



SOCIAL OBLIGATION

Vidya Balan reminds fans to wear masks to face the second wave of the pandemic

LEISURE P2



BJD-BJP BLAME GAME ON

The BJD and the BJP indulge in a blame game over pre-election violence in Pipli

DOWNTOWN P3



IRAN N-SITE SABOTAGE

Iran blames Israel for sabotage attack on its nuke facility that damaged the centrifuges used for enriching uranium

INTERNATIONAL P10

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



People know you very well, sir. You announced 'no lockdown' and they have started preparing for one!

Sputnik set for India launch

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 12: The Russian Direct Investment Fund said Monday it is "awaiting imminently" the recommendation by the Subject Expert Committee (SEC) of India's Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) to approve the use of the Russian Sputnik V vaccine against coronavirus in the country.

The comment by RDIF came amid reports that India has approved the Sputnik vaccine. "RDIF confirms it is awaiting imminently the recommendation by the Subject Expert Committee (SEC) of Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) of India to approve the use of the Russian Sputnik V vaccine against coronavirus in the country with certain conditions, sources said. The panel Monday took up the application of Dr Reddy's Laboratories seeking emergency use authorisation for Sputnik V.

The Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) will take a final call on the recommendation. If approved, it will be the third COVID-19 vaccine to be available in India. The vaccine would be imported from Russia for emergency use in the country, they said.

In September last year, Dr Reddy's partnered with the Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) to conduct



India overtakes Brazil in number of cases

NEW DELHI: India Monday surpassed Brazil to become the second worst hit country from COVID-19 with a record daily spike of 1,68,912 new infections as several states including West Bengal witnessed the biggest surge since the outbreak of the pandemic prompting authorities to impose new curbs. According to the Johns Hopkins University data, India with a total of 1,35,27,717 cases pushed Brazil to the third spot. The Latin American country had a tally of 1,34,82,023 cases while the US has the highest number at 3,11,98,055.

clinical trials of Sputnik V and for its distribution rights in India.

State govt demands 10 days' Covishield stock

BHUBANESWAR: The state government urged the Centre to provide at least 10 days' stock of Covishield vaccine to continue the vaccination programme in the state. Health Minister Naba Kishore Das wrote to Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan Monday. "Odisha is facing a crisis due to extremely low and erratic supply of COVID-19 vaccines to the state. Urgently supply 10 days' stock of Covishield (25 lakh doses) as an emergency measure to plan session and undertake the vaccination programme effectively," Das said. **MORE P4**

The Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) has already given the

emergency use authorisation for two COVID-19 vaccines - Covaxin of Bharat Biotech and Covishield of Oxford-AstraZeneca, being manufactured by Serum Institute of India in Pune.

Sputnik V has demonstrated an efficacy rate of 91.6 per cent in the interim analysis of phase 3 clinical trial, which included data on 19,866 volunteers in Russia. PTI PLB The RDIF, Russia's sovereign wealth fund, recently announced the results of a YouGov survey with 9,417 respondents from 9 countries on their vaccine preferences and country of preference in terms of vaccine production. According to the survey, 54 per cent of respondents who selected a country they trust to produce a vaccine, considered Russia the most trusted vaccine producer alongside the US and leaving the UK behind, when asked to choose the 3 countries they trusted the most to produce a vaccine.

Sputnik V, the world's first registered vaccine against coronavirus, is the most recognizable one - over 7 in 10 (74 per cent) of those surveyed have heard of the Russian vaccine. Sputnik V is also among Top-2 most preferred vaccines, just after the one produced by Pfizer/BioNTech.

The survey was conducted between February 18 and March 3 by YouGov, the leading UK-based company in market research and data analytics in Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, North Africa and Europe.

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CANCER CARE UNITS IN BHUB

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 12: The state cabinet headed by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Monday approved ten proposals including establishment of two specialized cancer care units in Bhubaneswar.

A 500-bed cancer hospital and a 100-bed palliative care unit will be set up in Info Valley area. Chief Secretary Suresh Mahapatra said Subroto Bagchi and his wife Susmita have pledged ₹340 crore for the two projects to be run in partnership with two Bangalore-based charitable organisations.

The couple has decided to donate ₹210 crore to the hos-

pital and ₹130 crore to the palliative care centre. The government will provide 20 acres for each of the two projects. Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan thanked them for their gesture. Sri Shankara Cancer Care Foundation would run the cancer hospital while Karunashraya Hospice Trusts will manage the palliative care unit. The hospitals will be named as— Bagchi-Karunashraya Palliative Care Centre and Bagchi-Sri Shankara Cancer Hospital & Research Centre. However, the couple will not have any involvement and oversight with regard to operation of the facilities to avoid conflict of interest, sources said. **MORE P4**

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VALUE	VARIATION
SENSEX	47883.38	↓ 1707.94
NIFTY	14310.80	↓ 524.10
DOLLAR	75.85	↓ ₹0.07
EURO	89.66	↑ ₹0.02
GOLD	₹46,484	↓ ₹109
SILVER	₹66,220	↓ ₹763

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
MAX	38.9°C	37.0°C
MIN	25.6°C	25.0°C
Humidity	77%	88%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Partly cloudy sky	

HAPPY BIRTHDAY SMART BHUBANESWAR

Yet home to thousands of temples

Jewellers since 1936

leisure



MONAGHAN PROUD TO BE PART OF MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE SERIES

Actress Michelle Monaghan is proud to be part of the *Mission: Impossible* franchise. Talking about her love for the series, she said: "I'm as much a fan as I am proud to be working in it. Tom (Cruise) is an extraordinary actor and a great friend. As long as he keeps going, we'll keep watching."

'TRAVOLTA IS LAST MOVIE STAR OF HOLLYWOOD'S GOLDEN AGE'

Actress Margaret Cho says she loved sharing screen space with John Travolta in John Woo's 1997 action superhit *Face/Off*, adding that she considers the actor the 'last movie star'. Travolta the 'last movie star' of Hollywood's golden age, says Cho, who played the role of Wanda in the film.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
If you're looking to get married, buy the ring today. But before you take the leap, weigh all the pros and cons carefully, says Ganesh. All in all, this may be a day filled with activities related to your relationship and by the time the day ends, you may be on cloud nine!

TAURUS
This is one of those dreadful days when you could be unduly touchy and short tempered, fears Ganesh. Don't go around getting into fights and quarrels with anyone who seems unfriendly or ill mannered. You will only end up in spoiling some healthy relationships.

GEMINI
Today, your house gets a facelift — a new rug, matching cushion covers, or a brand new kitchen. This will take up most of your time. First, you will be busy furnishing and setting up your home, and then you will spend your time flaunting it to your friends, relatives, neighbours, bosses, colleagues, acquaintances.

CANCER
Your strange and unconventional behaviour doesn't always go down well with many people. If you think you are different, and maybe even better than others, it is advisable that you keep it under the wraps. The reason being that most people may not be able to understand you.

LEO
Some people have the world at their feet. And today, you are one of them, says Ganesh. With your gorgeous appearance and gregarious attitude, it is easy for you to open all doors with just a touch. So, you have the luxury to choose — either you entertain yourself through multiple avenues such as movies, theatre and music, or you be the entertainer with your superior performing skills.

VIRGO
A shadow grows large in your mind today. An unknown fear will haunt your day, warns Ganesh. But be ready to take a hike. You are most likely to end up spending on your foreign associates. Be careful of those expenses, says Ganesh.

LIBRA
Nothing comes for free — keep this in mind as you may have to pay your dues for the success you desire today, especially if it is a new project that you have undertaken. Be prepared to invest a considerable amount of time and effort in your endeavours.

SCORPIO
Your energy levels are high as you gear up for new events. However, there are chances that these events may not meet your expectations. But, don't lose hope and get disappointed.

SAGITTARIUS
Remember that actions always speak louder than words. You will, in all probability, finish your work that has been seeking your attention for long now. You shall also successfully bring continuing disputes to the table and resolve them logically.

CAPRICORN
The journey from defeat to success is driven by optimism. You will be very optimistic today — about your work, future and everything that can lead you to success, says Ganesh. You will also be very careful while dealing with day-to-day work, and will capitalise on every opportunity that can get you a step closer to your goals. Determination and good luck is all you need to realise your dreams; you will have both today.

AQUARIUS
Things barely move today. But just like the proverbial tortoise, you seem to be winning the race, for many opportunities will come your way. There won't be any cash crunch, so you needn't lose sleep over that, says Ganesh.

PISCES
The focus will be on children today, says Ganesh. While they will be the cause of an unfair share of your headache, you will be surprised at their ability to step up to the occasion, with just a little amount of coaching.

List of other notable winners

- Best Film:** *Nomadland*
- Best actor:** Anthony Hopkins (*The Father*)
- Best Actress:** Frances McDormand
- Best Cinematography:** Chloe Zhao
- Best Director:** Chloe Zhao
- Best Animation:** *Soul*
- Best Original Score:** Jon Batiste, Trent Reznor, Atticus Ross
- Best supporting actress:** Yuh-Jung Young (*Minari*)
- Best supporting actor:** Daniel Kaluuya (*Judas and The Black Messiah*)
- Outstanding British Film:** *Promising Young Woman*
- Original Screenplay:** *Promising Young Woman*
- Outstanding Debut By A British Writer:** Remi Weekes (*His House*)
- BAFTA Rising Star trophy:** Bukky Bakray
- Film Not In The English Language:** *Thomas Vinterberg (Another Round)*
- Best Documentary award:** *My Octopus Teacher*
- Best Editing category:** *Sound Of Metal*
- BAFTA Fellowship award:** Ang Lee



NOMADLAND sweeps BAFTA awards

THE WHITE TIGER ACTOR ADARSH GOURAV LOSES TO LEGENDARY ANTHONY HOPKINS

London: The Frances McDormand-starrer Hollywood drama *Nomadland* was the big winner at the 74th British Academy for Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) awards held at Royal Albert Hall Sunday night, winning four trophies. Indian actor Adarsh Gourav, who was nominated in the Best Actor category for his role in *The White Tiger* lost to the legendary Anthony Hopkins.

The 83-year-old veteran Hopkins won for his role in *The Father*, surprising many who had expected the late Chadwick Boseman to walk away with the honour in the category, for his role in *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*. Indian actress Priyanka Chopra Jonas was among the presenters this year along with Sophie Cookson, Phoebe Dynevor, Chiwetel Ejiofor, Hugh Grant, Richard E. Grant, Tom Hiddleston, Felicity Jones, Jonathan Pryce, Rose Byrne, Anna Kendrick and Renee Zellweger amongst others.

Nomination equivalent to winning: Adarsh

New Delhi: Indian actor Adarsh Gourav earned global spotlight with his nomination at the 74th BAFTA awards for his performance of Balram Halwai in *The White Tiger*, in the Leading Actor category. Although he did not win, he is not upset. Adarsh was in competition with veteran names such as Anthony Hopkins, the late Chadwick Boseman, Riz Ahmed, Mads Mikkelsen and Tahar Rahim. The veteran Hopkins won for his role in *The Father*. Getting nominated with such names is as good as a win, says Adarsh, who says he had no expectations.

INDIAN LEGENDS REMEMBERED

London: Rishi Kapoor and Irrfan Khan were among late screen icons who were given tributes along with Sean Connery, Kirk Douglas and Chadwick Boseman, at the show held in the Royal Albert Hall Sunday night. The tribute, in the form of a video clip, was a homage paid to over 40 artists the world of screen lost dur-

ing the past year, including actors, writers, directors, and technicians. Irrfan's name was accompanied by a dialogue from his 2012 Hollywood film *Life Of Pi*. Other late artists who were remembered in the video included Ian Holm and Barbara Windsor; and the video ended with a tribute to *Black Panther* star Chadwick Boseman.



Odia film Kalira Atita invited for NY screening

Mumbai: Filmmaker Nila Madhab Panda's Odia film *Kalira Atita* is all set to be screened at Cornell University's film society, Cornell Cinema, at New York. In addition to the screening, the filmmaker will also conduct a webinar with the students and faculty of the institute to discuss climate change and its drastic implications, topics that the film focuses on. "I am happy that the film is being screened at Cornell University. The

film will certainly help more dialogues on the impact of climate change, as it is based on true events in Odisha," Panda said. *Kalira Atita* is a film about villages being consumed by the sea because of climate change and rising sea levels. The film was submitted for the Oscars and was also screened at the Indian Panorama section of the 51st International Film Festival of India (IFFI) in Goa.

'Mask'erade is not over yet for Vidya

Mumbai: Actress Vidya Balan Monday reminded fans to wear masks amid the ongoing second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has badly affected Maharashtra.

photograph of herself on Instagram. Vidya's advice to netizens comes after India reported 1,68,912 new Covid-19 cases over the last 24 hours, setting another grim one-day record.

"Let's not forget that the 'Mask'erade is not over yet," Vidya wrote, with a

The actress recently took a sarcastic jibe at bodyshamers on social media. On World Health Day, she wrote on Instagram: "People always turn around and tell me that your weight is equivalent to your health but your weight should be a part of your health and not its identity."



Happy World Health Day. #worldhealthday. Vidya will next be seen in *Sherni*, for which she has been shooting in Madhya Pradesh. The film, directed by Amit Masurkar, casts her as a forest officer.

'Don't lose your originality'

Mumbai: Actor Nawazuddin Siddiqui says that aspiring actors need to make sure they have their unique style while entering showbiz, adding that if they intend to copy the superstars, they will not be liked by the audience.

that is interesting and original, I would want to see that," he said. The actor adds that stars are now moving to OTT because films are not being released in theatres. "In the beginning, it was because of cause and

"I would just like to say from my experience that you should not lose your originality. These superstars do fake acting, so don't get carried away with it. I want to see your original acting. If you are acting like a superstar, why would I watch you. If you show something good, something

passion. Now, because of the lockdown and films not releasing in theatres, these big stars are coming to OTT. That is not a good thing. Now there are big OTT platforms that are taking these big stars. Why didn't these stars come before?" he added.



PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

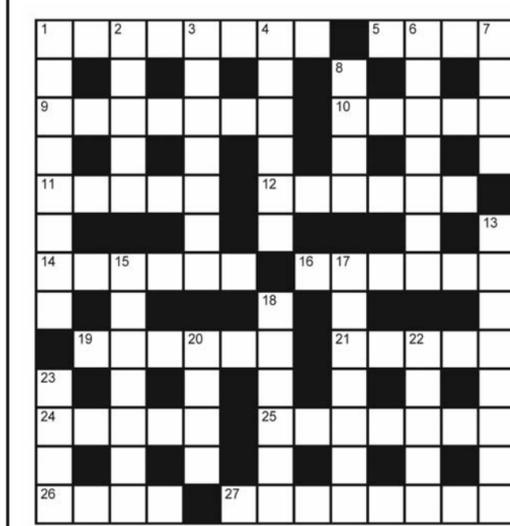


BREVITY



FUN post

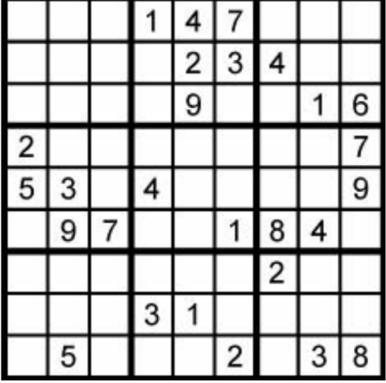
CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Laboratory item (4,4)
 - 5 Colourful fish
 - 9 Bram Stoker character
 - 10 Angler's basket
 - 11 Maui neighbor
 - 12 It's under foot
 - 14 Pays
 - 16 Bird of prey
 - 19 Cereal grass
 - 21 Mustard choice
 - 24 Up and about on a shirt
 - 25 German city
 - 26 Picture card
 - 27 Most unusual
- Down**
- 1 Tykes
 - 2 It may be found attraction
 - 3 Kind of attraction
 - 4 Offshoot
 - 6 Stave off
 - 7 Place for a lecture
 - 8 Mark left by Zorro?
 - 13 Send
 - 15 Make damp
 - 17 Bank examiner
 - 18 Paper clip alternative
 - 20 Vega's constellation
 - 22 Court figure
 - 23 Rubberneck

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS



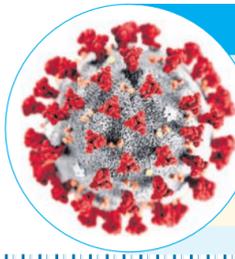
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown



IN MEMORIAM

Members of Gangadhar Meher Jayanti Committee pay floral tributes to the legendary poet on his death anniversary near Nalco Square in Bhubaneswar, Monday



COVID-19 TRACKER

Table with 4 columns: Region, Infected, Recovered, Dead. Data for World, India, and Odisha.

BJP-BJD blame game over pre-poll violence

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 12: The ruling BJD and BJP Monday indulged in a blame game over pre-poll violence reported in Pipli Assembly segment ahead of the bypoll scheduled for April 17.

While the saffron party alleged that the BJD in association with the police made a conspiracy to ensure there should not be a free and fair election, the BJD raised fingers at the former for attack on Labour Minister Sushanta Singh's car.

Holding a press conference, BJP national spokesperson Sambit Patra accused the ruling BJD of indulging in violence and attempting to capture Pipli seat by means of criminal activities.

"The Odisha police is part of the conspiracy hatched by the ruling party to prevent conduct of a free and fair election in Pipli," Patra said, alleging that instead of arresting criminals facing non-bailable warrants, the police were shielding them.

"Many criminals including Dharendra Samantray, Raja and Sanjay Samantray have non-bailable warrants against them and Odisha



BJD and BJP leaders submit their memoranda before the Chief Electoral Officer in Bhubaneswar, Monday



OP PHOTOS

BJP goons smashed the front and rear windshields of the minister's car, Sunday

The Odisha police is part of the conspiracy hatched by the ruling party to prevent conduct of a free and fair election in Pipli

SAMBIT PATRA | BJP NATIONAL SPOKESPERSON

police has declared them absconders. But they are campaigning for the ruling party candidate. Even, they met the Chief Minister at his residence," said Patra while showing some photographs.

The BJD leader also questioned the investigation carried out on seizure of a black bag with BJD party flags. Patra said the police came to a conclusion in the investigation with just a statement of a potato godown owner, who had

stated that there was no money in the bag.

A delegation of BJP led by Patra met the CEO, SK Lohani, and demanded deployment of sufficient companies of Central Armed Police Force (CAPF) at sensitive booths for the bypoll.

Similarly, a BJD delegation comprising Rajya Sabha MPs Sambit Patra and Sujit Kumar Monday met the CEO and demanded stern action against those involved in the at-

tack on the minister's vehicle and two other party workers.

