

Bharat Ratna for Madhu Babu

Bhubaneswar(KCN): All lawyers' forum Odisha collected signa-

Lingaraj Sahoo collected signatures from Chennai. The signature

Odisha," said Dr Sahoo. For his unbridled ambition, dedication and ac-



tures of Odias residing in chennai support for Bharat Ratna to Utkalga Babu Madhusudan Das posthumously. Members, including Local odia Intellectual sj Gadadhar das, Bibuti bisoi, Swadhin pattnaik, Pratap sing mishra, Dr Amarendra mahanty, Rajkishor nayak, Pabitra mohan majhi and santanu jena, led by lawyer Dr

campaign, which started in Kolkata in 2018, has covered Andaman, Mumbai, Mathura, Amritsar, Haridwar, Bangalore and kolkatta. "Many great leaders have been honoured with the coveted Bharata Ratna since 1954. But no Odia legendary has been given the award. Now it is right time to amend the historic injustice done to

tion with indomitable courage and intelligence, Madhubabu has carved a niche for himself in the heart and minds of millions of Odia people. Because of his tireless support and effort through the Utkal Sammilani, Odisha was formed with amalgamation of different Odia-lying tracts of the then Andaman, Mumbai,

Mathura, Amritsar, Bengaluru, Haridwar and kolkatta. Presidencies and Central Province. He was called as the real "Garibasathi" of Odisha. As a first Odia to be an MA, LLB, member of Provincial Legislative Council and Central Legislative Assembly and Minister, he was the first Odia to visit England for the sake of his mother land, said the members.

Besides this, Madhubabu was a pioneer of industrialisation, cooperative movement, social reformation like female education and abolition of caste in Odisha and even impressed Mahatma Gandhi during his visit to the State, they added. "Many great leaders have been honoured with the coveted Bharata Ratna since 1954. But no Odia legendary has been given the award. Now it is right time to amend the historic injustice done to Odisha," said Sahoo

Uproar over Murmu remark

Bhubaneswar(KCN): Odisha Legislative Assembly on Thursday witnessed uproar over Congress Spokesperson Ajoy Kumar's alleged remarks against NDA Presidential candidate Droupadi Murmu. The pre-lunch session of the House was completely washed away due to strong protest by BJP Members.

As soon the House assembled for the day at 10.30 AM, Opposition BJP Members with holding placards raised anti-Congress slogans and trooped into the Well of the House demanding apology from the Congress and passing of a censure motion against it for the alleged "defamatory" remarks against Ms.Murmu, a tribal woman leader from Odisha.

Speaker Bikram Kesari Arukha asked the BJP Members to express their opinions during the zero hour and allow the question hour to take place but the agitating members refused to comply. Opposing the BJP Members, Congress MLAs too rushed to the Well and raised slogans against the BJP for stalling the House proceedings for a person who is neither a Member of House nor present there.

NASA's James Webb telescope detects water on distant planet

WASHINGTON(KCN): NASA's James Webb Space Telescope has detected signs of water, along with evidence of clouds and haze, in the atmosphere of a hot, puffy gas giant planet orbiting a Sun-like star over a thousand light years away, the US space agency said on Wednesday.

The observation is the most detailed of its kind to date, demonstrating Webb's unprecedented ability to analyse distant atmospheres, according to NASA. WASP-96 b is one of

It triggered a faceoff between the Opposition BJP and Congress forcing the Speaker to adjourn the proceedings first till 11.30 AM.

When the House reassembled for Zero Hour at 11.30 AM, BJP Chief Whip Mohan Majhi said Congress Spokesperson Ajoy Kumar has



made a controversial and cheap mentality statement against Ms.Murmu, who is going to be the 'First Citizen of India'. Opposition Chief Whip Mohan Majhi of BJP said outside the House Ajay Kumar's remarks are unfortunate. This is not his personal opinion, but the views of Congress and its leader Rahul Gandhi.

We demand an unconditional apology from Congress and passing of a censure motion against the party in Odisha Legislative Assembly.

"We strongly condemn such remarks made by Congress spokesperson and demand to allow us to move a censure motion in the House against the Congress leader," Mr.Majhi further said.

As the opposition members continued to create uproar in the House, the Speaker adjourned the proceedings till 4 PM. After the House was adjourned, CONTINUED ON: P-7

Demolition, jobs for Agniveers, attacks on migrants in J-K to figure in Parl session

New Delhi(KCN): "Demolition of homes due to pro-

a host of subjects expected to be raised by MPs in the mon-

Union Ministry of Home Affairs, issues like attacks on Kashmiri Pandits and migrant workers in the Kashmir Valley, safety of RTI activists, status of Census 2021 and details of cases registered under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act would be raised by the parliamentarians.

The "demolition of homes due to protests" is listed as a starred question in

the Rajya Sabha. In a starred question, the MPs are allowed to ask supplementary questions during the 'Question Hour', while unstarred questions are those whose replies come from the government as written answers. There were several incidents, including in Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, where homes of those allegedly involved in violent



tests" in some parts of the country, reservation of jobs for 'Agniveers' in paramilitary forces, riots and police firings are

soon session of Parliament beginning Monday. According to the tentative list of questions related to the

Mineral sector Revenue 11K CR

Bhubaneswar(KCN): While Odisha is showing sign of prosperity, thanks to Mineral Sector Rev-

Rs.43,444 Crore during 2022-23 from this premium sector. The share of non tax revenue is Rs.48,200

tion from the Union Government by a substantial margin. Grants from Center is expected at Rs.32,789 Crore.

State Government has set a target of collecting Rs.94,200 Crore from both Tax and Non Tax Revenue during 2022-23 out of which Non Tax Revenue target is Rs.48,200. During last three months State has been able to collect Rs.12,858 Crore from Non Tax Revenue sources, while Rs.11,527 is from non Ferrous

Mining and Metallurgical Industries. Each year Mineral Revenue is rising as on 30 June, 2020, State has been able to collect Rs. 2990 Crore and as on 30 June, 2021, it generated Rs.9378 Crore, while as on 30 June 2022, state has been able to collect Rs.2149 Crore more during the corresponding period. Latest Statement of Revenue Collection shows that while State Government has been able to mop



enue continues to rise and by 30 June, 2022, as it has collected Rs.11,527 Crore, while the State Government is eyeing to gather

Crore during 2022-23, Lion Share comes from Mineral Sector, which is set at Rs.43,444 Crore and this collection has exceeded the devolu-

Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik urges people to be alert amid COVID surge

BHUBANESWAR(KCN): Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Wednesday urged people to remain alert and follow COVID-

came a day after Principal Secretary of Health and Family Welfare department NB Dhal said that if needed, the issue of free precaution



19 protocols amidst a 45 per cent-plus uptick in the daily caseload.

Stating that COVID-19 scare still persists, the CM appealed all to protect themselves and others from the risk of infection. "Be vigilant, be safe," Naveen said. He also welcomed Centre's decision to provide free precaution doses for the 18-59 year age group and appealed eligible beneficiaries of the State to get vaccinated. The move from the Centre

dose to all adults will be taken up with the Centre.

On the day, the State recorded a 46 per cent jump in its new infection count as 743 persons tested positive in last 24 hours making it the highest single-day spike so far in the fourth wave. It was

also the highest infection count on a day in last five months. The Health and Family Welfare department said the next few weeks will be crucial and COVID graph in Odisha may plateau by the second week of August. Most of the new cases were reported from Khurda (303) followed by 115 in Cuttack and 36 in Puri. The new cases pushed the daily test positivity rate to 4.02 per cent from 3.48 per cent on the previous day.

Moj launches #MojArtFactory - the biggest art festival

Kolkata(KCN): India's number one short video app, Moj, recently launched its first-ever art competition, #MojArtFactory. This uniquely curated property is aimed at empowering art enthusiasts and creators across the nation to showcase their talent. #MojArtFactory comprises of four challenges - MakeOverArt, FusionArt, EmotionInArt, ColourSwitch, and one art battle - TheArtBattle, offering creators a chance to participate in and entertain their audiences through interesting artistic content while keeping up the offbeat art alive.

Throughout the campaign, different art and

The challenges will enable artists to educate their audience on different art forms that can be created with readily available materials. Each challenge will remain live for a duration of 10 days with weekly winner announcements. At the end of the Art battle, 3 mega winners will be announced.

Announcing the launch of #MojArtFactory, Shashank Shekhar, Sr. Director, Content Strategy and Operations Moj, said, "We are thrilled to launch our first-ever campaign dedicated to art and artists on Moj. Through #MojArtFactory, we aim to discover budding and talented artists across different regions and



crafts, from around the country, will be hosted on Moj providing a visual treat to users. Artists can create classic, traditional, modern, and fusion art using different forms and styles. Creators can dabble with different art forms like painting, sketching, Mandala sculpting, carving, DIY art, home decor, needlework, papercraft, etc, and participate in the challenges that suit their art.

