



Actor Payal Rohatgi released on bail
JAIPUR Actor Payal Rohatgi, arrested for her alleged objectionable social media posts on the Nehru-Gandhi family, was released on bail by a sessions court at Bundi in Rajasthan on Tuesday. A magistrate's court had sent her to judicial custody for eight days on Monday.

BrahMos missiles successfully test-fired
NEW DELHI The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) on Tuesday successfully conducted two BrahMos supersonic cruise missile tests, one each from land and air platforms. The first missile launch was from a land-based mobile launcher, where most of the components were indigenous, while the second launch was carried out by the Air force from an SU-30MKI platform against a sea target.

Siblings, father booked over sexual assault plaint
COIMBATORE A day after the principal and three teachers of a school in Coimbatore were booked on the charges of sexually assaulting a Class XI student and his younger brother, the police on Tuesday registered a case against the boys and their father, based on a counter petition filed by the principal in-charge. The Class XI student, on whose complaint the teachers were booked under POCSO Act, had been placed under suspension on December 13.

Tripura court extends custody of CPI(M) leader
AGARTALA A Tripura court on Tuesday extended for three days the judicial custody of former Minister Badal Choudhury accused in the 2008 PWD scam. The special judge ordered the police to produce the CPI(M) leader in court on December 20 to decide on his bail application. The sessions court had earlier rejected the bail pleas of Mr. Choudhury.

Defence ties to get push at ‘2+2’ with U.S.

Jaishankar, Rajnath to meet Pompeo and Esper today

SUHASINI HAIDER
DINAKAR PERI
NEW DELHI Enhanced defence cooperation, furthering their Indo-Pacific strategy, and discussions on global challenges, including U.S. policy in Iran and Afghanistan, are likely to feature at the top of the agenda as External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh sit down for the second “2+2” combined ministerial meeting with their U.S. counterparts, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Secretary of Defence Mark Esper, on Wednesday. On the defence front, the two sides are expected to sign the Industrial Security Annex (ISA) and review steps being taken to operationalise the foundational agreement Communications Compatibility and Security Agree-



Creating symbiosis: External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar with his U.S. counterpart Mike Pompeo, in this file photo. ■ AP

ment (COMCASA), which was signed during the previous 2+2 talks. However, discussions on the last foundational agreement, Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geo-spatial Cooperation (BECA) have not concluded yet, as some differences still remain, official sources said. The ISA is crucial for U.S. companies bidding for big ticket Indian deals to partner with the Indian private industry, especially the multi-billion dollar deal for 114 fighter jets. As part of efforts

for co-development and co-production of military hardware, a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Defence Technology Trade Initiative (DTTI) is also expected to be signed that “will act as a guide to coordinate projects.” In addition, there are several big ticket defence deals in the works, the progress of which will be reviewed. These include the 24 Lockheed Martin MH-60R Multi-Role helicopters worth \$2.4bn and 13 BAE Systems-built 127 mm MK-45 Naval

gun systems, among others. However, the threat of U.S. sanctions under CAATSA over S-400 air defence purchases from Russia remains a sticking point.

Quad grouping As part of the larger Indo-Pacific focus, the evolving cooperation between the Quad grouping comprising India, Australia, Japan and the U.S. will also be discussed. While Washington has been pushing for greater military engagement, New Delhi has stated that it doesn't see any military role for the grouping. “The 2+2 dialogue is the highest-level institutional mechanism between India and USA that brings together our perspectives on foreign policy, defence and strategic issues,” Indian Ambassador to the U.S. Harsh Vardhan Shringla told news agency PTI in Washington. “A lot of progress has been made in the areas of foreign policy and defence between

our two countries and we are looking forward to a highly qualitative meeting,” he added. **CAA, Kashmir** In addition, officials say U.S. concerns over the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and the protests, which the U.S. State Department has spoken about twice now, will come up. “We are closely following developments regarding the Citizenship (Amendment) Act. We urge authorities to protect and respect the right of peaceful assembly. We also urge protesters to refrain from violence,” a U.S. State Department spokesperson said in Washington on Monday. U.S. officials in Delhi have also raised the issue of continuing restrictions in Kashmir, including the detention of political leaders, as recently as last week, and have made requests repeatedly to the government to allow U.S. Embassy diplomats to visit Jammu and Kashmir.

Limit deputation of IPS officers in paramilitary at 25%: RS panel

It has objected to the overuse of CAPF personnel

VIJAITA SINGH
NEW DELHI A Rajya Sabha committee has objected to the overuse of the Central Armed Police Force (CAPF) for rigorous internal security and election-related duties to the extent that even the reserved battalions are deployed not giving them enough time for rest and recuperation. To boost the morale of the CAPFs, the committee insisted on limiting deputation of officers from the IPS and the armed forces to CAPFs at 25% and the CAPFs cadres should be given an opportunity to become the Director General of respective forces. The committee insisted on paying paramilitary service pay to the CAPF on



CRPF personnel deployed for poll duty in Madurai.

par with the defence forces personnel. The Department Related Standing Committee on Home Affairs has strongly reiterated its recommendations rejecting the government's explanation. The report of the 15-member committee, chaired by Congress leader Anand Sharma, on the action taken by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) in respect of the functioning of the Border Guarding Forces was submitted in the Rajya Sabha last week. “The committee noted

that the defence forces personnel are being paid Military Service Pay in view of the risk to life and social and family isolation and argued that the CAPF also deserves similar incentive in the form of Paramilitary Service Pay as they also face similar risks and isolation. Noting the response of the MHA that the 7th Pay Commission and the Committee on Allowance did not agree to such special pay, the committee insisted on doing the needful,” the report said. Referring to suicides in the CAPFs, the committee urged the Ministry to put in place an institutional mechanism with representatives of the MHA, the Bureau of Police Research and Development, heads of various forces and experts in public health, mental health, psychology and psychiatry to address the issue.