They submitted a memorandum to the CEO. Patra alleged that BJP goons smashed the front and rear windshields of the minister's car, Sunday. Later, they attacked two party workers of whom one is undergoing treatment at the CHC in Delang while the condition of the other worker undergoing treatment at Capital Hospital is critical.

Patra also alleged that recently ₹50 lakh was seized from two BJP leaders in Pipli which they wanted to use to influence voters.

Meanwhile, the CEO's office has issued two numbers for report of any untoward incidents occurring in the Pipli constituency. The phone no is 0674-2391155 and Fax No -0674-2536645.

Naveen's virtual campaign for Pipli

Bhubaneswar: BJD president and CM Naveen Patnaik Monday campaigned for party candidate Rudra Pratap Maharathy for Pipli bypoll on virtual mode. Naveen expressed his disappointment over not being able to meet the people of Pipli and Delang area in view of Covid resurgence. He assured the people to visit the area after the pandemic is over.

1,000 ARMED COPS DEPLOYED IN PIPLI

PNN/ AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, April 12: The state police Monday deployed about 1,000 armed policemen at Pipli Assembly constituency in Puri in a bid to ensure peaceful polling in the by-election scheduled for April 17.

Delang police Monday arrested two persons in connection with the pre-poll violence in which three BJP workers were injured



order situation.

Official sources said as many as 80 sensitive booths have been identified in the constituency.

The DGP also reviewed the pre-poll violence in Pipli at a meeting attended by DGP (Intelligence) RK Sharma and the ADGP (Law and Order) Yashwant Jethwa.

Meanwhile, the Delang police Monday arrested two persons in connection with the pre-poll violence in which three BJP workers were injured in a clash Sunday.

The ruling BJD alleged that Labour Minister Sushanta Singh's vehicle was attacked by BJP workers when he had gone to meet some injured party workers at Delang.

Athawale urges Naveen to join NDA

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 12: Union Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Ramdas Athawale, during his visit to the Capital city, Monday, appealed to Biju Janata Dal (BJD) president Naveen Patnaik to be part of the NDA government at the Centre.

Athawale, president of Republican Party of India (RPI) from Maharashtra, a part of the NDA government, also claimed that the BJD had been a "friendly party" of the NDA government at the Centre and has always helped the government in Parliament during important legislations.

"We always get good support from BJD in Rajya Sabha as well as Lok Sabha when important Bills are discussed. BJD is a friendly party



We always get good support from BJD in Rajya Sabha as well as Lok Sabha when important Bills are discussed. BJD is a friendly party and I would urge the CM to join the NDA

RAMDAS ATHAWALE | UNION MINISTER

and I would urge the CM to join the NDA. If he comes with NDA, he can get better central assistance," Athawale said.

He also said that if the BJD joins NDA, it could usher in more development in the state. "This will also boost the NDA government at the Centre. In Odisha, the two parties are fighting with each other because the BJD is able to sustain the government alone. However, there is not much opposition be-

tween the NDA and BJD in Parliament," he said.

Sharing his personal bonding with Naveen, Athawale said, "I have good relations with Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik. When there was a government at the Centre under the former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Naveen was the coal minister and I was a member of the Lok Sabha. We have had good relations since then. He has created a good record in securing the CM's seat."

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



Khimji donates ₹11L to Srimandir

POST NEWS NETWORK



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar April 12: Khimji Foundation, the philanthropic wing of one of the Odisha's largest jewellery chain Khimji Jewellers, Monday donated ₹11 lakh for the development of Srimandir Parikrama Project. Directors of KHMJI Foundation Mitesh Khimji and Sumeet Khimji presented the token of devotion to Krishan Kumar, Chief Administrator, Shree Jagannatha Temple Administration (SJTA), Puri. The Srimandir Parikrama Yojana (Jagannath temple corridor plan) was announced by the Chief Minister.

Mitesh Khimji, Director of Khimji Foundation, said, "One should not consider this as a donation because who can donate what to the one who runs the universe. This contribution is towards the project that is aimed at enhancing the comfort of the pilgrims coming from around the world and also restoring our heritage which is a dream project of our beloved Chief Minister. We sincerely pay our gratitude towards this effort of state government for bringing such a project."

Cybercriminal nabbed from Kolkata; 10 vehicles seized

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 12: Badagada police has arrested a fraudster from Kolkata for cheating a person on the pretext of selling an old four-wheeler through popular website OLX. The accused has been identified as Trupti Ranjan Das, 46, of Dhauli area here.

The fraud came to the fore when Gangadhar Harijan of Nabarangpur registered a complaint with Badagada police April 9. The victim alleged that he came across an advertisement on OLX posted by one Shree Motors of Bhubaneswar seeking buyers for an old Bolero

vehicle (OD-33-W7191).

Later, Harijan contacted Das who asked him to deposit ₹5 lakh through cheque. Das assured the victim about handing over the vehicle to him after a week. However, he neither gave the vehicle nor returned the money received from the victim despite the lapse of more than five months to the payment.

Police during the course of investigation came to know that as many as 44 cases of cheating have been registered against Das at different police stations of Bhubaneswar. Das used to post advertisements in OLX to sell second hand cars and SUVs. Subsequently,

he would collect money from the customers, mostly from various places in western Odisha and far off places from Bhubaneswar. Upon receipt of the amount, he would later deny transferring the ownership of the vehicle in the name of the victims.

Sources also revealed that the accused has been in the business of selling old cars since 2011.

Police also seized 10 cars and several documents and cards during the raid at his office located at Bijaya Vihar area in Badagada area.

Commissionerate Police arrested Das from Kolkata Saturday. Das was Monday sent to judicial custody after the court rejected his bail plea.

Rights panel seeks ATR on asphyxiation deaths in City

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 12: The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has sought an action-taken report (ATR) from the state government in connection with the death of two labourers who were reportedly asphyxiated while cleaning a sewage tank in March here.

While hearing a plea filed by rights activist Akhand, the commission asked the Chief Secretary to take appropriate steps and submit the ATR within six weeks.

In his plea, the rights activist had informed the NHRC that Silup Birua, 25, of Mayurbhanj and Sunaram Sardar, 55, of Jharkhand

died of suffocation while cleaning a sewerage tank in Tankapani area under Badagada police limits here March 19, 2021.

Referring to the Supreme Court's 2014 directive to states on compensation of ₹10 lakh to the families of 'safai karmacharis' in case of any eventuality Akhand had urged the rights body to direct the Odisha government to pay ₹10 lakh each to the next of the kin of the deceased labourers.

He also demanded stern action against those responsible for the mishap that claimed two innocent lives. The commission has also directed the Director General of Police (DGP) to submit the status report in connection with the case.

'City fares better than metros in Covid battle'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 12: Even as the celebration of 73rd Capital Foundation Day would be a low-key affair amidst a rapid surge in Covid-19 cases, many experts and activists hailed the initiatives taken by civic administration in containing the highly infectious virus.

Experts said that the Capital city of Bhubaneswar has fared better in comparison with other cities in the country. As per reports, five states—Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh and Kerala—cumulatively account for 70.82 per cent of India's active Covid-19 cases which have breached the 11-lakh mark for the first time since the outbreak of the pandemic. Odisha has been reporting more than 1,000 fresh cases for three consecutive days.



Environment expert JK Panigrahi said, "Covid-19 pandemic has taught the mankind many lessons, especially in the management of healthcare facilities and implementing precautionary measures. The administration of the Bhubaneswar City has dealt with

this highly infectious disease successfully by undertaking diverse measures to prevent the spread of the virus. As the second cycle of the disease is appearing to be more dreaded, with higher transmission rate, both the administration and the public in general are required

The administration of the Bhubaneswar City has dealt with this highly infectious disease successfully by undertaking diverse measures to prevent the spread of the virus

JK PANIGRAHI | ENVIRONMENT EXPERT

to behave more responsibly so as to contain the infection before it takes a heavy toll on us."

Naba Kishore Pujari, a social activist, said, "Bhubaneswar is much ahead as compared to other cities to have started lockdown, night curfews, travel restrictions and other precautionary measures to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus. But as the situation subsided, focus got diluted and people started lowering guards. The state

government had instructed authorities to be strict in implementation of wearing masks and ensuring social distancing." The government must allow vaccines for all now, he added.

Urban planner Piyush Ranjan Rout said, "I think, on this foundation day, we must appreciate the gift that the city founder had given us while carving out the city way back in 1948 with the grid-based neighbourhood planning, which actually ensured people living in those neighborhood not getting affected due to lockdown or infection as each neighborhood streets became children's play ground, grocery shops became Super Malls and balcony became site for interaction with neighbours maintaining social distancing and terrace became gym for many."

OP impact: Damaged stand posts repaired

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, April 12: A few days after this media highlighted the large-scale wastage of drinking water in the Silver City here, the Public Health Engineering Organisation (PHEO) swung into action and repaired the stand posts, sources said Monday.

Orissa POST had April 7 highlighted the issue in an article 'Drinking water going down the drain worrisome'.

According to sources, around 30 to 40 per cent of the drinking water supplied by the PHEO is being wasted away on a daily basis here, sources said.

With 6 lakh inhabitants, the Silver City requires 92.85 million litres of drinking water every day. However, the PHEO is supplying 107.7 million litres of potable water to the residents every day. The drinking water is being sourced from 195 bore wells, sources added.

It is learnt that altogether 78,000 households in Cuttack have drinking water connections from the PHEO while the city has 3,000 stand posts cater to the need of lower middleclass and poor people.

Leaking pipelines, overflow from rooftop tankers, damaged stand posts and above all carelessness of the people are blamed for large-scale wastage of drinking water, said a source.

Entry & exit at rly station swapped to fight nCoV

Bhubaneswar, April 12: To prevent the spread of novel coronavirus at Bhubaneswar railway station, East Coast Railway (ECOR) has decided to allow entry to the Capital city station only through platform number 1. The decision was taken to ensure effective management of crowd and social distancing at the railway station.



The earlier entrance will now be the exit and the earlier exit will now be the entrance. Entry to the platforms will be allowed only from the right hand side, i.e. the government car parking side or the bus stand side or the RMS side, said the official notification.

The exit from platforms will be allowed only from the left hand side which is the ATM side or the Reliance mall side. It is because the checking for RT-PCR reports and gate passes are being done at the ATM side only. Passengers will not be allowed to enter the station from this side as it might bring them in contact with the exiting passengers.

Meanwhile, about 100 employees of East Coast Railway have been vaccinated at Rail Sadan, the first workplace vaccination centre under Bhubaneswar

Municipal Corporation (BMC) Sunday to mark Nationwide Tika Utsav from April 11 to 14. Urban task force of BMC had inspected the arrangements at Rail Sadan along with two other places and provisionally approved for workplace vaccination centre at the ECOR headquarters.

RT-PCR mandatory for all

BHUBANESWAR: With a possible second Covid wave looming large, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) Monday made RT-PCR report mandatory for all passengers coming to state through any means of transport.

Through a tweet, the BMC informed that people coming to Bhubaneswar by any means of transport (Bus, train, flight, private cars, waterways) from other state will have to produce an RT-PCR negative report obtained within 72 hours of entry or final vaccination certificate i.e. after two doses of vaccination. "As per government order, we have introduced the new system at railway stations and airport from today. If anyone arrives without the negative Covid report from other states, they will have to undergo 7-days quarantine," BMC Commissioner, Prem Chandra Chaudhary said.

He further added that those special teams have been deployed at railway stations and airport to collect data including address and contact numbers if anybody arrives without the negative report. Apart from this, another provision has been made to conduct on-the-spot testing at airport if anybody shows Covid symptoms, he added.

Reactivate health facilities to treat Covid patients: DMs told

Bhubaneswar, April 12: The state government Monday asked all district Collectors to reactivate government and private Covid-19 facilities utilised during the first wave of the virus to accommodate the new patients.

Additional Chief Secretary (Health) PK Mohapatra has written to the Collectors, municipal commissioners and Chief District Medical and Public Health Officers (CDM & PHOs) in this regard. "In view of the rapid surge of the Covid-19 cases, you are requested to remain in readiness to accommodate the new cases and activate the earlier used government and private Covid facilities in a phased manner as and when required," Mohapatra said in the letter.

He asked the authorities to operationalise healthcare facilities with an increment of 50 beds at a time when needed. The number of ICU beds shall be 20 per cent of general beds and availability of ventilators shall be at least 50 per cent of all ICUs, he said.

All the private hospitals established under Odisha Clinical Establishment Act having 30 beds or more must reserve at least 10 per cent of beds for the Covid patients.

In OPD, the medical officer should avoid advising frequent re-visit of the patients, if not required

If required, 80 per cent of available beds will be reserved for the Covid patients, Mohapatra directed. All districts and municipal corporations have been directed to set up a dedicated Covid helpdesks.

Meanwhile, the government has also advised people not to rush to the hospital, if it is not necessary. People have been advised to utilise existing telemedicine services for their ailments. The Health department has directed the hospitals to ensure that no emergency case is denied timely medical care in the name of Covid.

Central registration is to be suspended for the time being and manual registration to be taken up in each OPD to avoid large gathering.

All elective surgeries will be stopped and only emergency surgeries to be taken up. One attendant is to be allowed for the serious in-door patients and no attendant would be allowed inside the ward for ambulatory patient. In OPD, the medical officer should avoid advising frequent re-visit of the patients if not required.

4 more test positive at Utkal University

BHUBANESWAR: A day after a student was identified Covid positive at the Sociology Department, four more were identified with the virus Monday in Utkal University campus here. Two students from Chemistry department and one each from MCA and Economics departments have been infected. Sources said that the two students of the MCA and Economics department are inmates of Gopbandhu Hostel. All have been admitted to the Capital Hospital for treatment. "The process of contact tracing of the patients is underway. Once it is done, we are taking steps for subsequent Covid testing of others. If required, we will take appropriate decision on the matter," Chaudhary said.

TALLY BREACHES 3.5L MARK IN STATE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, April 12: Odisha's Covid-19 caseload breached 3.5 lakh mark Monday as 1,741 more people tested positive for the infection, while two fresh fatalities pushed the state's coronavirus death toll to 1,928. The state's coronavirus tally now stands at 3,51,302 as new cases were reported in all 30 districts, while the fresh fatalities were registered in Nuaapada, a health department official said.

Odisha recorded over 1,000 daily cases for the fourth consecutive day. Monday's spike was the highest since October 23 last year when

the state had registered 1,793 cases, he added. As many as 1,015 new cases were reported in quarantine centres, while 726 infections were detected during contact tracing.

Sundargarh district reported the highest number of new cases at 268, followed by Khurda (204) and Balasore (158), the official said.

BMC begins paid quarantine services in three places



THE BMC HAS DECLARED MAA GUEST HOUSE IN PATIA, MAA SUM PALACE IN GHATIKIA AND MAA GUEST HOUSE IN GAJAPATI NAGAR AS THREE PAID QUARANTINE CENTRES

ANY PERSON WHO MAY HAVE COME INTO CONTACT WITH A COVID-19 POSITIVE PATIENT OR THOSE COMING FROM OUTSIDE STATE OR A SUSPECTED CASE CAN AVAIL PAID QUARANTINE FACILITY

A PERSON CERTIFIED AS ASYMPTOMATIC POSITIVE CAN AVAIL SERVICES OF PAID ISOLATION ONLY AFTER PROPER HEALTH SCREENING, THE ORDER MENTIONED

Bhubaneswar, April 12: Taking cognizance of the rising Covid cases in the state capital, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) Monday identified three properties under OYO Hotel and Room services as paid quarantine centres here.

Issuing an order, the civic authority recognized the need for paid quarantine services to be made available in the wake of a possible second wave. The BMC has declared MAA Guest House in Patia, MAA Sum Palace in Ghatikia and MAA Guest House in Gajapati Nagar as three paid quarantine centres.

"It appears that pay and use isolation facility is also an essential

requirement and the Asymptomatic patients or Covid-19 suspects at their own expenses may also like to avail the pay and use facility in private hotels if they so desire. These facilities can be availed on payment with the condition as mentioned in the order and as per protocol."

Any person who may have come into contact with a Covid-19 positive patient or those coming from outside state or a suspected case can avail paid quarantine facility. Meanwhile a person certified as asymptomatic positive can avail services of paid isolation only after proper health screening, the order mentioned.

While the guest houses in Patia and Ghatikia will charge Rs. 1,099 per day for paid quarantine facilities,

the guest house in Gajapati Nagar have fixed Rs 1,499 per day. About 40 rooms, 15 each in Patia and Ghatikia and 10 in Gajapati Nagar have been made available. The accommodation will include three time meals and a provision of 2 litres of water daily.

"The maximum number of days up to which an asymptomatic positive patient (Guest) can avail this pay and use isolation facility is 10 days from the date of testing of sample unless and otherwise directed by the concerned Medical Officer to stay for more number of days subject to health condition," the order added.

FOR A CAUSE



Members of various trade unions stage a sit-in with Aam Aadmi Party workers at PMG Square in Bhubaneswar, Monday, demanding free electricity to families consuming below 200 units a month

Police groping in dark over Hyder escape

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, April 12: The police are still groping in the dark to nab the dreaded gangster Suleiman Hyder who managed to escape from Cabin No.5 of the surgery ward at SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack Saturday afternoon. The notorious criminal was shifted to SCB March 23 from Sambalpur circle jail.

In the latest development, the police have sent four teams to various states to trace the whereabouts of the dreaded criminal. Meanwhile, Yakub Khan alias Sallu, one of the close aides of Hyder Monday sur-

Hyder's family members including his son, son-in-law and nephew helped him get away, said suspended constable Md Mausim

rendered before the Chauhaganj police. Sources claimed that Yakub took the step fearing police action against him as he was suspected to be involved in the escape plan of Hyder. The police officials have been interrogating Yakub to elicit information on the matter as well.

However, police are yet to get any vital lead to zero in on the absconding gangster.

Following the escape, the state police have launched massive manhunt by creating six teams under the supervision of DCP Cuttack Prateek Singh. The STF of Crime Branch, Cuttack, Jajpur and Kendrapara police, have been engaged to trace Hyder.

Police have been keeping close surveillance at airports, railway stations, road routes and bus stands to check any attempt by the dreaded criminal to leave the state. CCTV footages are being examined too. The police forces of border areas

have been alerted after Hyder's escape. Police are also in touch with their counterparts in the neighbouring states. Police also suspended six cops who escorted Hyder from Sambalpur to SCB.

On the other hand, the suspended constable Md Mausim who was on duty during the escape claimed in his complaint at the Mangalabag police station that Hyder's family members including his son, son-in-law and nephew helped him get away. Mausim alleged that one of his family members threw some poisonous substance following which he fell unconscious Saturday.