Under MakeOverArt, creators can give a makeover and enhance any existing object. Under FusionArt, creators can combine two artforms and make their own vision. They can reflect any strong emotion through art under EmotionInArt. Transition videos from black and white to coloured will fall under ColourSwitch, and the most unique and off-beat art forms will qualify under TheArtBattle.

art forms of India. We want to create an inclusive platform for Indian artists to excel by reaching the right set of audiences that appreciate their talent no matter which part of the country they are from. We are sure to see some unique and authentic art during our campaign that will represent both contemporary and traditional Indian artists."

The 60 days challenge, which commenced on 11th July, will conclude on 10th September and will announce weekly winners and three mega winners who will get a chance to win hampers worth INR 2 Lakhs. If you are an art enthusiast, art lover, or indulge in art professionally, it is your time to shine on with #MojArtFactory. Join the app and enroll under Moj For Creators program to kickstart your creator journey.

State Asks for Vax Intensification

Bhubaneswar(KCN): With the Covid cases starting rising in Odisha, the State Government on Thursday asked all collectors and municipal commissioners to intensify vac-



ination of 18-59 age group on campaign mode from Friday.

Chief Secretary SC Mahapatra has given this instruction to the officers while holding a high-level review meeting on Covid-19 situation in the state through virtual mode this evening.

Taking a district wise review, Mahapatra directed to increase the number of daily Covid testing, ensure function of the call center on a 24x7 basis and intensify the awareness and enforcement activities like wearing of masks, avoiding the crowd, and maintenance of physical distance of 6 feet.

He also instructed the officials to conduct vaccination of students of the above age group in various engineering colleges, hos-

tels, higher educational institutes as well as in urban areas in a massive way.

Further, he asked the collector and municipal commissioners to spread information about location of vaccination center, call center and help center number, and facilities for treatment. Medical colleges and district administrations were asked to set up separate Covid wards. They were also directed to be in all readiness for enhancing the number of beds as per requirement. Health secretary Nikunja Bihari Dhal emphasized for proper execution of village and panchayat-wise vaccination programmes in rural areas and every ward in urban areas. Development Commissioner Pradeep Kumar Jena suggested that health workers, Anganwadi workers, public representatives, voluntary organizations and women's self-help groups be included in the vaccination drive.

Odisha on Thursday reported 804 new Covid-19 cases, the highest in nearly five months. On February 17, the state reported 886 cases.

The positivity rate jumped to 4.18 per cent as the cases were detected after testing 19,218 samples. Seventy-one children were among the new patients. Khurda, where the capital Bhubaneswar is located, reported the highest number of 307 cases, followed by 119 cases in Cuttack. The toll remained at 9,127 as there were no new deaths.

The active cases climbed to 4,262, out of which 1,694 patients are in Khurda. As many as 420 more people recovered from the virus, taking the total recoveries to 12,82,690. The state has so far reported 12,96,132 cases.

BJD Celebrates 25th Foundation Day - Organized Plantation Programme



(Khordha) The Biju Janta Dal(BJD) observed its 25th foundation day. On the occasions BYJD State Secretary Rudra Nath Dutta organized tree plantation programme at Kuradhamal, GP, under Khordha Assembly Constituency. MP, Rajya Sabha Mujibullah Khan, MLA, Khordha, Joytrindra Nath Mitra, President Zilla Parishad, Khordha, Rupa Shree Rani Gumansingh, Biju Mahila Janta Dal State vice-president Basanti Mohapatra, Biju Mahila Janta Dal Khordha District President Geetanjali Patsani, Chairman Khordha Mu-

nicipality, Kanaka Lakshmi Mohanty, Vice-Chairman Panchayat Samiti, Khordha, Prakash Samantaray, Odisha Mo-Parivar Khordha District Co-ordinator Dillip Kumar Hota, BCJD State General Secretary Nasim Khan, BYJD, Khordha District President Rajesh Parida, Sarapancha Kuradhamal GP, Sriram Prasad Mohanty among others were present on this occasions. The main objective of the programme is to upgraded and promote protection, preservation and monitoring of environment.

8970 Cr DMF funds unspent

Bhubaneswar(KCN): Planning & Convergence Minister Rajendra Dholakia has admitted that the District Mineral Foundations (DMF) fund of Rs 8970.88 crore collected in all 30 districts of Odisha has remained unspent till May, 2022.

Mr.Dholkia presented a written statement in the Odisha Legislative Assembly here on Thursday in this regard.

District Mineral Foundations have been constituted in each district of the State under the provisions of Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2015. Mr.Dholakia said the State Government has collected Rs 18,730.27 crore under the DMF from minor minerals, coal, lignite, iron, bauxite & other major minerals till May 2020. Of which the Government has utilized Rs 9759.38 crore till May last.

While Rs 3945.58 crore has been collected from coal/lignite mines, Rs 14,469.28 crore has been received from major minerals other than coal & lignite. Moreover, the Government has collected Rs. 90.41 crore towards the DMF from minor mineral sources like sand, stone, etc., he said.

Highest Rs 8191.04 crore DMF fund has been collected in Keonjhar district, of which Rs 4941.28 crore has remained unutilized till May this year.

Out of Rs 4843.63 crore DMF collected in Sundergarh district, Rs 1627.26 crore remained unspent.

Similarly, Rs 952.34 crore of Rs 1574.14 crore DMF fund collected in Jajpur district has remained unutilized till May of 2022.

The DMF collection in Angul and Jharsuguda districts is Rs 2241.19 crore and Rs 1023.27 crore, respectively. The unspent balance in Angul district is Rs 832.22 crore while Rs

194.33 crore remained unutilized in Jharsuguda district.

Only Rs 33.95 lakh of DMF fund has been collected in the year 2014-15. However, the collection has increased substantially in the following years.

While Rs 668.74 crore of DMF fund collected in 2015-16, it has been increased to Rs 2040.65 crore in 2016-17. The State Government has collected DMF funds of Rs 1678.14 crore in 2017-18, Rs 2548.38 crore in 2018-19, Rs 2964.62 crore in 2019-20, Rs 2623.24 crore in 2020-21 and Rs 4585.04 crore in the last financial year.

Moreover, the State is supposed to get Rs 1063.45 crore DMF till June of the current financial year. However, Rs 37.77 crore is yet to be paid to the concerned DMF by the miners. Action is being taken to realize the outstanding amount, said Minister Mr.Dholakia. The DMF fund is being spent as per the guidelines of Pradhan Mantri Khanij Kshetra Kalyan Yojna (PMKKKY) and Odisha District Mineral Foundations Rules, 2015. High priority is being given to drinking water supply, protection of environment & pollution control, health service, education, women & child development, welfare of old & PwD, skill development, sanitation, housing, livelihood and road connectivity, informed the Minister in his reply.

Under other priority sectors, the fund is being utilized for infrastructure development, irrigation, power supply and plantation, he said. As per DMF expenditure is concerned, Keonjhar district is on top position with utilization of Rs 3249.76 crore followed by Sundergarh (Rs 3216.37 crore), Angul (Rs 1408.97 crore), Jharsuguda (Rs 828.94 crore) and Jajpur (Rs 621.80 crore).

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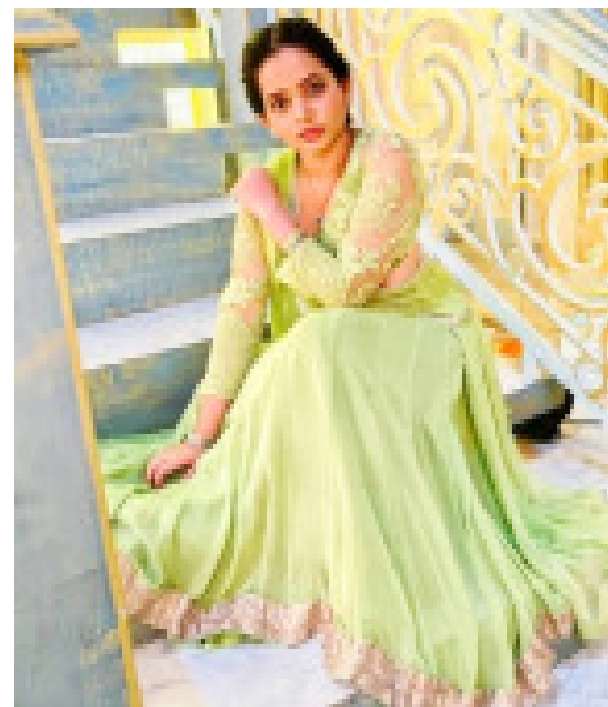
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Now a days the heroines have nothing much in the film, except to flaunt their glamour: Aarushi Sharma

