



BANKING ON MOM

Actor Nikita Dutta says she drew styling references from her mom to do justice to her role in 'The Big Bull'

LEISURE P2



EXODUS OF MIGRANTS

Fearing another lockdown due to spike in COVID cases, migrant workers start leaving Surat and Ahmedabad

TWO STATES P7



IPL BEGINS TODAY

Defending champions Mumbai Indians face Royal Challengers Bangalore in IPL-14 season opener

SPORTS P12

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IRREGULAR by MANJUL



No games, movies, outing or PM speeches till your exams are over

SHORT TAKES

NZ stops entry of visitors from India

Wellington: Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern announced Thursday that New Zealand will temporarily suspend the entry for all travellers, including its own citizens, from India for about two weeks from April 11 due to a surge in COVID-19 cases among visitors to this country. The ban will begin Sunday and will remain in place until April 28, Ardern said. The travel restriction comes after New Zealand recorded 23 new positive COVID cases in isolation Thursday, of which 17 came from India, said a local media report here.

No relief for Anil

New Delhi: The Supreme Court said Thursday the nature of allegations and persons involved in the case related to sensational claim of ex-Mumbai police commissioner Param Bir Singh against former Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh required investigation by an 'independent agency'.

P9

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VARIAION
SENSEX	49746.21 ↑ 84.45
NIFTY	14873.80 ↑ 54.80
DOLLAR	75.04 ↑ ₹0.23
EURO	88.82 ↑ ₹0.17
GOLD	₹46,854 ↑ ₹492
SILVER	₹67,546 ↑ ₹912

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP MAX	36.2°C	34.8°C
TEMP MIN	26.1°C	25.2°C
Humidity	79%	83%
Rainfall	Trace	Trace
Forecast	Partly cloudy sky	

State seals borders with Ch'garh

RT-PCR NEGATIVE TEST REPORT A MUST FOR ALL PERSONS ENTERING ODISHA

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 8: The resurgence of COVID-19 has occurred in many parts of India including some places in Odisha. Hence the Odisha government has put restrictions in place for those coming to the state. Odisha reported Thursday a total of 879 new COVID-19 cases taking the state's tally to 3,45,526. It is the highest single-day rise this year.

"People coming to Odisha by any mode of public transport like train, bus, aircraft or waterways or by any private vehicle will have to produce RT-PCR negative reports obtained within 72 hours of entry/final vaccination certificate (after two doses of vaccine jab)," Chief Secretary SC Mahapatra said in an order issued Thursday. This order will be effective from April 12 (Monday). Those without valid documents will have to undergo seven days mandatory home/institutional quarantine.

In a separate development, the Odisha government also decided to close borders with Chhattisgarh from April 10 to April 30. No public transport will be allowed to enter Odisha through the Chhattisgarh border and vice-versa. The chief secretary has also written a



letter to Railway Board chairman Suneet Sharma to cancel train services from Chhattisgarh to the state from April 10. Passengers arriving in any station of Odisha on trains from any state will also have to produce either a vaccination certificate or RT-PCR negative report.

The state Transport department with help of police and under active guidance of collectors will set up Border Check Points (BCPs) at strategic locations across Odisha to manage entry of incoming persons and vehicles.

District collectors of high caseload districts namely Sundargarh, Jharsuguda, Sambalpur, Bargarh, Bolangir, Nuapada, Kalahandi, Nabarangpur, Koraput, Malkangiri, Ganjam, Gajapati, Rayagada, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj and Balasore have been authorised to set up and operate Temporary Medical Centres (TMCs)/ Cluster Temporary Medical Centres (CL TMCs) to provide institutional quarantine facilities for people coming from other states.

CM SEEKS 10-DAY STOCK OF VACCINES

BHUBANESWAR: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik urged the Centre to ensure at least 10 days stock of COVID-19 vaccines and he sought ₹300 crore for management of the disease. Naveen raised the demand during the virtual meeting of the prime minister with chief ministers of different states. "We have not been able to ramp up the vaccination due to lack of supplies. We are currently vaccinating 2.5 lakh persons per day and have capability to increase further. We request stock of vaccines for a minimum of 10 days," Naveen said.

MORE P4

Meanwhile Health Minister Naba Kishore Das informed Thursday that the state is yet to receive fresh stock of Covishield vaccines from the Centre. "We have already written to the Union government. Till Thursday noon the state didn't get new stock for vaccination. The supply of the vaccine lies with the Union government. When we need to give impetus to the vaccine drive, we are struggling due to the shortage of jabs," said Das.

Rukuna Rath to roll sans devotees

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 8: Rukuna Rath Yatra, the annual chariot festival of Lord Lingaraj, which is scheduled to be conducted April 20, will be done so without devotees, sources said Thursday. This is being done to prevent social gathering keeping in mind the steep rise in new COVID-19 cases especially in the state capital.

Only the servitors of the shrine will be allowed to pull the chariot. Others who can be present on the occasion are police personnel and district administration officials.

A blueprint detailing the modalities for the festival was prepared in a meeting Thursday which was conducted by Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) Commissioner Prem Chandra Chaudhary. Also present were representatives of the four Nijogs of the shrine, temple committee members, officials of police and district administrations.

"We requested the BMC to grant permission for Rukuna Rath Yatra which would uphold the legacy of Lord Lingaraj. The BMC will send the proposal to the Odisha government. We have assured that only 20-25 servitors will be present on the chariot. The Rath Yatra will be a two-day affair instead of

9,400 violators fined over ₹25L

BHUBANESWAR: Fines to the tune of over ₹25 lakh was collected Wednesday from violators across Odisha, the first day of enforcement of COVID-19 guidelines. "A total of ₹25,07,900 fine amount has been collected from 9,400 persons on charges of violating COVID-19 protocols in different parts of the state on the first day of the special COVID enforcement drive," Odisha Police informed on their official Twitter handle Thursday.

five days and devotees will not be allowed to take part. The chariot will be pulled by police personnel or the servitors," said secretary of Brahman Nijog, Biranchi Narayan Pati after the meeting.

BMC Additional Commissioner Laxmikant Sethi said that a blueprint has been prepared to conduct the programme. "We have also made RT-PCR tests mandatory for all taking part in the rituals. The proposal has been sent to the state government. Only after approval, we will take a final decision to observe the festival," Sethi informed. Last year, the function was cancelled due to the nationwide lockdown when construction of the chariot was nearing completion.

Rural economic corridors on cards

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 8: With and aim to boost rural economy, the Odisha government has decided to develop rural economic corridors in each of its 147 Assembly constituencies.

The decision was taken during a high-level meeting held under the chairmanship of Development Commissioner and Additional Chief Secretary—PK Jena recently. Accordingly, the Rural Development department (RD) has recently asked all executive engineers of the rural works divisions to

identify such roads which have potential to become economic corridors. The engineers have been asked to submit the proposals by April 12 for three roads of 15 to 25km length or more with carriage way width 7.5 metres.

Out of the three, the concerned district collector will shortlist one. After receiving the truncated list from collectors, approval of government will be taken and work will start, sources said. The government has asked the executive engineers to take help of Odisha Space Application Center (ORSAC) if required to select the best three roads in one constituency.

WHEN HUNGER RULES



Social distancing norms go out of the window as people queue up for the ₹5 meal in front of an Aahar centre at the SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack

SBI main branch sealed again after 17 test positive



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 8: The main branch of State Bank of India in this city was sealed again for 96 hours Thursday after it came to the fore that 17 more employees had tested positive for COVID-19. The main branch had earlier been sealed Sunday for 48 hours after seven of its staff was found coronavirus positive. However, work in the branch situated in Unit-I here will remain suspended from April 8 to 11, BMC officials said Thursday. So far 24 employees have tested positive from the branch.

During the period no one shall be allowed to go inside the bank except authorised personnel of BMC. The employees infected by COVID-19 have been directed to remain in isolation at their respective residence. SBI authorities have been asked to inform BMC officials if they observe COVID-19 symptoms in other staff. If any positive case needs medical attention, the bank authorities are to intimate the same to BMC immediately.

"After seven tested positive in the first phase, it was decided to have another round of tests. In the second phase, 17 others were found positive. So it was decided to close down the branch for 96 hours," said a BMC official.

Experts blame politicians for 2nd COVID-19 surge

ELECTION RALLIES AND RELIGIOUS GATHERINGS WITHOUT PROPER PROTOCOLS HAVE LED TO 2ND WAVE OF CORONAVIRUS INFECTIONS



The really treacherous thing about this virus is how silently it casts its footsteps. By the time you see the cases and deaths, the damage has been done

HEALTH EXPERT

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 8: India's COVID-19 cases have soared 13-fold in barely two months. This second wave has happened due to open disregard for safety protocols in India. Election rallies led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other major political figures, as well as crowded festivals and religious gatherings, have characterised the record resurgence of the new COVID-19 cases.

After quelling the first surge late last year, India's leaders let down their guard. Allowing or even encouraging dangerous behaviour at election rallies and religious gatherings, they underestimated the lethal capacity of the virus. As a result, India has seen more than one lakh daily new infections for three days in the ongoing week. Experts also say that Indian leaders reopened the economy too fast and too



WINNING MATTERS, LIVES DON'T: BJP president JP Nadda leads a road show in West Bengal's Cooch Behar district sans all COVID-19 protocols

PTI PHOTO

broadly which has led to this calamity.

Many of India's 1.35 billion people ignored masks and social distancing, while politicians including Modi and

Home Minister Amit Shah led huge election campaigns where protocols were thrown to the winds. Not just the BJP, parties of other leaders too

were guilty of fostering such behaviour.

"We were really premature to celebrate," University of Michigan epidemiologist Bhramar Mukherjee was quoted as saying by 'Reuters'. "This is a lesson. The really treacherous thing about this virus is how silently it casts its footsteps. By the time you see the cases and deaths, the damage is done," he added.

Health Minister Harsh Vardhan told officials of 11 of the worst-hit states this week that 'people largely gave up on COVID-appropriate behaviour; became very careless' as activity resumed.

"There have been elections, religious gatherings, reopening of offices, lots of people travelling, attending social functions, not following rules, little mask-wearing in functions like weddings, even on crowded buses and trains," Vardhan said in a video conference. But then he himself has faced criticism for tweeting dozens

of images and videos of party rallies.

Authorities have imposed some curbs on movement, but ministers and industrialists have advised against another national lockdown.

Being in power is of prime importance to all political parties in India. That is why authorities have refused to call off the weeks-long Mahakumbh festival, held once every 12 years on the banks of the Ganga in Uttarakhand.

A successfully run 'Mahakumbh', which is expected to draw millions of devotees, is seen as crucial for the campaign of Modi's BJP in the state, which votes next year.

"Political leaders are themselves responsible" for the resurgence by allowing the packed rallies, said Subhash Salunke, a former WHO official who advises the worst-hit state, Maharashtra. "The upward trend is going to be there for another couple of weeks," Salunke added.

FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES

Today you will be perplexed by some inexplicable and fantastic event. Either that, or you may experience an unforeseen but favourable incident. It may not be earth-shaking, but it will definitely make you assess things. Besides, you could have difficulties meeting deadlines.

TAURUS

Anxiety will keep your nerves swollen for most part of the day, feels Ganesh. On the work front, you will face success later in the day. You will be a role model for business efficiency and people will try to follow in your footsteps.

GEMINI

If you are embroiled in a legal dispute, an out-of-court settlement is likely, predicts Ganesh. You are a courageous person and you'll need a lot of it today. Don't back down from your decisions. You may have to be stern with a few people. Your resilience will pay off.

CANCER

Today, you will put your heart and soul into whatever task you take up. But the results may not be too forthcoming. However, that should not be a reason for you to get dejected or anxious. You will get your due sooner or later.

LEO

Sometimes, it takes courage to be honest and admit to your failures. Doing so only goes a long way in establishing your credentials as a real person, feels Ganesh. So understand that, while it is only human to make mistakes, it takes more than that to accept them.

VIRGO

A renewed zest for life will bring in a transformation in you. It is a good time to let people know how important and intelligent – yes, you can be both – are. Your eminence will be obvious as you show how things are meant to be done.

LIBRA

Good news! You will be a people's person today. Close friends, relatives and family – you seem to want to spend your time with all of them today, says Ganesh. Better news? Your romantic brilliance will be at its peak today as your fancy takes wings and creativity flows freely in manners that seem irresistible. Best news? The opposite sex just can't seem to keep their hands off you. Need you want more, asks Ganesh?

SCORPIO

A cascade of let-downs will dent your confidence and shake your determination, says Ganesh. But don't let these failures affect you as they are temporary. At work, your subordinates may force you to take drastic measures.

SAGITTARIUS

Benevolence will be your middle name today. Being frank and open-minded will have its own advantages. You might just give your life partner a patient ear. This will make them feel treated well, says Ganesh.

CAPRICORN

You may not get as popular as Romeo did, but your exceedingly romantic nature will earn you quite a reputation, not to forget the hypnotic effect it will have on your sweetheart, says Ganesh.

AQUARIUS

Today is an important day in the larger scheme of things. You may finally decide to buy a home, change your job, or marry! Sudden and unexpected profits are on the cards too. Reputation and rewards are all yours today. This acknowledgement helps you remain committed, says Ganesh.

PISCES

You are human enough to make mistakes, and humble enough to admit them, and it is this honesty that people admire in you. Your affectionate nature will see you excel at tending to the needs of your family members today, says Ganesh.



MARGOT IS A TEA FANATIC

Hollywood star Margot Robbie has shared that she is a tea fanatic. "Breakfast is usually porridge, and during the morning I'll have an immunity-boosting smoothie. Throughout the day, I'll sip on tea – I've been obsessed with it ever since I lived in the UK," Robbie told Women's Health UK magazine.

LEONARDO TO PREMIERE IN INDIA

Irish actor Aidan Turner will play diversely talented Leonardo Da Vinci in the web series *Leonardo*. The show on Da Vinci's life is all set to premiere in India April 9, ahead of its release in the UK and the US.



Kangana defines her 'ultranationalism'

Mumbai : Actress Kangana took to social media Thursday to talk about her love for India.

She wrote about how you are an 'ultranationalist' if you try to work for the well-being of the country and its people.

Posting a picture of herself in a yellow sari, she wrote: "If you love your nation then you are a nationalist if you are obsessed with your nation, and every single action of yours is directed at its well being every penny that you spend you want your nation and it's people to benefit then you are an ultranationalist #VocalForLocal."

Kangana was also in the news Wednesday for her tweet claiming that actors Akshay Kumar and others called her up to praise the trailer of her upcoming film *Thalaivi* secretly.

In the film, Kangana plays late former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa. It is scheduled to release in Hindi, Tamil and Telugu. She is

also shooting for her film *Tejas*, which is Sarvesh Mewara's directorial debut.

IANS

Nikita banked on mom for her *The Big Bull* look

Mumbai : Actress Nikita Dutta is gearing up for the release of her film *The Big Bull* on OTT. The film which is based in the eighties and the nineties, gave her the chance to go back in time and build her character accordingly.

She plays Priya Shah, wife of Abhishek's character Hemant Shah in the film, and Nikita says she drew styling references from her mother.

"We have done a lot of detailing in terms of how she dresses, speaks. Everything has been worked upon. It's very different for me. One of my go-to people was my mom because she has lived through that era. This was one of the most interesting things because I got to do something I have not done before and be someone, I have not been before," she said. The actress added: "That is my favourite part. I love researching

for a character and reading about the era in which the character is based in. Trying to get to know what happened is interesting." Nikita shot to fame after playing film star Jiah Sharma in *Kabir Singh*. **WS**

Farhan roped in for Marvel project: Reports

Mumbai : B-town actor Farhan Akhtar has bagged an international project with Marvel Studios. Unconfirmed sources said the actor has started shooting for the project in Bangkok, although when we contacted Disney, who own Marvel, they refused to comment.

"Farhan is currently stationed in Bangkok, along with an international cast and crew, for the shoot of a project with Marvel Studios, who are known to be one of the biggest film studios worldwide," the source said.

However, the source refrained from giving details about the project.