Sarangi on central deputation

BHUBANESWAR: Odisha cadre IAS officer Santosh Kumar Sarangi was relieved from state services to join the Ministry of Education, Monday. Sarangi was the Principal Secretary to the state Science and Technology department. Manoj Kumar Mishra, Secretary (I/c), state E&IT department with additional charge of CRC-cum-Special Secretary to Government, Commerce and Transport department was allowed to remain in additional charge of Secretary, Science and Technology Department in addition to his own duties.

ANWESHA to continue for 5 more yrs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, April 12: To cover more number of ST & SC students, the state Cabinet Monday decided to continue ANWESHA scheme for a period of another five years.

The scheme was launched during 2015-16 with an objective to provide quality education to ST and SC students in partnership with urban educational institutions.



medium schools of repute located in urban areas till completion of Class XII.

At present, the programme is being implemented in 177 schools, spread over 17 districts and 21,682 students are being benefited. "The government has decided to continue the scheme for further five years with financial implications of Rs 569.90 crore," Mahapatra added.

In the next five years, up to 25,000 students will be covered under the

scheme and all the students will be kept in ANWESHA hostels managed by the SC & ST Development department.

The Cabinet has also approved the proposal to amend the Odisha Minerals (Prevention of Theft, Smuggling and Illegal Mining and Regulation of Possession, Storage, Trading and Transportation) Rules, 2007. The amended rule has been called as OMPTS (Amendment) Rule, 2021. The panel also approved

The Cabinet approved the proposal to amend the Odisha Minerals (Prevention of Theft, Smuggling and Illegal Mining and Regulation of Possession, Storage, Trading and Transportation) Rules, 2007

The panel also approved annual report of Odisha Public Service Commission (OPSC) for the year 2016-17

Service rules for government Employees including Odisha Judicial Service, lab technician, welfare extension officers and district welfare officers have been amended by the Cabinet

annual report of Odisha Public Service Commission (OPSC) for the year 2016-17.

Besides, service rules for government employees including Odisha Judicial Service, lab technician, welfare extension officers and district welfare officers have been amended by the Cabinet.

Urgently supply 25 lakh doses of Covishield: Odisha to Centre

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, April 12: The state government urged the Centre to provide at least 10 days' stock of Covishield vaccine to continue the vaccination programme in the state.

State Health Minister Naba Kishore Das has written a letter to his Union counterpart Dr Harsh Vardhan Monday. "Odisha is facing a crisis due to extremely low and erratic supply of Covid-19 vaccines. Urgently supply at least 10 days' stock of Covishield (25 lakh doses) as an emergency measure to enable us to plan session and undertake the vaccination programme effectively," Das said in his letter.

April 3 this year, the state had held 1,476 vaccination sessions and vaccinated 2.72 lakh people in a single day. However, since then due to short and uncertain supply of vaccine from the Health Ministry, the state government has been forced to close down about 700 vaccination centers, he mentioned.

The minister said that with such low and uncertain supplies of vaccines, it is impossible for the state government to schedule sessions in advance or mobilize people with confidence.

"Hence, our daily utilization has come down to 1 lakh though we have capacity for doing 3 lakh vaccinations daily," he said, adding that the state is unable to observe the Tika Utsav properly.

Till April 11, Odisha had received 46.08 lakh doses of vaccine (42.71 lakh doses of Covishield & 3.36 lakh doses of Covaxin). There is no stock in the state, regional and district vaccination stores. However, there are 1.59 lakh doses of Covishield and 71,010 doses of Covaxin in pipeline across the state. The balance stock will last for just another day. Meanwhile, the state has received 2.71 lakh doses of Covishield vaccine Monday afternoon. Only very few amount of vaccines are being supplied to the state which could not meet the present demand.

WASSUP TODAY
BHUBANESWAR
■ Garlanding of Capital foundation plaque, PMG Square, 8am
■ Meeting on Capital Foundation Day, Soochana Bhawan, 6pm
Programmes/announcements for wassup today may be sent to opwassup@gmail.com for record, it must also carry the sender's mobile number for our verification, but not for publication.

The government has decided to continue the scheme for further five years with financial implications of ₹569.90 crore
SC MAHAPATRA | CHIEF SECRETARY
Chief Secretary SC Mahapatra said that under this scheme, the ST and SC students are admitted into standard one in different government, private and aided English

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Jharaphula was murdered: Jajpur SP

TWO ACCUSED ARRESTED, ANOTHER STILL ABSCONDING

Fact file



ARRESTED ACCUSED AMARESH ROUT RUNS A FAST-FOOD STALL AT SUNDARPADA HAAT UNDER AIRFIELD POLICE STATION IN BHUBANESWAR. HE WAS ABSCONDING SINCE THE INCIDENT

RAKESH AND AMARESH ALLEGEDLY MURDERED JHARAPHULA IN A PRIVATE GUEST HOUSE IN BHUBANESWAR, JANUARY 26

He assisted the prime accused Rakesh Swain by booking a room (No. 201) on his behalf at the OYO guest house at Dharma Vihar in Bhubaneswar where Jharaphula was murdered.

He was absconding after the murder but arrested Sunday following a tip-off, the SP said.

Now, documents and evidence collection regarding the murder from the forensic lab is at an advance stage," the SP added. However, further investigation is on to find out how she was killed.

Attempts are being made to nab the other accused, Sekhar, in the murder case.

The arrested accused Amaresh will be taken on remand for further interrogation if the situation demands, the SP said

Reports said that Rakesh and

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, April 12: Following the arrest of the second accused, Jajpur police Monday admitted the Jharaphula Nayak, 22, a girl student of Ramadevi University (RD) in Bhubaneswar, was murdered.

This was stated by Jajpur SP Rahul PR in video clip released Monday. Another accused is still absconding. The arrested second accused has been identified as Amaresh Rout, who runs a fast-food stall at Sundarpada haat under Airfield police station in Bhubaneswar. He was absconding since the incident.

The prime accused in the sensational murder case, Rakesh Swain,



Now, documents and evidence collection regarding the murder from the forensic lab is at an advance stage

RAHUL PR | SP, JAJPUR



the boyfriend of the deceased, was arrested by police a few days after Jharaphula's body was found dumped at the roadside in Kuakhia of Jajpur district.

The SP, in video clip, said the second accused Amaresh, has been arrested for his involvement in the murder conspiracy. He is a friend of the main accused and belongs to the same village.

Amaresh allegedly murdered Jharaphula in the private guest house in Bhubaneswar, January 26.

Later, Rakesh with the help of another accomplice Sekhar carried the girl's body by a two-wheeler and dumped it on the roadside near Mulapala Chowk under Kuakhia police limits in Jajpur district.



Students of Gangadhar Meher University in Sambalpur staging a demonstration in front of the district Collector's office demanding online examinations

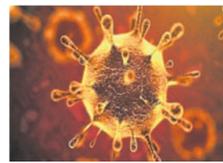
STUDENTS' STRIKE

101 employees of Emami Paper Mills test +ve

POST NEWS NETWORK

Balasure, April 12: A total of 101 employees of Emami Paper Mills Limited, a part of the Emami Group of Industries at Remuna in Balasure district, tested positive Monday for COVID-19, said Balasure chief district medical officer (CDMO) Dr Dulal Sen Jagdeeb.

With a large number of people testing positive to the virus in one place has become a cause for concern for the district administration. It has declared the premises of the company as well as the place where the employees are staying



The premises of the company as well as the place where the employees are staying has been declared as a 'micro containment zone'

closed down one of three units of the company. The district reported 158 fresh COVID-19 positive cases Monday. Of these, 101 are from this company only.

With the fresh additions, the district's tally has gone up to 12,872. So far 12,481 persons infected by the virus have already recovered and 290 are undergoing treatment. The disease has so far claimed 96 lives in Balasure district.

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Miscreants vandalise Nayagarh Town rly station

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nayagarh, April 12: Miscreants went on a rampage and tried to set fire to the office of the Nayagarh Town railway station, ransacked its premises and assaulted four officials, including the station master, after they were asked not to celebrate a birthday party and consume alcohol in the station premises, Sunday night.

Four officials, including the station master Sanjay Kumar Pradhan, sustained multiple injuries after they were allegedly beaten up by the miscreants late Sunday night. Nayagarh SP Siddharth Kataria and Town police IIC Jaydeep Mohanty reached the spot and initiated a probe. The prime accused was identified as a police constable Chittaranjan Jena, 34, alias Felu, posted at the VHF Control Room of Nayagarh Reserve Police. The SP, after the probe, suspended Jena from



stable Chittaranjan Jena, 34, alias Felu, posted at the VHF Control Room of Nayagarh Reserve Police. The SP, after the probe, suspended Jena from

the post. A team of railway officials also conducted a probe.

Later, 10 persons were arrested in this connection and produced in the court. The accused persons were identified as the constable Chittaranjan Jena, 34, Bikash Lenka, 19, Siddharth Das, 22, Rajkumar Pradhan, 23, alias Suman, Basant Mohapatra, 25, alias Pinu, Deepak Mohapatra, 19, Dillip Jena, 23, Biswabhusan Panigrahi, 25, Kanha Pradhan, 19, and Alok Mohapatra, 25. Another accused is absconding

A group of around 20 to 25 miscreants assaulted Pradhan and his four officials after the former was asked not to engage in birthday celebration and consume liquor on the railway station premises, railway official said. The incident occurred after a railway

official noticed the group consuming liquor and celebrating birthday of someone in the railway station premises by playing DJ music at high decibel sound.

The official tried to dissuade them and asked them to vacate the place but they refused to listen and assaulted the station master and other officials with iron rods and pipes. Later, they ransacked the computer systems in the station panel rooms and threw away the flower pots.

They also snatched the gold necklace of the station master and cash worth Rs 2,000 from him. While leaving they set fire to the documents in the control room with petrol and fled the scene.

3 VIMSAR medics to take part in int'l workshop

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, April 12: Three doctors from the Veer Surendra Sai Institute of Medical Sciences and Research, Burla, have become the only ones from the state to have been selected for an international workshop on 'Good Health Research Practice', an official said.

The workshop will be jointly organised by the Tropical Disease Research Foundation of WHO, Institute of Public Health (IPH), Bangalore, and University of Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta,

Indonesia. It will be funded by UNICEF and UNDP.

The three doctors of the department of community medicine Subrat Pradhan, Samyak Sahu and Sanjeeb Mishra will take part in the event that will commence April 19 and conclude June 5, the VIMSAR official said.

The workshop aims to impart knowledge and skills for the application of ethical and quality principles in the design, conduct, recording and reporting of health research in humans, Mishra said.

Miscreants assault five of a family over love affair

POST NEWS NETWORK

Dunguripali, April 12: In a shocking incident, four miscreants allegedly hacked five members of a family including three women, with sharp-edged weapons at Siali village under Dunguripali police limits of the district Monday.

The injured were identified as Sata Niali, Sai Niali, Rohit Niali, Himadri Niali and Apsara Sandha in the village. They have been admitted to the

Dunguripali hospital where they are currently undergoing treatment.

The incident occurred after a youth, Bimbadhar Niali, from a family eloped with a girl of the same village. Nursing a grudge, the miscreants attacked the Niali family over the love affair and rendered them critical.

Police rushed to the spot and launched a probe into the incident. A manhunt has been launched to nab the culprits, police added.

Sand quarry auctions trigger unrest in Bhadrak riparian areas

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhadrak, April 12: The law and order situation has been deteriorating in some riparian areas of Bhadrak district over sand mining and auction of sand quarries. Reports of clashes among local villagers and attacks on enforcement agencies are commonplace here.

During the last few days, disputes have cropped up in different areas under Bant tehsil. At some places, people have opposed sand quarry actions, while some influential people have been lobbying for auctions at other places. In such situation, the local administration is allegedly sitting pretty.

According to the district survey report, 20 sand mines had been auctioned earlier. Later, a decision was taken to put three new sand mines of Bhadaripokhori block and six of Bant block under auction.

This has resulted in deep resentment among the people living near the proposed sand mines. They have been opposing the auction since January.

For quite some time now, some influential people have been illegally mining murrum near Mohanty Pada under Bant tehsil. However, the administra-



tion claims that it has no report of such activities.

In some places, lessees have been lifting sand beyond the sanctioned capacity using excavators, which is against the official norms. Wanton sand mining has posed danger to some riparian villages, it was alleged.

As per the guidelines issued by the MoEF in 2016, no excavations can be allowed within a perimeter of 200 to 500 meter from any bridge. Despite this, sand mining has allegedly weakened a bridge at Kandaba, which links Bhadrak and Balasure. As a result, locals are apprehensive of the durability of the bridge. Locals alleged that no attention is being paid to the guidelines for sand mining in

the area as the administration has turned a blind eye to such blatant violations.

Rampant sand mining has triggered erosion of the river bank at some places like Haripur Balighat. As a result, a river in the area has encroached local farmlands and even a part of the Agarpada-Gopinathpur road.

Environment clearance is a must for undertaking sand mining. In many cases mining is being carried out despite the fact that environment clearances for those areas are pending.

When contacted, Sub-Collector Pitambar Samal said that allegations will be looked into. If illegal sand and murrum mining is found anywhere, action will be taken, he added.

OFFICE OF THE NOTIFIED AREA COUNCIL, KHARIAR ROAD
e-mail: nackhrd@rediffmail.com; Ph.: 06678-221239
No. 87/1 Invitation for Bids Date: 09.04.2021

Bid Identification No.- KHRD-03/2020-21
Online Bid Reference No.-2021_ORULB_67738

No. C-62: The Executive Officer, Khariar Road NAC invites percentage rate bids in double cover system in ONLINE MODE only, for Development of Smart Park in Khariar Road NAC, as detailed below.

1 Nature of Work	Civil Work
2 No. of work	2 Nos.
3 Amount put to tender (Aprox.)	Rs. 52,86,053.00 to Rs.65,12,467.00
4 Bid Cost	Rs.10,000/-
5 Class of Contractor	"A" and "B"
6 Availability of Bids	From 11.00 Hrs. Dt.12.04.2021 to 17.30 Hrs. Dt.04.05.2021
7 Date of opening of Bid	Dt.10.05.2021 at 11.00 A.M.

The bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website i.e. <https://tenderorissa.gov.in>. Any addendum/corrigendum/cancellation of tender can also be seen only in the said website.

Sd./- Executive Officer, Khariar Road NAC
OIPR-13136/11/0002/2122

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA No. B-15
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
PARALAKHEMUNDI (R&B) DIVISION, PARALAKHEMUNDI
Tel.Ph.No.: 06815-222542, E-mail I.D.: eerparalala@yahoo.com

TENDER CALL NOTICE
Bid Identification No.E.E., PKD. R&B DIVN. - 01/2021-22

1. The Executive Engineer, Paralakhemundi (R&B) Division on behalf of Governor of Odisha Invites Percentage rate bid in Single cover system to be received in ONLINE MODE only for the construction of work as mentioned below:

2. Nature of the work : Building & Road works
3. Approximate estimated cost : Rs.11.61 Lakhs to 34.89 Lakhs.
4. No. of works : (3) Three numbers only
5. Tender paper cost (online) : Rs.6000/-
6. Class of Contractor : "D" class/"C" class/"B" class
7. Availability of Bid documents : From dt: 20.04.2021 (10.00 AM) to 29.04.2021 (05.00 PM) in the website
8. Date of Opening of Bid : 30.04.2021 at 12.00 Noon
9. The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website <http://tenderorissa.gov.in>. Any addendum / corrigendum / cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website. The authority reserves the right to reject any or all bids without assigning any reason therefor.

Executive Engineer, Paralakhemundi (R&B) Division
OIPR-34065/11/0001/2122

CSIR-Institute of Minerals and Materials Technology
Council of Scientific & Industrial Research, Ministry of Science & Technology
Govt. of India, Bhadrak, Bhubaneswar - 751013, Odisha

CSIR-Institute of Minerals and Materials Technology, is a premier establishment of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), Govt. of India, New Delhi. The institute carries out R&D for the sustainable utilization of natural resources with special emphasis on mineral processing, material resources engineering, process metallurgy, advanced materials development and environmental sustainability.

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58th CSIR-IMMT Foundation Day

Tuesday April 13, 2021

Chief Guest - Dr. Shekhar C. Mande
Director General - CSIR, and Secretary DSIR, Govt. of India

Participation: Online mode through invitation only

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An aimless life is always a miserable life.

THE MOTHER

Let Festivities Begin

The BJP government is at it again. It has developed quite an expertise in coining catchy phrases, slogans and managing headlines as its main tools of governance rather than hard work, comprehensive planning and delivering on its promises. This time the eye-grabbing phrase is 'Tika Utsav' (Vaccine Festival) from April 11 to April 14 with the supposedly noble intention to vaccinate large groups of people against Covid-19. The country is in the grip of a fresh wave of the pandemic which is assuming even more serious proportions than the first wave. All this while most states have sounded alarm bells about dire shortage of vaccine supply. The response of the Central government is to trivialise the grave crisis. It doesn't seem to have learnt from its inept handling of the pandemic when it announced a thoughtless, ill-planned and inhuman lockdown on March 24, 2020 and urged the nation to bang thalis, clap and light lamps to ward off the virus.

The only difference this time is that it is now armed with the two vaccines, namely Covaxin manufactured by Bharat Biotech and AstraZeneca's Covishield produced locally by Serum Institute of India, and that apparently induces it to put the nation in a celebratory mood. The catch is even in this the government is ill-equipped and the two vaccines are yet to pass the ultimate tests of efficacy. While Covaxin has still not received any field test report back-up, Covishield has been banned across Europe for numerous blood clot related deaths taking place. So much so that France's top health regulator on Friday advised all recipients above the age of 55 of AstraZeneca's Covid-19 vaccine to get a second shot of another alternative vaccine. India has no third option. That is why it is trying to hide its failure to cushion people against this fresh onslaught of the virus behind yet another headline-grabbing exercise. Interestingly, while the farce of the Tika Utsav has started, Orissa alone has been compelled to shut down 900 vaccine centres due to non-availability of vaccines.

The daily caseload has now gone up to 1.68 lakh and the number of deaths stands at 900 plus a day. Till last month, March 2021, the daily caseload was about 15,000. The latest figures surpass those at the height of the first wave and present a scary scenario.

The problem is compounded by the fact that the Centre has monopolised the procurement and supply of the two vaccines. Apparently, the reason is to claim all the credit for itself and indulge in thoughtless vaccine diplomacy and politics. The first is intended to impress the world about performance of the BJP government and enhance its image battered by its anti-farmers' policies, suppression of dissent and nose diving economic growth due to wrong policies and mismanagement. The second is the outcome of cynical calculations to put states ruled by non-BJP parties in a bad light by supplying far less vaccine doses than those given to BJP-ruled states.