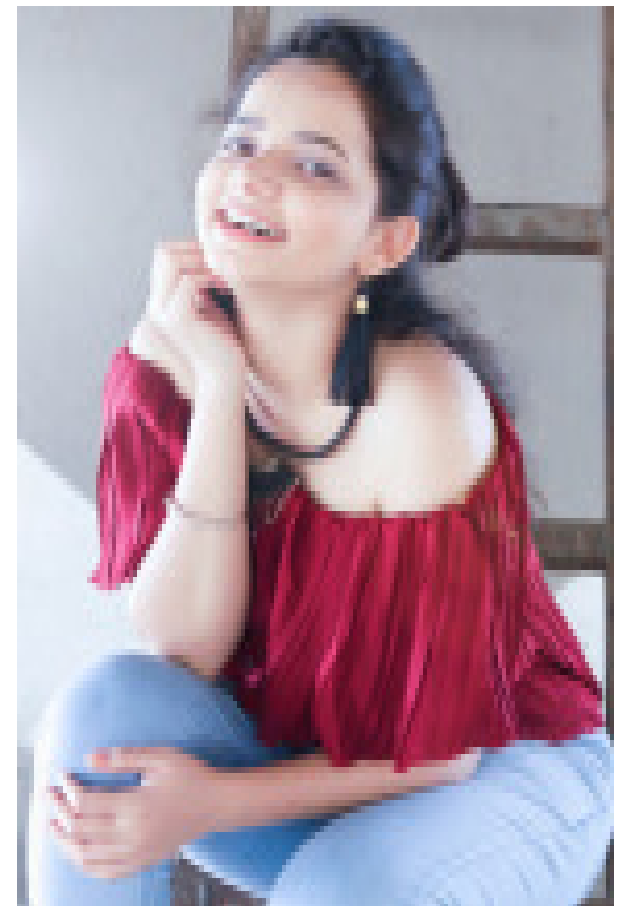
The multi-faceted talented actress “Jag Jaanani Maa Vaishnodevi” and Her performance is being widely appreciated and her role as Muskaan is being



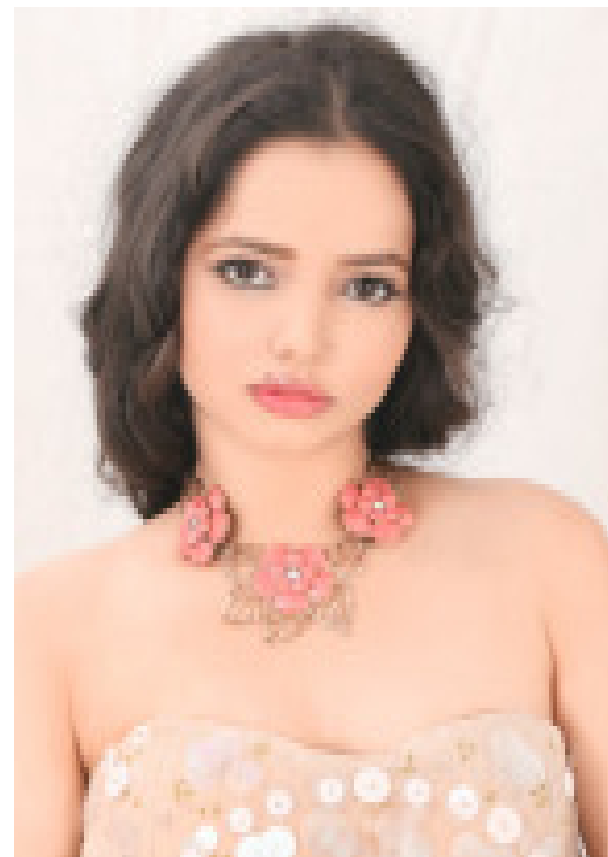
Aarushi Sharma “Muskaan” is now who has left an impression performing in the



ciated and her role as Muskaan is being



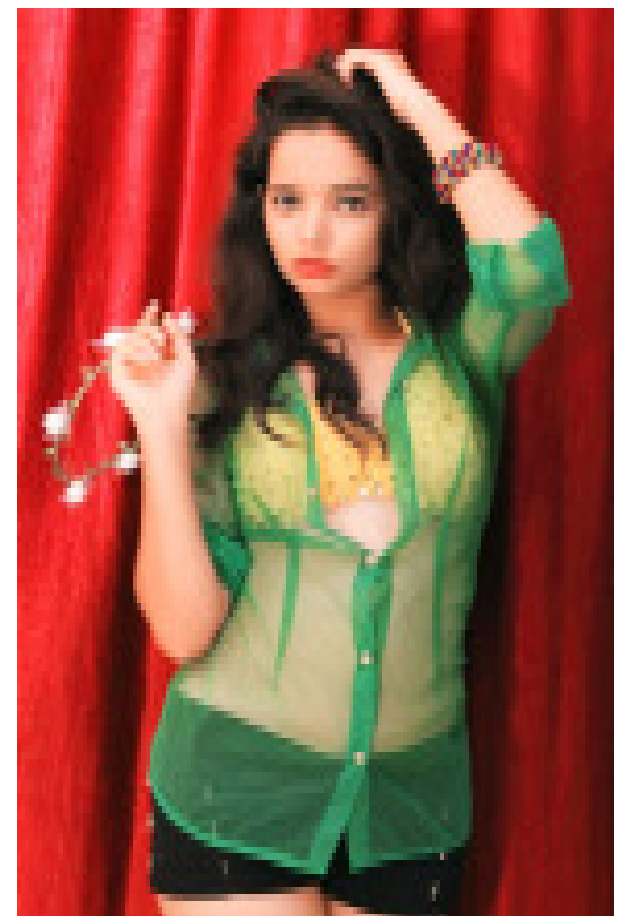
our mother and to corona pandemic. Now it may



delible impression of her acting on TV serial “Ranju Ki



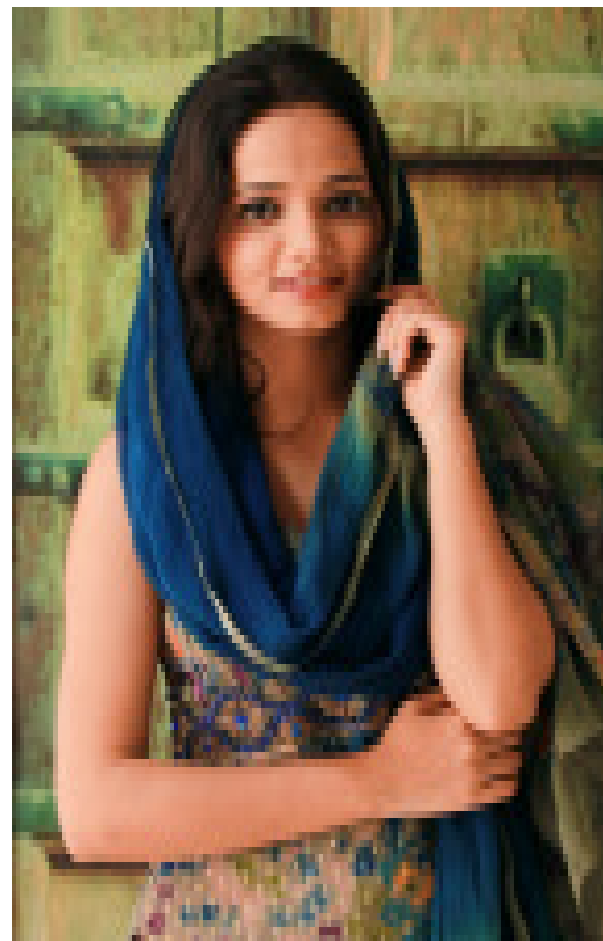
highly acclaimed by the viewers.



harasses our family. Till now my role was that of an innocent and bubbly girl. But henceforth my role will be different and the viewers will be taken aback by my new role. The viewers will certainly like the new twist in the story. About her film ventures Aarushi says “I had signed a film in the South. However the project could not start early due



viewers' mind with her TV serials like



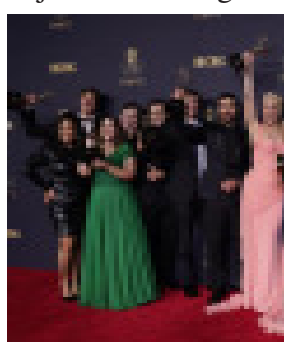
About her role in “Ranju Ki

'Emmys So White': Netizens call out award show for 'fake diversity'

Los Angeles: The 73rd Primetime Emmy Awards concluded on a disappointing note on Monday. While setting a record for diversity, with 49 black or indigenous people of colour (BIPOC) nominated across all categories, all major acting trophies went to white actors at the Emmys 2021.

According to Variety, actors that were seen as solid contenders included Billy Porter and Mj Rodriguez and Kenan Thompson and Bowen Yang (Saturday Night Live) --

has undoubtedly failed to meet the expectations of people. Calling out the event, a netizen tweeted, "Not a single Black actor won tonight. Not a single Asian actor won tonight. Not a single Latino actor won tonight."



(‘Pose’), the late Michael K. Williams (‘Lovecraft Country’)

but in the end, all ended up empty-handed. The 2021 ceremony up- we four sisters. My father deserts not start early due

wrote while condemning Emmys 2021. "Lovecraft country won nothing tonight and 98% of the winners were white despite the amount of black talent around #EmmysSoWhite," a netizen tweeted. This time Black performers had a strong showing at the event. But all efforts went in vain when nominees of colour failed to win most categories.

Indian Diaspora again bring laurels to native indians

India-origin British MP, Rishi Sunak, has won the most number of votes in the first round in the race for prestigious British Prime Minister seat. This is for the first time that Indian Origin Politician has reached a stage to be Prime Minister of UK and his election seems a certainty now. If he does become the PM of Britain, then he will be the first person of Indian or even Asian origin to hold the post.

