

World Water Day: PM Modi launches ‘Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch the Rain’ campaign

Press Trust of India

New Delhi, Mar 22 : Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday (March 22) launched the ‘Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch the Rain’ campaign on World Water Day via video conferencing. On the occasion, the Prime Minister also interacted with sarpanches and Ward Panches in Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Gujarat, said a government statement.

A memorandum of agreement was also signed between the Union Minister of Jal Shakti and the Chief Ministers of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh to implement the Ken



Betwa Link Project, the first project of the National Perspective Plan for interlinking of rivers, in the presence of the Prime Minister.

Speaking on the occasion, the Prime Minister said, “on

International Water Day, a major step has also been taken for the Ken-Betwa Link Canal along with the introduction of the Catch The Rain campaign,” adding “this agreement is important to realize Atal Ji’s dream in the interest of millions of families of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.”

Rapid development is not possible without water security and effective water management,

he said, adding that the vision of India’s development and India’s self-reliance, is dependent on our water sources and our Water Connectivity. The Prime Minister noted that the challenge of the water crisis is increasing equally with India’s development. He said it is the responsibility of the present generation of the country to fulfill its responsibility for the generations to come. He asserted that the government has made water governance a priority in its policies and decisions. In the last 6 years, many steps have been taken in this direction. He talked about Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojna, water campaign

to every farm - Har Khet ko Paani, ‘Per Drop More Crop’ campaign and NamamiGange Mission, Jal Jeevan Mission or Atal Bhujal Yojana. Work is being undertaken rapidly on all these schemes, he said. The Prime Minister pointed out that the better India manages rainwater, the lesser the country’s dependence on groundwater. “Therefore, success of campaigns like ‘Catch the Rain’ is very important,” he said and noted that both urban and rural areas have been included in the Jal Shakti Abhiyan. He called upon to step up water conservation efforts in the days leading upto Monsoon.

Congress-AIUDF alliance will lead to rise in infiltration in Assam, warns Amit Shah



Press Trust of India

Jonai, Mar 22 : Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday warned that the infiltration will rise in Assam since Congress has now aligned with Badruddin Ajmal’s AIUDF to win the upcoming assembly election in the BJP-ruled state. “We worked for the development whereas Congress is forging an alliance with Badruddin Ajmal. If they come to power, infiltration in the state will surge. Do you want to stop infiltration? Congress party should be ashamed for coming together with Ajmal,” Union Home Minister Amit Shah said.

Amit Shah on Monday said BJP has ensured peace and development in Assam during the last five years and alleged that this was in contrast to violence and instability during the Congress rule.

Addressing the first of three election rallies in Assam during the day, Shah alleged that five years ago when Congress was in power, there was agitation, violence, bomb blasts, deaths and curfews were common.

“Aatankwad ka nanga naach charo aur chal rahi thi (there was the naked dance of in-

surgency was going on all around). “Rahul Gandhi talks of protecting Assam’s ‘asmita’ (pride and identity), but today I want to ask him publicly - will Congress do it with AIUDF Chief Badruddin Ajmal on his lap?” he said.

If by chance Ajmal comes to power, “will Assam be safe from infiltrators? Do people want more infiltrators to come into the state?” he asked. He also accused the Congress of a policy of divide and rule, while stating that BJP’s policy is ‘Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas and Sabka Vishwas’.

The Congress has created a rift between Assamese and Bengalis, plains and hills and Upper and Lower Assam, while the “BJP has taken all smaller communities together and bonded them through development,” Shah claimed.

“This is an election for people to decide whether they want peace and development....This is an election for not electing MLAs or a Chief Minister but to ensure that development continues and Assam’s pride and glory is further enhanced,” he said.

Amit Shah further asserted that it was evident from the enthusiasm of the people that the BJP was going to form the government for a second consecutive term in Assam.

Besides Jonai, Shah will also address an election rally at Majuli from where Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal is contesting for a second consecutive term, and at Udalguri. He is also scheduled to attend a meeting of party workers at Guwahati in the evening.