The record of 'vaccinating people doesn't inspire any confidence either. So far, over 10 crore people have received the shots in a country with a population size of 135 crore. The combined output of the two manufacturers - Bharat Biotech and Serum Institute of India - is now 2.4 million doses a day, while the need is for 3.7 million doses. The infrastructure to meet the need is simply non-existent. The government seems to be oblivious to this fact and has therefore adopted an ostrich-like policy to bury its eyes in the sand of the Tika Utsav propaganda rather than face reality and take steps to remedy the situation as most other countries across the world are doing.

The pertinent question that the government needs to answer is what has it been doing to improve the treatment and hospital facilities since the pandemic started last year. There have hardly been any efforts to address the problems of high hospital occupancy, shortage of oxygen and test centres, while great stress has been laid on vaccination. But, even on this count the government is displaying a cavalier attitude. The Delhi High Court got so exasperated by the Centre's handling of the vaccine supply that it asked it to explain in affidavit the rationale behind keeping strict control over the class of persons who can be vaccinated against Covid-19. A Bench of Justice Vipin Sanghi and Rekha Palli said the Serum Institute of India and Bharat Biotech have more capacity to provide the vaccines, but it seems that they are not exploiting it fully. "We are not utilising it fully. We are either donating it to foreign countries or selling it to foreign countries and are not vaccinating our own people," the judges observed, exposing the Centre's utter lack of concern for its own citizens.

The Centre is blaming the state governments, especially those run by non-BJP parties, for inadequate vaccination. But, the complaint is it is supplying vaccines in far more numbers to BJP-ruled states than to the non-BJP governments. For example, the UP government is getting adequate doses unlike the Maharashtra government, even though the latter, being the country's financial capital, is far more exposed to the infection than any other state. Naturally, the spike in the second and third waves is the maximum in Maharashtra. Punishing the people for their political decision in a democratic setup will eventually harm politicians of all hues.

This apart, anyone watching videos of the BJP rallies being held for West Bengal elections would definitely realise the attitude of senior-most BJP functionaries towards the Covid situation and safety of their supporters. It is a matter of shame that even the Prime Minister is often photographed without a mask.

WISDOM CORNER

- If you can't tolerate critics, don't do anything new or interesting.** - JEFF BEZOS
- Accept the terrible responsibility of life with eyes wide open.** - JORDAN PETERSON
- We cannot change anything until we accept it. Condemnation does not liberate, it oppresses.** - CARL JUNG

WORDSWORTH

Mongo

A Talk of the Town piece in the issue of the New Yorker for 13 November 2006 reported on an anthropologist-in-residence programme in the city's Department of Sanitation. An aside mentioned mongo, a word used by sanitation workers for the act of creatively recycling refuse, reclaiming and putting back to useful purpose items that had been thrown out. The magazine has featured the word before - its first recorded appearance was in the New Yorker in September 1984. It's one of that large group of terms which is almost impossible to research and about whose origin nobody seems to know anything at all. But we may with some confidence assume that it's not the same word as the US slang term mongo meaning "huge" (which is a short form of humongous, perhaps influenced by mondo) or "idiot" (which is an abbreviation of Mongol or mongoloid, in the now deeply deprecated sense of a sufferer from Down syndrome), nor that it refers to the Flash Gordon planet. It matches least badly to mungo, another name for shoddy, an inferior cloth made from recycled fibres taken from old woven or felted material.

LOL

The crowded store

It was the day of the big sale. Rumours of the sale (and some advertising in the local paper) were the main reason for the long line that formed by 8:30, the store's opening time, in front of the store. A small man pushed his way to the front of the line, only to be pushed back, amid

loud and colourful curses. On the man's second attempt, he was punched square in the jaw, and knocked around a bit, and then thrown to the end of the line again. As he got up the second time, he said to the person at the end of the line... "That does it! If they hit me one more time, I won't open the store!"

RBI'S QUANTITATIVE EASING

FOCUS ECONOMY

The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India meets every two months to decide on the main policy interest rate. This is the rate at which the RBI gives an overnight i.e. a one-day loan to a commercial bank that may be in temporary need of liquidity. The loan is given against collateral which is typically a government bond (or security) owned by the bank. This one-day transaction is called a repo transaction, since it involves a "repurchase"

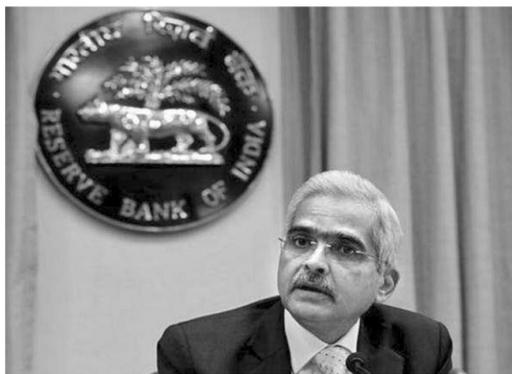


Ajit Ranade

SINCE THE RBI CANNOT JUST PRINT MONEY AND LOAN IT AT AN ULTRA-LOW COST TO THE SOVEREIGN, IT HAS FOUND AN INDIRECT METHOD

obligation on the borrower. That rate is called the repo rate. The lower the rate, the easier it is to get the loan (assuming there is enough collateral with the bank). Banks may very well garner huge amounts of repo loans, in case they are facing a stiff demand for loans from their customers and find themselves in a tight liquidity situation.

The mandate of the MPC, as per a contract signed between the RBI and the Central government, is to set the repo rate so that inflation is between the band of 2 to 6 per cent. That five-year contract expired recently, and has been renewed on the same terms. What if the MPC fails to meet its mandate, i.e. fails to do its job? The contract says that if the inflation rate goes outside the band for three consecutive quarters, the MPC has to explain to the government why it failed to keep inflation within the band. That explanation could be in writing, or as an appearance before a panel or something similar. But it has never been invoked, even though last year the inflation rate was above six per cent for almost twelve months. This was because of food prices mainly, and seasonal spikes in fruit and vegetable prices including the infamous onion price. It is possible that MPC (if at all it is called to account for its failure) might express helplessness, because it may say that inflation is affected by government actions more than anything else. For instance, a massive increase in excise taxes on petrol and diesel has



Many experts believe that inflation is affected much more by fiscal expansionism and deficits rather than by setting the repo rate

caused those prices to race toward 100 rupees and cause inflation in transportation costs, and hence on everything else. Clearly these are fiscal actions, about which the monetary policy cannot do anything. Many experts believe that inflation is affected much more by fiscal expansionism and deficits rather than by setting the repo rate. For what it is worth, the current repo rate is at a historic low of 4 per cent. Indeed, barring a couple of occasions, for the past three years, the RBI has had a very long record of reducing interest rates, notwithstanding the inflation fears. There has also been some talk of whether the MPC should be given a wider leeway, and a higher band, to tolerate higher inflation in India, so that low interest rates can live much longer.

After all, in the western world, and also Japan, interest rates have been near zero for about 12 years now, so why should India bother? Why can't we live with six or even seven per cent inflation rather than a median rate of four? And is not inflation good for producers, who get the profit incentive of higher prices to produce more? Thankfully such debates have been

put to rest by the RBI itself, which has reiterated through a research report, that the current band of 2 to 6, with a median rate of four is just right for India.

So clearly the MPC favours a low repo rate to spur higher credit growth, and loan growth in the economy. Thus, the main thrust of RBI's policy ever since the pandemic began, and even earlier is to spur economic growth. It has tried all sorts of things beyond setting interest rates, to make cheap loans available to potential borrowers through the banking system. Thus, it allowed a moratorium on loan repayment, and also announced a Long-Term Repo Operation (LTRO), i.e. not just an overnight repo loan, but a three-year loan at low rates. Despite these measures, credit growth has been anaemic.

This fiscal year the biggest challenge for the RBI is to meet the huge borrowing requirement of the biggest borrower, i.e. the government of India. Its requirement is ₹12 lakh crore. In addition is the borrowing requirement of state governments which could also be another ₹10 lakh crore. The borrowing requirement from the private sector has not been growing

robustly, but if that picks up, then that too will add demand pressure. The supply of loanable funds of the banking system comes from depositors. That deposit growth this year will not be more than around ₹15 lakh crore, even with optimistic assumptions. So, there's going to be a shortage of loanable funds, and this can only cause interest rates to go up. That is the last thing the RBI or the government wants. Even a one per cent increase in the cost of borrowing means an extra interest burden of more than ₹1 lakh crore. Hence it is critical that interest rates remain low, since the biggest beneficiary is the biggest borrower, i.e. the government.

Since the RBI cannot just print money and loan it at an ultra-low cost to the sovereign (that is prohibited by law), it has found an indirect method. This is called Quantitative Easing as per western central banks. What the RBI has said after the latest MPC meeting is that it will commit itself to "buy" government bonds worth ₹1 lakh crore in the first quarter (and quite possibly throughout the year). Which means ₹4 lakh crore of extra loanable funds at low rates. This is very unorthodox, and a bold crossing of a "lakshman rekha" for the RBI. This column has suggested a direct loan against shares swap deal between RBI and Central government, wherein PSU shares can be pledged. The current QE (which has been christened Government Securities Acquisition Programme or G-SAP) is a step in that direction. As the government embarks on its borrowing programme to bridge a mammoth deficit of ₹12 lakh crore, it will sell bonds, which will be indirectly bought by the RBI through secondary markets, and thus ensure adequate funding and also low interest rates. Whether this infusion of freshly created money will be inflationary or not, only time will tell. Watch this space!

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SPECTRUM SOCIETY

The urban farming wave amid pandemic

Exactly a year ago lockdown was imposed in most of the world's urban areas and Bhubaneswar was no exception. During the period, no people took up many activities at their homes to keep themselves engaged. Thousands of Bhubaneswar residents planted 'lockdown gardens' in their backyards, rooftops, even inside homes. Once the lockdown period was over, some of these gardens withered away and were supplanted by increasingly efficient urban agriculture.



Piyush Ranjan Rout

URBAN AGRICULTURE REDUCES THE DISTANCE THAT FOOD NEEDS TO BE TRANSPORTED AND DECREASES THE OVERALL CARBON FOOTPRINT OF AGRICULTURE

Even though without much or no incentive from the government, urban farming is now staging a curious comeback. Residents of Bhubaneswar have set up their own gardens for encouraging people to grow crops in vacant lots or on rooftops. The lockdown has promoted the resurgence of community gardens or urban farming as the solution for 'food deserts' in city neighbourhoods.

But do these gardens actually make sense? Are there real social or environmental benefits to growing food within city limits? Or is urban farming just a well-meaning but ultimately insignificant hobby for urban elites?

What emerges is a nuanced picture. Urban farming likely won't ever provide cities with all that many calories. But urban farms

can provide a bunch of other neat benefits, from bolstering local communities to (sometimes) encouraging healthier diets. They can also give city-dwellers a better appreciation of how our food system works, which is less nebulous than it sounds.

There are a few takeaways that the government may consider to incentivise urban farming post-pandemic as a regular programme.

Community gardens and urban farms can provide some families with an additional source of healthy, low-cost produce. That's a worthwhile goal in itself, and there is a belief that people who engage in urban farming eat more fruits and vegetables.

A number of cities across the globe have been pushing community gardens and farms as a way of revitalising neighbourhoods falling into disrepair and there is indeed evidence that urban farming is quite valuable for city residents.

The presence of urban farms is associated with improved neighbourhood aesthetics, reduced crime, and community cohesion. When a community garden is established in a neighbourhood, it keeps its resident engaged as it increases social bonds and networks among neighbours and the people who participate in farming. These farms bridge gaps, reduce existing ten-

sions, and foster social integration between otherwise segregated groups. Just like tilling the soil on a weekend is a great way to bring people together. It's also a healthy, relaxing activity.

Urban farms can serve as sites for education, development, and skill training opportunities. Some cities have programmes that use urban agriculture to help teach young people about science, environmental stewardship, and healthy eating.

Modern-day industrial agriculture certainly has its environmental drawbacks from soil degradation to disruption of the nitrogen cycle to all the fossil fuels used for the heavy machinery. Urban agriculture reduces the distance that food needs to be transported and decreases the overall carbon footprint of agriculture.

There are other angles to consider, too: urban growers often use less water and fertilizer and pesticides than rural farms do. Urban agriculture does have environmental benefits. Community gardens and green roofs can help filter out local air pollution, cool down cities during summer and retain precipitation by avoiding storm-water runoff into nearby waterways. When designed well, urban gardens can provide valuable habitats.

People who participated for the

first time in a community garden learned what it takes to grow different crops and appreciate how difficult it actually is. Similarly, people can better grasp the seasonality of different fruits and vegetables once they are into urban farming. They can learn why food waste occurs. They can see first-hand the ins and outs of a complex, vital system most have lost touch by spending a few months taking a potato from seed to harvest, and children will soon have a much deeper appreciation for the natural systems on which a city depends.

Urban agriculture is most valuable for how it forces community to be more conscientious about the people who feed society at large: the farmer, the agriculture labourer, the market and the business community, the cooks in homes and restaurants.

Do lockdown gardens push for broader reforms in our food security pattern? Right now, it's a little tough to say. But if urban farming keeps expanding with encouragement from government, then this may turn out to be its biggest achievement in the pandemic.

The writer is an urban management practitioner. He can be reached on Twitter @piyushrout.

Indo-Russian ties

Sir, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's visit to India enabled us to take stock of the positives in the ties between the two countries and the issues on which the two countries disagree. India and Russia have always maintained strong relations though many factors have caused fluctuations in the relations over the years. Neither Russia nor India can be blamed for the strained relations. The last three decades have witnessed a lot of changes in the world. China has emerged as the number two global power. Russia-US ties have deteriorated. Russia and China are under pressure because of the West. Consequently, both have formed a stronger strategic partnership. Further, Russia-Pakistan ties have strengthened in recent years. Similarly, India-US ties have strengthened. India and Russia need to review their close ties through these changes and adapt their policies in accordance with them. Lavrov held detailed discussions with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on a range of bilateral and regional issues and also on preparations for Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to India later this year. Lavrov's visit to Islamabad after his visit to India is a cause for concern for India. The fact that Russia supplies over 6 per cent of Pakistan's conventional weaponry has adversely affected India-Russia relations. Both countries have convergent views on the peace process in Afghanistan, the place of importance given to Taliban in power-sharing. The present status of the relations between the two countries in the changed circumstances can only be understood after Putin's visit to India. It remains to be seen if India will go ahead with the purchase of S-400 anti-missile defence system from Russia in the face of severe US restrictions on this. Against this backdrop, India needs to devise plans for strengthening its ties with Russia. Even though India-Russia ties have had their ups and downs, both countries cannot afford to sever the ties. Venu GS, KOLLAM (KERALA)

Grave concern

Sir, The sharp spike in Covid-19 cases is a matter of grave concern. India reported 1,69,899 new cases and 904 deaths on Sunday. This was the second day on the trot when the country registered over 1.5 lakh new cases. Maharashtra topped the charts with around 63,294 infections, followed by Uttar Pradesh and Delhi in that order. While the government has banned the export of antiviral injection Remdesivir, we would do well not to take the virus lightly anymore. NJ Ravi Chander, BANGALORE

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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Maha businesses choke under fresh curbs

REUTERS

Mumbai, April 12: Retailers, restaurants and theatres in India's richest state are reeling under the impact of harsh restrictions imposed last week by authorities scrambling to curb a resurgence in COVID-19 cases.

The western state of Maharashtra, home to India's financial capital Mumbai, has been the worst hit in the pandemic, accounting for about a quarter of the country's 13.5 million case load.

Last week, the local government shut down restaurants, bars, gyms, theatres and non-essential stores in a blow to businesses that had barely recovered from the nationwide lockdown last year.

After closing for more than eight months, theatres in Maharashtra reopened in November despite sporadic Bollywood releases and capacity restrictions.

But with the new surge in cases and the spectre of more curbs, theatre owners say they may never recover from the losses and be forced to shut down.

"It's the final nail in the coffin," said Sharad Doshi, vice-president of the Cinema Owners and Exhibitors Association of India. "We have no choice but to perish."

Doshi and other business owners have called on the government provide support through tax waivers and subsidies on rent to prevent the crisis from worsening.

India reported 168,912 new infections on Monday, inching past Brazil, with a total of 13.53 million cases, data compiled by Reuters



One month (of lockdown) is equivalent to about \$5 billion of revenue for retailers from just Maharashtra

KUMAR RAJAGOPALAN | CEO OF THE RETAILERS ASSOCIATION OF INDIA

shows. India is now the second-most affected country after the United States that is grappling with 31.2 million cases.

With barely 4% of more than 1.3 billion people in India estimated to have been vaccinated, experts say the COVID crisis in the country could have a long way to go.

STORE CLOSURES, JOB LOSSES

Maharashtra, one of India's most urbanised and industrialised states, accounts for nearly 15% of the country's gross domestic product and is crucial for its economic recovery.

The Confederation Of All India Traders estimated traders in Maharashtra would lose about 1 trillion rupees (\$13.34 billion) during a month-long lockdown.

The state has also suffered the most deaths in India's COVID-19

outbreak, and as cases continue to surge, sources said authorities were considering shutting down some industries and restricting public transport.

"One month (of lockdown) is equivalent to about \$5 billion of revenue for retailers from just Maharashtra," Kumar Rajagopalan, CEO of the Retailers Association of India, told Reuters. "We are talking about 1.2 million stores and 5 million jobs."

Rajagopalan said store shut-downs will hit sectors such as manufacturing, distribution and banking and have a snowball effect on the economy.

Restaurants and bars in Maharashtra had already felt the pinch as the state mandated a daily curfew after 8pm - prime time for eateries to rake in revenues - before shuttering them completely last week.

Riyaaz Amlani, who runs nearly 60 popular restaurants, including

Last week, the local government shut down restaurants, bars, gyms, theatres and non-essential stores in a blow to businesses that had barely recovered from the nationwide lockdown last year

SOCIAL, across 15 cities in India, said the shutdown would lead to more job losses.

Amlani said many restaurants took loans to re-start their businesses after burning capital during the lockdown last year and would now have to bear interest costs on top of fixed costs.

"So there is a serious crisis looming," he said.