Actor Shriram Lagoo passes away in Pune

He was a pioneer in Marathi theatre

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA PUNE Eminent theatre personality and film actor Shriram Lagoo died due to age-related ailments at his Pune residence on Tuesday, family sources said. He was 92. “I spoke to his son-in-law. He passed away due to age-related complications,” playwright Satish Alekar said. Dr. Lagoo, who was a trained ENT surgeon, played an important role in the growth of the theatre movement in Maharashtra post-Independence along with Vijay Tendulkar, Vijaya Mehta and Arvind Deshpande. His roles in Marathi plays such as *Natsamrat* and *Himalayachi Saoli*, and films such as *Pinjra* made him popular. In Hindi, he essayed memorable roles in films



Shriram Lagoo

such as *Ek Din Achanak*, *Gharonda* and *Laawaris*. Dr. Lagoo, affectionately called in theatre circles as ‘Doctor’, was known for his progressive and rationalist views, which he expressed without fear. Paying tribute to Dr. Lagoo, Maharashtra CM Uddhav Thackeray said: “The Marathi theatre has lost its beloved Natsamrat. There were many before him and there would be many after him, but there was nobody like him.”

WEATHER WATCH
RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY

TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 17.30 HRS)

Forecast for Wednesday: Cold day conditions likely in pockets of Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh & Delhi, Rajasthan, northern parts of Madhya Pradesh and Bihar

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	27.2	13.1	Kozhikode	.....	35.5	23.8
Ahmedabad	25.2	12	Kurnool	.....	32	20.4
Aizawl	21.2	8.6	Lucknow	.....	22.2	11.7
Allahabad	24	12.6	Madurai	.....	0.7	27.4
Bengaluru	26.2	18.4	Mangaluru	.....	37.3	22.5
Bhopal	17.3	9.9	Mumbai	.....	33.6	21.2
Bhubaneswar	28.7	18.1	Mysuru	.....	28	18
Chandigarh	11.4	9.6	New Delhi	.....	12.2	10.4
Chennai	30.4	23.4	Patna	.....	20.3	12
Coimbatore	27.1	21.8	Port Blair	.....	30.3	25.6
Dehradun	21.7	8.4	Puducherry	.....	30.2	22.2
Gangtok	13.3	5.5	Pune	.....	28.6	15.6
Goa	34.4	21.4	Raipur	.....	26	16.2
Guwahati	0.1	26	Ranchi	.....	19	14.6
Hubballi	29	18	Shillong	.....	16	—
Hyderabad	28.5	18.7	Shimla	.....	12.4	2.5
Imphal	23.8	5.2	Srinagar	.....	7.5	-3.7
Jaipur	15.7	5.5	Thiruvananthapuram	.....	33.2	24
Kochi	32.6	23.8	Tiruchi	.....	28.7	23.6
Kohima	17.5	—	Vijayawada	.....	30.9	21
Kolkata	25.5	18.6	Visakhapatnam	.....	29.7	22.8

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO ₂	NO ₂	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE	Yesterday
Ahmedabad	29	33	16	101	100	■ In observation made at 4 p.m., Bulandshahr, Uttar Pradesh, recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 277, indicating a severe level of pollution. In contrast, Eloor, Kerala, recorded a healthy AQI score of 30
Bengaluru	04	53	86	41	62	■
Chennai	04	35	39	78	—	■
Delhi	11	163	76	275	180	■
Hyderabad	17	53	41	164	—	■
Kolkata	14	72	31	168	137	■
Lucknow	08	07	63	285	—	■
Mumbai	13	90	24	198	160	■
Pune	05	26	59	151	119	■
Visakhapatnam	09	34	55	155	115	■

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)
SO₂: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.
NO₂: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.
CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.
PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

Govt. aims to provide broadband access to all villages by 2022

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI The government on Tuesday announced a new ‘mission’ aimed at providing broadband access to all villages by 2022, entailing an investment of around ₹7 lakh crore from various stakeholders. “The National Broadband Mission will facilitate universal and equitable access to broadband services across the country, especially in rural and remote areas,” Telecom and IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said. It would also aim at significantly improving quality of services for mobile and In-



ternet. Under the mission, the government plans to lay incremental 30 lakh route km of optical fibre cable, while also increasing tower density from 0.42 to 1 tower per thousand of population by 2024. The mission envisages stakeholder investment of \$100 billion (₹7 lakh crore)

including ₹70,000 crore from Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) in the coming years and “address policy and regulatory changes required to accelerate the expansion and creation of digital infrastructure and services.” “The vision of the national broadband mission is to fast-track growth of digital communications infrastructure, bridge the digital divide, facilitate digital empowerment and inclusion, and provide affordable and universal access of broadband for all,” an official statement said.

UIDAI drops monitoring agency plan

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI The UIDAI on Tuesday informed the Supreme Court about its decision to withdraw its proposal to hire a ‘social media monitoring agency’. The nodal agency for Aadhaar conveyed its decision to a Bench of Justices S.K. Kaul and K.M. Joseph on a petition filed by Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra, who alleged that the move was meant to “mount surveillance on social media platforms.” Ms. Moitra's plea had said the UIDAI was seeking to hire a social media agency that will employ ‘online reputation management’ and ‘social listening’ tools to monitor and influence conversations on Aadhaar on Facebook and Twitter.