"All other details of the project are strictly under wraps," the source explained. Meanwhile, the actor has the film *Toofan* lined up for release. The actor plays a boxer in the film. Toofan has been directed by Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra and also features Mrunal Thakur, Paresh Rawal, Supriya Pathak Kapur and Hussain Dalal. This is the second time that Farhan is working with Mehra. The two had collaborated for the film *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag* in 2003. Farhan was last seen in *The Sky Is Pink* alongside Priyanka Chopra.

IANS

'Middle-class upbringing had its advantage'

NOT GETTING EVERYTHING IN LIFE THAT ONE WANTS, AND TO DEAL WITH IT IS AN ADVANTAGE, SAYS BAFTA-NOMINATED ACTOR ADARSH GOURAV

AGENCIES

Mumbai : BAFTA-nominated actor Adarsh Gourav says a middle-class upbringing in small town Jamshedpur had its advantage. It helped him experience a wider perspective of life.

Gourav has received a BAFTA nomination in the Best Actor category for his starring role of Balram

Halwai in *The White Tiger*:

On the advantage of being middle class, Adarsh said: "I think the fact that you do not get everything in life that you want, and how to deal with it (is an advantage). If I give a small example, at the age of nine, if I wanted a pair of Nike shoes, I wouldn't get that because either there was no showroom of Nike back then or my father thought it

was an unnecessary expenses. Not that I was upset or anything but we always knew what we could afford and what we couldn't."

He added: "We did not go abroad for those vacations but in India, as child, I have travelled everywhere. We went to Himachal Pradesh, we went to Goa and also different places in South India. I felt the diversity, and whenever we travelled by train, we would chat with fellow passengers

and the journeys were filled with memory."

"I know the advantage of being middle-class. My com-



Adarsh with Priyanka Chopra and Rajkumar Rao in *The White Tiger*

passion and empathy towards other people and their condition is more. I value my privilege of having good food, going to a

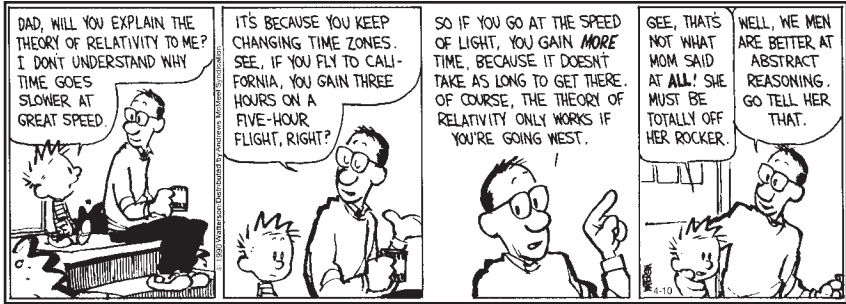
good school, living in a good house and everything that my parents have given me. Honestly, I do not want to change those values," he summed up.

FUN post

PEANUTS



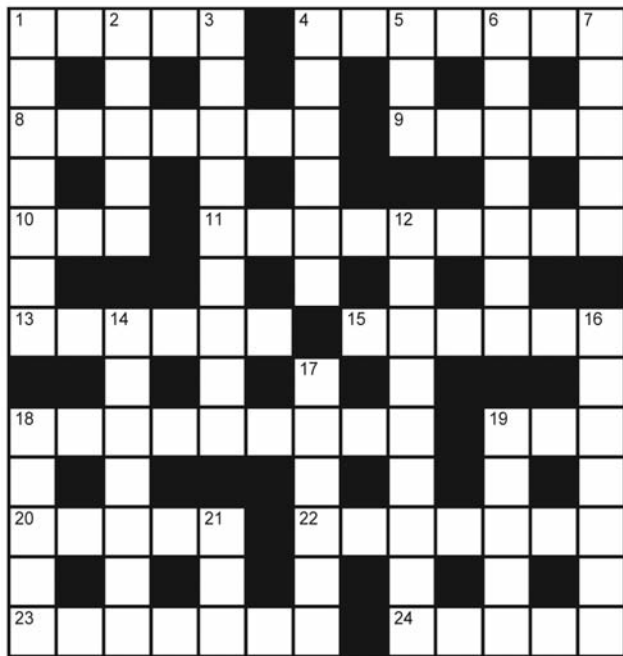
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



CROSSWORD



Across

- 1 Instruct
- 4 Hot spot
- 8 Proceeds
- 9 Punctuation mark
- 10 Leather sticker
- 11 Numbers pools
- 13 Bushes
- 15 Capital of Alaska
- 18 Meddle
- 19 It has a shell

Down

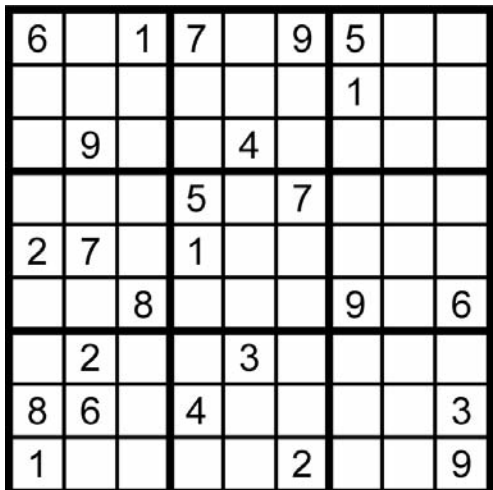
- 20 Like helium
- 22 Moved on all fours
- 23 Former star? (3-4)
- 24 Tuckered out
- 1 Plaid
- 2 Blacksmith's block
- 3 Moustache type
- 4 Elaborate party

5

- Mythical bird of stories
- 6 Large wardrobe
- 7 Tests
- 12 Joyously unrestrained
- 14 Cads
- 16 Turned over
- 17 Guiding light
- 18 Kind of coffee or stew
- 19 Frigid
- 21 Stocking part

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS



CROSSWORD

SUDOKU

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

Hand over unused assets to SHGs: Collectors told

The Chief Minister further said that Odisha is predominantly an agrarian state. Irrigation is a vital

As many as 10 major dam projects, 50 medium dam projects and more than 2,500 minor dam projects are currently operational in the state



NAVEEN PATNAIK
CHIEF MINISTER

Department Secretary Anu Garg said that WR is the biggest engineering department of the state government. She outlined the importance of water resources management and spoke about the initiatives the state government has been taking in this sector.

Secretary to Chief Minister (5T) VK Pandian, in a detailed interaction with the engineers, highlighted the importance and various factors of 5T initiative of the Chief Minister and how engineers can follow it and bring a paradigm change in water sources management. Chief Secretary Suresh Chandra Mahapatra and other senior officers attended the programme.

Once these assets are under the control of women SHGs, these groups will manage the unused properties for the betterment of the locals and society, he said.



MISSION SHAKTI MEMBERS CAN UTILISE THESE ASSETS FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, SAID THE CHIEF MINISTER

empowerment of women has always been the priority of the state government. "Mission Shakti has become the torch bearer of transformation today. This initiative will be beneficial in strengthening the quiet movement of mothers," he added.

Justice Rao recuses himself from hearing Polavaram case

Significantly, Odisha had challenged the order of the NGT passed in September last year asking the



Justice L Nageswara Rao had appeared in the Supreme Court on the same issue when he was practicing



It is to be mentioned here that an original suit was filed by Odisha in 2007 against Andhra Pradesh for launching Polavaram project on Godavari River. The apex court has not heard the suit since February 2020. Odisha stated in the suit that the operation of Polavaram

Odisha also alleged that the project authority had changed the structure of the dam and for that it hasn't granted environment clearance.

No night curfew now, says BMC

“Continuous sealing is being carried against any Covid violators that are found violating social distancing and other norms as directed by the BMC,” the BMC Commissioner added.

nCoV: Over 7 times jump in active cases since March 8

The state has so far conducted over 92.75 lakh sample tests for Covid-19, including 31,057 on Wednesday, and the positivity rate stands at 3.73 per cent.



Utkal asks boarders to vacate hostels

cases. The hostel and university authorities decided that the PG 4th semester boards shall have to vacate the hostels by April 12, while PG 1st semester boards shall have to vacate immediately after the completion of mid-semester exam April 16. This apart, M Phil (final semester students), PhD scholars and post-doctoral fellowship (PDFs) will be permitted to stay in the hostels on recommendation of their grades and respective heads of the departments for carrying out dissertation/research work. Hotel mess will remain closed from April 17. However, mess of research hostel will remain open till further notice.

Jails no home to infected inmates: Govt



IN A FIRST, JAIL ADALATS IN STATE FROM APRIL 24



THE INFECTED PRISON INMATES WILL BE SENT TO THE DEDICATED COVID CARE CENTRES OR COVID HOSPITALS FOR TREATMENT

However, this time, the SOP has categorically said that the prison inmates will be sent to the dedicated Covid care centres or Covid hospitals for treatment.

Last year, in accordance with a court order, the Odisha government had released 16,789 under trial prisoners (UTP) and convicts to decongest prison cells.

The government had also introduced an e-Mulakat system in order to reduce physical interaction between prisoners and their family

start monthly jail adalats in their respective areas from April 24. Similarly, the DG, Prisons, Thursday issued a letter to the jail superintendents to remain present on the day and ensure all the arrangements at their respective prisons. The superintendents have also

The jail adalats are a success in various states like Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh.



High Court March 9, had directed the A and prisons department to organise dalats every month

A total of Rs 25,07,900 fine has been collected from 9,400 persons on charges of violating the protocols in different parts of the state on the first day of the special en-

Following the direction of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Tuesday, the Odisha Police has launched the 10-day special drive to enforce the COVID-19 protocol.

Man held for cheating investor of ₹4.80Cr

THE ACCUSED HAD PROMISED TO PAY 45 PER CENT PROFIT SHARE FROM GREEN GRANITE AND 50 PER CENT FROM BLACK GRANITE PROJECT TO THE VICTIM

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 8: The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of state Crime Branch has arrested a fraudster for cheating a Karnataka-based investor of Rs 4.80 crore on the pretext of making him a partner in Black Granite business in 2017. One of the accused identified as Alaga Muthu Sankar, a native of Kerala, had been staying at Jeypore in Koraput.

According to sources, the victim, Jagannath Rao Doddamani is working as a senior research staff in Samsung Electronics in South Korea.

In 2017, Doddamani came across an advertisement in the website, www.expatriates.com seeking investors to invest money in an upcoming south Indian movie called 'Shankar Puram' to be produced by one G Vijaya Sugumaran. The advertisement was floated by A.M. Raghunath of Kottayam in Kerala.

Raghunath told Doddamani that he should invest in the granite stone mining project in Odisha being run



by Sugumaran instead of the movie. Later, Doddamani along with Raghunath met Sugumaran at his office, Sri Sai Enterprises, in Madurai in Tamil Nadu where Doddamani agreed to invest Rs 30 lakhs in the Green Granite quarry project in Odisha.

Later, a partnership deed was signed by the wife of Doddamani and the accused Sugumaran 25 October, 2017. Doddamani later invested a total Rs 50 lakhs in both green and black granite quarry project that would be operated from

an office at Berhampur in Ganjam. Raghunath later introduced the complainant with his own brother and accused Sankar who proposed the victim to invest in Black Granite business run by his firm, "A.M. Sankar Granite Industry" at Boriguma in Koraput.

Subsequently, the complainant fell into their trap and invested about Rs. 4.80 crores in phase manner from 2017 till October, 2020 in the process to get lease of several mines including decorative stones, coals & iron ores etc. However, till

The accused had prepared a series of fake letters purportedly issued by several highly placed officers of state as well as central govt pertaining to Steel & Mines and Forest departments

date, he was neither granted with any such licenses nor received any return.

Doddamani came to know about the cheating in 2020 and registered a case (5/21) in this regard with the EOW, 22 February this year. During the course of investigation, the EOW also found that the accused Muthu Sankar had prepared a "series of fake letters purportedly issued by several highly placed officers of Govt. of Odisha as well as Govt. of India, pertaining to Dept. of Steel & Mines and Forest Department etc." The accused was Thursday sent to judicial custody by the SDJM court here.

CM seeks 10 days vaccine stock, ₹330Cr from Centre



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 8: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Thursday urged the Centre to ensure at least 10 days stock of vaccines and Rs 300 crore for Covid management.

Naveen has raised the demands at the meeting taken up by Prime Minister Narendra Modi with all chief ministers through virtual mode. Odisha has been doing well in vaccination programme with among the lowest wastage in the country and efficient system of administering the vaccine to eligible persons, he said. "We have not been able to ramp up

the vaccination due to supply issues. We are currently able to vaccinate 25 lakh persons per day and have capability to increase further. We request that at least 10 days stock of the vaccines is ensured for Odisha," the Chief Minister said.

During 2020-21, Odisha had requested for Rs 400 crore under Emergency Covid Response Plan (ECRP), but it has received only Rs 146 crore. In view of the new wave of Covid, Patnaik has urged the Prime Minister to allocate at least Rs 300 crore to Odisha for 2021-22 for Covid Management.

He thanked the Union government for allowing the states, under State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF)

During 2020-21, Odisha had requested for ₹400 crore under Emergency Covid Response Plan, but it has received only ₹146 crore

guidelines, to spend up to 50 per cent of the annual allocation for Covid-related activities during 2020-21. The same guidelines may be continued for the year 2021-22 as well, he suggested.

Speaking about steps taken by the state government on Covid management, he said, "We have reactivated our system to tackle the new rise in Covid cases especially in districts bordering some states with high incidence of the virus.

The entire country has to put up a united front against this pandemic and the state government will continue to provide support in this fight, he added.

ECoR GM inspects Central Hospital



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 8: East Coast Railway (ECoR) General Manager Vidya Bhushan along with principal heads of departments of ECoR inspected the Railway's Central Hospital at Mancheswar Thursday.

During the inspection, Bhushan reviewed the Intensive Care Unit (ICU), Outpatient Department (OPD), wards, facilities provided to patients and interacted with patients & officials. He also reviewed the performance of Railway Central Hospital.

Principal Chief Medical Director KC Sahoo assisted the ECoR GM during his inspection.

Vidya Bhushan had inspected the Mancheswar Carriage Repair Workshop here, Wednesday.

During the inspection, Bhushan reviewed the overhauling of coaches. He laid emphasis on maintenance and modernisation of the passenger amenities like improved quality of seats, flooring, easy to clean toilets, fire retardant, upholstery, mobile charging points and emergency lights. He lauded the process and quality control measures and steps undertaken to increase the production.

WASSUP TODAY

BHUBANESWAR

- State-level skill development training by All India Dalit Mahila Adhikar Mancha, Adhikar, Plot-77/180/970, Tamando, 9.30am
- 'Rashtriya Madhyabitta Paribar Mahasangha' to hand over demand letter, RWSS office, Khandagiri, 12noon
- Inauguration of Amazon Easy Store, Esplanade One Mall, 5pm
- Inaugural occasion of 'Tumble Dry', first floor, plot-435/1866, Kiit Square, Patia, 6pm

BALIANITA

- Inauguration of 'Jan Sampark Padayatra' by Bhubaneswar MP, Nikunja Bihari Temple, 8.30am

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.

Madhusudan Law College gets university tag

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 8: The State government has approved the upgradation of Madhusudan Law College, Cuttack into Madhusudan Law University with effect from April 28.

With this, the law college will become Odisha's first state run law university. As per the notification, the decision of upgrading the college into university has been taken by the order of the Governor. The department has suppressed the earlier notification dated March 4, 2020 and June 11, 2020 in this regard.

"The state government does hereby alter the territorial juris-



diction of all existing universities of the state and establishes a new

university called Madhusudan Law University at Cuttack by upgrading

Madhusudan Law College with effect from April 28, 2021," the notification said.

All the existing government and private law colleges except the constituent law colleges of different universities of the state shall cease the affiliation from their respective universities from April 28 and shall stand affiliated to Madhusudan Law University from that date.

Earlier, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had hinted at the upgradation May 20, 2018. In February this year, the Higher Education department had invited applications from eligible candidates for the post of Vice-Chancellor of Madhusudan Law University.