Reality contrary to Guj govt's claims: HC on Covid situation

"People now think that they are at God's mercy," a division bench of Chief Justice Vikram Nath and Justice Bhargav Karia said while hearing a PIL, taken up suo motu on the situation in the state



Health workers shift a COVID-19 patient at the Government Civil Hospital in Ahmedabad, Monday. PTI PHOTO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, April 12: The Gujarat High Court pulled up the state government Monday over the COVID-19 situation in the state and problems being faced by citizens, saying the reality is contrary to what the government claims.

"People now think that they are at God's mercy," a division bench of Chief Justice Vikram Nath and Justice Bhargav Karia said while hearing a PIL, taken up suo motu (on its own), on the situation in the state. The HC also suggested some steps, like capping the number of guests at weddings to 50, instead of 100 at present, limiting the number of people at funerals, ban on all kind of gatherings, limiting the number of employees in offices and designating one person in each society to coordinate with authorities.

Advocate General Kamal Trivedi informed the HC about various steps taken by the Gujarat government, but the bench refused to accept most of the explanations, be it on the availability of beds or

Remdesivir-the key anti-viral drug currently in high demand.

"The situation is quite different than what you are claiming. You are saying that everything is alright. But, the reality is contrary to that," the high court said. There is a "trust deficit" among people, the HC observed during the hearing held via video conference. "People are cursing the government and the government is cursing the people. This will not help. We need to break this chain of infection," the court said.

On some media reports claiming there was a shortage of Remdesivir injections and long queues outside a hospital to get it, Trivedi told the court that people who do not need the drug were also trying to buy it as a precautionary measure.

Remdesivir is not required if the

patient is under home treatment or is asymptomatic and not critical. The supply is also less from companies, he informed. "Only seven companies make it. The production is just 1.75 lakh vials per day. We are procuring around 25,000 injections every day for Gujarat," Trivedi said.

However, the HC asked why the government was controlling the supply of Remdesivir when people were running here and there to get it and even designated hospitals were saying they do not have it.

"The medicine is available, but it is being controlled by the government. Why can't people buy it? Make sure it is available everywhere. There is no shortage of Remdesivir. Everything is available with you. We want results, not reasons," the court said.

Increase in rush for outstation trains from Mumbai

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 12: Amid talks of a complete lockdown in Maharashtra to arrest the COVID-19 surge, the passenger rush on outstation trains in Mumbai has increased since the last weekend, Railway sources said Monday.

The Railway administration, however, attributed the passenger rush to the summer season which sees a large number of people travelling to their native places.

The sources said though the rush on outstation trains has gone up since the state government announced fresh COVID-19 curbs earlier this month, the weekend saw a steady flow of passengers on long-distance trains originating from different stations in the metropolis.

Speculation is rife about the Maharashtra government mulling a "complete lockdown" to curb the current surge in COVID-19 cases, which registered an all-time high spike of 63,294 infections Sunday. A Central Railway staffer deputated at Lokmanya Tilak Terminus



Passengers gather at the Lokmanya Tilak Terminus to board outstation trains amid the ongoing spike in COVID-19 cases in Mumbai, Monday. PTI PHOTO

(LTT) said since the last couple of days, the station in suburban Mumbai has registered a sharp increase in passengers coming to

board trains. "Since the last few days, trains are going full, but since the last few days there has been more rush,"

he said. A senior Railway officer said the rush on outstation trains going to North India is mainly due to the summer season, when a large num-

ber of people visit their native places for marriages and other reasons.

"Panchayat elections are scheduled in Uttar Pradesh and hence many people are going for voting," he said, adding there may be some migrant labourers among the passengers, but their number is "negligible" as compared to the last year.

A Central Railway spokesperson said they are operating 12 of the 88 scheduled summer special trains for North India, apart from 18-20 regular special trains for Darbhanga, Patna, Danapur, Gorakhpur, Lucknow, Manduadih, Puri, Raxaul and Guwahati among other destinations.

"The Railway administration appeals to people to avoid panic booking. The Railway runs more trains in summer for the convenience of passengers," Shivaji Sutar, chief public relations officer, Central Railway, said.

Sutar said only passengers having confirmed tickets/reservation are being permitted to board the trains.

Sabarmati Ashram closed again for visitors as virus cases spike



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, April 12: Over three months after it was reopened for people after remaining shut for nine months, the Sabarmati Ashram here in Gujarat has been closed for visitors once again following the rise in coronavirus positive cases in the state.

The Sabarmati Ashram Preservation and Memorial Trust, which manages the ashram, stated Monday that the ashram premises "will remain closed for visitors due to COVID-19 pandemic till further notice".

The ashram, which served as one of the residences of Mahatma Gandhi during the freedom struggle, was closed for visitors March 20, 2020, after detection of early COVID-19 cases in Gujarat.

The ashram was opened for visitors in January this year after a gap of more than nine months as the

COVID-19 scenario improved in Gujarat with the number of cases showing a downward trend.

However, the cases have been rising steeply in the state for the last few weeks. Gujarat logged more than 5,000 fresh cases on two consecutive days on Saturday and Sunday. Ahmedabad had added over 1,500 new infections Sunday, the health department had said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had visited the Sabarmati Ashram last in March to flag off a symbolic Dandi March as part of the "Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav" initiative. Several prominent temples in Gujarat, including the Somnath temple, Bahucharaji Temple and Shamlaji temple, have been shut for visitors because of the rising graph of cases. As of Sunday, Gujarat's caseload stood at 3,47,495. The state is left with 27,568 active cases, as per the government data.

CBI summons Deshmukh for questioning tomorrow

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, April 12: Moving ahead in its probe into the allegations of corruption and misuse of office, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has summoned former Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh for questioning April 14.

"We have asked Deshmukh to record his statement April 14 at our office here," a CBI official related to probe told IANS.

This is for the first time that the CBI has summoned Deshmukh for questioning after it registered a preliminary enquiry (PE) April 6 into allegations of corruption and

CBI has recorded the statement of Param Bir Singh, who dropped a letter bomb March 20, accusing Deshmukh of asking arrested Mumbai cop Sachin Vaze and others to extort money from bars and hotels



misuse of office on the orders of the Bombay High Court.

The CBI action comes a day after it recorded the statements of his two PAs, Palande and Kundan, Sunday.

Earlier, in the day, the CBI also recorded the statement of ACP Sanjay Patil for the second time in connection with its probe.

Deshmukh had stepped down from his post on last Monday after the Bombay HC ordered the CBI to conduct a preliminary enquiry into the charges levelled against him by former Mumbai Police chief Param Bir Singh.

Two teams of the CBI led by

Superintendent of Police level officers are already in Mumbai to probe the allegations of corruption and misuse of office by Deshmukh.

The CBI has also recorded the statement of Param Bir Singh, who dropped a letter bomb March 20, accusing Deshmukh of asking suspended and arrested Mumbai cop Sachin Vaze and other Mumbai Police personnel to extort Rs 100 crore monthly from bars, hotels and restaurants.

The CBI has also recorded the statement of petitioner Jayshri Patil and DCP Raju Bhujbal.

Arrest Guj BJP head for free Remdesivir distribution: Cong



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, April 12: Gujarat BJP president CR Paatil is facing fire over free distribution of 5,000 doses of key COVID-19 drug Remdesivir in Surat with the opposition Congress Monday demanding his arrest for alleged illegal procurement and storage of the medicine.

The Gujarat Congress sought registration of an FIR against Paatil, who had stirred a controversy last week after he announced free distribution of 5,000 doses of Remdesivir in Surat, his hometown, amid a shortage of the medicine.

The free distribution started from the BJP's Surat office April 10. Even as the Congress sought his arrest, as many as 3,000 vials had already been distributed during the last three days, including around 1,000 injections given free to relatives of needy patients Monday, said an office-bearer of the Surat BJP.

A Congress delegation, led by state unit chief Amit Chavda, called on Gujarat Governor Acharya Devvrat and sought strict action against Paatil for "flouting rules".

"No one knows how Paatil procured 5,000 Remdesivir injections. Is he having any licence to buy and store such critical drug in his premises?"

"How much money was spent (to buy the drug) and under which law it was procured? There is absolutely no information available about it," Chavda told reporters after meeting the Governor.

Other members of the Congress delegation included Rajya Sabha MP Shaktisinh Gohil, Leader of Opposition Pares Dhanani and former Gujarat Congress president Bharatsinh Solanki.

"It appears that one man is controlling the entire state. Since the BJP government is not taking any

action, we urged the Governor to intervene in the matter.

"We want the police to lodge an FIR and arrest Paatil for this illegal act so that others refrain from doing such acts in the future," said Chavda.

Paatil had told reporters on Saturday that the free distribution of the much sought after COVID-19 medicine was decided after looking at the plight of relatives of patients who needed Remdesivir.

"We were seeing long lines of people for injections and that is the reason we decided to help relatives of patients.

Gujarat BJP president CR Paatil had stirred a controversy last week after he announced free distribution of 5,000 doses of Remdesivir in Surat, his hometown, amid a shortage of the drug

"The government is doing a good job by providing Remdesivir free of cost in government hospitals, while those in private hospitals have to pay large sums of money for it, the Gujarat BJP president had said.

Monday, Surat MLA Harsh Sanghavi of the BJP came out in support of Paatil and said all the injections were procured from other states by paying money.

The ruling party legislator also hit out at the Congress. "We have purchased these injections from other states where they are in excess. We are giving it for free to the needy people who are standing in queues. Is it a crime to help the needy people? Did Chavda give even one injection free to someone his own constituency?" asked Sanghavi.



“We will continue with our struggle for the restoration of J&K’s special status. We do not accept your (government’s) decision of revoking it”
MEHBOOBA MUFTI | PDP PRESIDENT

LIVING COVID PATIENT DECLARED DEAD

A case has come to light at Patna Medical College Hospital (PMCH) where a living person infected with Covid-19 was declared dead and a death certificate issued to his family members



of the day quote

The talks with the government would resume from the same point where it had ended January 22. The demands are also the same -- all three ‘black’ farm laws should be repealed, a new law made to ensure MSP (minimum support price) for crops



Several government and private hospitals will be converted into dedicated Covid care centres soon. The decision was taken in an emergency meeting to review the Covid-19 situation in the national capital



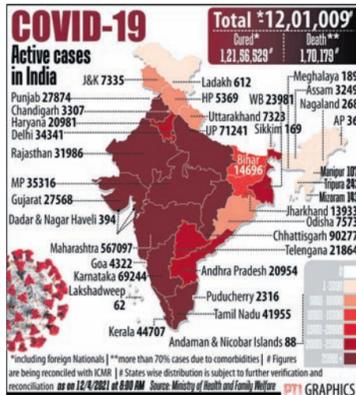
ARVIND KEJRIWAL | DELHI CHIEF MINISTER

Corona vaccine is the need of the country. You all should also raise your voice for it. Everyone has the right to a safe life



RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

10 STATES SHOW SHARP RISE IN DAILY nCoV CASES



Night curfew in Haryana
Chandigarh: The Haryana government Monday announced night curfew from 9 p.m. till 5 a.m. with immediate effect to curb the spike in Covid cases. Earlier, neighbouring Punjab, Chandigarh, and Delhi had imposed night curfew too. State Health Minister Anil Vij told the media that the decision was taken in the wake of the sudden spike in cases.

AGENCY

New Delhi, April 12: Ten states Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Rajasthan have shown a steep rise in the daily COVID-19 cases accounting for 83.02 per cent of the new infections, the Union Health Ministry said Monday. India's daily cases continue to rise and 1,68,912 fresh coronavirus infections were registered in a span of 24 hours, the highest single-day rise since the outbreak of the pandemic. Maharashtra has reported the highest daily cases at 63,294. It is followed by Uttar Pradesh with 15,276 while Delhi reported 10,774 new cases.

Sixteen states -- Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Delhi, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Haryana, Rajasthan, Punjab, Kerala, Telangana, Uttarakhand, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal are displaying an upward trajectory in daily new cases. India's total active caseload has increased to 12,01,009 and now comprises 8.88 per cent of the country's total infections. A net increase of 92,922 cases has been recorded in the total active caseload in a day. Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh and Kerala cumulatively account for

14 hosps dedicated for Covid patients in Delhi

New Delhi: In view of exponential surge of Covid-19 cases in the national capital, the health department of the Delhi Government has declared as many as 14 big private hospitals as fully Covid-care centres Monday. The decision came hours after the Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal chaired an emergency meeting in view of Covid-19 situation in the capital Monday.

70.16 per cent of India's total active cases. Maharashtra alone accounts for 47.22% of the total active caseload of the country. India's cumulative recoveries stand at 1,21,56,529 with 75,086 recoveries being registered in a span of 24 hours. Besides, the daily deaths continue to show an upward trend with 904 deaths being reported in a day. Ten States account for 89.16 per cent of the new deaths. Maharashtra saw the maximum casualties (349). Chhattisgarh follows with 122 daily deaths. Nine states and UTs have not reported any COVID-19 deaths in a span of 24 hours. These are Odisha, Himachal Pradesh, Ladakh (UT), D&D and D&N, Meghalaya, Sikkim, Lakshadweep, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Arunachal Pradesh.

CHEERFUL MOOD



Youngsters in traditional attire dance on the eve of Baisakhi festival in Amritsar

PTI PHOTO

Covid hits Supreme Court

Around 50% Supreme Court staffers have tested positive for COVID-19, media reports said



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, April 12: The surge in cases amid the second wave of Covid-19 has hit the Supreme Court with several of its staff testing positive for the viral infection. According to sources familiar with the development, 44 people have tested positive for Covid-19 so far in last one week. A top court official, however, dismissed some media reports suggesting that nearly 50 per cent of Supreme Court staffers have tested positive. However, the top court's functioning has not been affected in any way. The source added that there nearly 3,000 staffers in the top court.

also come out with two separate notifications in this regard. One of the notifications said on Monday, the top court benches, which used to assemble at 10.30 a.m. and 11 a.m., would assemble one hour late. A sanitation drive would be carried out on the entire court premises, including courtrooms, and the judges will take up matter virtually from their residences. According to the other notification, physical mentioning of cases for urgent hearing by advocates have been suspended from Monday until further orders. Around 10 lakh new cases have been reported over the past week, as India faces exponential rise in Covid positive cases. Today was the sixth consecutive day it reported over a lakh daily cases with 1,68,912 new infections -- the highest daily surge so far. According to the Health Ministry, 904 people have succumbed to the viral infection in past 24 hours.

Sushil Chandra appointed CEC



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 12: Election Commissioner Sushil Chandra was Monday appointed as the next Chief Election Commissioner, the Law Ministry said. According to a statement issued by the Legislative Department of the ministry, Chandra will assume charge April 13. Incumbent Sunil Arora demits office Monday. Chandra was appointed as an election commissioner February 14, 2019, ahead of the Lok Sabha elections.

He would demit office May 14, 2022. Under him, the Election Commission would hold assembly polls in Goa, Manipur, Uttarakhand, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. The term of the assemblies of Goa, Manipur, Uttarakhand and Punjab ends on various dates in March next year. The term of the Uttar Pradesh assembly ends May 14 next year. New assemblies have to be constituted before their five year term ends.

Babri judge rewarded

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, April 12: Retired judge Surendra Kumar Yadav, who gave the verdict in the high-profile Babri mosque demolition case last year, took oath as an 'up-lokayukta' in Uttar Pradesh Monday.

As a judge of special CBI court, Yadav had September 30, 2020 acquitted all the 32 accused, including BJP veterans LK Advani, MM Joshi, Uma Bharti and Kalyan Singh, in the case of demolition of Babri mosque in Ayodhya December 6, 1992.

"Yadav was appointed as third 'up-lokayukta' by the Governor April 6. On Monday, Yadav was administered oath by Lokayukta Sanjay Mishra in the presence of other senior officers," an official statement said here.

The anti-corruption watchdog comprises the Lokayukta and three 'up-lokayuktas'. The other two up-lokayuktas are Shambu Singh Yadav, who was appointed August 4, 2016, and Dinesh Kumar Singh, who was appointed June 6, 2020.

The tenure of an 'up-lokayukta' is eight years. The Lokayukta is from a non-political background and functions as a statutory authority probing cases primarily related to corruption, government mismanagement, or abuse of power by public servants or ministers.

SHORT TAKES

Eight killed in road mishap

Jammu: At least eight passengers were killed and four seriously injured Monday in a road accident in Jammu and Kashmir's Doda district. Police sources said a mini bus travelling on the Thathri-Gandola road went out of the driver's control and dropped into Kalnai river. 42 Kms from Doda town. "Eight passengers were killed and 4 seriously injured in this accident. A rescue operation has already started", police said. The ill-fated mini bus was on its way from Doda to Chillil village.

Tiger mauls man to death

Lakhimpur Kheri (Uttar Pradesh): A 45-year-old farmer has been mauled to death by a tiger inside the buffer forests of the Dudhwa Tiger Reserve (DTR) in Tikunia area. The farmer, Om Prakash, is the fifth person to be killed by a tiger in the forest in six months. Anil Patel, divisional forest officer, said that villagers had been warned last week not to enter the forest as camera traps had captured images of a tigress with cubs in the area. Pugmarks had also confirmed the presence of an adult tiger in the area.

CBI interrogates Anup for 6th time

Kolkata: The CBI Monday interrogated the alleged coal scam kingpin Anup Majhi alias Lala for the sixth time. According to the probe body, Majhi appeared before the CBI at around 11 a.m. A CBI official said that he was being questioned in connection with the scam and about his financial dealings and his properties in the state (West Bengal).

Riyaz suspended

Mumbai: Assistant Police Inspector Riyaz Kazi, a colleague of police officer Sachin Waze, was suspended from service Monday, a day after he was arrested by the NIA probing the recovery of an explosives-laden SUV found outside industrialist Mukesh Ambani's residence here and the subsequent murder of Mansukh Hiran, an official said. Additional Commissioner of Police (Arms unit) Virendra Mishra has issued the order suspending Kazi which stated that he cannot do any private work and action will be taken against him if this order is violated.

No meals on flights with duration of less than 2 hours

The ban will come into effect from Thursday, the ministry said in its order

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 12: Airlines are not permitted to serve meals in domestic flights that have a duration of less than two hours, the Civil Aviation Ministry said Monday, as coronavirus cases continue to spiral across the country. When scheduled domestic flights were resumed on May 25 after coronavirus lockdown last year, the ministry had allowed the airlines to serve in-flight meals under certain conditions. Modifying the previous order, the ministry's fresh directive said: "The airlines, operating flights on domestic sectors, may provide meals services on board, where the in-flight duration is two hours or more." The ministry



said it decided to review the on-board meal services in domestic flights due to the "the increasing threat of COVID-19 and its variants". "Airlines are permitted to serve only pre-packed snacks, meals and pre-packed beverages on flights that have a duration of more than two hours. The servicing of in-flight meals must be staggered "among the adjacent seats as far as possible", it added. The ministry said all three coronavirus

variants of the UK, South Africa and Brazil demonstrated increased transmissibility, as reported by the World Health Organization. India has surpassed Brazil to record the second-highest number of COVID-19 cases at 1,35,27,717, as a record 1,68,912 new infections were reported Monday. The active cases have surpassed the 12-lakh mark, while the toll increased to 1,70,179 with 904 more deaths, the highest since October 18.