This trend of Indian origin people holding powerful positions is not confined to the UK.

More than 200 members of the over 550 million-strong Indian diaspora has risen to highest positions globally, including heads of state, with sheer dedication, commitment, honesty and sincerity. The latest to join the list is US Vice President Kamala Harris, the first Indian-American to hold the post.

Let us start with Australia. Lisa Singh was the first woman of Indian origin to be selected as a senator from the state of Tasmania. Her great grandparents were from Bengal and came to work on sugar cane farms in Fiji. Lisa is now the director of Melbourne based Australia-India Institute. She played a supporting role in the formation of Quad which is a security dialogue between Australia, India, Japan and the US.

In neighbouring New Zealand, Sir Anand Satyanand is a former lawyer, judge and ombudsman who served as the 19th Governor-General of New Zealand from 2006 to 2011. His grandparents came to Fiji in 1911. Sir Satyanand has said: 'For 200 years, people of Indian descent have lived in New Zealand and for 200 years they have embodied India's traditions and val-

ues. That heritage is one that New Zealanders have increasingly come to appreciate and cherish'.

In Canada there are many politicians of Indian origin and Anita Anand is Minister for National Defence.

In Fiji almost 38% of the population is of Indian origin. Mahendra Chaudhry was the first Fijian Prime Minister of Indian origin. There are many more politicians of Indian origin in Fiji.

In Guyana almost 40% of the population is of Indian origin. There are many Indian origin politicians and the present vice president is Bharat Jagdeo.

Trinidad and Tobago has an Indian origin population of 37%. Kamla Persad Bissessar was the Prime Minister of the country from 2010 to 2015.

Suriname has an Indian origin population of 27.4% and it makes up the largest ethnic group. Pretaap Radhakishun was a former Prime Minister. Ramsewak Shankar was a former president of the country. Chan Santokhi is the present President of Suriname.

Mauritius has had several Prime Ministers and Presidents including Sookdeo Bissondoyal one of the founding fathers of independent Mauritius.

Wavel Ramkalawan is the President of Seychelles from 2020.

In Malaysia there are dozens of Indian origin politicians.

Singapore has had several Presidents of Indian origin.

In South Africa Pravin Jarnadas Gordhan is a politician and anti-apartheid activist who has held various ministerial posts in the Cabinet of South Africa. He served as Minister of Finance from 2009 until 2014 and again from 2015 until 2017, as Minister of Cooperative Governance and Tra-

Nitin Mehta

ditional Affairs from 2014 until 2015, and as Minister of Public Enterprises from February 2018.

In the East African countries of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania the Indian community has deep roots. One individual of Indian origin who has impacted many countries of the world is Yash Pal Ghai. He has advised over twenty countries on constitution making and other issues, including Iraq, Afghanistan, Papua New Guinea, Nepal, Fiji, Somalia, Libya, and Kenya (where he chaired the Constitution of Kenya Review Commission (CKRC) from 2002-2004, as well as the National Constitutional Conference ("Bomas").

The United States of America: President Joe Biden has appointed around 17 people of Indian origin to the key positions in the country. Kamala Harris the vice President is one of them. Vinay Reddy is the director of speechwriting for president Joe Biden. Dr. Madhu Lika Guhanthakurta is leading the world's first mission to the Sun. Dr. Suresh Kulkarni, 'Rocket Man' has successfully launched 55 rockets and has designed several rocket and missile components for the Intercontinental Ballistic Missile System. Rush Doshi is a senior China director on the National Security Council. Pritesh Gandhi is Chief Medical Officer, Department of Home Security. Mili Gosar is Deputy Chief of Staff -Operations in the Department of Interior. Anil Menon a lieutenant colonel with US air force and SpaceX's first flight surgeon has been selected among the 10 new astronauts who could fly to the Moon in future. He was the first responder during the 2010 earthquake in Haiti and to the 2015 earthquake in Nepal. Sharmila Bhattacharya is a

Nigerian born Director of Research in the

Biomodel Performance Laboratory of the Space Bio-Sciences Division NASA. There are many more Indians in very high positions who will create scientific breakthroughs that the world has never known before.

Some Indian origin Ambassadors and High Commissioners:

Suriname's Ambassador to the US: Niermala Badrising

Australia's High Commissioner to South Africa: Gita Kamath

Suriname's Ambassador to India: Aahna Kanhai

Fiji's High Commissioner to India: Namita Khatri

Singapore's Ambassador to the US: Ashok Kumar Khatri

Canada's High Commissioner to India and Ambassador to Nepal and Bhutan: Nadir Patel

Conclusion: Given the skills shortages faced by many countries the Indian diaspora is set to settle in big numbers in other parts of the world and their influence on these countries will grow simultaneously. A day is not far when an Indian-origin Prime Minister, for example, Rishi Sunak will meet an Indian Prime Minister. The Indian-origin Prime Minister while having great love for the land of his forefathers will strenuously push the cause of his country. This code of Dharma is well explained in the Mahabharata when Guru Dronacharya decided to fight for the Kauravas. His reason was that he had always worked for Kauravas and had to be loyal to them. Similarly, all Indians settled all over the world will and should fight for the interests of their adopted country.

The Author is the Founder Indian Vegetarian Society UK

Ex-muslim movement - Dissension or reformation?

Religions across the globe have always been seen from two fronts. The first is to see them as principles codified for people by a divine will and therefore, not to be questioned. The second one is to view them as manmade caricatures of God or principles forcefully stamped on people by people. This view demands the need of a scientific analysis while it questions the authenticity of all religious beliefs. Both the views are gaining momentum and of course, the first one has a mammoth fan following with a large part of the world kneeling for the divine interventions in human progress. Religions, successfully manipulating their belief systems could bring about demographic changes across the globe. The influence that most of the religions could successfully embroider all over the world was the result of their aggression and indecorous invasion and contemptuous intellectual involvement. History may not often reveal the true story of persecution that most of the religions could spread their wings with. It is the second kind of view that brought creative changes in the thinking pattern of people. Those who remained imprisoned in the contrariness of principles concocted by religions proposed changes, suitably matching the demand of the time. Most of the religions underwent this change time and again. Call them a creative minority at least for their intellectual rebellion, questioning the faithfulness of the patriarchal hegemony in most of the religions. Coming out of the dungeons of superstition and the horror of radicalization, most of the silent rebellions are known to be happening inside the precincts of Islam. This is probably seen as an effect of its ineptitude to modernise the ideals that it followed from the medieval periods. Ex-Muslim movement, as that is what it is

known as, is a non-religious movement of free thinkers who

dared to break open the confinement of Islam, has silently begun to make their presence felt across continents and the reality is that it is steeply pricking the edifice of Islam. It began to surface as a western phenomenon but now, it is creeping into the deeply conservative countries with stringent laws against apostasy like Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Iran. The cause of their worry is unfathomable as most of the Islamic countries realize it with a shudder, when the American Journal "The New Republic" reveals the rate of Muslim conversion to atheism in America and in most of the European countries. It doesn't shy away from revealing the decline of numbers among the actual believers in the Islamic world. The number of convinced atheists and non-religious persons are growing rapidly who prefer to shed the garb of Islam without any remorse. For the Islamic world, leaving Islam can invite death punishment. At the same time, on a parallel track, Abrahamism, a new religion in the making should be seen as an appropriate intellectual churning taking place. The new religion is a combination of religious principles scrapped from all the three Abrahamic religions- Islam, Christianity and Judaism. This new invention evidently showcases the depression that the followers of Islam face due to its radicalized and rigid mannerisms. Encompassing the variety available in these three religions, with their common notion of being the descendents of one common prophet and by the vision of enhancing this new religion with Prophet Abraham as its revered spiritual source, some of the dissenters may be trying to put a milder version of the semitic religions for a new world.

Punishments spanning from stone pelting to beheading a dissenter of Islam are questioned and challenged by the Ex-Muslim movement. India, with a huge population of Muslims is

M. R. LALU

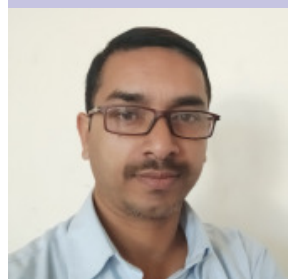
also bracing with a minority of Ex-Muslims despite

radicalization to the effect of the horrendous Udaipur barbarity is staring at its polity repugnantly. Social Media could take an active role in bringing the aspirants to quit the mishmash and the complexity of the religion. Reports reveal that nearly one in four Muslims raised in the United States have left Islam with a sigh of relief of being a "Godless, Fearless Ex-Muslim." The trend is catching pace in India too, especially in Kerala. An organisation has recently been formed to provide those who renounce Islam, a platform to express and gather fearlessly. "Ex-Muslims of Kerala" is an attempt by the educated Muslim youth, who thought to exit the religion and become free thinkers. It has declared January 9 as 'Kerala Ex-Muslim Day'. It is a historic development as many in the group are active in social media debates attracting more like-minded people to their fold. Kerala, with Islamic radicalization growing unimaginably voluminous in its Malabar region, has become a hotbed of Islamist activities which the state administration is purposefully silent about. Most of the members in the group face economic and social boycotts and sometimes receive violent reactions from the radicals. Ex-communication of people who left Islam is normal in the community and thanks to democracy that apostasy is not punishable under the constitution. The movement in Kerala provides social, economic and legal support to the Ex-Muslims.