POWER TARIFF HIKE DECRIED



CPI(M) workers demonstrate in front of TPCODL officer near Raj Bhawan in Bhubaneswar, Thursday, demanding rollback of the power tariff hike

OP PHOTO

IIT STUDY HINTS AT 5-LAYERED MASK TO DEFEAT COVID

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, April 8: Aerosol droplets 'reach and leakage from various protective measures like face masks and shields during breathing might trigger the airborne transmission of Covid 19 and other similar diseases, a recent study conducted at IIT-Bhubaneswar said. The study also suggested use of five-layered masks to keep the highly infectious virus at bay.

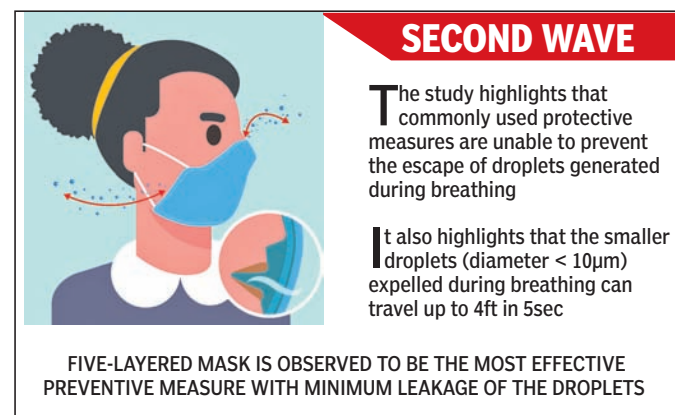
The study was conducted by Venugopal Arumuru, assistant professor, School of Mechanical Science (SMS), and his team.

Director, IIT-Bhubaneswar, RV Rajakumar, while congratulating the team for conducting a relevant

and relatively unexplored study said, "Breathing as a source of virus transmission is not adequately explored in the past. Our recent study is a step ahead in this direction."

He said that the study highlights that commonly used protective measures like face masks and shields are unable to prevent the escape of droplets generated during breathing.

The leaked aerosol particle may contain the virus which may trigger the airborne transmission of Covid 19 and other similar diseases. Under these circumstances, the conventional CO2 level measurement in confined space for assessing Air Quality Index may not be sufficient to regulate the airflow.



The study highlights that the smaller droplets (diameter < 10µm) expelled during breathing can travel

up to 4ft in 5sec. The study strongly recommends not using a surgical mask during normal conversations.

Surgical mask and face shield combinations are discouraged in hospitals and other places where strict social distancing guidelines are difficult to follow.

A commercial N-95 mask completely impedes the leakage of the droplets in the forward direction. However, the droplets' leakage from the gaps between the mask and nose is observed to be significant, the study said, suggesting that a five-layered mask is observed to be the most effective preventive measure with minimum leakage of the droplets.

Venugopal said that the majority of the past research focuses on understanding droplet generation and transport through the leakage of

the aerosol particle.

The breathing pattern is simulated at the exit of a standard mannequin's nose, using air and fog as tracer particles.

However, breathing, the most common phenomenon, is scarcely studied as a virus transmission source, and the present study goes a step further by evaluating the risks involved with various masks and non-practising of social distancing.

The breathing patterns simulated in the study imitated typical breathing frequencies that include breathing while standing at rest and also slightly longer breaths of healthy adults involved in a moderate activity like walking.

FOR CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS CONTACT OUR BOOKING STATIONS

Acharya Vihar-Dayal Agency-9437135727, **A.P. Tours and Travel**, Maitri Vihar, C.S. Pur- 9861301598, **Aurobindo Market**-Sai Audio & Electronics-9438304668, **Airport Road**-Sai Baba Variety Store-9090071530, **Anish Infotech**-Tankapani Road-9861341488, **Bapuji Nagar**- Dreamland Studio- 9777517314, **Baramunda Rental Colony**-Maa Ramchandi Communication-9658821469, **Baramunda Housing Board Colony**-Pappu Variety Store-9040500106, **Cuttack Road**-Alishan Snacks-8984236754, **District Center (Chandrasekharpur)**-Sai Google Mart-977665507, **Forest Park**-DTDC Couriers & Services (HB Services)-7381024156, **IRC Village**-Bapi Xerox-9090090404, Gift Hut(Antriksh Gifts & Decors Pvt. Ltd.)-9954781084, Pruthvi Medicine-9853314816, **Janpath-Krupajal Book Store**-7978646669, **Jaydev Vihar**-AK Enterprises-7978116618, Subam Sai Books Store-8895550649, Swain Graphics- 9337121249, **Jagannath Mobile Point**- Janpath Road, Ram Mandir- 9938475415, **Kanan Vihar**-Auro Electronics-8260697560, **Khandagiri**- Swosti Mobile Centre- 7992914045, World Solution- 9938317559, **KIIT Road**-Jugad Jn-9338545031, **Laxmi Sagar**-Aditya Mobile-9438191836, **Lewis Road**-Spider Web-7809186415, **Metro Satellite City**-Arogya Mitra Medicine Store-9853621640, **Madhusudan Nagar**-Mohapatra Communication-9124446664, **Maa Santoshi travels**- Gajapati Nagar- 9777675867, **Nayapalli**- The Cake Room- 7873660137, **Near Mayfair Lagoon**-Cookieman-9439491273, **Nigamananda-Omm Sai Travels**-9668284823, **Nr Cosmopolis Main Gate**- Shreeram Medical Store- 8763711714, **Net Square**- Niladri Vihar (C.S. Pur)- 7205634821, **Priyadarshini Market**-Astro Point-9938134346, **R.N. General Store**-Nilakantha Nagar-9438642501, **Sahid Nagar**- Maa Communication- 9437353424, **Sahini General Store**- Near Patia Railway Station, Mahavir Vihar- 9937586626, **Satya Nagar**-Baishnavi Mixture & Sweets-7894821764, **Samantapur**- Download Point-7504557743, **Sailashree Vihar**-Harsha Book Store-8093449515, **Saheed Nagar**-Jagannath Graphics-7978652670, Photo World-7978468191, Sainath Photo Studio-8984436129, Shanti & Co-9937071063, **Siripur**-Omm Maa Sarala Communication-9777682449, **Sushree fashion**- Jagmara-9938714347, **Shree Vision**- Sailashree Vihar-9861476678, **Unit-3**-LIC of India Premium Point-9337787080, **Unit-7**- LIC Premium Point- 9338227422, **VSS Nagar**-Friends Cake & Bake-8658200930, Jeet Infoworld-7205195782, **XIMB Square**-LD Books-9658061373.

ANDHRA PRADESH ZP POLLS

Kotia villagers quarrel with cops over voting



People cast their votes at Neredibalsa booth in Kotia panchayat

AP officials reached the Neredibalsa polling booth bordering Andhra Pradesh, in the morning. A deputy collector and an ITDA official accompanying the polling team had an altercation that led to a scuffle with some local politicians of the Kotia locality

Tension flared up in some villages in Kotia panchayat when residents were prevented from casting their votes. In spite of resistance, over 107 voters from the area exercised their franchise. Reports said that out of 1,291 voters allotted to the booth, 107 cast votes

A clash took place in Neredibalsa village after police tried to prevent some villagers from casting their votes. Police said the villagers were violating Section 144 imposed by the Koraput administration

Koraput, April 8: Even as the state government Thursday filed a fresh petition in the apex court appealing for injunction to prevent the Andhra government's attempts to hold elections in Odisha villages, the latter conducted Zilla Parishad and Mandal polls in several villages of Kotia panchayat. In a petition filed in this regard, the state government has requested the Supreme Court to order the AP government to refrain from conducting elections in the disputed villages as the matter is still sub-judice. In its plea, the state government appealed to SC that if elections are

30-ft breach in Rengali canal: 1K acres flooded

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kamakhyanagar, April 8: At least 1,000 acres of farmland were inundated after a 30-ft breach occurred in the Rengali left bank canal division No-III near Sibulapasi-Lembupala village under Baunsapala panchayat of Dhenkanal district Thursday morning. As a result, over 1000 acres of farmland lying on the downstream of the canal were submerged. Vegetable cultivation over 300 acres were also destroyed. A flood like situation has occurred in Ramial river and Betali canal as water came gushing out of the canal following the breach. The expansion work of National Highway-53 and construction of a



bridge near Alutuma was also disrupted. On being informed, the canal authorities closed down the canal gate at Samal. The Rengali left canal is known as the lifeline of irrigation in Dhenkanal district.

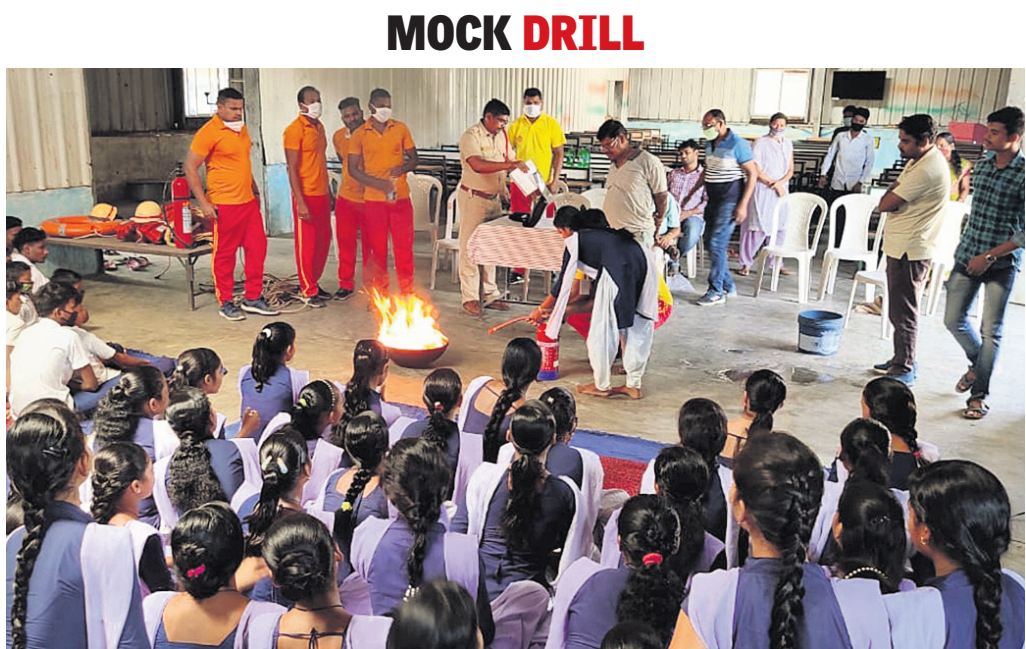
Water has also started entering nearby Lembupala village triggering panic among 50 families living in the village, said reports. The villagers alleged that despite repeated complaints to the

local authorities on the urgent need for repair of the canal embankments, no steps were taken to mend the cracks. The villagers alleged that the breach might have resulted from the increased outflow of water in the canal. They alleged that the canal had cracks but no steps were taken to repair it. "Despite repeated complaints, our grievances remained unheard," a villager-cum-district BJD secretary Dillip Kumar Sandha said. Executive engineer Gagan Bihari Sandha of Rengali Division-III said, a probe has been undertaken while the higher authorities have been apprised about the development. The canal gates were closed and repair will start after water recedes.

Body recovered from canal in Jajpur

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, April 8: The decomposed body of an unidentified woman was found lying in a canal under mysterious circumstances at Kapileshwar village under Jajpur Sadar police limits Thursday. Some residents who were out for work early in the morning first spotted the body lying in the dried up canal on the outskirts of the village. They immediately alerted the villagers and the police. A team from Sadar police station reached the spot and recovered the body. The cops sent the body for post mortem and are on the job to identify the deceased. After preliminary investigation, the cops believe that the woman was murdered somewhere else before being dumped in the canal.



Fire personnel imparting training to students on fire safety measures and road accidents at SSD Government High School in Padia block of Malkangiri district, Thursday

6-yrs on, horticulture garden remains a dream

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kendrapara, April 8: Despite the allotment of land and funds, the proposed model horticultural garden project in Kendrapara district has failed to take off. According to a report, the district administration had identified 60 acres at Nolasahi village under Derabish block for the project, while the state horticulture department had sanctioned ₹2 crore for the construction of a boundary wall of the garden and plantation. However, after the initial euphoria, the project has failed to make any headway. The establishment of the garden was necessary as severe irregularities were alleged in plantation of coconut saplings in which the district administration has spent over ₹3 crore during last five years under MGNREGS project. There is no trace of coconut sapling plantation in Garadpur and Derabish blocks even as many ben-

eficiaries have received funds for plantation of saplings. Ironically, many of the beneficiaries have received funds despite having no land for plantation. Residents have demanded a thorough probe into the fraud to unravel the irregularities and punish the guilty. Local residents claimed that the project would have brought a turnaround in the lives of farmers in Kendrapara district as the mainstay of the people here is agriculture. This district still does not have any industrial activities. Reports said barring Kendrapara, model horticulture gardens have been established in other districts of the state. The garden is part of a plan of the state government to grow various fruit-based plants such as mango, coconuts, guavas, papaya, pineapple as well as flowers and sell them to the general public. On the other hand, the farmers would receive saplings for plantation at a nominal price.



The district administration had initiated the move to establish the proposed horticulture garden six years back. Farmer leaders and residents have expressed their displeasure over the delay in completion of the project. They alleged that the project has slipped into coma even before it was started. They blamed the apathy of the administrative for the inordinate delay.

Farmer leaders Gayadhar Dhala and Bidhu Bhusan Mohapatra, social activists Manoj Nayak, senior citizens Prabhat Parida and Radhakant Mohanty said agriculture is the main occupation of the people in the district as there is no industry or mines in the region. The fertile soil of the district, favourable climatic conditions, presence of seven rivers flowing through the district makes

a strong case for establishment of the horticulture garden. The above conditions are quite favourable for cultivation of cash crops like fruits, flowers and vegetables. However, despite the favourable conditions farmers here are deprived of proper saplings, provision of training in modern agricultural practices and availability of fertilizers and farm tools at subsidized rates. Many of these problems could have been solved if the district administration had taken more initiative to establish the proposed garden, they said. Contacted, Kandha Jena, Deputy Director of Horticulture, said that the proposed site is under the jurisdiction of the Forest department. The project work can only begin after the Forest department hands over the land to the district administration for which efforts are underway. This apart, he assured to conduct a probe into the irregularities in plantations in the district.

DAWN-TO-DUSK TALCHER BANDH OVER TTPS CLOSURE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Talcher, April 8: In protest against the closure of the Talcher Thermal Power Station in Angul district, members of the Joint Action Committee observed a 12-hour dawn-to-dusk bandh in the area Thursday. Bandhs were observed for two days. BJD called Angul bandh Wednesday. The MCL has incurred huge losses in two days. Reports said, due to the bandh, all operations – coal extraction and transportation from 10 MCL-owned mines were paralyzed. Coal transportation to Nalco, NTPC and TTPS was hampered Thursday. According to reports, the demonstrators staged protests in front of mines offices and on the premises of the mines. They forced closure of the mines' operations. As a result, all works relating to coal extraction and transportation



from 10 coal mines of the Mahanadi Coalfields Ltd (MCL) at Jagannath, Lingaraj, Bhubaneswari, Bharatpur and Ananta mines came to a grinding halt. Vehicular movement, schools, colleges and all government and private offices, remained closed across the district barring essential

services. Similarly, coal transportation through rail and road routes was also disrupted. The BJD had also observed Angul bandh Wednesday. For the last two days of bandh, the MCL has suffered huge losses. The agitating people alleged that the Union government shut it down citing violation of pollution

In the two days, the MCL has incurred huge losses as all operations – coal extraction and transportation from 10 MCL-owned mines at Jagannath, Lingaraj, Bhubaneswari, Bharatpur and Ananta mines came to a grinding halt. Coal transportation to Nalco, NTPC and TTPS was hampered, Thursday

norms of the Central Pollution Control Board(CPCB) despite it remaining functional till last before it was closed down. They claimed that the lackadaisical attitude of TTPS authorities led to closure of the plant as the latter did not pay heed to the reminders of CPCB. It was alleged that the closure resulted in job loss for scores of people and the people dependent on it either directly or indirectly for their livelihood.