Rain likely in parts of India in next 4-5 days, says IMD

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

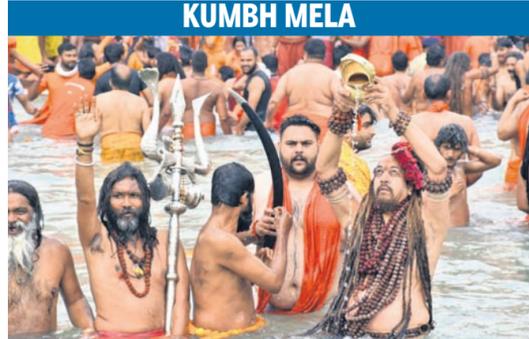
New Delhi, April 12: Several parts of the country are likely to receive rainfall in the next five days due to different cyclonic circulations, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said Monday. According to the National Weather Forecasting Centre of the IMD, under the influence of trough and cyclonic circulations over the south peninsula, scattered to fairly widespread rainfall with thunderstorm, lightning and gusty winds of 30-40 kilometres per hour are very likely over southwest peninsula India in the next five days. The IMD said isolated heavy rainfall is also likely over south and ghat areas of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Mahe, coastal and

south interior Karnataka during April 14-16. Another cyclonic circulation lies over southwest Madhya Pradesh and neighbouring areas. Under its influence, isolated rainfall with thunderstorm, lightning and gusty winds (30-40 kmph) is very likely over Madhya Pradesh, Vidarbha, Telangana, Chhattisgarh, Gangetic West Bengal and Odisha during next 4-5 days and over Jharkhand during next 24 hours. The IMD said a fresh active western disturbance is very likely to affect the western Himalayan region during April 14-17 and adjoining plains during April 15-17. Isolated hailstorms are also likely over Jammu, Kashmir, Ladakh, Gilgit-Baltistan and Muzaffarabad and Himachal Pradesh April 14-16.

Thousands flout Covid norms, take dip in Ganga

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Haridwar, April 12: Amid rising coronavirus cases nationwide, a sea of saffron-clad seers and ash-smeared Nagas converged at Har ki Pauri in Haridwar for a holy dip in the Ganga during the second shahi snan of the Kumbh Mela Monday. Led by their 'mahamandaleshwaras', the sadhus from different akhadas took out "shobha yatras" through the main thoroughfare of the pilgrimage city to gather at Brahma Kund, Hari ki Pauri for the shah snan -- or the royal bath -- on Somvati Amavasya. Marching barefoot to their destination, the seers took a dip in the river as they were showered with flower petals from helicopters arranged by the Uttarakhand government. Masks were not worn by a large proportion and social distancing appeared impossible in an



event in which, according to the mela administration, over 17 lakh people had taken a dip in the river in the first few hours up to 10 a.m. Mela Inspector General Sanjay Gunjyal said 100 per cent compliance with Covid-19 norms is not possible

with such a large crowd of seers converging on the ghats, but efforts were on to ensure that everyone adheres to them. While Har ki Pauri, considered the holiest of the ghats was reserved for the akhadas from 7 am onwards,

common people took the dip at the other ghats of the Ganga, revered by millions as a goddess. Seers from Niranjani Akhada led by their mahamandaleshwar Acharya Kailashanand Giri were the first at the ghat. Sadhus from Ananda Akhada also went to the river with them. They were followed by the Joon Akhada seers. Former King of Nepal Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah, on his maiden visit to Haridwar, was among the devotees who took a bath in the river. It was the second shahi snan during the ongoing Kumbh Mela, which has been limited to just one month due to rising cases of coronavirus. The last 'royal bath' was conducted on the occasion of Mahashivratri March 11. Har Ki Pauri resonated with the chants of Har Mahadev throughout the day as the akhadas descended on the ghat in batches.

The akhadas of transgenders led by mahamandaleshwar Lakshmi Narayan Tripathi took the dip along with the Joon Akhada seers. They came to Har ki Pauri dancing to drum beats. However, Acharya Lakshmi Narayan took ill and fainted soon after the ritual bath and was rushed to hospital in an ambulance. Maha Nirvani Akhada seers led by its mahamandaleshwar Vishokanand Maharaj arrived at the ghat at the end of a procession. Before taking a dip themselves, they bathed an idol of the Sun god kept in a palanquin. Uttarakhand DGP Ashok Kumar said the shahi snan was being conducted smoothly throughout the 'mela kshetra' from Haridwar to Devprayag. More than 20,000 police and para military personnel kept an eye over the mela area spread over 600 hectares.

of the day quote

Patients without symptoms and with mild symptoms will be isolated in hotels and COVID care centres. Only patients with severe conditions will be treated in hospitals

K SUDHAKAR | HEALTH MIN, KARNATAKA

I salute the volunteers for rendering selfless service and effectively delivering the government's welfare schemes right at the people's doorstep. You are great soldiers with a great heart, who understood the people's concerns

Y S JAGAN MOHAN REDDY | CM, AP

Why is it that nobody shot a video of the incident on a cell phone? Everyone, from the mediapersons to common people, is in possession of smart phones. The EC says the central forces were compelled to open fire. But the report of the DM and the SP is not clear

BIMAN BOSE | VETERAN CPI(M) LEADER

SHORT TAKES

Drug trafficking network busted

New Delhi: The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) Monday claimed to have busted a psychotropic drugs trafficking network, that used the 'darknet' to ship consignments abroad, with the arrest of 4 people and seizure of over 30 lakh pieces of drugs and cough syrup. The syndicate used to conceal the psychotropic drugs in herbal supplement packages, the agency said. "The operation, that is ongoing, has led to seizure of 30.5 lakh (pieces) of psychotropic drugs, 70,000 codeine-based cough syrups and 14.895 kg Amphetamine drug," NCB deputy director (operations) K P S Malhotra said.

Youth with fake currencies held

Coimbatore: A youth has been detained near Tirupur, about 55 kms from here, for allegedly trying to circulate fake currencies, police said Monday. The youth was stopped during a vehicle-check Sunday at Padiyur as his two-wheeler did not bear any registration number, the police said. During interrogation, the police said they found in the vehicle colour photocopies of currencies in the denomination of 2,000, 500, 200 and 100 totalling ₹1.19 lakh. The currencies were seized.

Youth dies while dousing forest fire

Pithoragarh (Uttarakhand): A youth died while dousing a wildfire in his village in the Didihat forest range in Uttarakhand's Pithoragarh district, officials said Monday. The incident occurred Saturday when a fire broke out in Athkhawli and Sarpanch Purn Singh Mehta called youths from the village to extinguish the blaze, Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Vinay Bhargava said. The victim, Pankaj Singh Deopa (19), fell into a 500-metre-deep, fire-filled gorge, the officer said, adding he was pulled out of it and rushed to a hospital where doctors declared him dead.

Farmer kills self

Banda: A 48-year-old farmer killed himself by jumping in front of a train in Turra village as he was facing financial hardship, police said Monday. They said Pappu alias Ganga Prasad jumped in front of a Sampark Kranti Express Sunday and died on the spot. According to his brother, police said, Prasad's wife died six months ago following a kidney disease.



Maha Vikas Aghadi has become a 'Maha Vasooli Aghadi'. The way they have started the vasooli from police, farmers and the common man, it shows that all the three ruling parties have only one agenda and that is to collect money from wherever it is possible

DEVENDRA FADNAVIS | BJP LEADER

PRESIDENT RETURNS TO RASHTRAPATI BHAVAN

President Ram Nath Kovind Monday said he has returned to Rashtrapati Bhavan. Kovind, 75, had March 30 undergone a cardiac bypass surgery at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in New Delhi



24-hour campaign ban on Mamata: EC

THE BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER WAS ACCUSED OF VIOLATING THE CODE WITH HER REMARKS ON MUSLIM VOTES AND THOSE ALLEGEDLY TELLING PEOPLE TO REVOLT AGAINST CENTRAL SECURITY FORCES

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 12: The Election Commission Monday barred West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamool Congress leader Mamata Banerjee from campaigning for 24 hours for her remarks against central forces and a statement which had alleged religious overtones. "Commission hereby condemns such statements potent with serious law and order problems across the state(s) and sternly warns Mamata Banerjee and advises her to desist from using such statements while making public utterances during the period when Model Code of Conduct is in force," the order said. It said that the "commission also imposes a ban of 24 hours on Ms Mamata Banerjee from campaigning in any manner from 8 pm of April 12 till 8 pm of April 13".

Assembly elections in West Bengal began March 27 and four of the eight phases of the polls have been completed. The poll panel's order cited two separate notices to Banerjee April 7 and April 8, and her subsequent replies. On her speech which had alleged religious overtones, the Election



Commission (EC) said that Banerjee has "selectively chosen" parts of her speech in her reply dated April 9 and "did not mention anything on the context of key parts of her speech".

In her reply to the notice, the Trinamool Congress leader had said, "I did not seek to influence the voters to cast their vote for her on religious segmentary lines; rather I categorically spoke in favour of religious harmony in line with the spirit of Model Code of Conduct and the Constitution of India". "By using words 'I also will tell my Hindu brothers and sisters not

to make division amongst yourselves as Hindu and Muslim' it is evident that my speech was not to incite religious sentiments but to maintain peace and harmony," the chief minister had said. The EC order reproduced the "key part" of her reported speech. The text of Banerjee's speech and quoted in the commission's order read: "I am requesting my minority brothers and sisters with folded hands don't divide the minority votes after listening to the devil (shaitaan) person who had taken money from the BJP. He passes many communal statements and

Mamata to stage dharna in Kolkata

KOLKATA: Lashing out at the Election Commission over its decision to bar her from campaigning for 24 hours, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said she would stage a dharna in the city on Tuesday to protest against the poll panel's "unconstitutional decision". Taking to Twitter, she wrote, "To protest against the undemocratic and unconstitutional decision of the Election Commission of India, I will sit on dharna tomorrow at Gandhi Murti, Kolkata from 12 noon." The poll panel's order came after Banerjee's remarks against central forces and a statement which had alleged religious overtones.

initiates clashes between the Hindu and the Muslims..."

"The comrades of CPM and BJP are roaming around with the money given by BJP to divide the minority votes. Please don't allow them to do so. Keep in mind that if the BJP comes to the government then you will be in severe danger", read text of her speech quoted in the EC order.

SC dismisses PIL seeking deletion of Quran verses

The plea had sought deletion of 26 verses from Quran stating that these are being used by Islamic terrorist groups as justification for attacks on the civilians



POST NEWS NETWORK



New Delhi, April 12: The Supreme Court Monday dismissed a petition filed by Syed Waseem Rizvi, former chairperson of Shia Waqf Board of Uttar Pradesh, seeking deletion of certain verses of Quran alleging that they violate the law of the land and promote hatred. A three-judge bench of the apex court comprising Justices R F Nariman, B R Gavi and Hrushikesh Roy termed the petition "absolutely frivolous" and also imposed cost of ₹50,000 on Waseem Rizvi, who is also president of All India Shia Yateem Khana.

Rizvi had sought deletion of 26 verses from Quran stating that these are being used by Islamic terrorist groups as justification for attacks on the civilians.

Rizvi had alleged in his petition that certain verses in the Quran are a threat to the sovereignty, unity and integrity of the country and should be declared unconstitutional.

He had contended in the petition that verse 9 surah 5 is negative and promotes violence.

"But once the Sacred Months have passed, kill the polytheists, who violated their treaties, whoever you find them, capture them, besiege them, and lie in wait for them on every way. But if they repent, perform prayers, and pay alms-tax, then set them free. Indeed, Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful," the verse reads.

He had pleaded the court to constitute a committee of religious experts to get the opinion on the subject matter of the petition in the larger public interest.

RED FORT VIOLENCE

Court reserves order on Sidhu's bail plea

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 12: A Delhi court Monday reserved its order on the bail application of actor-activist Deep Sidhu, arrested in connection with the Red Fort violence on the Republic Day. Special Judge Neelofer Abida Perveen said that the order on Sidhu's bail plea will be pronounced April 15.

Sidhu's counsel told the court that mere presence did not make him part of unlawful assembly and that he was an honest citizen who was part of a protest.

The public prosecutor representing the Delhi police claimed that Sidhu participated in the protest with the intention to create violence and disregard the national flag and that he was the main instigator of unlawful assembly.

Sidhu was arrested February 9 in connection with the Red Fort violence on the Republic Day during farmers' tractor pa-

rade against the Centre's three new agri laws.

The prosecutor opposed the bail application, claiming that if released, Sidhu will destroy the evidence as he destroyed two phones before he was apprehended.

He told the court that before January 25, Sidhu gave interview to media wherein he said "26th (January) is coming...More and more people should come."

The prosecutor read out the transcripts of an interview that Sidhu had given to a news channel and claimed that he admitted in this interview that he broke the barricade. He further quoted from the interview where Sidhu had allegedly claimed to have broken barricades in Punjab November 26.

He claimed that in Sidhu's presence national flag was disrespected and that he did not try to stop it.

The prosecutor claimed that Sidhu was very well aware in advance that protesters at Singhu border will not follow the route.

KEEPING TRACK



A muslim man, is seen setting the timing for prayer in different watches for upcoming Ramzan festival in Hyderabad, Monday

PTI PHOTO

Govt to frame new electricity policy

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, April 12: The Power Ministry has set up an expert panel to prepare the Draft National Electricity Policy 2021.

The Central government, from time to time, in consultation with states, reviews and revises the National Electricity Policy and Tariff Policy under the Electricity Act, 2003. The government had notified the National Electricity Policy in February 2005. The Working Group on Power for the 12th Plan had made recommendation for amendment in National Electricity Policy in addition to Electricity Act 2003 and Tariff Policy.

The panel will prepare the National Electricity Policy 2021 and will be headed by Gireesh Pradhan, former Chairman, CERC. Other members include Rakesh Nath, former Chairman, CEA and ex-member, APTEL, CEA Chairman and representatives of MNRE, states of West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Assam and Gujarat, Niti Aayog, heads of NTPC, NHPC, POSOCO, PGCIL and SECI. The Joint Secretary, Power Ministry will be the convener. The panel may call invitees from industry including IPP, FICCI, CII, Wind Association, Solar Association for the meetings.

Kerala's night watchman turns IIM Professor

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Thiruvananthapuram, April 12: Ranjith Ramachandran, an Assistant Professor at IIM Ranchi, is a role model today. His struggle to get a good education and the fight to sustain himself to see his dream getting realised is being regarded as an inspiration to the society.

Ranjith lived in a dilapidated single room mud hut and worked as a night watchman for survival. His father is a tailor and mother a daily wage earner under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS).

He did his graduation at St Pious College, Kanhangad in northern most Kerala and worked as a night watchman at the BSNL exchange in Panathur, Kasargod district. He graduated in Economics honours and went on to study a doctoral degree at IIT Madras, one of the premier institutes of the country.

Ranjith, who writes himself as Ranjith K. Panathur, said that he was totally desperate after getting into IIT Madras as he knew no other language other than Malayalam. As communication was difficult, he wanted to quit, said Ranjith. However Dr Subhash, his professor



at IIT Madras encouraged him to continue, and now Ranjith has got a posting as Assistant Professor in the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Ranchi.

After his doctoral degree from IIT Madras, Ranjith joined Christ University, Bangalore for two months and he got a posting at IIM Ranchi. In between he was also in the merit list for the selection of professors in Calicut University but could not

make it. In a Facebook post, Ranjith wrote extensively on the trauma and the tough life he had faced to meet two ends together and dedicates his success to the poor parents, who had given everything to make him what he is now.

His Facebook post turned viral with more than 37,000 likes and Ranjith while speaking to IANS said, "I never thought that my

Facebook post would go this viral, I had posted it to be an inspiration for each and everyone who are fighting with their backs to the wall and I wanted to be an inspiration, nothing more."

The story of Ranjith, who comes from a remote village in the northernmost part of Kerala, is being appreciated as a hugely inspiring one, and he is being projected as a role model.

I never thought that my Facebook post would go this viral, I had posted it to be an inspiration for each and everyone who are fighting with their backs to the wall and I wanted to be an inspiration, nothing more

RANJITH RAMACHANDRAN

AMARNATH YATRA

Online registration to begin April 15

Jammu, April 12: The online registration of pilgrims for Shri Amarnathi Yatra 2021 is going to commence April 15 for both the Baltal and Chandanwari routes. This year's 56-day Yatra shall commence simultaneously on both the routes from June 28 and culminate Raksha Bandhan, August 22, 2021.

Nitishwar Kumar, Chief Executive Officer, Shri Amarnathi Shrine Board has informed that the intending yatriss shall have to visit the URL: www.jksasb.nic.in and click on REGISTER. The yatri will then be guided for the steps to be followed. He will have to fill up his details in the online application form and attach his photograph and the Compulsory Health Certificate (CHC).

The CEO said that for ensuring against fraudulent health certificates, only such certificates which are issued by doctors/Medical Institutes authorized by the concerned State Government/UT Administrations shall be accepted for the online registration.



While we would like to see these doses completed before the end of the year, it is not possible to set such targets given the many uncertainties involved
SCOTT MORRISON | AUSTRALIAN PRIME MINISTER

APPLE TO TESTIFY BEFORE US SENATE HEARING ON APP STORE

Apple will send its chief compliance officer before the US Senate Judiciary Committee to testify during a hearing on app stores and digital competition April 21, said media reports



of the day quote

I urge everyone to continue to behave responsibly and remember 'hands, face, space and fresh air' to suppress COVID as we push on with our vaccination programme
BORIS JOHNSON | BRITISH PRIME MINISTER



We need a strong, diversified and resilient US-based electric vehicle battery supply chain, so we can supply the growing global demand for these vehicles and components -creating good-paying jobs here at home
JOE BIDEN | US PRESIDENT

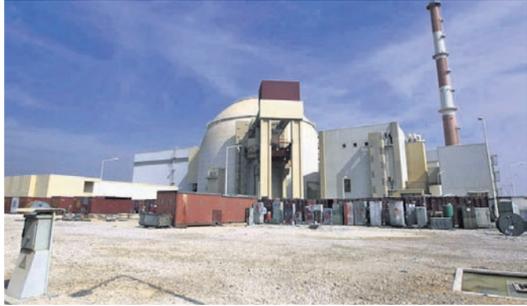


China's failure to provide access to global health experts made the COVID-19 pandemic worse than it had to be
ANTONY BLINKEN | US SECRETARY OF STATE



Iran blames Israel for sabotage at its Natanz nuclear plant

Israel has not directly claimed responsibility for the attack, but Israeli media widely reported that a devastating cyberattack orchestrated by Israel caused the blackout



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Dubai, April 12: Iran Monday blamed Israel for a sabotage attack on its underground Natanz nuclear facility that damaged the centrifuges it uses to enrich uranium there, warning that it would avenge the assault.