Islam is at a crossroads when it comes to match its ability to patch up with the requirement of a modern world. Retaining its medieval Semitic ideals through a parallel seminary education system has thoroughly shattered its aura as a 'Religion of Peace'. Hammering of unscientific aphorisms on its younger generation has blatantly hampered the intellectual faculty of many young minds who aspired to

climb the ladder of success through modern education platforms. Though it is not punishable by law, India's legislature is yet to frame laws to protect those who come out of the dark caves of fanaticism. Stunning statistics also reveal the fact that there is a growing disgruntlement on religions which refuse to change with the change of times. Islam is seen to be facing a grave demographic shift in many countries including the Arab world. Why do many people prefer to quit their faith? Arif Hussain Theruvath, an Executive Member of the Ex-Muslim community in Kerala has the answer. He said that he chose to come out of Islam to safeguard his human rights, dignity and constitutional rights promised by the country. Liyakkath Ali, President of the community says that his organisation has decided to move the court against atrocities committed in the name of religious traditions. The former chairman of the Shia Waqf Board, Wasim Rizvi has converted back to Hinduism and became Jitendra Narayan Singh Tyagi. Famous Malayali film director Ali Akbar became Ramasimhan. India is witnessing a sharp radicalization among the followers of the religion and the recent atrocious killings in the name of faith should be seen as its proof; and the dissension, or a silent rebellion for reformation, is emerging as a bitter reality in Islam. Globally, the conflict among the Islamic countries is real when they fight each other overtly or covertly for an upper hand over the Islamic World. The question is, whether the Ex-Muslim movement across the globe would become a game changer forcing the radicals to bend for reformation, transforming the structure of the religion for world peace, in principle and practice.

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NDA nominee Droupadi Murmu set to get over 60 per cent votes in presidential poll; JMM now extends support

NEW DELHI: With the support of regional parties like the BJD, the YSR-CP, the BSP, the AIADMK, the TDP, the JD(S), the Shromani Akali Dal, the Shiv Sena and now the JMM, NDA nominee Droupadi Murmu's vote share in the July 18 presidential poll is likely to reach nearly two-thirds and she is set to become the first woman from the tribal community to occupy the top constitutional post.

Murmu's vote share is now likely to go past 61 per cent, while it was earlier estimated to be around 50 per cent at the time of her nomination.

The Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) announced its support on Thursday in favour of Murmu, who is a former governor of Jharkhand.

The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) nominee now has over 6.67 lakh votes after the support of various regional outfits, out of a total of 10,86,431 votes.

These include 3.08 lakh votes of the MPs of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its allies.

The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) has around 32,000 votes in the electorate, which is around 2.9 per cent of the total votes.

The ruling party in Odisha has 114 MLAs in the 147-member state Assembly, while the BJP has 22 lawmakers.

The BJD has 12 MPs in the Lok Sabha and

Though the final list of electors will be notified after the bypolls to three Lok Sabha seats and the Rajya Sabha elections to 16 seats, the NDA has 440 MPs in its favour, while the opposition UPA has around 180 MPs, besides 36 MPs of the Trinamool Congress (TMC) who are expected to support the opposition candidate.

Among the states, the BJP has a maximum of 56,784 votes from Uttar Pradesh, where it has 273 MLAs.

Each MLA in Uttar Pradesh has 208 votes. The NDA will get its second-highest number of votes among the states from Bihar, where with 127 MLAs, it will get 21,971 votes as each legislator has 173 votes, followed by 18,375 votes from Maharashtra where it has 105 MLAs and each of them has 175 votes.

With 131 MLAs, the NDA will get 17,161 votes from Madhya Pradesh, 16,464 votes of its 112 MLAs from Gujarat and 15,982 votes of its 122 legislators in Karnataka.

The United Progressive Alliance (UPA), on the other hand, has a little over 1.5 lakh votes of its MPs and will get around the same number of votes from its legislators from the states.

The value of the vote of a Member of Parliament has gone down to 700 from 708 in the presidential poll this time due to the absence of a legislative assembly in Jammu and Kashmir.

The value of the vote of an MP in a presidential election is based on the number of elected members in the legislative assemblies of the states and Union territories, including Delhi, Puducherry and Jammu and Kashmir.

The election will be held on July 18 and the results will be announced on July 21.

Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) chief Shibu Soren on Thursday said his party will support Murmu, ending weeks of suspense. In a statement, he directed all MPs and MLAs of the JMM to vote for Murmu.

"You are aware that Droupadi Murmu, former governor of Jharkhand and a tribal woman, is the candidate in the upcoming presidential election. For the first time after Independence, a tribal woman is going to get the distinction of becoming the president," he said.

"Therefore, after due deliberation, the party has decided to vote in favour of Droupadi Murmu in the presidential election," he added.

JMM, an ally of the Congress, has 30 MLAs in the state legislature.

While Murmu's victory is ensured even without JMM's support, the declaration by Soren is a shot in the arms for the NDA. Yashwant Sinha, the opposition candidate, is from Jharkhand.

The ruling party was in a dilemma whether to back the "son of the soil" or a "fellow tribal".

Murmu had visited Jharkhand on July 4, and met Soren to seek his party's support. His son Hemant Soren, the chief minister, was also present in the meeting.

Murmu and Soren are both tribal leaders and belong to the Santhal ethnic group, which has a sizeable population in Jharkhand as well as neighbouring Odisha, from where she hails.

The chief minister had met Union Home Minister Amit Shah and other NDA leaders in Delhi on June 27 amid speculation about his party's move in the presidential election.

The state Congress had earlier said that every party was free to make their own decision.

The alliance in Jharkhand was forged only to contest elections and not on any other issue, state Congress chief Rajesh Thakur had said.

Odisha Fire Service to deploy quick response units in Bhubaneswar-Cuttack



BHUBANESWAR: The department will deploy six four-wheelers (pickup trucks) in Bhubaneswar and five such vehicles in Cuttack to carry out operations in areas connected through narrow approach roads. "As heavy and medium fire fighting vehicles face hin-

drances due to restricted access, the four-wheelers will be utilised to carry out operations in areas like Unit-I, II and IV in Bhubaneswar and in market places like Chhatra Bazar in Cuttack," said DG (Fire Service) Santosh Kumar Upadhyay.

Initially, one quick response unit will be deployed in the Capital City between 6 pm and 9.30 pm. Everyday, the unit will be positioned in different areas of Bhubaneswar. Fire department has also planned to conduct mock drills in the cities.

Educational institutes in Bhubaneswar-Cuttack tread a cautious path amid COVID spike

BHUBANESWAR: As COVID-19 cases spike and fresh cases from educational institutions of Twin City sparks concern, virus safety norms are back on campuses. On Wednesday, 44 students and staff of a national university at Cuttack tested posi-

been detected in the campus.

As the government has not given any directive on online classes yet, other institutions are just following the social distancing and mask rules. Vice-Chancellor of Utkal University Sabita Acharya said no direction has come from the Higher

Education department yet on online classes. "We are adhering to COVID SOPs issued by the State government and the focus is on regular sanitisation of the campus and hostels," she said.

As far as schools in the Capital are con-



cerned, the attendance has come down by at least 30 per cent in many of them. The institutions are continuing with offline classes and will take a decision on classes in online or hybrid mode as per the advisory of the School and Mass Education department.

Officials at St Xavier's Kedargouri campus said the current attendance for most of the classes in their school has come down to 70 to 75 per cent with children suffering from cold, cough or fever. They have, however, not opted for online classes yet.

Mothers Public School principal Poly Patnaik said as students have suffered huge learning loss in the last two years, they have been focusing on physical classes with adequate COVID safety measures. In her school, attendance has been more than 90 per cent as students are keen on attending physical classes.

Patnaik said they are not giving stress on attendance of students up to Class II. Besides, parents have been advised not to send their wards to schools in case they have cough, fever or any other symptoms. "We should learn to live with COVID," she said. Efforts to contact Higher Education Minister Rohit Pujari and School and Mass Education Minister Sameer Dash did not yield any response.

Even with an RTPCR negative report, any student suffering from common cold and cough is being isolated for a minimum of four days," said an official of XIMB, adding that so far no COVID case has



nine in the Rajya Sabha.

Murmu has also received the support of the AIADMK (17,200 votes), the YSRCP (with around 44,000 votes), the Telugu Desam Party (around 6,500 votes), the Shiv Sena (25,000 votes) and the Janata Dal (Secular) (around 5,600 votes).

The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) strength in the Upper House of Parliament is 92 after the results of the just-concluded Rajya Sabha elections.

It has a total of 301 MPs of its own in the Lok Sabha.