BJP’s win will ensure that Assam’s image would be of Gopinath Bordoloi, Bhupen Hazarika and Sankardev: JP Nadda



Press Trust of India

New Delhi, Mar 22 : JP Nadda on Monday (March 22, 2021) said that the Bharatiya Janata Party’s win will ensure Assam’s image as the state’s cultural revolutionaries like Gopinath Bordoloi, Bhupen Hazarika and Sankardev. BJP’s National President’s comments came after Congress leader Rahul Gandhi called Badruddin Ajmal as Assam’s image.

Nadda said, “Rahul Gandhi says ‘Badruddin is Assam’s image’. Assam’s image would be Gopinath Bordoloi, Bhupen Hazarika and Sankardev, all cultural revolutionaries of Assam!”

During the public meeting in Assam’s Biswanath Charali, Nadda said, “Tarun Gogoi in 2006 had said - ‘Who is Badruddin?’ Today, Congress is walking with Badruddin. This is the politics of Congress! Their alliance is based on opportunism.”

Nadda also said, “Like a

tusker, the Congress has two sets of teeth -- one to show off and another to chew. It says something and always does the opposite... It is dividing the society.”

The senior BJP leader added, “If you need darkness, then go with the Congress. But if you need development, hold the hands of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.”

He highlighted his ruling party’s work in the state and said that 60 lakh toilets have been built under the Swachh Bharat mission to make Assam open defecation free. “This has helped women a lot. A huge number of gas connections, too, have been provided to empower families,” BJP National chief said.

He said that the BJP government has started digital surveillance to stop infiltration in Assam.

“A new story of development has been written by preparing five bridges in Assam in 6 years,” said Nadda.

Centre asks states, UTs to increase gap between two doses of Covishield

Press Trust of India

New Delhi, Mar 22 : The Centre on Monday (March 22) has asked states and Union Territories to increase the gap between two doses of Serum Institute of India’s (SII) ‘Covishield’ from 4-6 weeks to 4-8 weeks now.

“In view of the emerging scientific evidence, the interval between two doses of a specific COVID 19 vaccine i.e. COVISHIELD, has been revisited by National Technical Advisory Group on Immunization (NTAGI) and subsequently by National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration for

COVID-19 (NEGVAC) in its 20th meeting. During this meeting, the recommendation has been revised to provide 2nd dose of COVISHIELD at 4-8 weeks’ interval after the 1st dose, instead of earlier practiced interval of 4-6 weeks,” the government said.

The Centre also clarified that the above instruction is only for Covishield and not Bharat Biotech’s Covaxin. “This decision of revised time interval between two doses is applicable ONLY to COVISHIELD and NOT to COVAXIN Vaccine,” the government’s press release stated.

The government stated that, as per scientific data, protection is enhanced if the second dose of Covishield is administered between 6-8 weeks, but not later than the stipulated period of 8 weeks. In a letter to the Chief Secretaries of States/UTs, the Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan stated that he has “accepted the recommendations of NTAGI and NEGVAC and has thereafter advised the States and UTs to ensure the administration of 2nd dose of COVISHIELD to beneficiaries within this stipulated time interval of 4-8 weeks after 1st dose.”

Delhi moots staggered timings for OPD patients amid rising COVID-19 cases

Press Trust of India

New Delhi, Mar 22 : Delhi Health Minister Satyendra Jain on Monday (March 22) said that the state government is mooting staggered timings for OPD patients amid rising COVID-19 cases. He also emphasised the need to wear masks, remain alert, and take precautions during the coming Holi festival.

“There is a need to remain alert and wear masks all the time. Strict action is being taken against those found without a mask and violating social distancing norms,” PTI quoted Jain as saying.

He also asked people to follow COVID appropriate

behaviour during Holi on March 28-29, PTI reported. Jain had said on Sunday that the government has been conducting aggressive testing and contact tracing, and will contain the recent surge in fresh coronavirus cases. The national capital has 3,618 active cases as of March 22, with the death toll reaching 10,956. As per a bulletin, the positivity rate remains at over 1 per cent for the second consecutive day. India has recorded 3,34,646 cases, while the death toll has reached 1,59,967, as per the Health Ministry data. Meanwhile, around 4,50,65,998 people have been vaccinated in the country so far.