Admin on toes as Covid cases up in Kalahandi dist

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhawanipatna, April 8: As the second wave of Covid-19 is spreading in parts of Kalahandi district, the administration and the health officials are on their toes. They are busy taking preventive measures and creating public awareness. The corona graph is witnessing a steady upswing in Kalahandi over the past few days. In last five days, over a hundred Covid-19 infections were reported in the district. It is said that if the rate of infection keeps an upward trend over the next seven days, the situation will go out of control in the district. Reported said, the district recorded 26 infection cases April 1; 22 cases April 2; 26 cases April 3; 47 cases April 4; 58 cases April 5; 64 cases April 6 and 38 cases April 7. There are 4,888 active cases in the state. Of them, 420 active cases are in Kalahandi.



An awareness rally on Covid-19 underway at Paralakhemundi

GM girl tests +ve; three in isolation

SAMBALPUR: A girl student of Gangadhar Meher University in Sambalpur district has tested positive for Covid-19. This was informed by deputy registrar of the university UC Pati. The girl had come to the university to stay in a hostel Tuesday. Her swab test report came out positive for Covid-19. She was sent back home and is currently under isolation. A hostel warden and two of her roommates had come in contact with the girl. The three have been placed under isolation.

Police and civic body officials have kept a strict vigil on the movement of people and are taking action against people violating safety measures and social distancing. Since April 5, night curfew has been enforced from 10 pm till 5 am. In view of huge gatherings at Bhawanipatana weekly market, it has been shifted to Lal Bahadur Stadium so as to ensure social distancing between traders. On the other hand, the administration has intensified checking of vehicles, mask wearing at the border point in Dharamagarh on the

Chhatisgarh borders. Conscious citizens say, the alleged irresponsible conduct of the public at this time might deteriorate the Covid situation. The rapid spread of the Covid cases in the neighbouring Chhattisgarh has added to the worry of the Kalahandi administration as people have access to fringe areas on a daily basis. Notably, the neighbouring state is clocking more than 10,000 cases a day. It is said the second mutant strain of Covid-19 is more dangerous than the previous one.

3 held for bomb attack on Jajpur RTI activist

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, April 8: Police arrested three people involved in the bomb attack on RTI activist Sarbeswar Behura near Imamnagar under Dhamashala block in Jajpur. However, police did not disclose the identities of the accused who were produced in court Thursday. According to SP Rahul PR, four bombs were hurled at Behura over a past enmity. Considering the seriousness of the incident, police had formed a spe-

cial squad under Jajpur Road SDPO Chinmay Kumar Nayak. All the accused were involved in various illegal activities which came to the notice of the police and the administration. The accused suspecting that Behura was exposing them, attacked him and two of his friends at Imamnagar March 27 night. Behura was critically injured. "Further investigation to find whether others were also involved in the matter is on. The identities of the accused will not be revealed as the investigation is still

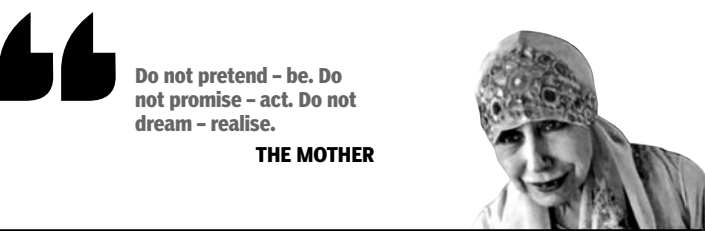
underway," the SP said. For the last two decades, black stone is being plundered in various parts of Dhamrashala, leading to huge loss of revenue for the government. RTI activist Behura had drawn the attention of the NGT, the High Court and the Lokayukta towards the rampant black stone mining. The administration had assessed the loss due to stone quarrying at Dankari hill at ₹58 crore. The NGT had asked the government to recover ₹25 crore as penalty.

NANDANKANAN ZOOLOGICAL PARK
TENDER NOTICE No. 01 of 2021-22
Date: 07.04.2021
No. MM-03: Deputy Director, Nandankanan Zoological Park invites sealed tender in prescribed form from interested individuals/firms/entrepreneurs for following tender of Nandankanan Zoological Park.

Sl. No.	Name of the Tender	Last date of Submission of Sealed Tender	Opening of the Sealed Tender
1	Outsourcing of Safari Facility	5.00 P.M. of 19.04.2021	11.30 A.M. of 20.04.2021

Detailed terms and conditions along with the tender papers will be available in the website of Nandankanan Zoological Park (www.nandankanan.org) from **08.04.2021**. The downloaded tender papers must be accompanied with a Bank Draft for **Rs.11,800/-** (inclusive of 18% GST) for tender drawn in favour of "Deputy Director, Nandankanan Zoological Park" in any Nationalized Bank payable at Bhubaneswar. The cost of tender is approximately Rs.60.00 lakh per annum.

Sd./- Deputy Director
Nandankanan Zoological Park
OIPR-08070/11/0001/2122



Do not pretend – be. Do not promise – act. Do not dream – realise.
THE MOTHER

The Right to Die

The right to assistance in dying continues to gain ground. Last month, the Spanish parliament passed legislation, expected to come into effect in June, permitting doctors to assist adult patients to die if they have a “serious and incurable” disease that causes “unbearable suffering.” The doctor may either prescribe a lethal dose of a drug that patients can take themselves – a mode known by various terms, including medical aid in dying, voluntary assisted dying, and physician-assisted suicide – or give the patient a lethal injection, known as voluntary euthanasia.

In February, the Portuguese parliament passed legislation permitting voluntary euthanasia for patients who are terminally ill. Portugal’s president, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, referred the law to the Constitutional Court, which rejected it on the grounds that it was insufficiently precise. Parliament is expected to pass a revised version, which should become law before the end of the year.

Other countries have gone further. Since 2016, Canada has permitted medical aid in dying – both physician-assisted suicide and voluntary euthanasia – for patients whose natural death is “reasonably foreseeable.” The legislation was a response to a decision by the Supreme Court of Canada holding that existing prohibitions on assisted suicide and voluntary euthanasia violated the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Canadians supported the legislation, but, according to one poll, eight out of 10 respondents thought it too restrictive. In a case brought in Quebec in 2019, the province’s Superior Court ruled that the restriction of assistance in dying to patients whose natural death was foreseeable violated the Charter of Rights.

In March, after extensive public consultation and parliamentary debate, the Canadian parliament approved amendments making patients eligible for assistance in dying if they have a “grievous and irremediable medical condition,” which is defined as “having a serious and incurable illness, disease or disability; being in an advanced state of irreversible decline in capability; and experiencing enduring physical or psychological suffering that is intolerable to them and cannot be relieved under conditions that they consider acceptable.”

Although patients whose natural death is not reasonably foreseeable are now eligible for assistance in dying, requests from these patients must receive additional scrutiny, including a mandatory 90-day period in which the patient’s eligibility is tested by, for example, counselling or improved palliative care that may alleviate the patient’s suffering.

The 2016 legislation required a parliamentary review of the law after five years. In addition to a general overview of how the law is working, the review will consider two issues that will help to shape public discussion of assistance in dying. One is whether advance requests should be permitted (for example, by someone in the early stages of dementia who is still capable of enjoying life, but does not want to live beyond the point when that capacity has been lost). The other issue the review will consider is whether assistance in dying should be available to someone whose intolerable and irremediable suffering is caused by mental illness.

The issue of allowing advance requests for assistance in dying will become more pressing as populations age and more people develop dementia. Last year, the Dutch Supreme Court ruled that doctors cannot be prosecuted for carrying out euthanasia on patients who have given written consent, but subsequently lost the capacity to consent.

The overriding reason for permitting this is that it allows patients in the early stages of dementia to enjoy their lives, without fearing that unless they commit suicide while they are still capable of doing so, they will become what Gillian Bennett, a Canadian advocate for advance requests, called “an empty husk.” Bennett took her own life, because she had been diagnosed with dementia and did not want to prolong a life she would no longer be able to enjoy, entirely dependent on nurses who should have been using their vocation to care for patients who could benefit from it.

Canada’s 2021 legislation explicitly excludes mental illness as a sole ground for receiving assistance in dying, but the exclusion will automatically lapse in two years. That sets a deadline for parliament to decide what safeguards are needed to ensure that the suffering of mentally ill people who request assistance in dying is truly irremediable.

There can be little doubt that some mentally ill people are not helped by treatment, and do suffer greatly. It is hard to see why, if suffering from an incurable but non-terminal physical illness suffices for assistance in dying, suffering that is as bad or worse from incurable mental illness should not also be sufficient. Moreover, for people who are suffering from untreatable depression or other mental illnesses that do not respond to treatment, merely being judged eligible for euthanasia can in itself make life more bearable.

Mental illness is accepted as a ground for euthanasia in Belgium and the Netherlands. A study of 100 psychiatric patients in Belgium who requested euthanasia on the basis of their psychological suffering found that 48 of the requests were accepted, but eight patients postponed or cancelled the procedure, “because simply having this option gave them enough peace of mind to continue living.”

The only remaining question might be the reliability of psychiatric assessments of whether a patient’s mental illness is incurable and will continue. But in the end, only the patient can judge how unbearable the suffering is, and therefore, how much weight should be given to the possibility that it will end, either with further treatment or on its own.

The writer is Professor of Bioethics at Princeton University and founder of the non-profit organisation The Life You Can Save.

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WISDOM CORNER

- “ Face reality as it is, not as it was or as you wish it to be. ”
JACK WELCH
- “ Worry never robs tomorrow of its sorrow, it only saps today of its joy. ”
LEO BUSCAGLIA
- “ Imagination and fiction make up more than three quarters of our real life. ”
SIMONE WEIL

WORDSWORTH

Misomusist

Invention of this word is usually credited to the Czech novelist Milan Kundera, who described it like this in his book The Art Of The Novel in 1988: “To be without a feeling for art is no disaster. A person can live in peace without reading Proust or listening to Schubert. But the misomusist does not live in peace. He feels humiliated by the existence of something that is beyond him, and he hates it.” So a misomusist is not a passive ignorer of culture, but an active opponent of it. Presumably Milan Kundera coined the word in Czech, from which it was carried over into the English translation. He took it from the Greek misos, hatred, and mousa, learning (the word is also the source of the name of the nine muses of Greek and Roman mythology who presided over the arts and sciences). He cannot claim sole credit, however, for he was pre-empted by Sir Edward Dering more than three centuries ago.

FOCUS PRIVATISATION

DON’T BANK ON THIS PLEASE!

Why does the government of India want to sell the Public Sector Banks? Are they not serving the public purpose anymore? Will their profitability surely increase under private ownership, and who will apportion that profit? Will the depositor’s money be safer under private management? The government has a democratic duty to answer these questions before going ahead with its plan announced in the recent Budget - privatising two PSBs, besides the IDBI, this fiscal. Its privatisation obsession should not blind it to the private banks’ failures and the PSBs’ achievements.

The rapid branch network expansion is the foremost of achievement of banks’ nationalisation. By September 2020, the number of bank-branches has reached to 1,60,827 from a mere 8,187 before the bank nationalisation, in 1969.

In rural areas, the bank branches increased from a mere 1,443 in 1969 to 52,632 by September 2020, raising rural share from 17.6 per cent to 32.72 per cent. It is another matter that the rural share has fallen from 58.2 per cent peak of 1990 after the bank ‘reforms’.

The Scheduled banks’ outstanding credit has increased from ₹3,987 crore in 1969 to ₹1,07,04,649 crore by January 1, 2021 and the deposits have gone up from ₹3,035 crore to ₹1,47,26,753 crore (75.59 per cent of the GDP). The private banks’ deposits, as of March 2020, amounted to ₹40,40,424 crore (30.88 per cent share in total) against the PSU banks’ ₹90,43,443 crore (69.12 per cent). Their outstanding credit was ₹37,07,435 crore (36.79 per cent) against PSBs’ ₹63,71,042 crore (63.21 per cent).

The public sector banks’ coverage of rural areas was far better than their private counterparts. The PSBs (including RRBs) have 44,397 rural branches (84.35 per cent of total rural branches) whereas the private sector banks have only 8,235 rural branches with a 15.65 per cent rural share.

However, the present number of 52,000 rural branches, of both PSBs and private, against more



The right solution for correcting the functioning of the PSBs would be putting in place a better regulation and control mechanism. If the government finds flaws in the PSBs’ functioning it has every reason to correct them, but it should not throw the baby out with the bathwater

than six lakh villages, imply no bank branch in at least 87 per cent of the villages.

Also, the private banks are lagging in the deployment of rural ATMs with 6,112 (18.34 per cent) in total rural ATMs of 33,312, as of the end of 2020.

Turning to profits, the private banks can never match the PSBs in their profit earning in its true sense, not only because the public sector banks have higher risk-taking capacity but due to the dual nature of their profitability- social and commercial profits.

Social profit comprises, improving banking services accessibility in the unbanked areas and to the weaker sections of the society; this type of profit is intangible and measured in terms of the increase in incomes, output and employment in the country.

The very need for nationalisation arose due to the failure of the private sector in the area of commercial viability and the protection of depositors’ money, let alone any social profit. Many banks failed during British India. One prominent reason for their liquidation was combining trading activity with banking. The trading houses like Alexander and Co., and Ferguson and Co. set up the

banks at that time. The bad experience of banks’ failure and the suffering of the depositing public had led to the legislative ban of combining trade with banking. In other words, the opinion against corporates controlling banks was seminal even during those days.

After Independence too, the private banks’ experience was no good; 559 banks failed between 1947 and 1969.

The nationalised banks have bailed out the failing private banks. Twenty-five private banks were merged with the PSBs from 1969 to 2020 as per AIBEA’s compilation; the YES Bank’s bailout by the State Bank of India is the latest example.

Reverting to the social profit, three other achievements of PSBs, besides their spread in unbanked and rural areas, merit a mention here. One, they operate 97.2 per cent of 41.98 crore Jan-Dhan accounts in the country. Their share of these accounts in rural areas is still higher at 97.50 per cent against the 2.5 per cent share of the private banks.

Two, the PSBs (including RRBs) have bank-linked more than 80 lakh SHGs (78 per cent of the total 1.02 crore). The outstanding amount of SHG loans of these banks was

₹94,291 crore as of March 31, 2020 (87.25 per cent of the total ₹1.08 lakh crore) against the private banks’ share of a mere 7 per cent.

Three, more important than the preceding two or anything else is the PSBs’ support to farming. Their outstanding agriculture credit was ₹4,50,207 crore (86.6 per cent in total credit to agriculture) as of March 2020 against the private banks’ ₹72,893 crore (13.94 per cent).

Despite wielding higher social responsibility, the PSBs’ operating profits during the five years, 2015-16 to 2019-20 aggregated to ₹7,77,043 crore. The huge provisioning, ₹9,84,415 crore towards bad loans turned them red, ₹2,07,372 crore net losses.

The bank unions say that the loan default was willful- meaning those who had the capacity could evade the payment. And they argue that most of these bad loans belong to private corporates. The quantum of bad loans written off from 2001 to 2019 amounted to a whopping ₹6,94,037 crore. The NPAs, as can be seen from the economic survey 2020-21, are not exclusively generated in the PSBs. The NPAs, of private banks, up to March 2020 amounted to ₹2,05,848 crore against ₹6,87,317 in PSBs.

The loans have become bad due to the corporate customers’ default; the written-off sum of 50 corporate customers aggregates to ₹68,607 crore. The idea, therefore, of transferring the bank ownership to the loan defaulters makes no sense.

The right solution for correcting the functioning of the PSBs would be putting in place a better regulation and control mechanism. If the government finds flaws in the PSBs’ functioning it has every reason to correct them, but it should not throw the baby out with the bathwater. On the contrary, there is every reason and scope for the nationalisation of private banks, not the other way round if public and government interests converge.

The writer is a development economist and commentator on economic and social affairs.

SPECTRUM CLIMATE CRISIS

The mother of news stories



Jules Kortenhorst

OWING TO THE SHEER COMPLEXITY OF THE CLIMATE CHALLENGE, WE NEED EXPERIENCED, COMMITTED, AND KNOWLEDGEABLE JOURNALISTS COVERING ALL FACETS OF THE PROBLEM FULL-TIME

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

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In addressing climate change, “winning” slowly is the same as losing. We have only one chance to fix this problem before it becomes an existential threat, and the window for action is closing fast.