The comments by Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh represent the first official accusation leveled against Israel for the assault Sunday that cut power across the facility.

Israel has not directly claimed responsibility for the attack. However, suspicion fell immediately on it as Israeli media widely reported that a devastating cyberattack orchestrated by Israel caused the blackout.

If Israel was responsible, it would further heighten tensions between the two nations, already engaged in a shadow conflict across the wider Middle East. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who met Sunday with US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, has vowed to do everything in his power to stop efforts to revive a nuclear deal between Iran and world powers.

At a news conference at Israel's Nevatim air base Monday, where he viewed Israeli air and missile defense systems and its F-35 combat aircraft, US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin declined to say whether the Natanz incident is likely to impede the Biden administration's efforts to re-engage with Iran on its nuclear programme

The comments by Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh represent the first official accusation leveled against Israel for the assault Sunday

Multiple Israeli media outlets reported Sunday that an Israeli cyberattack caused the blackout in Natanz

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England reopens pubs, hair salons

REUTERS

Birmingham, April 12: People queued up outside retailers across England Monday to release their pent-up shopping fever and some grabbed a midnight pint or even an early haircut as England's shops, pubs, gyms and hairdressers reopened after three months of lockdown.



After imposing the most onerous restrictions in Britain's peacetime history, Prime Minister Boris Johnson said the reopening was a "major step" towards freedom but urged people to behave responsibly as the coronavirus was still a threat. As the sun rose, dozens of people queued up outside Primark in English cities such as Birmingham and outside JD Sports on Oxford Street in London, undeterred by the unseasonably cold weather.

Some folk lined up after midnight to raise a pint with fellow revellers at the Kentish Belle in Bexleyheath, south London, and at the Oak Inn in Coventry, central England. "I'm so excited to see my clients: to see how they are and give them that feeling that they get from having had their hair done," Maggie Grieve, who manages Beauchamp hairdressers in north London, told Reuters. "Today is going to feel like every hairdresser's birthday. The well-wishers have already come in: emails, texts, WhatsApps, even neighbours in the street wishing luck and joy. It feels great. Now can't wait to get to the pub," Grieve said.

Teacher leads Peru Prez polls

Lima: Pedro Castillo, a school teacher running for the Free Peru party, is leading the country's presidential elections with 16.1 per cent of the vote, according to the results of an exit poll published by local media. Preliminary data also showed candidates Hernando de Soto, of the Advance Country party, and Keiko Fujimori, of the Popular Force party, were at the second place with 11.9 per cent of the votes each.

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Getting people spending again is crucial for Britain's recovery after official data showed that 2020 was the worst year for its economy in more than three centuries with a 9.8% decline in gross domestic product.

Austin declined to say whether the Natanz incident is likely to impede the Biden administration's efforts to re-engage with Iran on its nuclear programme. "Those efforts will continue," Austin said.

Details remained scarce about what happened early Sunday at the facility. The event was initially described as a blackout caused by the electrical grid feeding its above-ground workshops and underground enrichment halls.

"The answer for Natanz is to take revenge against Israel," Khatibzadeh said. "Israel will receive its answer through its own path." He did not elaborate.

Khatibzadeh acknowledged that IR-1 centrifuges, the first-generation workhorse of Iran's uranium enrichment, had been damaged in the attack, but did not elaborate. State television has yet to show images from the facility.

A former chief of Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard said the attack had also set off a fire at the site and called for improvements in security. In a tweet, Gen. Mohsen Rezaei said that a second fire at Natanz in a year signaled "the seriousness of the infiltration phenomenon."

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif separately warned Natanz would be reconstructed with more advanced machines, something that could imperil ongoing talks in Vienna with world powers about saving Tehran's tattered atomic accord.

Clashes in Minneapolis after US police shoot Black man



A woman who was tear gassed while confronting police raises her arms outside Brooklyn Center Police Department in Brooklyn Center, Minnesota

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Minneapolis, April 21: Protests broke out Sunday night after US police fatally shot a young Black man in a suburb of Minneapolis - where a former police officer is currently on trial for the murder of George Floyd.

Hundreds of people gathered outside the police station in Brooklyn Center, northwest of Minneapolis. Police fired teargas and flash bangs at the demonstrators,

according to an AFP videojournalist at the scene.

The mother of Daunte Wright, a 20-year-old Black man, told a crowd earlier Sunday evening that he called her to say he had been pulled over by police, local media reported.

Katie Wright said she heard officers tell her son to put his phone down, and then one of the officers ended the call. Soon after, her son's girlfriend told her he had been shot.

The Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension confirmed

to AFP it is "investigating an officer-involved shooting incident" in Brooklyn Center but declined to identify the victim.

According to a statement from the Brooklyn Center Police Department, officers pulled over a driver for a traffic violation. When they discovered he had an outstanding warrant, they tried to take him into custody.

He got back into his car, and one of the officers fired their weapon, striking the driver, who died at the scene. A female passenger in the car suffered "non-life threatening injuries" and was transported to a local hospital, said the statement, which did not identify the woman.

A couple hundred people gathered in Brooklyn Center Sunday evening, where they were met with police in riot gear.

Photos from the scene showed men stomping on the windshield of a police cruiser. Police fired non-lethal rounds to try to disperse the protesters, according to the Star Tribune.

After about an hour, the police presence eased, and the crowd lit candles and wrote messages such as "Justice for Daunte Wright" in chalk on the street.

47 dead in 24 hrs as fighting escalates in Yemen's Marib

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Sanaa, April 12: Forty-seven people were killed in the past 24 hours as fighting escalated in Yemen's oil-rich province of Marib, a government official said.

The government forces engaged in violent armed confrontations with scores of the Houthi militia who were desperately attempting to militarily advance towards the city of Marib, the official told Xinhua news agency on Sunday.

He said that "the Houthis simultaneously carried out large military operations and shelling attacks against key government-controlled villages located around the city of Marib".

He confirmed that the Houthis' military operations against Marib continued despite the intensified airstrikes launched by the Saudi-led Arab coalition to support Yemen's government forces on-ground.

More than 27 Houthi fighters and about 20 soldiers of the government forces were killed during the fighting, he added. Earlier in the day, both warring sides continued exchanging heavy artillery shelling outside Marib, causing an unknown number of deaths and injuries..

Muslims navigate restrictions in the second pandemic Ramadan

THE PANDEMIC HAD DISRUPTED ISLAMIC WORSHIP THE WORLD OVER, INCLUDING IN EGYPT, WHERE MOSQUES WERE CLOSED TO WORSHIPPERS LAST RAMADAN

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Cairo, April 12: For Ramadan this year, Magdy Hafez has been longing to reclaim a cherished ritual: performing the nighttime group prayers called taraweeh at the mosque once again.

Last year, the coronavirus upended the 68-year-old Egyptian's routine of going to the mosque to perform those prayers, traditional during Islam's holiest month.

The pandemic had disrupted Islamic worship the world over, including in Egypt, where mosques were closed to worshippers last Ramadan.

"I have been going to the mosque for 40 years so it was definitely a very, very, difficult thing," he said. "But our religion orders us to protect one another." "Still, it's a whole other feeling, and the spirituality in

Ramadan is like nothing else."

Egypt has since allowed most mosques to reopen for Friday communal prayers and for this Ramadan it will let them hold taraweeh, also with precautions, including shortening its duration.

Ramadan, which begins this week, comes as much of the world has been hit by an intense new coronavirus wave. For many Muslims navigating restrictions, that means hopes of a better Ramadan than last year have been dashed with the surge in infection rates though regulations vary in different countries.

A time for fasting, worship and charity, Ramadan is also when people typically congregate for prayers; gather around festive meals to break their daylong fast, through cafes and exchange visits.

Once again, some countries are



imposing new restrictions. But concern is high that the month's communal rituals could stoke a further surge.

"The lack of adherence that happened last Ramadan, hasty lifting

of the curfew imposed at the time and re-opening of places of congregations ... Led to grave consequences that lasted for months," said Ahmed Al-Mandhari, the World Health Organization's regional di-

rector for the Eastern Mediterranean.

"We have a lot of worries of a repeat of what had happened last Ramadan, especially since Ramadan coincides with another important holiday, which is Easter," he said by email. Orthodox Christians mark Easter May 2.

In Pakistan, new case numbers grew from fewer than 800 a day at the start of the month last year to more than 6,000 a day a few weeks after Ramadan ended. Officials largely attributed the increase to Pakistanis flouting restrictions. After a dip, the country is back up to more than 5,000 new cases a day.

Iran Saturday began a 10-day lockdown amid a severe surge in infections that followed a two-week public holiday for Nowruz, the Persian New Year.

Economic hardship also looms

over the month for many in war-torn Syria. Abed al-Yassin was concerned about what his iftar — the meal at sunset breaking the fast — will look like this year.

"It will be difficult to even have fattoush," al-Yassin said, referring to a salad that is a staple of the holy month in his country.

He's spending his second Ramadan in a tent settlement near the Turkish border after he was driven from his hometown last year during a Russian-backed government offensive that displaced hundreds of thousands.

"Our main wish is to return to our homes," said al-Yassin, who lives with his wife, three sons and daughter in a tent. He relies mostly on food aid, he said. Camp residents have recently received bags of lentils, pasta and bulgur and receive bread on daily basis.

business



Covid-19 has been extremely disruptive on the hospitality industry. It was the first to fall and will be the last to recover. We had lost all business after the lockdown came into effect and zero business scenarios for nearly 10 months last year
GURBAXISH SINGH KOHLI | VICE PRESIDENT, FHRAI

'SYSTEMIC RISK IN INDIAN BANKS TO REMAIN HIGH'

S&P Global Ratings has said that systemic risk in Indian banks is likely to remain high in the wake of the second wave of Covid-19 and high proportion of weak loans. S&P estimates the weak loans in banks at 11-12 per cent of gross loans



of the day quote

Health and safety of our teams and partners continues to be of top priority. We are encouraging eligible individuals to get vaccinated, and will cover the cost of vaccination for our employees, associates, operations partner network, sellers and their eligible dependents to ensure their continued safety

AMIT AGARWAL | SENIOR VP & COUNTRY MANAGER, AMAZON INDIA

Our strengths will enable us to build capabilities, create engaging and personalised learning programmes. The future of learning is hybrid and this union will bring together the best of offline and online learning, as we combine our expertise to create impactful experiences for students

BYJU'S RAVEENDRAN | FOUNDER & CEO, BYJU'S

Robust backend systems, the ability to offer consumers flexibility in choosing channel packages under NTO and the exit of leading private channels from DD FreeDish helped the DTH pay-TV sector grow even after the new TRAI tariff regulations came into effect

MIHIR SHAH | INDIA VICE PRESIDENT, MPA

SHORT TAKES

Microsoft to acquire Nuance

New Delhi: Microsoft Corp Monday said it will acquire Nuance Communications, Inc in a \$19.7 billion (around ₹1.4 lakh crore) deal, a move that will double Microsoft's total addressable market (TAM) in the healthcare provider space to nearly \$500 billion. Microsoft will acquire Nuance for USD 56.00 per share, implying a 23 per cent premium to the closing price of Nuance on April 9, in an all-cash transaction valued at \$19.7 billion, inclusive of Nuance's net debt, a statement said.

Bank credit rise 5.56% in FY'21

Mumbai: Bank credit grew 5.56% to ₹109.51 lakh crore, while deposits rose 11.4% to ₹151.13 lakh crore in the financial year ended March 31, 2021, data released by the RBI showed. In the 2019-20 fiscal, advances had grown at 6.1% and deposits at 7.9%.

'NBFCs ready to face 2nd wave'

Mumbai: With strong capital and on-balance sheet buffers, non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) are well prepared to deal with any impact on economic activities due to the second wave of Covid-19, a report said. With a surge in coronavirus infections, many states have started imposing strict restrictions, including mini-lockdowns, which are likely to have a significant impact on business activities, India Ratings Research said in the report.

Sensex crashes over 1,700 pts

Mumbai: Rising Covid cases as well as reimposition of movement restrictions across states dented India's stock markets Monday. Accordingly, the new cases count has crossed 1.5 lakhs for the first time April 11. This spooked investors and led the S&P BSE Sensex and NSE Nifty50 to crash by over 3.5% each. Around 1.55 pm, Sensex traded at 47,842.31, lower by 1,749.01 points or 3.54% from its previous close of 49,591.32. The Nifty50 on the National Stock Exchange traded at 14,313.90, lower by 520.95 points or 3.51% from its previous close.

Digital payments see 76% growth in a year

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bangalore, April 12: Online transactions saw a healthy growth of 76% in the first quarter of 2021 as compared to 2020, as tier 2 and 3 cities and towns continued to contribute over 50% of all online transactions, a new report said Monday.

After seeing a steep decline in 2020 owing to the pandemic, travel industry grew by 50% while real estate was up by 69% in the first three months of this year.

As tourism opened up, Jammu and Kashmir made it to the top 10 'Digitally Inclusive States/Union Territories' for the first time, with



a growth of 36% in online transactions in the January-March period, ranking above Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Haryana, according to data provided by full-stack financial solutions company Razorpay in its 'The Era of Rising

Fintech' report. Payment options such as Buy Now Pay Later (BNPL) saw a whopping growth of 569% in the last 12 months, owing to consumers avoiding bulk payments and pre-

ferring affordable payment modes.

UPI continues to be the preferred payment option followed by debit cards, credit cards and net banking. "Over 50% of this digital adoption is coming from tier 2 & 3 cities today, which indicates that this is not just an urban phenomenon. Small businesses are providing newer payment methods and reaching out to a wider customer base that transcends geographical boundaries

VEDANARAYAN VEDANTHAM | HEAD OF SME BUSINESS, RAZORPAY

DOUBLE WHAMMY

Retail inflation rises, factory output contracts

With both mining and manufacturing contracting in February, the lack of momentum in industrial activity along with fresh Covid-19 lockdowns in certain states has cast its shadow on the likelihood of meaningful positive GDP growth in the fourth quarter this fiscal

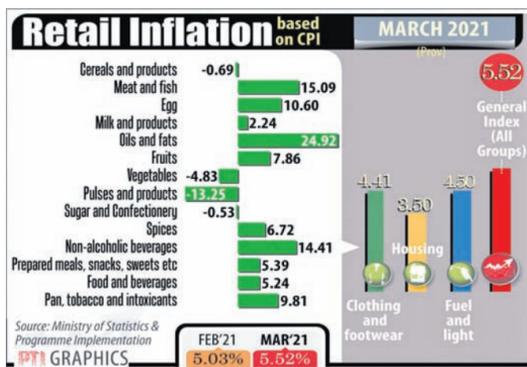
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 12: In a double whammy for the economy, retail inflation jumped to a four-month high of 5.52% in March while industrial output contracted for the second month in a row, falling 3.6% in February - reinforcing concerns over the pace of GDP recovery amid a fresh wave of coronavirus infections.

Contraction in factory output, measured as the Index of Industrial Production or IIP, in February came on the back of a 0.9% decline in January, according to government data released Monday.

With both mining and manufacturing contracting in February, the lack of momentum in industrial activity along with fresh Covid-19 lockdowns in certain states has cast its shadow on the likelihood of meaningful positive GDP growth in the fourth quarter of the 2020-21 fiscal. Policymakers had expected positive GDP growth in January-March to restrict the annual FY21 contraction to 7.5-8%.

Higher food inflation and spurt in fuel prices led the consumer price index (CPI) based retail inflation rising to 5.52% in March,



from 5.03% in the previous month. Core inflation jumped to a 29-month high of 5.96% in March 2021 (3.95% in March 2020 and 5.88% in February 2021).

Though the contraction in IIP growth in February could be attributed to the base effect (February 2020 growth was at a 16-month high), there was a worrisome sequential drop in the manufacturing output.

This comes as India reported yet another peak in daily Covid-19 cases with 1,68,912 new cases, the highest

single-day rise since the pandemic began, with its total tally pushing past 1.35 crore.

Some states such as Maharashtra and Delhi have already imposed partial lockdowns to curb its spread.

Commenting on the macro-economic data, India Ratings and Research said the uptick witnessed in September and October last year was more due to a combination of festive and pent-up demand and India is still far from witnessing a sustained recovery.

OSL to distribute 1 lakh free masks

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 12: In order to raise awareness among the people, Odisha Stevedores Limited (OSL) Monday started an initiative to distribute 1 lakh free masks among the people. OSL Corporate Office Chairman Mahimananda Mishra launched the drive and also distributed masks to the commoners. The initiative is also part of supporting Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik's clarion call for the 14-day 'Mask Abhiyan'; a move to keep Covid-19 pandemic at bay.

Mishra said that OSL aims to distribute one lakh masks during this fortnight long drive for wearing masks. Directors OSL Chandan Mishra, Charchit Mishra and Director (Finance) Chinmaya Mishra



were present in the mask distribution ceremony. OSL Group is also going to organise a two-day corporate vaccination programme where 260 OSL staffs will be vaccinated. The Group has also conducted RT-PCR test of 217 staff of OSL recently.

Supporting the 14-day Mask Abhiyan, OSL chairman said that OSL Group is fully committed in Odisha's fight against the Covid-19 pandemic and accordingly extending its support to the Chief Minister's 'Mask Abhiyan'.

Nabard's loan disbursement reaches ₹22,709cr in FY'21

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 12: National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (Nabard) Odisha Regional Office Monday announced that it has provided financial support of ₹22,709 crore the state government, banks and corporations during financial year of 2020-21.

Nabard Chief General Manager C Udayabhaskar said, "Out of total disbursement, Nabard, Odisha RO disbursed ₹1,700 crore under Special Liquidity Facility (SLF) to cooperative banks and MFIs during the pandemic. It also provided ₹12,193



crore to Cooperative Banks and RRBs for short term crop loans during the same financial year."

According to the CGM, Nabard disbursed long term refinance of ₹151.85 crore to commercial banks, Odisha State Cooperative Bank

(OSCB) and MFI during the year to promote capital formation in agri and allied sectors.