The saffron party's empathic win in four state Assembly polls, including in Uttar Pradesh, where the value of the vote of each MLA is more than their counterparts in any other state, has only added to its overall advantage.

Though the BJP and its allies in the NDA have fewer MLAs than they had during the 2017 presidential poll, their numbers of MPs have gone up since.

The saffron party had sprung a surprise by picking tribal leader Murmu to succeed Ram Nath Kovind, a leader from the Dalit community, for the president's post.

After being elected, Murmu will be the first president who was born post-independence.

According to the latest official figures, the BJP on its own has 393 MPs, excluding four nominated Rajya Sabha members who cannot vote, of the current strength of 776 members in both houses of Parliament, giving it a clear majority.

The BJP's numerical advantage in Parliament, which has almost half of the votes in the electoral college that also comprises all the MLAs, is further enhanced when the strength of its allies like the Janata Dal (United), which has 21 MPs, the Rashtriya Lok Janshakti Party, the Apna Dal and several from the northeastern states is added. While there are 776 MPs in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha, each having 700 votes, there are as many as 4,033 legislators in the states with a different vote value who will also elect Kovind's successor.

Gotabaya quits as Sri Lankan President after landing in Singapore, sends resignation letter to Speaker through email

Sri Lanka (KCN): Sri Lanka's embattled President Gotabaya Rajapaksa on Thursday sent his resignation letter through an email to Parliament Speaker Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena whose office is checking the legality of the document, according to media reports.

The Speaker said that he has received the resignation letter from President Rajapaksa and his office was checking the legality of the letter, media reports said.

In an unusual move, Maldivian Majlis (Parliament) Speaker Mohamed Nasheed earlier announced that Sri Lankan President Rajapaksa has resigned.

"Sri Lankan President GR has resigned. I hope Sri Lanka can now move forward. I believe the President would not have resigned if he were still in Sri Lanka, and fearful of losing his life. I commend the thoughtful actions of the Govt of Maldives. My best wishes to the people of Sri Lanka," Nasheed, the former president who had negotiated Rajapaksa's escape to the Maldives, said in a tweet.

On Saturday, Rajapaksa had announced to step down on July 13 after thousands of protesters stormed his official residence, blaming him for the unprecedented economic crisis that has brought the country to its knees.

He, however, fled to the Maldives without resigning from his office.

From the Maldives, he went to Singapore on Thursday.

Rajapaksa was the first person with the army background to be elected as Sri Lanka's President in 2019.

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, who is now Acting President, has already said he was willing to resign and make way for an all-party government to take over.

Under the Sri Lankan Constitution, if both the president and prime minister resign, the Speaker of parliament will serve as acting president for a maximum of 30 days.

The Parliament will elect a new president within 30 days from one of its members, who will hold the office for the remaining two years of the current term.

Sri Lanka, a country of 22 million people, is under the grip of an unprecedented economic turmoil, the worst in seven decades, leaving millions struggling to buy food, medicine, fuel and other essentials.

In several major cities, including Colombo, hundreds are forced to stand in line for hours to buy fuel, sometimes clashing with police and the military as they wait.

The country, with an acute foreign currency crisis that resulted in foreign debt default, had announced in April that it is suspending nearly USD 7 billion foreign debt repayment due for this year out of about USD 25 billion due through 2026.

Sri Lanka's total foreign debt stands at USD 51 billion.

"Sri Lankan President GR has resigned. I hope Sri Lanka can now move forward. I believe the President would not have resigned if he were still in Sri Lanka, and fearful of losing his life. I commend the thoughtful actions of the Govt of Maldives. My best wishes to the people of Sri Lanka," he said.

Nasheed, the former president, had negotiated Rajapaksa's escape to the Maldives, sources here said.

On Saturday, Rajapaksa had announced to step down on July 13 after thousands of protesters stormed his official residence, blaming him for the unprecedented economic crisis that has brought the country to its knees.

He, however, fled to the Maldives on Wednesday without resigning from his office.

From Maldives, he went to Singapore on Thursday. Rajapaksa, who enjoys immunity from prosecution while he is president, fled to avoid the possibility of arrest by the new government.

Sri Lanka, a country of 22 million people, is under the grip of an unprecedented economic turmoil, the worst in seven decades, leaving millions struggling to buy food, medicine, fuel and other essentials.

Prime Minister Wickremesinghe last week said Sri Lanka is now a bankrupt country.

The Saudia airline plane carrying them landed at Singapore's Changi Airport at 7:17 pm (1117 GMT), according to AFP journalists on site.

Reporters had descended on Changi after news emerged that the president was heading to the city-state, but by late Thursday he had not been spotted leaving.

Now, the Sri Lanka Parliament will not convene on Friday as Speaker Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena is yet to receive Rajapaksa's resignation letter, the Speaker's Office said on Thursday.

The next date for the meeting will be announced within the next three days if President Rajapaksa's resignation letter is received by the Speaker today, the Speaker's Office said.

On Monday, Abeywardena had announced that Parliament will elect the new Sri Lankan President on July 20 following Rajapaksa's resignation on July

13.

But Rajapaksa, 73, appointed Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe as the acting President hours after he fled the country without resigning as previously announced.

Abeywardena, who on Thursday, informed Rajapaksa that he should submit his letter of resignation as soon as possible or else he will consider other options to remove him from the office.

Singapore on Thursday said it has allowed Rajapaksa to enter the city-state on a "private visit" from the Maldives and there was no request for asylum from him, after he fled the country in the face of public revolt against his government's mishandling of the economy.

Acting President Wickremesinghe on Wednesday urged the Speaker to appoint a consensus Prime Minister that had the backing of all the parties.

The principal opposition party and the group of parliamentarians who broke away from the ruling Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) party said Sajith Premadasa is their Presidential nominee.

Political parties have asked the Speaker to explore ways to remove Rajapaksa from office if he continues to delay submitting his resignation.

Gotabaya Rajapaksa leaves Maldives for Singapore,



but yet to resign

Singapore's foreign ministry confirmed Rajapaksa had been allowed to enter the city-state but insisted it was for a "private visit". "He has not asked for asylum and neither has he been granted any asylum. Singapore generally does not grant requests for asylum," it said in a statement.

A handful of Sri Lankans were waiting in one of the airport's arrival areas to voice their anger at Rajapaksa and the economic crisis engulfing their homeland.

"I want to scold him with all the words that I know," said a Sri Lankan design engineer working in Singapore, who identified himself only as Max.

"He's responsible for everything that happened in our country," he told AFP. The city-state is home to a sizeable Sri Lankan diaspora.

Sri Lanka lifts curfew, no signs of Rajapaksa's resignation

But authorities were quick to warn against protests - it is illegal for even one person to stage a demonstration in tightly-controlled Singapore without prior official permission.

In a statement issued after Rajapaksa's arrival, police urged people to "abide by our local laws. Action will be taken against anyone participating in a public assembly that is illegal".

Rajapaksa, 73, fled Sri Lanka after protesters demonstrating against the country's worst-ever economic crisis overran his palace on the weekend.

He is expected to look to stay in the city-state for some time, according to Sri Lankan security sources, before potentially moving to the United Arab Emirates.

Rajapaksa was allowed to enter Singapore on Thursday on a "private visit", a day after he fled the country to the Maldives without resigning as promised in the face of public revolt against his government's mishandling of the economy.

A Saudi airlines flight - SV 788 - carrying Rajapaksa landed at the Singapore Changi International Airport shortly after 7 pm (local time).

A spokesperson for Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirmed that Rajapaksa has been "allowed entry into Singapore on a private visit".

He has not asked for asylum and neither has he been granted any asylum, the spokesperson said, adding Singapore generally does not grant requests for asylum.

Rajapaksa, the 73-year-old leader who had promised to resign on Wednesday instead appointed Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe as the Acting President hours after he fled to the Maldives, escalating the political crisis and triggering a fresh wave of protests in the island nation.

On Saturday, Rajapaksa had announced that he will step down on Wednesday after thousands of protesters stormed his official residence, blaming him for the unprecedented economic crisis that has brought the country to its knees.

Rajapaksa, who enjoys immunity from prosecution while he is president, fled the country without resigning to avoid the possibility of arrest by the new government.

Parliament Speaker Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena Thursday informed Rajapaksa that he should submit his resignation letter as soon as possible or else he will consider other options to remove him from the office.

Some media outlets reported that the Speaker's office has received the resignation letter from Rajapaksa.

However, there was no official confirmation as yet. The Speaker said that since an acting President has been appointed, his office is exploring the legal provisions to consider the option of "have vacated his post" if the President does not tender in his letter of resignation.

A spokesperson for the Sri Lanka Parliament said that given that the President had not yet tendered his letter of resignation, it is uncertain if Parliament would be convened on Friday.

Prime Minister Wickremesinghe, who is now Acting President, on Wednesday informed the Speaker to nominate a Prime Minister who is acceptable to both the Government and Opposition.

President Rajapaksa's brothers - former prime minister Mahinda Rajapaksa and ex-finance minister Basil Rajapaksa - on Thursday gave an undertaking to the Supreme Court through their lawyers that they will not leave the country until the Fundamental Rights petition filed against them is heard on Friday, the Daily Mirror reported.