In addition to being time-sensitive, the climate challenge amplifies every other crisis we face, from the coronavirus pandemic to global inequality. Communicating its urgency in a clear, fact-based, and responsible manner thus has become crucial. Without hard-hitting, accurate, and compelling reporting and analysis of the problem, voters will not understand it, let alone demand solutions from the policymakers who can mobilise the resources needed to confront it.

Owing to the sheer complexity of the climate challenge, we need experienced, committed, and knowledgeable journalists covering all facets of the problem full-time. As an issue that will affect everything on the planet and all aspects of our own lives, climate change is not just some niche newsbeat. The transition to clean, carbon-neutral energy implies an overhaul of the entire global economy – a transformation that will affect how we work, consume, and care for our families.

Already, almost every important news story today must be understood within the context of the climate crisis, which is changing the rules of the game everywhere and for almost every area of life. The journalists best suited to cover the challenge thus will be “systems” thinkers, women and men who excel at drawing connections and then explaining them well. The task calls for a technological perspective, to trace the links between the electric grid, mobility, buildings, and industry, as well as an ecosystems perspective, to identify the links between extreme weather, crop failures, global supply chain disruptions, and financial risk.

Of course, many fine journalists already are covering the climate crisis. It is they who have spread public awareness of the issue and done the hard work of exposing the false and fraudulent arguments advanced by climate-change deniers and backed by the fossil-fuel industry. But there are still plenty of climate-related issues that warrant deeper coverage. When it comes to climate journalism, the more the better. As the Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg says, everyone is needed, and everyone is welcome.

Established journalists who focus on other topics need to understand how their areas of expertise fit into the climate challenge. Veteran climate reporters need to support

newer journalists, by “passing the mic,” as the climate journalist and activist Bill McKibben has done with his New Yorker column. And influential voices online – whether they are making videos on TikTok or building audiences through Substack or Clubhouse – need to use their platforms to spread the word. Against this background, the launch of Canary Media (www.canary-media.com), a new energy and climate media platform, comes right on time. Supported with seed funding from RMI, and featuring experienced journalists, Canary Media aims to be a leading independent newsroom at the forefront of the clean-energy transition.

In today’s media landscape, credible independent climate journalism is becoming more important by the day. The watchdog organisation Media Matters for America reports that corporate television coverage of climate change in the United States decreased by 53 per cent in 2020. Clean energy, a sector that is expected to receive \$11 trillion in investment by 2050, is still an informational void compared to other industries. Now more than ever, we need foundational public knowledge about clean energy – its business models, technologies, and the policy and regulatory issues it entails.

As awareness of the climate emergency continues to grow, support for climate journalism will need to grow with it. Without compelling and accessible coverage that reaches a broad global audience, the scale of the challenge – and of the opportunity it represents – will not be recognised in time, and the transformation we need will come too late. We need to cut our emissions by at least 50 per cent by 2030 to hit net-zero targets by 2050. Failing that, we will need to start preparing for worst-case climate scenarios. Human civilization itself will be at risk.

Business leaders who understand this are already moving toward the net-zero future, where they will secure a significant first-mover advantage. As a recent report from the World Economic Forum explains, fortunes will be made and lost according to who takes the climate challenge seriously.

We need more leaders to recognise the urgency of the crisis and the opportunities offered by the clean-energy transition. Effective climate journalism is an essential tool for building this understanding. The climate crisis is, and must remain, front-page news.

The writer is CEO of RMI.

©PROJECT SYNDICATE

Stop IPL

Sir, The Covid-19 situation has reached alarming proportions in many states, especially in Maharashtra. As part of the measures taken by the government to contain the spread of the deadly infection, the IPL tournament, which draws huge crowds, should also be suspended as a precautionary step to check the onslaught of the pandemic. No doubt there are large financial stakes involved, but concern about public health should receive top most priority in the present situation.

Bhaskar Roy, NEW DELHI

UP leads in vax drive

The state government has started a focussed vaccination drive for various professional groups from Thursday

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, April 8: Uttar Pradesh has taken a lead in vaccination drive by surpassing other states and setting a new record by vaccinating more than 5 lakh persons in a day.

According to the government spokesman, there was a sudden rise in the number of people coming for vaccinations and the total number of vaccinations April 5 were 5,01,599.

On April 5, due to the sudden rise in the number of vaccinations, Uttar Pradesh became the most vaccinated state. Considering the figures, a highest number of vaccine doses were given in the state April 5, leaving behind Maharashtra, Gujarat, West Bengal, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar.

According to the data released by the Union Health Ministry, on April 5, a total of 2,58,475 vaccine doses were given in Bihar; 3,24,934 in Gujarat; 2,61,067 in Madhya Pradesh; 4,74,017 in Maharashtra; 4,75,558 in Rajasthan; 4,11,562 in West Bengal with the maximum being 5,01,599 vaccinations in Uttar Pradesh.

The state government has started a focussed vaccination drive for various professional groups from Thursday. Covid-19 vaccination is being done for people who have



■ Due to the sudden rise in the number of vaccinations April 5 Uttar Pradesh became the most vaccinated state

■ Covid-19 vaccination is being done for people who have crossed the age of 45 years in the state

crossed the age of 45 years in the state. So far, 65,00,506 people have been given the first dose of vaccine and 11,67,323 people have been given the second dose of vaccine. Thus, a total of 76,67,829 people had been given vaccine doses till Wednesday.

To control the spread of coronavirus, 'village monitoring committees' and 'mohalla monitoring committees' have been reactivated in urban and rural areas.

The committees will identify people coming from other states, get them medically examined and then will take necessary action against them.

LOCKDOWN FEAR

Migrants leaving Guj amid Covid surge

LAST YEAR, THERE WAS A RUSH BECAUSE THE LOCKDOWN WAS IMPOSED ALL OF A SUDDEN. THUS, AS A PRECAUTION, MIGRANTS ARE RETURNING BACK HOME AS THEY FEEL THAT TRANSPORT MAY NOT BE AVAILABLE AFTER SOME TIME

AGENCIES

Ahmedabad, April 8: Fearing another lockdown in the wake of a sudden spike in COVID-19 cases in Gujarat, migrant workers and their families have started leaving Surat and Ahmedabad, two of the state's most severely affected cities.

However, government officials Thursday claimed the number of those leaving was very low and people cannot be stopped from moving from one place to another. "There are no formal reports which suggest that a large number of migrants are leaving. However, we have asked district authorities to ensure that workers do not face any trouble," state Additional Chief Secretary, Labour and Employment, Vipul Mitta told PTI.

Since there is no lockdown and trains are also running, people are free to move anywhere in the country, he said. Mitta said though some people are going back to their native places, "it's not happening on large scale".

In Ahmedabad, a number of migrant workers, mostly hailing from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, have been rushing to the city's main Kalupur railway station to travel to their na-



tive places, said Yogesh Mishra, member of the Zonal Rail Users Consultative Committee.

The migrants fear they would be stuck here if the government imposes another lockdown, Mishra said, adding that the waiting list for reserved seats in trains is also increasing with each passing day.

"The Gujarat High Court recently suggested that a lockdown should be imposed. This has created panic among the migrant workers, who suffered a lot last year due to the sudden lockdown and travel restrictions," he said.

Now, migrants are in a hurry

to reach their native places, said Mishra. "People from UP are leaving in large numbers, mainly because they don't want to miss the panchayat polls, starting from April 15. Many have also planned marriage ceremonies, which were cancelled last year," he said.

People are extra cautious this time and want to leave before any travel restrictions are announced, he added.

In Surat, migrant workers belonging to UP, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Jharkhand have been leaving in luxury buses, but their number is not very large, Surat

CENTRAL TEAM VISITS SURAT

Surat: In the wake of a sudden spike in COVID-19 cases, a 12-member central team visited Surat in Gujarat Thursday and collected information about the vaccination process and the number of patients being treated in the district, a senior official said. The team comprised experts from the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi, Pune-based National Institute of Virology and the Union health ministry. Surat Collector Dhaval Patel told reporters that the situation is 'serious' this time as compared to last year, and the best way is to stay indoors and maintain social distance.

Luxury Bus Operators Association president Dinesh Andhan said.

"People from Saurashtra are not leaving. It's the migrants from other states who are leaving Surat city due to panic.

They suffered a lot last year due to the lockdown and unavailability of transport. Many were forced to walk to their native places last year," Andhan said.



Eunuchs pouring milk in Yamuna river performing Puja in Mathura, Uttar Pradesh

UNI PHOTO

Gujarat gets 15 lakh new vaccine doses

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, April 8: Amid complaints of a shortage of the COVID-19 vaccine in some parts of Gujarat, the state government Thursday said it has received 15 lakh new doses from the Centre.

While the fresh stock of the vaccine was received Wednesday, the state government is already in talks with the Centre for getting another batch, said Deputy Chief

Minister Nitin Patel. "The Centre has sent 15 lakh new doses of the coronavirus vaccine just yesterday. It will be distributed to various districts as per requirements."

"This new stock will run for four days. Now, no one will be turned away due to a shortage," Patel told reporters.

On an average, around 1.7 lakh eligible beneficiaries are covered daily under the ongoing vaccina-

tion drive in Gujarat. Till now, 71.86 lakh persons have been given the first dose of the vaccine, said a health department release.

Patel visited the main civil hospital campus in the city to review the patient management and availability of beds.

To accommodate more patients, the state government has decided to convert the newly-built 418-bed kidney hospital in the campus as a dedicated COVID-19 hospital, said

Patel, adding another 200 beds will be added in the coming days. He said over 1,000 beds in different government-run hospitals in the city will also be made available for COVID-19 patients soon.

To ease the burden on hospitals, Patel said the government is mulling to make use of large community halls for patients who requires nothing except Remdesivir injection, a key drug in COVID-19 treatment.

Mukhtar Ansari may lose his Assembly membership

Ansari, in 2019, was shifted to Punjab and has not taken part in Assembly proceedings thereafter

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, April 8: The Yogi Adityanath government in Uttar Pradesh is preparing to terminate the UP Assembly membership of Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) MLA and mafia don Mukhtar Ansari.

Ansari represents the Mau constituency in the UP assembly. UP Parliamentary Affairs Minister Suresh Khanna told reporters that a legal opinion is being sought in the matter. "If any member remains absent



from the House for over 60 days, then in that case, his membership can be cancelled as per the rules. If someone moves a petition asking for cancellation of his membership then the government will decide on the future course of action," he said. Assembly Speaker Hriday Narain Dixit also said that the matter was under consideration. Ansari was lodged in Punjab's Rupnagar jail since January 2019 in connec-

tion with an extortion case and was brought back to Banda jail Wednesday following a Supreme Court order. He has been in jail since October 2005 but has been taking part in the legislative proceedings with the permission of the court.

He also won the elections in 2007, 2012 and 2017 from inside the jail. However, after the Yogi Adityanath government came to power, it strongly opposed the move to grant permission to jailed legislators to participate in legislative proceedings.

Ansari, in 2019, was shifted to Punjab and has not taken part in assembly proceedings thereafter. The BSP MLA is facing 52 cases in the state and elsewhere, and 15 of them are in the trial stage.

New wheat varieties high in nutrition, low on sugar

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Prayagraj (Uttar Pradesh), April 8: A genetic scientist at Sam Higginbottom University of Agriculture, Technology and Science (SHUATS), in Prayagraj has developed two new varieties of wheat that are very high in nutrition, need less water, are resistant to extremes of weather and also has a very low sugar content.

Mahabal Ram, 79, professor emeritus, has written to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath requesting him to ensure more cultivation and wider use of these nutritive-rich super wheat varieties that have already been notified by Central Variety Release Committee of the Union ministry of agriculture and are presently under limited cultivation in the state.

The two semi-dwarf high yielding varieties -- SHIATS-W6 and SHUATS-W10 -- are good for diabetics also since they have such low sugar content that they can be



considered sugar-free.

According to Prof. Mahabal Ram, 79, "The two wheat varieties offer high yield and have higher protein, iron, fibre content while the sugar is below detection limit. They are ideal for a state like Uttar Pradesh which is still battling malnutrition and can survive extreme climate conditions like heavy rain and dry summers with high temperature."

The agro-scientist further said that these wheat varieties can be provided to the poor through the

public distribution system as well to battle malnutrition.

The two varieties are a boon amid growing concerns over falling farm output due to rise in temperature and unpredictable rainfall.

Prof. Ram, an eminent geneticist and plant breeder, said the State Variety Release Committee, Lucknow, has also formally released these two varieties for cultivation and thousands of farmers in 11 districts, including Prayagraj, Kaushambi, Pratapgarh, Fatehpur, Mirzapur,

Court permits ASI survey at Kashi Vishwanath temple site

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Varanasi, April 8: A Varanasi court has ordered an archaeological survey of the Kashi Vishwanath Temple-Gyanvapi mosque site.

The court, Thursday, gave its approval for survey of Kashi Vishwanath temple and Gyanvapi Mosque complex by Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). The court further directed the Uttar Pradesh government to bear the cost of the survey. The ASI is likely to set up a five-member team that will visit the campus soon.

The court order came on a petition filed by a local lawyer Vijay Shankar Rastogi, who had demanded that the land entailing the Gyanvapi Mosque be restored to Hindus. The petition was filed in December 2019 on behalf of Swayambhu Jyotirlinga Bhagwan Vishweshwar in the court of civil judge. The petitioner requested for a survey of the entire Gyanvapi compound by the ASI. He had filed the petition as the 'next friend' of Swayambhu Jyotirlinga Bhagwan Vishweshwar. In January 2020, Anjuman Intezamia Masjid Committee had filed an objection against the petition.

The Gyanvapi mosque management committee had opposed the petition.

127 Bihar bonded labourers rescued from UP brick kiln

THE RESCUED PERSONS INCLUDE 67 CHILDREN

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Aligarh (Uttar Pradesh), April 8: Following a complaint with the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), the Aligarh district administration has rescued 127 bonded labourers from a brick kiln located in the Bansali village.

The rescued persons included 67 children. All the rescued persons have been sent home to Bihar's Nawada. According to reports, one of the labourers, last month, had lodged an FIR for alleged sexual assault of a minor girl by the brick kiln owner's relative.

Though the suspect was arrested and remanded to judicial custody, the labourers said they wanted to return to their homes as they said they were being abused and felt unsafe. Circle officer, Iglas, Mohsin Khan, confirmed the sexual assault incident and said that the same was reported on the day of Holi.

The police had arrested the 20-year-old man accused for committing the crime. Sub-Divisional Magistrate (Iglas) Kuldev Singh said that a 3-member committee was formed by the district magistrate to inquire the allegations and during inquiry, it was found that the labourers wanted to go back to their homes in Bihar.

A bus was arranged for them and they left Tuesday. Officials said that each labourer was being paid Rs 400 per thousand bricks that he or she made. Each labourer made around 2,000 bricks in a day. The labourers had taken an advance of

The labour department of Bihar is also being informed so that the rehabilitation of the rescued people, after completing the summary trial in the SDM court, can be done and they can be given prescribed compensation

Rs 25,000 each before coming to work here. Meanwhile, the owner of the brick kiln named Sri Radhe Eit Udyog, Munni Devi, and her

son Jitendra Singh have been booked under sections 16, 17 of the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act 1976 and can be punished up to three years of imprisonment, along with Rs 2,000 fine, by the sub-divisional magistrate.