"Nabard also extended financial support for infrastructure financing. It sanctioned a whopping of ₹3234.25 crore to government of Odisha under RIDF Tranche XXVI [2020-21]. This sanction includes 2510 Community Based Lift Irrigation Projects under BKVY scheme, 11 Megalift Schemes under Cluster-V, 74 Rural Bridge Projects, 07 Mega Piped Water Supply Projects, 08 Flood Protection and 01 System Improvement Project," CGM said in a statement.

Indians among most optimistic for 'return to normalcy'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi/Geneva, April 12: Indians are among the most optimistic globally in terms of their expectations for a return to pre-Covid normal, with over 70% expecting it to happen in less than a year, a new study said Monday.

Importantly the survey was conducted just before the Covid-19 pandemic was seen moving towards a new peak in India and some other countries.

The survey, conducted by global market research major Ipsos for the World Economic Forum (WEF) with a sample size of over 21,000 globally between February 19 and March 5, showed that Indians were the most optimistic (24%) on expectations for the 'return to normal' happening in

within 1-3 months and also for it to happen in 3-6 months (21%).

Besides, a further 23% of Indians said they expect a return to pre-Covid normal in 6-12 months, but people from several countries, including Saudi Arabia, China and Brazil, scored better on this timeframe. An estimated 15% of Indian respondents said they expect the return to normal to take more than 12 months, 6% said it would never happen and for 11% it was already the case.

Globally, a majority of people at about 60% are hopeful that the pandemic will be contained within the next year, but expectations vary widely by country, the WEF said, citing the survey results.

Respondents in China, India, Russia and Saudi Arabia said they believe it will take a year to return



to normal, while Japan, France, Italy and South Korea believe it will take longer.

One out of two adults globally

said their emotional and mental health has gotten worse since the beginning of the pandemic, but nearly one in four said it improved

STAYING HOPEFUL AMID COVID

- Over 70% Indians are among the most optimistic globally in terms of their expectations for a return to pre-Covid normal
- Globally, a majority of people at about 60% are hopeful that the pandemic will be contained within the next year
- On average across the 30 countries and markets surveyed, 45% of adults say their emotional and mental health has gotten worse since the beginning of the pandemic

since the start of 2021. Over 70% of adults in Saudi Arabia, Russia, India and mainland China are confident their life will return to pre-

Amway launches Chyawanprash by Nutrilite



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 12: Amway India, one of the country's leading FMCG direct selling companies Monday launched Chyawanprash by Nutrilite, under its flagship brand Nutrilite. This launch marks Amway's foray into the Chyawanprash segment, with the strategy to capture a sizable pie of the growing Ayurveda market in the country.

Chyawanprash by Nutrilite is a concentrated blend of nutrient-rich 32 herbs authenticated by DNA fingerprinting made with 16 certified organic ingredients, and with no preservatives.

Anshu Budhraj, CEO, Amway India, said, "On the back of successful growth trajectory and category potential, we aim to capture 20% market share of the premium Chyawanprash segment in the first year. We will continue to innovate and further strengthen the nutrition category with a special focus on traditional herbs range."

Chandra Bhushan Chakraborty, Senior Vice President - East & West, Amway India said, "Our product ensures highest level of purity, safety and potency and comes with simple and yet informative labelling that helps consumers make better and informed choices. To ensure optimum reach and engage consumers we are introducing digital activations across platforms."

PNB Bhubaneswar Zone celebrates 127th Foundation Day



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 12: Punjab National Bank (PNB), Bhubaneswar Zone celebrated its 127th Foundation Day in Odisha. The CGM & Zonal Manager Ashwani Kumar garlanded the portrait of Late Lala Lajpat Rai, the founder of the Bank in the Zonal Office Building and lighted the lamp.

Addressing the employees of the bank, Kumar urged the staff members to follow the noble principles and spirit of the late founder for taking the bank to new heights. He also urged the PNBians to dedicate towards the service and prompt delivery of banking requirement of the customers.

On this occasion, a blood donation camp was organised with the help of Red Cross in the zonal office where employees of the bank volunteered to donate blood. Also one health check-up camp was organised with the help of AMRI Hospital, Bhubaneswar in its Pokhariput branch for the customers and staff members of the bank.

Covid normal within a year.

In contrast, 80% in Japan and more than half in France, Italy, South Korea and Spain expect it will take longer. At a global level, expectations about how long it will take before one's life can return to its pre-Covid normal and how long it will take for the pandemic to be contained are nearly identical. These findings suggest that people across the world consider that being able to return to "normal" life is entirely dependent on containing the pandemic.

Similar to life returning to pre-Covid normal, 58% on average across all countries and markets surveyed expect the pandemic to be contained within the next year, including 13% who think this is already the case or will happen within 3 months.

KINGS TOP ROYALS KKR face nemesis MI

Rahul, Hooda and Arshdeep help Punjab eke out a four-run victory over Rajasthan as Samson ton goes in vain



KL Rahul (R) and Deepak Hooda during their match-winning partnership against Rajasthan Royals, Monday

in the penultimate ball before being dismissed on the final ball. Arshdeep Singh (3/35) was the bowler who was supposed to defend 12 runs in six balls and he did it exceedingly well. Royals were off to a poor start losing both their openers, including Ben Stokes in the first over, as they were reduced to 25/2 in 3.2 overs. However, Samson held one side of the end and got support from Jos Buttler (25), Shivam Dube (23) and Riyan Parag (25).

Samson added 45 runs with Buttler, 53 with Dube and 52 with Parag to keep Royals in the game. However, Punjab had the last laugh. Earlier put into bat, Punjab lost opener Mayank Agarwal (14) early who edged it back to Royals captain and wicketkeeper Sanju Samson for IPL debutant Chetan Sakariya's (3/31) first wicket. He ended being the pick of the bowlers, conceding only five runs in the 20th over.

Rahul, who got his first four with a glance to the fine-leg fence, and Chris Gayle (40, 28b, 4x4, 2x6) gave the team a good start with their 67-run stand.

Rahul got a 'life' after Ben Stokes dropped him at the fence in the seventh over even as Gayle, looked in his elements. The duo then took on Stokes, as Gayle hit his 350th IPL six, a pull over deep square in the 8th over with Punjab racing to 70 for one.

Gayle was dropped by leggie Rahul Tewatia (0/25) off his own bowling and the very next ball, the left-hander smashed a six. However, in the 10th over, Riyan Parag (1/7) removed Gayle, who was holed out to Stokes in the deep.

Rahul then changed gears and got to his fifty with a six over Shivam Dube's (0/20) head in the 13th over. Hooda then smashed two maximums in the same over and then



Sanju Samson

struck three sixes off Shreyas Gopal (0/40) in the next as Punjab went ballistic. It was Rahul and Hooda's show at the Wankhede that made the difference to their total as the duo tore into the opposition attack on way to their 105-run stand. Courtesy their monstrous hitting, Punjab added 111 runs in the final eight overs.

BRIEF SCORES: Punjab Kings 221/6 (KL Rahul 91, Deepak Hooda 64, Chris Gayle 40; Chetan Sakariya 3/31) beat Rajasthan Royals 217/7 (Sanju Samson 119; Arshdeep Singh 3/35, Mohammed Shami 2/33) by 4 runs.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, April 12: Fresh from their clinical display against Sunrisers Hyderabad, two-time champions Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) will look to set the record straight against nemesis Mumbai Indians (MI) in their second IPL match here, Tuesday.

Having missed the last two play-offs, KKR looked a completely different unit, in the manner in which they defeated SRH by 10 runs in their IPL opener here Sunday.

Be it the aggression shown by the top-order or the explosive finish by Dinesh Karthik, KKR's displayed a fearless approach under skipper Eoin Morgan.

Morgan's intent was evident right at the toss when he chose to leave out their most-trusted lieutenant, Sunil Narine.

The left-right opening combination of Nitish Rana and Shubman Gill started to attack right from the first ball, clearly indicating that the new approach had Morgan's success mantra written all over it.

Boasting of a solid middle-order in Andre Russell, Karthik and Morgan, 2020 was a season of promise for KKR but some rudderless planning did not help their cause.

This time KKR have further bolstered their middle-order by adding Bangladesh superstar Shakib Al Hasan, while Morgan, in his full season as skipper, gives a new dimension to the side.

Rana's deft wrist work and brute power was on full display on Sunday and it ensured that they stayed ahead despite Rashid Khan's twin



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



MUMBAI INDIANS
Rohit Sharma (C), Suryakumar Yadav, Anmolpreet Singh, Chris Lynn, Saurabh Tiwary, Dhawal Kulkarni, Jasprit Bumrah, Rahul Chahar, Trent Boult, Mohsin Khan, Hardik Pandya, Jayant Yadav, Kieron Pollard, Krunal Pandya, Anukul Roy, Ishan Kishan, Quinton de Kock, Aditya Tare, Adam Milne, Nathan Coulter Nile, Piyush Chawla, James Neesham, Yuvvir Charak, Marco Jansen & Arjun Tendulkar.

blows in the form of Gill and Russell. After Rana's 56-ball 80, it was underfire Karthik who hit an unbeaten 22-run cameo from nine balls to propel KKR to a winning total of 187 for 6.

And KKR would look to come out all guns blazing against the five-time champions on Tuesday. They have won just once in their last 12 games against MI, and have an overall lopsided 6-21 head-to-head record. But eventually it will all boil down to battle of wits between Morgan and Rohit Sharma, under whose captaincy MI has won a record fifth IPL title last season in UAE.

MI will pose real challenge for KKR as the title holders would be desperate to secure their first win of the season after their two-wicket loss to Royal Challengers Bangalore in the IPL opener on Friday.

KKR found it easy against SRH bowlers, which lacked firepower but in Jasprit Bumrah and Trent

Boult, MI attack will be a completely different proposition.

Gill's struggle to bat at T20 pace has been a concern for KKR and it will be interesting to see the young opener's approach against the finest in the business.

Often known as slow starters, MI lost the other day due to individual brilliance of RCB's Harshal Patel and AB de Villiers on a two-paced wicket here.

In his debut match for MI, Chris Lynn was their top-scorer, albeit with some stroke of luck as he survived some edges and mishits.

If Quinton de Kock is still in quarantine, MI may have to persist with Lynn at the top, otherwise they may go back to their preferred left-right opening combination of Rohit and de Kock.

MI's explosive middle-order consisting Suryakumar Yadav, Ishan Kishan and the Pandya brothers - Hardik and Krunal - also failed to fire to be restricted to 159 for nine.

TODAY'S MATCH
KKR VS MI
TIME 7.30 PM
Telecast: Star Sports channels

PSG FAVOURITES AGAINST BAYERN

GERMAN GIANTS' PREPARATIONS FOR THE CHAMPIONS LEAGUE QUARTERFINAL SECOND LEG TIE AGAINST FRENCH CHAMPIONS HIT BY INJURIES, SPECULATION

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Berlin, April 12: Bayern Munich's preparations for Tuesday's decisive Champions League quarterfinal with Paris Saint-Germain are being hampered by injury worries, internal divisions and persistent speculation over coach Hansi Flick's future.

The defending champion needs to make up a one-goal deficit in the second leg to avoid going out. Bayern lost the first leg 3-2 in Munich last Wednesday - Flick's first defeat in the competition since he took over in November 2019.

But Flick, who has clashed with sporting director Hasan Salihamidzic, has cut an increasingly annoyed figure as he continues to face repeated questions on whether he will still be at the Bavarian powerhouse next season.

Flick warned Friday that he will not answer any questions on the subject and engaged in a verbal spat with Sky reporter Patrick Wasserziehr Saturday before Bayern's 1-1 draw with Union Berlin in the Bundesliga.

"Next question!" Flick responded again and again to Wasserziehr's queries about whether he will still be at Bayern next season, or if he will fulfill his contract as Bayern's sporting leadership changes.

Flick has a contract to 2023 at Bayern but the Germany coaching position will be vacant after Joachim Low finally steps down after this



Bayern will miss the services of injured prolific striker Robert Lewandowski as well as his partner in crime in front of opposition goal Serge Gnabry along with few more crucial players

summer's European Championship. Flick was previously Low's assistant from 2006 to 2014 and the relative serenity of the national team position may appeal after nearly two stressful seasons at Bayern.

He complained Friday that his squad isn't as strong this season as it was last year, when he led Bayern to a Champions League, Bundesliga and German Cup triple

in his first season.

It was widely seen as another attack on Salihamidzic, who is responsible for Bayern's player signings. The tension between Flick and Bayern's sporting director goes back to January 2020, when the Bayern coach asked for reinforcements at right back.

Flick wanted Shakhtar Donetsk's Dodo or Monaco's Benjamin

Henrichs (now at Leipzig) but received Alvaro Odriozola on loan from Real Madrid. The Spaniard barely played before going back to Madrid.

Salihamidzic's summer signings have also barely featured under Flick. Marc Roca was supposed to help make up for Thiago Alcantara's departure for Liverpool, Brazilian winger Douglas Costa returned

after departing unwanted in 2017, and French defender Bouna Sarr has largely watched from the sidelines.

It was noteworthy that Flick did not even bring Sarr on against PSG in the first leg when Benjamin Pavard was clearly struggling with an injury.

Fellow defender Jerome Boateng was told the same day his contract will not be extended at the end of the season. Of all Bayern's defenders, only David Alaba - who is also leaving - has made more Bundesliga appearances than the 32-year-old Boateng, whom Flick would reportedly like to keep at the club.

Flick's biggest immediate concern is top-scorer Robert Lewandowski's knee injury, sustained while the Poland star was away on international duty.

With 35 goals in 25 Bundesliga appearances this season, it's arguable that Lewandowski would have made more of Bayern's chances had he been available for the first leg against PSG. Lewandowski, who returned to running drills on Monday, will not be fit in time.

Serge Gnabry is also out, as is defender Niklas Sule, while Flick is waiting to see if left back Lucas Hernandez (bruised ribs) or midfielder Leon Goretzka (high) recover in time.

He took Kingsley Coman and Boateng off as a precaution during Bayern's draw with Union Saturday, and both should be available for the clash in Paris.

We have a destructive batting unit: Morgan



Nitish Rana (L) and Rahul Tripathi during their partnership against SRH, Sunday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, April 12: Kolkata Knight Riders possess one of the most destructive batting line-ups in the IPL, something which was on full display during the 10-run win over Sunrisers Hyderabad, said skipper Eoin Morgan.

"One of the many strengths we have within our squad is two of the most talented guys in the country opening the batting for us," Morgan said at the post-match virtual media conference. Free from the "burden" of captaincy, Karthik smashed two sixes and one four to ensure that they do not go on back-foot after losing Andre Russell, Rana and Morgan for three runs.

"Tripathi today at No.3 played beautifully, and the middle-order we have is extremely versatile. When Dinesh plays like that or Andre plays the game he can play, you're going to see a very destructive batting unit that has potential to win you matches."

The skipper was all-praise for Rana who played the match-winning knock, days after recovering from a bout of COVID-19. "I'm delighted for Nitish obviously a match-winning innings today. The thing that impressed me the most about his innings was the method that he used. "He played really aggressively and always took a positive option, which really did set up our batting innings."

Talking about Karthik, who was seen batting at No.6, Morgan said the wicketkeeper-batsman is happy with the role given to him. "Dinesh

is happy with where he is at the moment. Obviously we're in regular conversation with him being the vice-captain and me being captain."

KKR's big-hitting Russell (5 off 5 balls) may not have clicked with the bat but the Jamaican was seen bowling at the death as he defended 22 runs in the last over.

"I'm delighted. Andre has been a big part of the franchise for a long time now," Morgan said. "Obviously, when you are a player of that talent and ability, you can offer so much at any stage, and today he did that. Bowling at the death is not an easy job to do, and he managed to get us over the line."

Veteran off-spinner Harbhajan Singh, who was given the first over of the match, almost took the prized scalp of David Warner but his catch was dropped by Pat Cummins at point. Harbhajan did not bowl after the impressive first over and Morgan defended the decision.

"It's more to do with matchups. There's a lot of preparation that goes into the analysing of the opposition team, and him bowling the first over of the game was a decision based on that," he said.

"He created a great opportunity. Unfortunately the catch was dropped. And the role that he played from then on, obviously using his experience to speak to other players, was outstanding."

"Since he's arrived in the camp, he's had more energy than anybody has seen within the squad so fantastic. Hopefully he can continue doing that."

2 coaches test COVID-19 +ve at nat'l camp

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 12: Two assistant coaches at the national camp for Indian women boxers here have tested positive for COVID-19 and quarantined with mild symptoms.

The development was confirmed to this agency by a source close to the team, which is training at the Indra Gandhi Indoor Stadium here. "Two women coaches have tested positive so far. They have been quarantined but the camp is progressing as scheduled," the source said.

This comes after 10 members of the men's contingent in Patiala were found positive in tests conducted a few days ago.

Lacazette, Martinelli help Arsenal beat Sheffield

AGENCIES

London, April 12: Arsenal thrashed Sheffield United 3-0 at Bramall Lane Sunday in their Premier League encounter as strikes from Alexandre Lacazette and Gabriel Martinelli secured a comfortable win for the Gunners.

With a crucial showdown with Slavia Prague to come in the Europa League Thursday, and with the absence of Emile Smith Rowe, Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang, David Luiz and Kieran Tierney to contend with, Mikel Arteta made five changes from last time out.

In came Martinelli into the starting lineup to explosive fanfare and he contributed in what was an impressive first half from Arsenal full of unorthodox system play. Slipping into a back three with



Alexandre Lacazette (L) and Gabriel Martinelli (2nd from L) celebrate former's goal with teammates, Sunday

Granit Khaka at left centre-back, Arsenal played with six men up front with Bukayo Saka in central areas interchanging with Lacazette. There were combinations on both flanks as Arsenal got bodies in wide areas, playing some neat football with movement and energy galore.

The opening goal was of the highest order as Lacazette finished off a gorgeous passing move with the impressive Dani Ceballos flicking it into the Frenchman's path, who coolly finished.

A second half that was far more subdued, Arsenal saw sloppiness

enter into their game as Sheffield United pushed for a route back in.

Despite Saka being forced off with a thigh injury, the game was wrapped up with less than 20 minutes to play as some delightful work from Pepe ended with his shot being parried into the path of Martinelli, who had a simple tap-in.

From there it was about seeing the game out without expending needless energy, which is what Arsenal did, having added to the scoreline with a sublime Thomas Partey turn and pass finished expertly by Lacazette.

LINGARD DOUBLE

Jesse Lingard took his goal tally to eight in nine appearances since joining West Ham on loan from Manchester United. The win allowed West Ham to dislodge Chelsea and move back into fourth place.