

7-day home isolation for travellers from 12 states

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 26: In the wake of rising Covid-19 cases in other states and a possible second wave of the pandemic, the state governREUTERS

New Delhi, Feb 26: India's economy returned to growth in its fiscal third quarter after a recession



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar. Feb 26: The state

SIZZLES

AT 40°C

arrested by Sonipat police January 12. The police have denied the charge as 'baseless.'

Haryana High Court granted bail to labour rights activist

Naudeep Kaur Friday, more

for allegedly gheraoing an

than six weeks after she was arrested in Haryana's Sonipat

industrial unit and demanding

money from the company. In

her bail plea, the 23-year-old

activist had claimed to have

been severely beaten up at a

police station after she was

N	IARKE	T WAT	CH	
IN	DEX		VARI	ATION
RSES	SENSEX	49099.99	₽	1939.32
CURRENCY BOURSES	NIFTY	14529.20	₽	568.20
ENCY	DOLLAR	74.88		₹1.35
CURR	EURO	89.72	₽	₹0.58
ION	GOLD	₹45,878	₽	₹363
BULLION	SILVER	₹67,710	₽	₹1566

WEATI	HER		
	BHUB	СТК	-1-17
d MAX	40.4°C	37.2°C	
₽ MIN	17.0°C	16.6°C	Forecast
Humidity	53%	57%	
Rainfall	Nil	Nil	Mainly clear sky

ment Friday made seven-day home isolation mandatory for travellers from 12 states including Delhi. Additional Chief Secretary

(Health and Family

Now, people coming

from Maharashtra,

Welfare) PK Mohapatra 56 issued instructions to all collectors, munici- Any laxity can result pal commissioners, East in a resurgence of Coast Railway and dithe pandemic in our rectors of Biju Patnaik state and ruin all our International Airport efforts over the past and Jharsuguda airport months in this regard.

PK MOHAPATRA ADDITIONAL CHIEF SECRETARY

Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Telangana, West Bengal, Punjab, Delhi, Chandigarh, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh will have to undergo mandatory home isolation for seven days. If any person develops symptoms during the isolation period, he/she will





passengers has to be ensured," Mohapatra

said in his letter. Wearing of masks and implementation of social distancing measures are to be strictly enforced, he instructed the officials.

The district administrations have been asked to increase RT-PCR testing rate in all

districts and launch awareness campaign on a war-footing. "Any laxity can result in a resurgence of the pandemic in our state and ruin all our efforts over the past months," he added. Meanwhile, Chief Secretary

Suresh Mahapatra conducted a meeting with all collectors and SPs through virtual platform and asked them to ensure strict enforcement of Covid-19 safety protocols.

He asked them to ensure early identification, isolation, testing and treatment of Covid patients.

earlier in 2020 and the recovery is expected to gather pace as consumer demand and investments shake off the effects of the pandemic, economists said.

Gross domestic product grew 0.4 per cent in October-December compared with the same period a year earlier, data released by the National Statistics Office Friday showed. That compared with revised contractions of 7.3 per cent in July-September and 24.4 per cent in April-June.

India also revised annual GDP estimates for the fiscal year, predicting an 8 per cent contraction, deeper than an earlier estimate of -7.7 per cent. Sectors such as retail, airlines, hotels and hospitality are still reeling from the impact of the pandemic. Annual growth of 3.9 per cent in the farm sector and 1.6 per cent in manufacturing during the three months to December raised hopes of an early recovery as the government rolls out plans to distribute COVID-19 vaccines to India's 1.4 billion people.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government earlier this month launched plans to fund a huge vaccination drive, while outlining a

While consumers' focus has re-

with the same period a year earlier

India revises annual GDP estimates for the fiscal, predicting an 8% contraction, deeper than an earlier estimate of -7.7%

Sectors such as retail, airlines, hotels and hospitality are still reeling from the impact of the pandemic

BLOODBATH ON DALAL STREET

MUMBAI: The BSE Sensex crashed about 1,940 points to post its biggest single-day fall in nearly 10 months and the NSE Nifty plunged over 568 points to crack below the psychological 15,000-mark Friday, tracking global selloffs triggered by a panic in bond markets

overseas. Investors also turned cautious ahead of the third quarter GDP data release, besides keeping an eye on simmering geopolitical tensions between the US and Syria. At the day's close, the 30-share BSE Sensex settled 1.939.32 points or 3.80 per cent lower at 49.099.99 - its worst one-day fall since May 4 last year. Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty plunged 568.20 points or 3.76 per cent to close the session at 14,529.15 - the biggest single-day drop since March 23 last year

slew of tax incentives to boost manufacturing. The RBI, which has slashed its reporate by a total of 115 basis points since March 2020 to cushion the economic shock of the pandemic, has projected growth of 10.5 per cent in the fiscal year that

after shrinking for 2 quarters

starts in April. The central bank left the reporte unchanged at 4 per cent earlier this month, saying the growth outlook had improved and inflation was expected to remain within the RBI's targeted range over the MORE P11 next few quarters.

capital Friday recorded a maximum temperature of 40.4 degree Celsius. For the second consecutive day Bhubaneswar was the hottest place in the country.

Highest temperature of 42.7 degree was recorded in the city in the month of February in 1963, said Bhubaneswar Met Centre Director HR Biswas. In 2016, the capital city had witnessed a maximum



temperature of 40.9 degree Celsius in February, he said.

"Though it is not all-time high temperature, it is not normal too. We hope the maximum temperature will continue to hover around 40 degree Celsius for the next three to four days," the Biswas said. Baripada recorded a maximum temperature of 38.6 degree, while it was 38.1 degree in Angul and 38 degree each in Bolangir and Nayagarh.