The owner will also be booked for non-maintenance of records of bonded labourers. In addition, there was also violation of inter-state migrant workmen Act, 1979, under which a licence is required for employing more than five workers from other states. The labour department of Bihar is also being informed so that the rehabilitation of the rescued people, after completing the summary trial in the SDM court, can be done and they can be given prescribed compensation.



of the day quote

A lockdown cannot be a solution. There is a need to create at least some atmosphere of fear and convince people (to wear masks)



SADANAND SHET TANAVADE | GOA BJP PRESIDENT

Now, when the COVID-19 infection is increasing, we always think that the younger generation of our young country should be prepared to manage the future challenges like they always did



BHUPESH BAGHEL | CHHATTISGARH CHIEF MINISTER

The call for protest was by farmer leaders, I'm not a member of farmer union, no call was given by me to go to Red Fort. There is no evidence that I have mobilised the crowd



DEEP SIDHU | ACTOR-TURNED-ACTIVIST

SHORT TAKES

Man lynched for entering temple

Rudrapur (Uttarakhand): A 29-year-old man was beaten to death by a mob that accused him of entering a pandal where a religious ceremony was in progress in an inebriated condition, police said Thursday. The incident occurred on Tuesday afternoon near Durga Mandir in Udham Singh Nagar. The victim, Johnny Sagar, kept lying on the road outside the pandal, writhing in pain for nearly three hours in a semi-conscious state but no one came to his rescue, Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) D S Kunwar said, citing CCTV footage of the spot.

Terrorist aide held, heroin seized

Srinagar: Police have seized nine kilograms of heroin worth ₹60 crore from an overground worker of militants in Karnah area of Kupwara district in Jammu and Kashmir, an official said Thursday. "On information, police have busted a Pakistan sponsored narco-terror module and arrested one terrorist associate," a police spokesperson said. He said the arrested person has been identified as Mukhtar Husain Shah, Panjtaran in Karnah. Nine kilograms of heroin, worth ₹60 crore was seized from his possession.

12-year-old boy sodomised

Muzaffarnagar (UP): A 12-year-old boy was allegedly sodomised by two men here, police said Thursday. According to a complaint lodged by the minor's father, the two men took the boy to a secluded place Wednesday and allegedly sodomised him. The accused also threatened the boy with dire consequences if he told anyone about the incident, police said. Based on the complaint, a case was registered at Civil Lines Police Station and one of the two men was arrested.

Hooch tragedy: 4 cops suspended

Patna: At least four policemen in Bihar were suspended Thursday in connection with the hooch tragedy in Nawada district March 29, in which 15 persons had died and 4 others lost their eyesight. Nawada SP DS Savlaram has confirmed the development, saying that ASI Devendra Kumar, ASI Sanjay Kumar, Head Constable Ratan Rajak and Constable Mukesh Kumar Singh were found guilty during the SIT probe in connection with the incident.



Farmers will not go back home till these laws are repealed. They talk of coronavirus but we have told the government that they should not treat this stir like Shaheen Bagh

RAKESH TIKAIT | BKU LEADER

TRY ARTIFICIAL RAIN TO DOUSE WILDFIRES: COURT TO U'KHAND GOVT

The Uttarakhand High Court has asked the state government to find out the possibility of using artificial rain to douse forest fires raging in various parts of the state. The court further directed the state that the forest fires be extinguished in two weeks



RAFALE DEAL

Dassault Aviation rejects fresh allegations



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 8: French aerospace major Dassault Aviation on Thursday rejected fresh allegations of corruption in the Rafale fighter jet deal with India, saying no violations were reported in the frame of the contract.

The assertion by the manufacturer of the Rafale jets came days after French publication 'Mediapart', citing an investigation by the country's anti-corruption agency, reported that Dassault Aviation had paid about one million Euros to an Indian middleman.

"Numerous controls are carried out by official organisations, including the French Anti Corruption Agency. No violations were reported, notably in the frame of the contract with India for the acquisition of 36 Rafales," a Dassault Aviation spokesperson said.

The official said Dassault Aviation reiterated that it acts in strict compliance with the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) Anti Bribery Convention and national laws.

"Since the early 2000s, Dassault Aviation has implemented strict internal procedures to prevent corruption, guaranteeing the integrity, ethics and reputation of the company in its industrial and commercial relations," the spokesperson said.

26 Covid-19 vax centres in Mumbai out of doses

DOSES IN ANOTHER 45 CENTRES ARE LIKELY TO RUN OUT BY FRIDAY, SAID ADDITIONAL MUNICIPAL COMMISSIONER SURESH KAKANI

AGENCIES

Mumbai, April 8: At least 26 of the 120 vaccination centres in Mumbai have already run out of COVID-19 vaccine doses. Vaccine stocks at another 20 centres are expected to dry up by Thursday. Doses in another 25 centres are likely to run out by Friday, said Additional Municipal Commissioner Suresh Kakani.

If more doses are not supplied at the earliest, all vaccination centres in Mumbai will soon run out of doses of COVID-19 vaccines.

This comes at a time when parts of the country, including Maharashtra, are witnessing a second wave of coronavirus infections. And Maharashtra happens to be the worst-hit state.

Out of 120 designated COVID-19 vaccination centres in Mumbai, 73 are private medical institutions



while the remaining are government-run hospitals.

Data indicates that vaccination centres in Maharashtra's Sangli, Satara, Gondia and Chandrapur

have also run out of doses.

On Wednesday, Maharashtra Health Minister Rajesh Tope had said Maharashtra government's stock of doses of Covid-19 vaccines

There are 120 COVID-19 vaccination centres in Mumbai

Centres in Sangli, Satara, Gondia and Chandrapur have run out of doses

Dr Harsh Vardhan has denied claims made by Maharashtra Health Minister over lack in supply

will last for only three more days.

Eligible recipients are being turned back from vaccination centres owing to lack of doses, Tope had told the media.

"Fourteen lakh doses are available with us now which would last three days. We need 40 lakh vaccine doses every week. We can then administer 6 lakh doses every day in a week. The doses we are getting are not

Narcotic offences have deadly impact on society: SC

Apex Court upholds 15 years imprisonment awarded to person found in possession of 1 Kg heroin



AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 8: In a landmark judgement, the Supreme Court of India has dismissed an appeal challenging a judgment passed by the Special Court convicting the accused for the offence punishable under Section 21 of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985, which talks about the punishment for contravention in relation to manufactured drugs and preparations.

A divisional bench comprising Justice DY Chandrachud and Justice MR Shah noted, "It has a deadly impact on the society as a whole... the interest of the society as a whole is also required to be taken in consideration."

In the case, the appellant was found to be in possession of 1 kg heroin which is four times higher than the minimum of the commercial quantity, i.e. 250 grams as per the NDPS Act. The Special Court sentenced the accused to undergo 15 years of imprisonment and also imposed a fine of ₹2 Lakh, and to undergo imprisonment for further one year in default of payment of fine.

The Apex Court observed that while imposing the punishment higher than the minimum term of imprisonment or amount of fine, the Court may take into account such factors as it may deem fit and also the factors enumerated in Section 32B of the Act.

The court relied on the judgment of Supreme Court in the matter of "Rafiq Qureshi vs. Narcotic Control Bureau, Eastern Zonal Unit", (2019) 6 SCC 492 and held that quantity of the substance with which accused is charged is a relevant factor, which can be taken into consideration while fixing the quantum of punishment.

The court further observed that the submission made on behalf of the accused that the main supplier has not been apprehended/arrested and the appellant is a carrier only cannot be a ground to interfere with the sentence imposed by the Special Court confirmed by the High Court, as the accused was not only found to be in possession of 1 kg heroin but also sold it to the informant.

The court dismissed the appeal, and while referring to the statement of objects and reasons for enactment of NDPS Act, observed that while striking balance between the mitigating and aggravating circumstances, public interest, and impact on the society as a whole will always be tilted in favour of suitable higher punishment.

The court said, it should be borne in mind that in a murder case, the accused commits murder of one or two persons, while those persons, who are dealing in narcotic drugs are instruments in causing death or in inflicting death blow to number of innocent young victims who are vulnerable.

IT'S SPRING



Tulips in full bloom at Asia's largest tulip garden along the banks of Dal Lake on the foothills of Zabarwan mountains in Srinagar, Thursday

PTI PHOTO

BENGAL ASSEMBLY POLLS

High decibel campaign ends for Phase IV polling

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, April 8: Campaigning for the high-decibel fourth phase of polling, for 44 Assembly seats scheduled in five districts of West Bengal April 10, ended at 5pm Thursday.

A total 1,15,81,022 voters including 58,82,514 men, 56,98,218 women and 290 members of the third gender, will decide the fate of 373 candidates in Friday's polling in constituencies spread over Howrah (Part II), South 24 Parganas (Part III), Hooghly (Part II) in south Bengal and in north Bengal's Alipurduar and Coochbehar.

The polling will be held between 7AM to 6.30PM in 15,940 polling stations. At stake are nine assembly constituencies in Howrah, eleven in South 24 Parganas, five in Alipurduar, nine in Coochbehar and ten in Hooghly.

Among those whose fate will be decided at the hustings are former Bengal Ranji captain Manoj Tiwary, TMC's candidate from Shibpur, state education minister and sitting MLA from Behala Paschim Partha Chatterjee and central minister Babul Supriyo of the BJP who has locked horns with state sports



Samajwadi Party MP Jaya Bachchan during an election campaign in support of TMC candidate from Shibpur constituency Manoj Tiwary in Howrah, Thursday

PTI PHOTO

minister Arup Biswas for the Tollygunge seat.

Ratna Chatterjee, wife of former city mayor and fire minister Sovan Chatterjee, who left Mamata Banerjee's TMC to join the BJP for a short period, is facing BJP's actress-turned politician Payel Sarkar for the Behala Purbo seat.

Former state Forest minister, Rajib Banerjee, who moved to the BJP recently is contesting from Domjur while BJP MP and actress Locket Chatterjee is contesting the polls

from Chinsurah in Hooghly district.

The Sanyukta Morcha comprising Left front, Congress and ISF has fielded mostly young faces for the fourth phase of polling. CPI(M) leader Sujana Chakraborty is one of the few seniors fielded by the Left for this phase of the elections.

BJP's start campaigners included PM Narendra Modi, Union Minister Amit Shah, party president JP Nadda, Smriti Irani, UP chief minister Yogi Adityanath besides, Bollywood star of yesteryears

Mithun Chakraborty who crisscrossed the state trying to build up support for the saffron party.

The BJP leadership targeted the TMC government, its supremo and chief minister Mamata Banerjee, her nephew Abhishek Banerjee accusing them of corruption and "appeasement politics" and claimed that their "khela shesh hobe" (game will be over).

Modi and Shah promised voters early implementation of Ayushman Bharat scheme, PM Kisan Samman Nidhi as well as implementation of the 7th Pay Commission scales for state government employees if voted to power in West Bengal.

Banerjee, her nephew and party MP Abhishek were among star campaigners for the TMC who stepped up their attack on the BJP-led Central government over recent hike in prices of gas, petrol, diesel, besides plans to disinvest in a large number of central government run PSUs.

Banerjee also accused Central police forces of harassing and intimidating voters in Bengal and urged voters to "gherao" them in case securitymen prevented them from voting.

Rise in prices of pulses, veggies upsets kitchen budgets

WITH THE IMPORT OF EDIBLE OIL BECOMING MORE EXPENSIVE AND DIESEL PRICES RISING IN THE COUNTRY, ITEMS OF EVERYDAY CONSUMPTION HAVE BECOME EVEN MORE EXPENSIVE

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, April 8: The dizzy rise in the prices of cereals, pulses, vegetables, fruits and several eatables has increased the difficulties of the common man in the middle of a resurgent pandemic.

With the import of edible oil becoming more expensive and diesel prices rising in the country, items of everyday consumption have become even more expensive. The problems of the common man have been further compounded by the resurgence of COVID-19 cases in the country.

At the nation's multi-commodity exchange, the price of crude

palm oil has risen by 74% in the last one year. Considered to be less expensive than other oils, the price of palm oil has now even surpassed soya oil.

Explains Lakshmi Chand Aggarwal of the Central Organisation For Oil Industry and Trade (COAT): "In the absence of a reduction in import tax of edible oil, even mustard oil prices will cross ₹200 per litre. Not just edible oil, even the prices of pulses are on the rise."

Responding to a question, Leena Nandan, Secretary, Department of Consumer Affairs, says the situation is being closely monitored. "Steps are being taken the keep a leash over eatable prices. New import



quotas have been issued and efforts are being made to raise the output

of edible oil in the country." The point to be noted is that the

production of food grains, vegetables and fruits in the country has grown considerably during the coronavirus pandemic. The output of foodgrains and horticultural crops is likely to again break records. Despite this, the budget of homemakers has been upset by rising prices.

As far as vegetables are concerned, with the departure of winter, the arrival of vegetables has led to a slight reduction in prices, but with the mercury rising along with the return of the pandemic, fruits are in short supply. So, the chances of fruit prices decreasing are very less.

Suresh Aggarwal of the All India Dal Mill Association says the de-

mand for pulses has increased even as the difficulties in importing pulses are continuing. Commodities experts say whenever vegetable prices go up, the demand for pulses also goes up.

With the supply of wheat increasing, its market price has diminished for sure, but the price of wheat flour has still not gone down.

Neetu Gupta, a resident of Yamuna Vihar, says that rice which was priced between ₹50 and ₹60 earlier has risen to ₹80 and wheat flour, which was earlier selling for ₹25 is now selling at ₹30 to ₹35 per kg.

The rise in prices of eatables has sent the budget of the kitchen for a toss.

of the day quote

Elections are taking place in Assam, Kerala, Puducherry, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal. I request the people in these places to vote in record numbers, particularly the young voters

NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER

Vaccinations have been 30 to 40 per cent less in central government hospitals, that is why Delhi's average has come down

SATYENDRA JAIN | DELHI HEALTH MINISTER

Never before has the country seen dirty politics being played out in such a manner, like indulging in character assassination using investigation agencies and IT cells of political parties

SANJAY ROUT | SHIV SENA LEADER

SHORT TAKES

Gunfight breaks out in Shopian

Srinagar: An encounter broke out between the terrorists and security forces in South Kashmir's Shopian district Thursday, officials said. The gunfight took place after a joint team of the police and the Army cordoned off the area and launched a search operation on the basis of specific information about the presence of terrorists. As the security forces zeroed in on the spot where terrorists were hiding they came under a heavy volume of fire that triggered the encounter.

Five killed in explosion in UP

Bijnor (UP): Five persons were killed and four others were critically injured in an explosion in an illegal cracker factory in Bijnor district of Uttar Pradesh. The incident took place Thursday afternoon in Bakshiwalla area in the house of one Yusuf, who was running a cracker unit in his house. The explosion was so severe that a part of the house was completely destroyed and the bodies of five labourers were buried under the debris.

Two-year-old girl raped in Ghaziabad

Ghaziabad: A 14-year-old boy with speech impairment was apprehended from Loni here for allegedly raping a two-year-old girl. The toddler is undergoing treatment at the GTB Hospital in Delhi. Police said the boy was playing with the baby on the terrace of her home and her mother was downstairs when he allegedly raped her.

13 yrs after Tata's ouster, Singur seeks industrialisation

Battle lines have been redrawn in Singur, which along with Nandigram shook the foundations of the mighty 34-year-old Left Front regime and propelled Mamata Banerjee to power

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Singur, April 8: Thirteen years after a farmers' stir put Singur on India's political map, having forced the exit of Tata's Nano car project, industrialisation has emerged as the main poll plank in this constituency as the land, for which swords were crossed, has been rendered infertile.

Battle lines have been redrawn in Singur, a place that along with Nandigram shook the foundations

Maharashtra fit case for President's Rule: BJP

The BJP has claimed that two more ministers will quit the government soon



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 8: Maharashtra BJP chief Chandrakant Patil Thursday claimed two more state ministers will have to resign in 15 days and that the state was a "fit case for President's rule".

His remarks came a day after suspended cop Sachin Waze in a letter claimed former state Home Minister Anil Deshmukh had demanded Rs2 crore from him to continue his service in the Mumbai Police and another minister Anil Parab asked him to collect money from contractors.

Anil Deshmukh, a senior NCP leader, resigned as state Home Minister Monday after the Bombay High Court ordered a CBI probe into corruption allegations levelled against him by former Mumbai police commissioner Param Bir Singh. Anil Parab, a Shiv Sena leader, has denied the allegations.