Ramdas Athawale writes to Amit Shah seeking imposition of President’s Rule in Maharashtra

Press Trust of India

New Delhi, Mar 22 : Union Minister Ramdas Athawale on Monday (March 22) wrote a letter to Union Home Minister Amit Shah demanding the imposition of President’s Rule in Maharashtra.

Citing the ongoing row in relation to Home Minister Anil Deshmukh and rising COVID-19 cases in the state, Athawale asserted that the state government has failed the people of Maharashtra. “Law and order in the state is very bad and uncontrolled and people of Maharashtra are being neglected,” Athawale wrote in the

letter addressed to Shah. He mentioned the allegations levelled by shunted cop Param Bir Singh on Deshmukh and questioned his removal from the post of Commissioner of Police. The minister asserted that the state government has failed to handle the matter. “Apart from this, as per the count of COVID-19 patients across the country, Maharashtra state is the highest COVID-19 patients in the state,” he wrote further.

The Republican Party of India (Athawale) leader said that the state government has failed in arranging proper infrastructure to check the rising number of

cases. “Therefore, my party is strongly recommending you to enforce President Rule in the state for the betterment, safety and security of the people of Maharashtra,” Athawale concluded.

Earlier, NCP ruled out the resignation of Deshmukh. “There is no question of Anil Deshmukh’s resignation. ATS is investigating the case and we believe the culprit will be punished,” Jayant Patil said on Sunday.

BJP leaders and workers staged protests in various cities demanding the resignation of Deshmukh.

Param Bir Singh approaches SC, seeks CBI probe against Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh

Press Trust of India

New Delhi, Mar 22 : Former Mumbai Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh filed a petition before the Supreme court demanding a CBI inquiry against Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh. The petition he filed was also about his transfer to Home Guard Department.

Earlier in the day, Singh reached the Home Guard office in south Mumbai around noon but avoided speaking to media persons.

Under flak for the handling of the recent bomb scare, the Maharashtra government on March 17 transferred Singh from the post and appointed senior IPS of-

ficer Hemant Nagrale, who was holding additional charge of Maharashtra DGP, as the new commissioner of Mumbai Police. Days after he was shunted out, Singh wrote a letter to Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray alleging that state Home Minister Anil Deshmukh had asked Sachin Waze, currently in custody of the National Investigation Agency (NIA), and other police officers to collect Rs 100 crore monthly, including Rs 50 crore to Rs 60 crore from bars and restaurants in Mumbai. Deshmukh had denied these allegations. The NIA is probing Waze’s alleged role in placing an explosives-laden SUV on February 25.

Rajya Sabha adjourned amid uproar over Maharashtra corruption issue

Press Trust of India

New Delhi, Mar 22 : The Rajya Sabha proceedings were adjourned till 2 pm on Monday (March 22) amid uproar over corruption allegations in Maharashtra. As soon as the Question Hour began, treasury bench members raised the Maharashtra issue with Deputy Chairman Hariwansh, who was in the Chair, asking them to allow the proceedings. Amid the din, he asked members to ask supplementaries.

However, as soon as Minority Affairs Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi answered supplementaries, the Chair Asked Chaya Verma to proceed to the next question. Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar then raised the Maharashtra issue re-

ferring to the alleged corruption in the state. The chair then adjourned the House till 2 pm amid the uproar. The NCP on Sunday (March 21) ruled out the resignation of Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh even as the demand for his removal grew louder over the former Mumbai police chief’s allegation that he wanted police officers to collect Rs 100 crore monthly from bars and hotels in the city.

Bharatiya Janata Party leaders and workers staged protests in various cities demanding the resignation of Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh in view of allegations of corruption levelled against him by former Mumbai police commissioner Param Bir Singh.

U’khand Police gives Guard of Honour to BJP State President Madan Kaushik, says ‘Misunderstanding’ later

Press Trust of India

Bageshwar, Mar 22 : Newly-appointed Bharatiya Janata Party State President Madan Kaushik was given a Guard of Honor by the Uttarakhand Police, which the Bageshwar DIG said was a ‘misunderstanding’.