A five-judge bench of Lankan Supreme Court comprising Chief Justice Jayantha Jayasuriya, Justice Buwaneka Aluwihare, Justice Priyantha Jayawardena, Justice Vijith Malalgoda, and Justice LTB Dehideniya are scheduled to hear on Friday the petition against the two members of the erstwhile powerful Rajapaksa family.

Mahinda, the patriarch of the Rajapaksa clan, resigned from the post of prime minister on May 9, hours after his supporters attacked anti-government protesters outside President Rajapaksa's office.

The 76-year-old former strongman was barred by a Sri Lankan court from travelling abroad in May in view of investigations against them for the deadly attack on anti-government protesters in Colombo.

Basil, a US passport holder, resigned as finance minister in early April as street protests intensified against shortages of fuel, food and other necessities and quit his seat in parliament in June.

Meanwhile, the Sri Lankan Army in a statement urged the protesters to desist from violence immediately or be prepared to face the "consequences",

warning that the security forces are "legitimately empowered" to exercise force.

At least 84 people were hospitalised when protesters clashed with the security forces at the PM office and at the main access junction to Parliament on Wednesday after President Rajapaksa fled the country.

The police fired tear gas and water cannons at the mob who were trying to break barriers and enter the restricted zone.

Authorities on Wednesday imposed a curfew in the Western Province following the eruption of violence. The curfew was lifted in the morning.

But it had to be reimposed amid fears of violence as there was no word from Rajapaksa on his resignation.

The Army said that despite its repeated appeals the "unruly protesting mobs" on Wednesday tried to forcibly enter the Parliament complex aggressively went on harassing and attacking the troops on duty using clubs, iron rods, stones, helmets, etc and snatched TWO T-56 weapons with ammunition rounds and caused injuries to a dozen of Army personnel.

It said the army troops used minimum force and brought the situation under control.

Wednesday's protests were more directed at Wickremesinghe.

Calls for his resignation intensified after he was appointed the acting president.

Political party leaders are asking him to step down so that Speaker Abeywardena can take control as acting president.

The demonstrators on Thursday decided to vacate some of the administrative buildings, including the President's House and the PM Office, they have been occupying since April 9 demanding President Rajapaksa's resignation.

"We are peacefully withdrawing from all buildings except the old parliament (president's office) and Galle Face (the continuous protest site). We will continue to remain in these places, we will continue to protest until we reach our goals," a spokesperson for the group told reporters.

Sri Lanka, a country of 22 million people, is under the grip of an unprecedented economic turmoil, the worst in seven decades, leaving millions struggling to buy food, medicine, fuel and other essentials.




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Sri Lanka's President Gotabaya leaves for Singapore from Maldives

Male/Colombo(KCN): Sri Lanka's embattled President Gotabaya Rajapaksa on Thursday



left the Maldives for Singapore after fleeing his country amidst the worst economic and political crisis faced by the island nation in decades.

Rajapaksa has departed from the Maldives on Saudi Airline flight SV 788 to Singapore, sources said.

Rajapaksa, the 73-year-old leader who had promised to resign on Wednesday, appointed Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe as the acting President hours after he fled the country, escalating the political crisis and triggering a fresh wave of protests.

Earlier, Rajapaksa, his wife Loma and their two security officers were expected to leave for Singapore on board SQ437 from Male on Wednesday night but did not board the aircraft due to security concerns, the Daily Mir-

ror newspaper reported.

Meanwhile, Sri Lankan Parliament Speaker Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena said that he is yet to receive the resignation letter from President Rajapaksa. Rajapaksa, who enjoys immunity from prosecution while he is president, fled the country on Wednesday before resigning to avoid the possibility of arrest by the new government.

On Saturday after thousands of protesters stormed his official residence, blaming him for the unprecedented economic crisis that has brought the country to its knees, Rajapaksa announced that he will step down on Wednesday. Rajapaksa's escape to the Maldives was negotiated by the Maldivian Majlis (Parliament) Speaker and former president Mohamed Nasheed, sources in the Maldives capital Male said. Sri Lanka, a country of 22 million people, is under the grip of an unprecedented economic turmoil, the worst in seven decades, leaving millions struggling to buy food, medicine, fuel and other essentials. Prime Minister Wickremesinghe last week said Sri Lanka is now a bankrupt country. Last week, Prime Minister Wickremesinghe said Sri Lanka is now a bankrupt country.

UAE to invest USD 2 billion to develop integrated food parks across India

NEW DELHI: The United Arab Emirates will invest USD 2 billion to develop a series of integrated food parks across India under the framework of the four-nation grouping 'I2U2'.

The decision was announced after the leaders of the grouping -- Prime Minister Narendra Modi, US President Joe Biden, Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid and UAE President Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan -- held the first virtual summit.

A joint statement said the I2U2 leaders' meeting focused on food security crisis and clean energy and that they discussed innovative ways to ensure longer-term, more diversified food production and food

delivery systems.

The grouping is known as 'I2U2' with 'I' standing for India and Israel and 'U' for the US and the UAE. On the project relating to food parks, the statement said India will provide appropriate land.

"India will provide appropriate land for the project and will facilitate farmers' integration into the food parks. US and Israeli private sectors will be invited to lend their expertise and offer innovative solutions that contribute to the overall sustainability of the project," the I2U2 said.

It said the investments will help maximise crop yields and, in turn, help tackle food insecurity in

Demolition, jobs for Agniveers, attacks on migrants in J-K to figure in Parl session

Continued from page-1

protests were demolished by authorities over claims that these were built illegally and there were irregularities in land documents.

Though "Reservation for Agniveers in paramilitary forces" has been marked as an unstarred question, the issue is likely to be raised by the opposition strongly orally too.

The Centre on June 14 had unveiled the ambitious 'Agnipath' scheme for the recruitment of youths aged between 17 and a half and 21 in the Army, the Navy and the Air Force, largely on a four-year short-term contractual basis.

Those recruited under the scheme will be known as 'Agniveers'. After the completion of the four-year tenure, 25 per cent of the recruits from each batch will be offered regular service.

There have been protests and violence by job aspiring youths against the scheme. The Union Home Ministry had announced that 10 per cent vacancies for recruitment in the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) or the paramilitary forces will be reserved for the 'Agniveers'. Issues like compensation provided to the families of the paramilitary personnel, attacks carried out by the Naxals, riots, curfews and police firings, smuggling of drugs and narcotics from across the border, incidents of terror attacks are expected to be raised during the monsoon session.

Wait for appointment in paramilitary forces, incidents of terror attacks in Jammu and Kashmir, loss of lives and properties due to heavy rains, unemployment crisis in the Union Territory of Ladakh and land acquired in Jammu and Kashmir are some other issues listed as tentative questions for the Parliament session. Spread of religious radicalisation, mental health of CAPFs personnel, losses due to heavy rains, floods and cyclones, centre-state relations, NRC, employment rate in Jammu and Kashmir and crime against the SCs and STs are other key subjects which are expected to be raised in both houses of Parliament.

NASA's James Webb telescope detects water on distant planet

Continued from page-1

The combination of large size, short orbital period, puffy atmosphere, and lack of contaminating light from objects nearby in the sky makes WASP-96 b an ideal target for atmospheric observations.

NASA's fear about China's militarization of US space agency not baseless: Report

While the Hubble Space Telescope has analysed numerous exoplanet atmospheres over the past two decades, capturing the first clear detection of water in 2013, Webb's immediate and more detailed observation marks a giant leap forward in the quest to characterise potentially habitable planets beyond Earth.

On June 21, Webb's Near-Infrared Imager and Slitless Spectrograph (NIRISS) measured light from the WASP-96 system for 6.4 hours as the planet moved across the star.

This resulted in a light curve showing the overall dimming of starlight during the transit, and a transmission spectrum revealing the brightness change of individual wavelengths of infrared light between 0.6 and 2.8 microns.

The light curve confirmed properties of the planet that had already been determined from other observations - the existence, size, and orbit of the planet.

The transmission spectrum revealed the previously hidden details of the atmosphere: the unambiguous signature of water, indications of haze, and evidence of clouds that were thought not to exist based on prior observations.

A transmission spectrum is made by comparing starlight filtered through a planet's atmosphere as it moves across the star to the unfiltered starlight detected when the planet is beside the star.

Researchers are able to detect and measure the abundances of key gases in a planet's atmosphere based on the absorption pattern - the locations and heights of peaks on the graph.

In the same way that people have distinctive fingerprints and DNA sequences, atoms and molecules have characteristic patterns of wavelengths that they absorb.

The spectrum of WASP-96 b is not only the most detailed near-infrared transmission spectrum of an exoplanet atmosphere captured to date, but it also covers a remarkably wide range of wavelengths, including visible red light and a portion of the spectrum that has not previously been accessible from other telescopes, NASA said.

This part of the spectrum is susceptible to water as well as other vital molecules like oxygen, methane, and carbon dioxide.

Researchers will be able to use the spectrum to measure the amount of water vapour in the atmosphere, constrain the abundance of various elements like carbon and oxygen, and estimate the atmosphere's temperature with depth.