Talking to reporters in Mumbai Thursday, Patil said, "What is in store in future is the common man's guess". "Two state ministers will have to resign in another 15 days. Some people will go to court against these ministers and then they will have to quit," Patil claimed without naming anyone or elaborating further. Chandrakant Patil said there



Getting your vehicle refueled is no less than an exam due to higher central government taxes, then why the Prime Minister does not discuss it? Discussions should be held on the issue of expenses too

RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

is a possibility that the allegations against Transport Minister Anil Parab may also be clubbed with the probe into charges against Anil Deshmukh.

"Maharashtra is a fit case for President's rule," the BJP leader said, adding his party was not making the demand. He said from what is going on in the state, experts should explain what else is needed to impose the President's rule.

"If you want to blame the Centre for everything, why not give the state administration to the central government?" he asked.

Patil alleged that Anil Deshmukh was a "hypocrite" as he had moved the Supreme Court against the Bombay HC order for a CBI probe into the allegations against him.

"In the resignation letter, he (Deshmukh) says he is quitting to facilitate a free and fair probe, and the next day he moves the Supreme Court against the probe," Patil said.

The BJP leader said the MVA government (comprising the Shiv Sena, NCP and Congress) in Maharashtra defended Waze so aggressively during the state's budget session that the Assembly had to be adjourned nine times.

"Now you don't trust him," he added. Patil alleged that the MVA government was indulging in an "or-

CBI probe to go on: SC

New Delhi: An independent probe is warranted in the matter of former Mumbai Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh's corruption allegations against former Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh since both occupied such high positions in the government, the Supreme Court today said. It refused to interfere with a Bombay High Court order directing a CBI investigation into the charges, observing that the two persons involved were working closely until they fall apart. The comments from a Supreme Court bench headed by Justice SK Kaul came on an appeal by the Maharashtra government and Deshmukh to stay the High Court order. "The allegations are extremely serious and the personas involved are the Commissioner and Home Minister. In this scenario, will it not be a CBI case?" the court asked. "Anil Deshmukh did not resign initially (following the allegations being made public). He did so only after the High Court directed a probe. It means the Home Minister was clinging on to office," the top court said, highlighting that allegations were made by a person who was the minister's right-hand person.

ganised crime".

"If the evidence comes out on paper, provisions of the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA) will have to be invoked," he claimed. Talking to reporters in Nagpur, senior BJP leader Devendra Fadnis said the claims made by Waze in his letter are serious and there is a need for deliberation on it.

"The things that are coming out and happening are not good for the reputation of Maharashtra and the state police."

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, April 8: Assam writer Sikha Sarma was arrested on the charge of sedition and sent to judicial custody Wednesday for her alleged comment in the social media on security personnel massacred by Maoists in Chhattisgarh, police said.

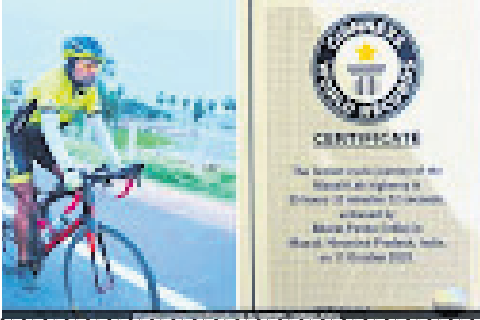
Sikha Sarma had April 5, two days after the brutal killing of the security personnel, allegedly posted on Facebook: "Salaried people cannot be termed martyrs if they die during duty. In that case, an electricity department employee will also be a martyr if he dies due to electrocution. Media do not make the people emotional."

The post had stirred controversy with over 11,000 comments and at least 1,600 shares in Facebook.

The police registered a case against her under Sections 124A (sedition), 294A (keeping lottery office), 500 (defamation) and 506 (criminal intimidation) along with

INDIAN ARMY OFFICER BREAKS 2 GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS

Indian Army's Lieutenant Colonel Bharat Pannu has earned two Guinness World Records for his fastest solo cycling feats from October last year, said officials Thursday



BJP leader Mithun Chakraborty during a roadshow in support of party candidate Babul Supriyo ahead of the fourth phase of West Bengal Assembly polls in Kolkata, Thursday

Classes 10, 12 students want board exams cancelled

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 8: Amid a surge in COVID-19 cases, over one lakh students of Classes 10 and 12 have signed petitions urging the government to either cancel board exams scheduled to be held in May or conduct them in online mode.

The hashtag "cancelboardexams2021" has been trending on Twitter for the past two days.

However, both the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) and Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE) have said that adequate safety arrangements are being made for students and all COVID-19 guidelines will be followed during the exams.

"The situation in India is getting worse day by day. When there were only a few cases in the country, they cancelled the remaining board exams and now when the cases are at a peak they are planning to open schools. We urge the edu-



cation minister to look into this matter and cancel all examinations to be held this year as students are already under a lot of stress," a petition on Change.Org said.

Divya Garg, a class 10 student, on Twitter urged the government to postpone the exams for at least a month and then take a further review based on the number of cases. "The students have already faced a lot of problems till now in this pan-

dem. Classes were held online so the exams should also be held online or students should be promoted via internal assessment marks," another user tweeted.

Usually, practical exams are conducted in January and written exams begin in February and conclude in March. However, the exams were delayed and are scheduled to be held in May-June in view of the pandemic.

Night curfew imposed in Noida, Ghaziabad

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Noida/Ghaziabad (UP), April 8: Amid a surge in COVID-19 cases, night curfew has been imposed in Uttar Pradesh's Gautam Buddha Nagar and Ghaziabad neighbouring Delhi, the two district authorities' orders said Thursday.

The restrictions will be in force from 10 pm to 5 am till April 17 from Thursday night, the orders said.

The movement of essential goods or commodities and medical and other essential services, however, will be exempted from the night curfew restrictions, the orders issued by the Ghaziabad and Gautam Buddha Nagar district magistrates said.

All government and private educational institutes (except medical, paramedical and nursing colleges), including coaching centres, shall be barred from holding physical classes till April 17 in the two districts.



All exams, including practicals, however, shall be held according to the schedule and are exempted from this order.

Gautam Buddha Nagar DM Suhas LY said, "There shall be an intensive enforcement of masks and other anti-Covid protocols in public places including workplaces, by police and incident commanders and by departments concerned."

Ghaziabad DM Ajay Shankar Pandey said, "The night curfew from 10 pm to 5 am will be imposed from tonight till April 17 to efficiently check the spread of the COVID-19 in Ghaziabad."

The Central and state government officials, medical staff will remain exempt from the night restrictions. Pregnant women and those in need of medical help too are exempted, the orders said.



of the mighty 34-year-old Left Front regime and propelled Mamata Banerjee to power in 2011, with TMC's sitting MLA Rabinranath Bhattacharya - a front-runner of the anti-land acquisition protest-shifting his allegiance to the BJP.

The ruling camp has field Bhattacharya's former associate, Becharam Manna, from the seat.

Farmers, who had been handed over the land parcels that were initially acquired for the Tata proj-

ect, now depend on government doles and petty jobs to make ends meet. Many of them feel betrayed as the TMC government failed to keep its promise of turning their arid plots cultivable.

Ironically, both the TMC and the BJP have promised industrialisation in Singur this election, having got a whiff of local sentiments, with 'Master Moshai' (the teacher) - as 89-year-old Bhattacharya is commonly referred to - and TMC can-

didate Manna crossing swords in the area over the issue.

The CPI (M)'s Young Turk, Srijan Bhattacharya, however, hopes that he would have the last laugh in the agrarian constituency, where his party desperately seeks to recover its lost ground.

Rabinranath Bhattacharya, once the eyes and ears of Mamata Banerjee's Singur movement, said, "We were never against industry; we were against forcible land acquisition. Somehow, things went out of control. The people here now want industry. If the BJP comes to power, we will work to bring investments in the area."

Manna, who is trying his best to keep the TMC flag flying in the constituency, said agro-based industries are best suited for the place.

"A few agro-based industries have already come up in Singur. The TMC dispensation had been putting in efforts to make this area a major hub of agro-industries in

the near future," he claimed.

Srijan, the 28-year-old firebrand student leader, mocked both Bhattacharya and Manna over their assertions and said the TMC and the BJP are only repeating what the Left Front had said 15 years ago.

"Both of them are shedding crocodile tears, having sensed the mood of the people. We had missed the bus back then. Only the Left, however, can change things for better," the SFI state secretary said.

Singur - once known for multiple crop farming - hogged the lime-light after Tata Motors set its sight on the area to build its cheapest car manufacturing unit, Nano, in 2006. The Left Front government had acquired 997.11 acres along National Highway 2 and handed it over to the company.

Leading from the front, the then opposition leader and TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee had called for a 26-day hunger strike, demanding the return of 347 acres that were ap-

parently forcibly acquired.

The TMC, which had a strong support base in the area with Bhattacharya as the sitting MLA, spearheaded a mass movement against the alleged acquisition.

Despite numerous meetings and consultations between the TMC and the Left Front government, no solution was reached, and Tatas eventually moved out of Singur and built its plant in Gujarat's Sanand. Land acquired for the project was subsequently returned to locals in 2016.

The Mamata Banerjee government, over the last few years, however, failed to turn the barren tracts fertile as it involves huge expenditure, and many farmers ended up selling their plots.

According to agricultural experts, with concrete pillars and cement slabs embedded in the land, at least seven to eight inches of topsoil will have to be removed to make the plots in Singur cultivable.

international

of the day quote

After careful deliberation and discussions with my family, I have decided to step aside as leader of the 4G (fourth-generation) team, so that a younger leader who will have a longer runway can take over



The terrorists have been expelled from Palma. We do not intend to proclaim victory because we are in an ongoing fight against terrorism, but we are sure that if we are united, we will win



The very dangerous situation of the disease in recent days has led to us losing a number of compatriots. Yet many of us still cannot say no to invitations to parties, weddings and funerals



SHORT TAKES

IS releases 46 people

Damascus: The Islamic State (IS) has released 46 people out of the 59 the terror group abducted 24 hours ago in the Syrian desert region, a war monitor reported. The IS militants Wednesday released 46 and kept 13 people in captivity after capturing them in the desert region in the eastern countryside of Hama province, Xinhua news agency quoted the UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights as saying. The 13 people include police officers, the watchdog group added.

8K killed by landmines

Sanaa: Landmines laid by the Houthi group during the years-long civil war in Yemen killed nearly 8,000 people so far, state-run news agency Saba reported. According to the Saba news agency, the mines and explosives planted by the Houthi militia caused a major humanitarian disaster in Yemen, killing more than 8,000 people, including children and women, since the beginning of the war in September 2014, reports Xinhua news agency.

Indonesia floods death toll at 138

Jakarta: The death toll from the floods and landslides triggered by tropical cyclone Seroja in Indonesia's East Nusa Tenggara province has increased to 138, the National Disaster Management Agency said. The agency's head Doni Monardo said that the deaths were reported in the districts of East Flores (67), Alor (25), Lembata (32), Kupang (5), Malaka (4), Sabu Raijua (2), and one each in Ende, Kupang city, and Ngada, reports Xinhua news agency.

32 sentenced to life imprisonment

Ankara: A Turkish court has sentenced 32 people, including former soldiers, to life imprisonment for their involvement in the 2016 failed coup, according to state media. Wednesday's verdict by the 19th Ankara Heavy Criminal Court for 497 defendants was made after four years of trial that saw 243 hearings, reports Xinhua news agency. The defendants, including the presidential guards, were accused of attempting to seize the military headquarters in Ankara.

Dragon agrees to discuss LAC status quo

China also said that there is no delay in holding talks with India to discuss the disengagement of troops from the remaining friction points in eastern Ladakh, amid reports about the likelihood of the 11th round of corps commander-level talks Friday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Beijing, April 8: China Thursday said that India's proposal for the restoration of the status quo of April 2020 at eastern Ladakh could be discussed at the next meetings between the two countries.

China also said that there is no delay in holding talks with India to discuss the disengagement of troops from the remaining friction points



in eastern Ladakh, amid reports about the likelihood of the 11th round of corps commander-level talks Friday. Asked to confirm the date for the 11th round of China-India Corps Commander-level meeting to discuss further disengagement in eastern Ladakh, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told a media briefing here that China and India are in communication on the holding of the 11th round of talks. As for the specific date for the up-

coming talks, I have no information, he said.

The spokesman also denied any delay in holding of the 11th round of talks when pointed out that it is going to be about two months since the first disengagement has taken place and a month since the 10th round of talks on the disengagement of troops. There is no delayed meeting as you cited. I want to stress that the merits of the situation at the India-China border are

very clear and the responsibility does not rest with the Chinese side, Zhao said.

We hope the Indian side will work with China to follow through the important consensus of our two state leaders, abide by relevant agreements and treaties to de-escalate the tension at the border, he said. He also said India's proposal for the restoration of the status quo at eastern Ladakh could be discussed at the meetings between the two countries.

About India's stand that the status quo of April 2020 should be restored and whether China would consider such a proposal, Zhao said, for the proposal, you mentioned I believe it should be talked in the meetings and I already made clear my position on the border issue just now. Media reports from Delhi said the corps commanders of both the militaries are likely to meet Friday to discuss the disengagement of troops in the remaining friction points in eastern Ladakh.

Pak criminalises criticism of forces

The Bill titled Criminal Law Amendment Bill 2020 was approved by the committee despite opposition from the political camps



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Islamabad, April 8: Pakistans National Assembly Standing Committee on Interior has approved a Bill that would punish those who intentionally criticise the countrys armed forces.

The committee has approved the Bill to amend the Pakistan Penal Code and Code of Criminal Procedure 1898, sanctioning punishment to those who ridicule armed forces through intended criticism.

As per the details of the Bill, anyone who shall be guilty of said offence could face up to two years imprisonment or fine that may extend to Rs 500,000 or both.

The Bill titled Criminal Law Amendment Bill 2020, which was introduced by the ruling party's Amjid Ali Khan, was approved by the committee despite opposition from the political camps.

The Bill proposes amendment to Section 500 of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC), which currently states whosoever defames another shall be punished with simple imprisonment for a term which may extend to two years, or with fine, or both.

The amendment proposes punishment for international ridiculing of the armed forces etc.

Whosoever intentionally ridicules, brings into disrepute or defames the armed forces of Pakistan or a member thereof, shall be guilty of an offence punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to two years, or fine which may extend to five hundred thousand rupees, or both.

Opposition lawmakers from Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) opposed the proposed amendment, stating that there was no need to introduce the Bill, as it is already covered under Article 19 of the Constitution.

Other than the opposition party's concerns, the home department of the Khyber Pukhtunkhwa (KP) provincial government, which is led by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), also opposed the Bill, stating that its declaration would create conflict among the existing constitutional and stationary provision, adding that its misuse could not be overruled. The KP government also maintained that the Bill would create differences and discrimination between other law enforcement agencies and public offices.

However, the Interior Ministry maintains that the amendment is being proposed because of the increasing criticism against the armed forces in the country.

EASTER GLISTER



A woman attends the annual Easter Parade and Bonnet Festival on Fifth Avenue in New York City

REUTERS

RAF's secret blitz against ISIS in Iraq

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, April 8: Missiles and bombs were used to clear a strong-hold of the Islamic State (ISIS) terrorist group in northern Iraq as part of a joint operation with ground forces in the region, the UK's Royal Air Force (RAF) said Thursday.

OPERATION SHADER



In an operation lasting 10 days during March, the Iraqi Security Forces ground troops cleared ISIS terrorists from the Makhmur mountain region, south-west from Erbil, while RAF and other Global Coalition aircraft carried out a major air offensive in support.

The operation began when ISIS extremists were confirmed to be based in a network of caves

in the Makhmur Mountains and concluded March 22.

"The British Armed Forces, alongside our Iraqi and coalition partners, continue to root out Daesh [ISIS] terrorists from where they hide," said UK Defence Secretary Ben Wallace.

"The UK is committed to defeating Daesh. This operation will prevent the terrorist group and its toxic ideology from regaining a foothold in Iraq and reduce its capability to coordinate attacks around the world," he said. Since the caves were assessed to be a particularly challenging target, three Typhoon FGR4's were tasked to conduct an attack using Storm Shadow missiles, the remote area having first been checked to ensure that no civilians would be placed at risk. The strike on the ISIS target was assessed by subsequent surveillance to have been a success, the RAF said.