The incident took place in Bageshwar following which the Police Headquarters had sought a report on the same.

“The Guard of honour was a misunderstanding,” said Bageshwar Deputy Inspector General Nilesh Anand Bhatne.

This is to be noted that Madan Kaushik, a Haridwar MLA, was made the state president on March 12, replacing Bansidhar Bhagat.

Earlier, the Uttarakhand Police was in the news for trolling Virat Kohli for getting out on a duck. Uttarakhand Police took a dig on India skipper for getting out on a duck against England in the first T20I and used the example of his dismissal to raise driving awareness. Although, they deleted the tweet after backlash.

Meanwhile, the Chief Minister of Uttarakhand Tirath Singh Rawat has tested COVID-19 positive, he announced on his official Twitter account on Monday (March 22).

Rawat, who has been in controversy over a couple of issues, took oath as the Uttarakhand CM on Wednesday (March 10) after Trivendra Singh Rawat stepped down from the post on Tuesday.

BJP Leadership In Assam Like Dhritarashtra, Shakuni: Priyanka Gandhi Vadra

Press Trust of India

Sarupathar, Mar 22 : Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Monday alleged the ruling BJP in Assam was functioning like a mafia and running syndicates. Addressing a rally, the Congress general secretary said, the BJP in the state has two “factions”, both of which have betrayed people.

The Congress leader compared Assam’s BJP leadership with “Dhritarashtra” and “Shakuni”, characters in the epic Mahabharata, without naming anyone. Dhritarashtra was known to be a blind ruler while Shakuni was a political manipulator. “...in the As-



sam government, there is a Shakuni Mama-like leader and a Dhritarashtra. Both of them and the BJP have betrayed the people of Assam.”

“The ‘Dhritarashtra’ who was at one time called ‘Jatiya Nayak’ (people’s leader) betrayed the six ethnic communities whom he had promised to get included in

the Scheduled Tribes list. But did not do so,” she said. She alleged that the other leader is like “Shakuni Mama who runs a corrupt government that only cheats people”.

Continuing her attack on the ruling party, she claimed, “BJP has not been able to decide who will be their chief ministerial candidate. They are not able to respect their own chief minister and spell out the name. If there is no stability and unity in the party, then how will it bring stability to Assam and assure the people to give a stable government?”

Corporate Social Responsibility Funds Not Used To Run Government Schemes: Minister

Press Trust of India

New Delhi, Mar 22 : Union Minister of State for Finance and Corporate Affairs Anurag Thakur on Monday said the government does not use the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds to run its schemes. During the Question Hour in Lok Sabha, Mr Thakur said so far Maharashtra (Rs 12700 crore) has received maximum CSR funds, followed by Gujarat (Rs 3926 crore) and Andhra Pradesh (Rs 3542 crore). “We don’t use CSR funds to run the centre’s schemes,” he said.

The minister also asserted that the government does not interfere with regard to allocation of CSR funds by



firms. Under the Companies Act, certain class of profitable entities are required to shell out at least 2 per cent of their three-year annual average net profit towards CSR activities. In case of not spending the requisite amount, the firms con-

cerned have to provide reasons for the same. Replying to a query on the RBI’s internal working group (IWG) report which had recommended that large corporate or industrial houses may be allowed as promoters of banks, he said the central bank has not taken any decision on the issue.

“The RBI will take a final decision keeping in mind interest of consumers of banks” Mr Thakur said, adding even today private sector majority stake is in banks like ICICI and HDFC.

Last year, an internal working group set up by the RBI has proposed to raise the cap on promoters’ stake in private banks from the current 15 per cent to 26 per cent in 15 years. The group has also recommended that large corporate or industrial houses may be allowed as promoters of banks only after amendments to the Banking Regulation Act and strengthening of the supervisory mechanism for conglomerates, including consolidated supervision.

The Reserve Bank of India had constituted the internal working group (IWG) on June 12, 2020, to review extant ownership guidelines and corporate structure for Indian private sector banks.