They can then use this information to make inferences about the overall make-up of the planet, as well as how, when, and where it formed.

Uproar over Murmu remark

Continued from page-1

the BJP MLAs holding banners staged a dharna in the Assembly premises.

Congress Whip Taraprasad Bahinipati blamed the saffron party for creating disturbance in the Assembly for the sake of publicity.

There is no point in disturbing the Assembly proceeding as it is run on the money of the people of Odisha. The BJP Members are doing this only to get publicity, he said.

Mr. Bahinipati said that BJP Members had failed to understand what Mr. Kumar had said and alleged that its Lawmakers were enacting a drama over the issue and were wasting the time of the House proceedings by stalling the Question Hour.

Meanwhile, the BJP leaders and workers took out rallies and started protests in several places including Bhubaneswar and Mayurbhanj—the home district of Ms. Murmu.

As per reports, Mr. Kumar, a former Lok Sabha MP from Jharkhand, on Wednesday said that Ms. Murmu, though a decent person herself, represents the 'evil philosophy of India' and she should not be made the symbol of adivasis.

Bhubaneswar student death: Naba Nirman Krushak Sangathan calls for Odisha bandh on July 19



BHUBANESWAR(KCN): The Naba Nirman Krushak Sangathan (NNKS) has called for Odisha bandh on July 19 over death of a Plus III first year student of Buxi Jagabandhu Bidyadhar Autonomous College (BJB) in the State Capital. NNKS along with its student wing Naba Nirman Yuva Chhatra Sangathan threatened to hold State-wide protests

on July 19 as the city police have failed to take any action in connection with the sensitive case. "Police have not initiated action even against the hostel authorities over the death of the girl. A peaceful protest will also be held in front of DGP's office in Cuttack on July 17," said convenor of NNKS, Akshay Kumar. NNKS along with its

student wing members and the victim's mother will also visit various colleges in Bhubaneswar on Thursday and Friday and educational institutions in Cuttack on Saturday to seek the support of the students to ensure justice for the victim. Meanwhile, the victim's mother on Wednesday called off her protest at the designated dharna site in the city. The 19-year-

old girl allegedly died by suicide in Karubaki Ladies Hostel of the college on July 2. Police had recovered a note purportedly written by the victim in which she had accused three hostel seniors of harassing her. However, police said that they have not found any clue so far of the victim being subjected to ragging.

Lack of clarity in selections continues with no Kohli for WI tour

CHENNAI: In the absence of a press conference, it is hard to ascertain whether the national selectors have rested or dropped Virat Kohli for the T20Is against West Indies. The press release — apart from naming the 18 players picked for the tour — has

Liverpool manager Klopp brushes off criticism of new signing Nunez

SINGAPORE: Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp on Thursday laughed off past comments about his unwillingness to spend heavily on a single player, defending the club's big-money signing of Darwin Nunez from Benfica.

Speaking in Singapore ahead of Friday's pre-season friendly against Crystal Palace, the Anfield boss was reminded by reporters of a

only one added information, which relates to the inclusion of KL Rahul and Kuldeep Yadav, whose availability for the series is subject to clearing fitness test. The selection committee led by Chetan Sharma has once again left it to the world to interpret their deci-

life can change," he added.

Nunez was heavily criticised on social media after a rusty performance in his first game for Liverpool, after he missed an open goal in their 4-0 loss to Manchester United in Bangkok on Tuesday.

Klopp said the criticism was unfair and backed the Uruguayan to come good for the Reds.

sion.

There is a strong chance Kohli has been rested alongside Jasprit Bumrah, Yuzvendra Chahal because India want him fresh for the upcoming challenges, which include a T20 World Cup in Australia in three months time. There is also a strong chance that Kohli has been dropped from the squad as in his absence, the likes of Deepak Hooda and Suryakumar Yadav have not only earned their spot, but have also shown



India are not really missing the services of their former captain.

Sometime in the next three months, India have to take a call on whether Kohli is part of their plans for the T20 World Cup or not. If one goes by the current form, he doesn't merit a place as, in Hooda and Suryakumar, India have batters who are playing the T20s the way it should be played.

But the World Cup is happening in Australia, where the conditions — especially adjusting to the bounce — will be challenging for batters even on batting friendly pitches. In the team that is picked for West Indies, barring Rishabh Pant and Hardik Pandya, who are expected to take the middle-order slots, Hooda, Suryakumar and Dinesh Karthik are yet to play any T20Is in Australia. Which is why, India still believe Kohli will be crucial to their plans Down Under as his experience in those conditions will be quite handy.

Although there is no official word, a couple of selectors privately confirmed that Kohli was not picked

for the West Indies series since he asked for rest. However, there is no guarantee that Kohli will get his place back for the Asia Cup which follows soon after the West Indies series.

Had Kohli been amongst runs, this would have been an easy decision. Here the selectors and the team management are facing a unique challenge. Such scenarios are not new to world cricket. South Africa saw it with AB de Villiers in the lead up to the 2019 World Cup and Bangladesh with Tamim Iqbal ahead of the last T20 World Cup. Like Kohli, both the batters had opted out of the ODI and T20 team for different reasons and with their replacements performing well in their absence, they were no longer automatic picks and subsequently missed those ICC events.

Kohli and India are facing a similar prospect now. Since the last T20 World Cup in October-November, Kohli has missed the series against New Zealand, Sri Lanka and South Africa and will now miss the five matches against West Indies too. Apart from the IPL, Kohli has only featured in four T20Is for India, which are far from being ideal preparation in a World Cup year.

With Hooda and Suryakumar not only confirming their tickets to Australia, but having made all the right noises for their continuous presence in the XI, the question is how far will India wait to decide on Kohli. He is too good a player to be picked for the World Cup and be asked to warm the bench. And in the current form he isn't the first name on the team sheet either. The squad for the Asia Cup may well provide some clarity.

Squad: Rohit Sharma (capt), Ishan Kishan, KL Rahul*, Suryakumar Yadav, Deepak Hooda, Shreyas Iyer, Dinesh Karthik, Rishabh Pant, Hardik Pandya, Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel, R Ashwin, Ravi Bishnoi, Kuldeep Yadav*, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Avesh Khan, Harshal Patel, Arshdeep Singh.

*KL Rahul and Kuldeep Yadav inclusion is subject to fitness.



2018 comment where he said he did not want to spend £100 million (\$118 million) on a single player.

Fans have poked fun at the German after his club agreed a deal with Benfica for Uruguayan striker Nunez that could see them pay up to £85 million (USD 100.4 million) with add-ons.

Klopp, however, laughed off the question, saying the transfer market had changed since he made the comments.

"When you want to sign a striker as exciting as Darwin is, it's the market and you have to pay the price," said Klopp.

"I've said so many things in my life which have caught me later and showed me how quickly

"The only real important thing is how I judge the situation and I couldn't be more calm or completely convinced about his potential," the German added.

He also downplayed the heavy loss to arch-rivals United, insisting that his focus was not on results but on preparing his players for the start of the new season.

"Do I like losing 4-0 against Man United? Not at all but we cannot judge our pre-season on just doing well in games," he said.

The German said the pre-season matches his team are playing were important, "but the more important games are coming up in two weeks and that's when we have to be ready".

Kohli returns as India bowl in 2nd ODI against England

LONDON: Virat Kohli returned to the India side as captain Rohit Sharma won the toss and elected to field in the second one-day international against England at Lord's on Thursday. Kohli missed India's 10-wicket thrashing of world champions England in the 1st

in India's side for the second of this three-match series.

England were unchanged from the side that was blown away for just 110 at the Oval on Tuesday. Thursday's encounter is taking place three years to the day since England beat New Zealand in a World

Bairstow, Joe Root and Ben Stokes.

But while England have won all four Tests under the new red ball leadership duo of captain Stokes and coach Brendon McCullum, the white-ball side has struggled since Buttler took over from 2019 World

ing loss on the other side of London's River Thames.

Teams England: Jason Roy, Jonny Bairstow, Joe Root, Ben Stokes, Jos Buttler (capt/wkt), Liam Livingstone, Moeen Ali, Craig Overton, David Willey, Brydon



ODI at the Oval on Tuesday with a "mild groin strain".

But the fit-again Kohli, who has been struggling for runs and was on Thursday left out of the India squad for the upcoming T20 series in West Indies, replaced Shreyas Iyer

Cup final at Lord's -- the only time their men's side have won a major 50-over global title.

England's team on Thursday contained five survivors from that dramatic 'Super Over' victory in new captain Jos Buttler, Jason Roy, Jonny

Cup-winning skipper Eoin Morgan who stepped down last month.

Buttler has won just one of his first four matches in permanent charge, with England beaten 2-1 in a Twenty20 series by India prior to Tuesday's humiliat-

Carse, Reece Topley India: Rohit Sharma (capt), Shikhar Dhawan, Virat Kohli, Suryakumar Yadav, Rishabh Pant (wkt), Hardik Pandya, Ravindra Jadeja, Mohammed Shami, Jasprit Bumrah, Yuzvendra Chahal, Prasidh Krishna



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