Throughout the 10-day operation, the RAF used 42 Paveway IV bombs and 10 Storm Shadow cruise missiles which have been used during the multiple strikes throughout the operation.

MYANMAR PROTESTS

11 killed as protesters fight troops with guns, firebombs

REUTERS

Yangon, April 8: Anti-coup demonstrators in Myanmar fought back with handmade guns and firebombs against a crackdown by security forces in a town in the northwest but at least 11 of the protesters were killed, domestic media reported Thursday.

Initially, six truckloads of troops were deployed to quell protesters in the town of Taze, the Myanmar Now and Irrawaddy news outlets said. When the protesters fought back with handmade guns, knives and firebombs, five more truckloads of troops were brought in.

Fighting continued into Thursday morning and at least 11 protesters were killed and about 20 wounded, the media said. There was no word of any casualties among the soldiers.

That would take the toll of civilians killed by security forces to over 600 since the junta seized power from the elected government of



Aung San Suu Kyi Feb 1, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP). It had a toll of 598 dead as of Wednesday evening.

Taze is near the town of Kale, where at least 12 people were killed in a similar clash between troops and protesters Wednesday, according to news media and witnesses. Security forces fired live rounds, grenades, and machine-guns on protesters who were demanding the restoration of Suu Kyi's government, AAPP said.

"Taze, Kale have many hunters in the jungle," said Hein Min Hteik, a resident of the region and a youth

ENVOY LOCKED OUT OF EMBASSY

Myanmar's ambassador to London Kyaw Zwar Minn said he was locked out of the embassy, with sources saying his deputy had shut him out and taken charge on behalf of the military. Kyaw Zwar Minn has broken ranks with the ruling junta in recent weeks, calling for the release of detained civilian leader Suu Kyi. "It's a kind of coup, in the middle of London... you can see that they occupy my building," he told Reuters. There have also been similar counter claims in embassies in other global centres and at the United Nations.

activist. "They have handmade firearms. And now they came out with their weapons in order to protect the locals, while the people were under attack by the junta." A spokesman for the junta could not be reached for comment.

Shrinking sea meadows store more carbon than forests

Human activity is helping destroy the equivalent of a soccer field of these seagrasses every 30 minutes around the world

REUTERS

Saya de Malha Bank, April 8: Hundreds of miles from the nearest shore, ribbon-like fronds flutter in the ocean currents sweeping across an underwater mountain plateau the size of Switzerland.

A remote-powered camera glides through the sunlit, turquoise waters of this corner of the western Indian Ocean, capturing rare footage of what scientists believe is the world's largest seagrass meadow.

Human activity is helping destroy the equivalent of a soccer field of these seagrasses every 30 minutes around the world, according to the UN Environment Programme (UNEP). And scientists are now

racing to take stock of what remains.

"There are a lot of unknowns - even things as simple as how much seagrass we have," said Oxford University earth observation scientist Gwilym Rowlands, who is helping the Seychelles government map the island nation's seagrass and estimate how much carbon it stores.

"If you look at the map data for seagrass, there are huge holes" in what we know.

Seagrasses play a large role in regulating ocean environments, storing more than twice as much carbon from planet-warming carbon dioxide per square mile as forests do on land, according to a 2012 study in the journal Nature Geoscience.



Countries that hope to earn credit toward bringing down their CO2 emissions could tally their seagrasses and the carbon they store, a first step toward accrediting carbon offsets for eventual trading on

an open market.

The grasses also curb the acidity of surrounding waters - an especially important function as the ocean absorbs more CO2 from the atmosphere and becomes

more acidic. But seagrasses provide some buffer from acidification, which can damage animals' shells and disrupt fish behaviours. In one study published March 31 in the journal Global Change Biology, scientists at the University of California, Davis, found that seagrasses dotted along the California coast could reduce local acidity by up to 30% for extended periods.

The plants also help clean polluted water, support fisheries, protect coasts from erosion, and trap microplastics, said the study's lead author Aurora Ricart.

"What is even cooler is that these habitats are present everywhere," she said. While most seagrasses fringe coastlines around the world,

the shallowness of Saya de Malha allows sunlight to filter to the seabed, creating an aquatic prairie in the Indian Ocean that provides shelter, nurseries and feeding grounds for thousands of marine species.

The bank's isolation has helped protect it from coastal threats, including pollution and dredging. But even such remote stretches of international waters face increasing incursions from shipping and industrial fishing.

Data on seagrass meadows are patchy, but research so far estimates the grasses cover over 300,000 square km (115,000 square miles), distributed across all continents apart from Antarctica, according to UNEP. That would be an area the size of Italy.

business

of the day quote

During this recovery period, we saw that H2 2020 has been a particularly challenging period for Indian equity active funds where 100% of the large cap funds, 80% of the ELSS funds and 53% of the mid/small-cap funds underperformed their respective benchmarks

AKASH JAIN | ASSOCIATE DIR., GLOBAL RESEARCH & DESIGN, S&P BSE INDICES

An unabated increase in Covid cases is likely to bring about fears of harsher lockdowns, which could impact the asset quality of retail loans especially for unsecured loans such as in the microfinance sector. This, in turn, would impact the fund-raising ability of the NBFCs and HFCs through securitisation of their assets

ABHISHEK DAFRIA | VP AND HEAD (STRUCTURED FINANCE RATINGS), ICRA RATINGS

With the economy opening up, recruiters are ready to hire again, and 83% confirmed this in our latest Naukri Hiring Outlook survey

PAWAN GOYAL | CBO, NAUKRI.COM

SHORT TAKES

Ending pandemic key priority: FM

New Delhi: FM Nirmala Sitharaman has said ensuring universal availability of Covid-19 vaccines and ending the pandemic should be the key priority for the global community. She was speaking at the Plenary Meeting of the International Monetary and Financial Committee of the Board of Governors of the IMF at the virtual Spring Meetings 2021. "The burden of economic transformation to a low carbon economy would disproportionately be higher for low income economies, and positive benefits may not accrue in the short run," Sitharaman said.

Gupshup enters unicorn club

New Delhi: Messaging platform Gupshup Thursday said it has raised \$100 million (about ₹746.6 crore) in funding from Tiger Global Management, valuing the company at \$1.4 billion. This funding will be followed by a second close with significant additional funds raised from more investors, Gupshup said in a statement. This latest round follows years of profitable growth, product innovation, and customer adoption, it added.

Coal India records all-time high capex

New Delhi: Coal India Thursday said its capital expenditure (capex) grew more than two-folds to hit an all-time high of ₹13,115 crore in the just concluded fiscal. CIL's original sanctioned capex budget was ₹10,000 crore for FY'21. "Coal India Ltd (CIL) more than doubled its capital expenditure to an unprecedented high of ₹13,115 crore in FY'21...against the capex of ₹6,270 crore in FY'20, the company clocked 109% growth amid the Covid slump," the company said in a statement.

JSW Steel output grows 6% in Q4

New Delhi: JSW Steel Thursday reported nearly 6% y-o-y increase in its output at 4.19 million tonne (MT) for the quarter ended March 31, 2021. In a statement, the JSW Group company said it had produced 3.97 MT steel during the same quarter of financial year 2019-20. During January-March 2021, the company's production of flat rolled products rose by 4 per cent to 2.99 MT, from 2.87 MT in the year-ago period.



With India in the middle of a second wave of coronavirus, second lockdown, if imposed, will be detrimental not only for the industry but for the economy as well

SHARAD MALHOTRA | PRESIDENT (AUTOMOTIVE REFINISHES AND WOOD COATINGS), NIPPON PAINT INDIA

'Faster global growth driven primarily by US, China, India'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, April 8: There is now a faster global growth driven primarily by the US, China and India, World Bank president David Malpass has said even as he expressed concern over growing inequality due to the Covid-19 pandemic. He said here is also the concern of inequality in terms of vaccinations and median income that's not going up very fast for some countries.

"But there's also the concern that there's inequality. Inequality in terms of vaccinations, in terms of median income that's not going up very fast for some of the countries and may even be going down. There's the interest rate differential, where poor countries face much higher interest rates and they haven't gone down the way global interest rates have done," he said.

"There's the good news that there is faster global growth driven primarily by the US, China, and India, having strong rebounds," Malpass told reporters at the start of the Spring meeting of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.

The annual spring meeting, which is being held virtually, focusses on vaccines, cli-

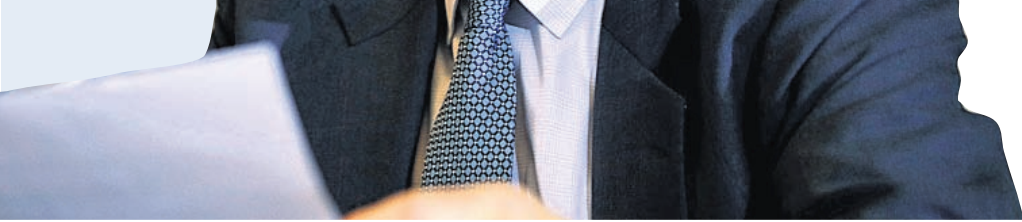
mate change, debt and recovery.

Malpass said there is an inequality in terms of the bankruptcy process, which is not available to sovereign countries, so the poorer countries do not have a way out of these very heavy debt burdens.

"There's also inequality in terms of access to credit with a lot of the stimulus going to the upper end, and people that don't have

pristine credit ratings, for example, or small businesses, new entrants, women that would like to start a business, having great difficulty getting credit," he said.

According to Malpass, the World Bank and the IMF are working



'Jio saved \$400 mn with recent deal'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 8: Jio's spectrum trading pact with Airtel has enabled India's largest telco to top-up its holding in three key circles and yielded potential savings of about \$400 million, according to a report.

It is pertinent to mention here that Reliance Jio has signed an agreement with Bharti Airtel to acquire a portion of spectrum in 800 MHz band for Andhra Pradesh, Delhi and Mumbai circles at an aggregate value of ₹1,497 crore, marking the first such deal between the



two telecom giants that otherwise compete fiercely in the market.

Market analysts have termed the deal "mutually beneficial" and "win-win for both". UBS in a note cited Jio's spectrum buys in the 800 MHz band in Andhra Pradesh, Delhi

and Mumbai in the recently-concluded auctions. Going by the total purchase cost of ₹13,500 crore, and given the 20-year validity, it works out to cost/MHz/annum of ₹300 million.

India's largest telecom operator Reliance Jio through the deal with Bharti has now topped up its holding in these circles to 10MHz, 10MHz and 15MHz, respectively, for a total consideration of ₹1,497 crore.

"With remaining validity of 14 years, the implied cost/MHz/annum comes to ₹140 million...50% discount to the auction price," UBS said.

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AMBANI TO APPEAL AGAINST FINE

Reliance Industries (RIL) Chairman Mukesh Ambani will appeal against the fine imposed by market regulator SEBI over alleged irregularities in a two-decade-old share issue in the company. RIL had issued debentures with convertible warrants in 1994 and allotted equity shares against the warrants in 2000



India to resume buying crude oil from Iran soon



AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 8: India will look to resume buying crude oil from Iran the moment US sanctions are eased, helping it diversify its import basket, a senior government official said. India stopped importing oil from Iran in mid-2019 following sanctions on the Persian Gulf nation by the Trump administration. The US and other world powers are meeting in Vienna to revive the Iran nuclear deal.

"Once the sanctions are lifted, we can look to resume oil imports from Iran," the official, who did not wish to be identified, said.

Indian refiners have begun preparatory work and can swiftly enter into contracts once the sanctions are lifted, he said.

"We already have a template for commercial terms and we can very quickly enter into contracts the moment Iran is cleared for exporting oil," the official said.

Iranian oil coming into the market will not just cool prices but also help India diversify its import basket.

In 2020-21, Iraq was India's biggest oil supplier, followed by Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Nigeria was fourth-largest supplier and the US was the fifth.

"We have been advocating for

oil producers to pump in more oil by easing output caps," the official said. "Rising oil prices are a threat to the fragile economic recovery around the globe including in India."

India, he said, did not advocate for such output increases when prices were within a certain reasonable limit.

"We voiced our concerns when oil crossed USD 63-64 on a sustained basis," he said. "We want prices that are reasonable for producers and affordable for consumers."

India - once Iran's second-biggest customer - imports more than 85 per cent of its oil needs. Iranian crude will bring a number of benefits, including a longer credit cycle and shorter voyage savings on freight costs.

Iranian exports tumbled after former US President Donald Trump tightened sanctions in 2018 and ended waivers for some countries in 2019, including India.

Iran and world powers this week began their most serious attempt yet to resurrect a nuclear deal.

Iran re-started banned nuclear programme after Trump pulled out of the deal and re-imposed sanctions on Iran. Even though new US President Joe Biden wants to rejoin, both sides say the other must make the first move.

GST, Excise & Customs, Bhubaneswar Zone records 14% growth

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 8: The GST, Central Excise & Customs, Bhubaneswar Zone achieved revenue realisation of ₹39,671 crore during 2020-21 by showing a growth of 14% compared to 2019-20 fiscal, said R Manga Babu, Chief Commissioner of the Zone. Revenue realisation was ₹34,817 crore during FY'20.

The mainstay in the revenue collection for 2020-21 was Central Excise duty which registered a collection of ₹24,918 crore over last year's collection of ₹20,531 crore a growth of 21.4%.

On the Customs front, ₹6,213 crore was realised over last year's collection of ₹5,042 crore achieving a growth of 23.22% in revenue realisation over 2019-20. The decline in GST revenue collection from the taxpayers under Central Tax jurisdiction from ₹9,245 crore realised during 2019-20 to ₹8,541 crore was narrowed down to 7.62% despite the fact that the pandemic wrecked havoc for some months during the beginning of FY 2020-2021.

As a part of measure to facilitate taxpayers, special refund drives were conducted to clear refund claims. During the year 2020-21, a total of 1,162 claims involving ₹2,709 crore were disposed of. Further, GST Seva kendras, Customs Seva Kendras have been made operational at divisional level to handhold both GST & Customs taxpayers of the Zone.

Under Swachhata Projects, a Government School at Sakhigopal, Puri was adopted and work relating to toilet renovation, floor repairing, wall colouring, provision of safe drinking water, fixation of sanitary items etc in office premises and other areas were executed.

Recovery underway after worst global recession: IMF MD

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, April 8: A day after the International Monetary Fund forecast a global growth of six per cent for this year, IMF Managing Director Christine Georgieva has said that after the worst global recession since the Second World War, the recovery is underway.

The outlook, she asserted, is brighter because millions of people are benefitting from vaccinations and because of further policy support, especially in the US. Georgieva said this is adding to the exceptional and coordinated actions taken over the past year.

"Without them, without those fiscal and monetary measures, the global contraction last year would



have been three times worse. This could have been another Great Depression," she noted.

"We have a good news that there is light at the end of the tunnel.

After the worst global recession since the Second World War, the recovery is underway. As you know, yesterday we lifted our global growth forecast to 6 per cent for this year,

The outlook, Georgieva asserted, is brighter because millions of people are benefitting from vaccinations and because of further policy support, especially in the US

4.4% for 2022," Georgieva told reporters at the start of the annual Spring Meeting of the IMF and the World Bank on Wednesday.

Yet, while there is light, the crisis continues to cast a dark shadow. Economic fortunes are diverging dangerously. A small number of advanced and emerging market economies, led by the US and China, are powering ahead. Weaker and poorer countries are falling behind in this multi-speed recovery, she rued.

"We also face extremely high uncertainty, especially over the impact of new virus strains and potential shifts in financial conditions. And, there is the risk of further economic scarring from job losses, learning losses, bankruptcies, extreme poverty, hunger. Policymakers

must take the right actions now by giving everyone a fair shot - not just into people's arms, but also in people's lives and in vulnerable," the IMF MD said.

The Global Policy Agenda released by the IMF, she said, focusses on three things: a fair shot at the vaccine, a fair shot at recovery and a fair shot at the future.

"This is perhaps the most consequential decision that any government can make this year. The focus should be on scaling up public investment in green projects and digital infrastructure, in people's health and education, to ensure that everyone can benefit from the historic transformation to greener, smarter, more inclusive economies," she argued.