MORNING SCHOOL FROM MONDAY

BHUBANESWAR: As a precautionary measure to tackle the heatwave situation, the school and mass education department Friday rescheduled school timings for Class IX, X, XI and XII with effect from March 1. As per new guidelines, students of classes IX and X will attend schools from 7 am to 9 am, while pupils of classes XI and XII will go to schools from 9 am to 1 pm from March 1. Pratap Kumar Mishra, additional secretary of school and mass education department, directed all DEOs to ensure availability of safe drinking water on all school premises.

After petrol & diesel, consumers face LPG price rise

WHILE CONSUMERS' FOCUS HAS REMAINED ON AUTO FUEL PRICES, THE COOKING GAS PRICE RISE HAS GONE ALMOST UNNOTICED

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 26: The government seems to be in no mood to subsidise the price of common man's cooking gas which like the price of petrol and diesel has maintained consistent increase for the past few months. The price of domestic 14.2-kg LPG cylinder was increased by ₹25 Thursday, the third increase in the month of February itself, taking its price to ₹794 a cylinder in Delhi. While the practice of weekly or fortnightly price revision of cooking gas is normally done for non-sub-

sidised cylinders, this year oil companies shave maintained almost equal increase in price of subsidised LPG cylinders as well.

This has equated its price with market prices of cooking gas and thus helping the government to completely eliminate direct benefit transfer (DBT) benefits extended to cooking gas consumers.

"There may just be some element of subsidy that still may be involved in cooking gas if it is getting transported to far off distances from bottling plants. Otherwise, subsidised and non-subsidised cooking gas



prices have almost remained same company on condition of anonymity during entire FY21," said an official of a public sector oil marketing mained on auto fuel prices, the

THE PRICE OF LPG INCREASED BY OVER ₹100 A CYLINDER IN FEBRUARY FROM A LEVEL OF ₹694

cooking gas price rise has gone almost unnoticed. The price increased sharply by over ₹100 a cylinder in February itself from a level of ₹694 to ₹794

With the government not supporting even cooking gas consumers in the time of rising prices, consumers are bearing the brunt of increase in both their transportation and cooking expenses during the pandemic.

There are around 30 crore LPG connections in the country and the levelling of non-subsidised and subsidised LPG cylinder means that the

government substantially reduces DBT payments in FY22 as well.

The government provides 12 subsidised LPG cylinder to a household in a year. While the household buys LPG cylinders at market price, the gap between subsidised and non-subsided cylinders is transferred to the consumers' bank accounts under the DBT scheme.

This transfer has remained suspended during most parts of FY21 as oil companies have raised price of even subsidised cylinders to market levels.







'EXCITING TO BE FIRST SOUTHEAST ASIAN DISNEY PRINCESS'

Vietnam-origin American actress Kelly Marie Tran, who voices the lead character Raya in the animated film Raya And The Last Dragon, finds it exciting to be the first Southeast Asian **Disney princess.**

THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD **TO PREMIERE IN MAY**

Academy Award-winner Barry Jenkins directs the new series, The Underground Railroad, which is all set to premier digitally May 14. The 10-episode limited series is based on Colson Whitehead's Pulitzer Prize winning novel of the same name.



FORTUNE FORECAST



ARIES

If you have children, it's likely you'll spoil them today. After all, it's for days like these that you work hard, says Ganesha. You will also complete pending assignments and it's a productive day for those in medical professions and public services

TAURUS

You may feel frustrated and stranded in family matters today, says Ganesha. Shower your

warmth and care to make up for past mistakes. Your spouse will be supportive and lend you a helping hand to regain your mental composure. Reciprocate with intimacy and go with the flow, suggests Ganesha.

GEMINI

Today, a strong emotional link with someone special may get established, predicts Ganesha. So you will remain delighted and elated for most part of the day. Still, some petty problems may spoil your happy mood later in the day. Diffuse tension with a light-hearted approach.

CANCER



judged by its appearance, and what is unseen counts for nothing. You will work hard to be seen and will crave for attention. Though Ganesha strongly suggests that this will only bring you grief as the most beauti ful of flowers shrivel and your appearance will not help you beyond a point you are not likely to follow his advice

LEO Though God is benevo-

lent, it is but necessary that we reciprocate the magnanimity of the Almighty through our actions. So wake up today with a little prayer on your lips. Make it a point to visit a temple some peace of mind

VIRGO

If curiosity killed the cat, it is going to inspire you to go to exotic places and meet new people, says Ganesha. Enriching experiences enter enthusiastically today. But hold on, don't unpack, as you may set off on yet another adventure. Ganesha sees you being crack ductile and malleable



Have signed five **Telugu films: Adah** Mumbai: Actress Adah Sharma @adivisesh Shweta

took to Instagram to announce that she has signed five new Telugu films.

In her post, the actress, whose film Kshanam completes five years today, thanked the makers for encouraging her to experiment with projects.

The actress posted a clip from the film and wrote: "On 5 yrs of Kshanam I want to announce that I have signed 5 Telugu films Everytime I've done something experimental in any language u guys have always given me sooo much love and support.The films I'm doing now are all stuff that's not done before. Thank you for

@raviperepu@pvpcinemaoffl.' The 2016 Telugu thriller film Kshanam stars Adivi Sesh. Anasuya Bharadwaj, Vennela Kishore, Satvam Rajesh and Satvadev Kancharana. In fact, the film was also remade in Tamil and titled Sathya. It's Hindi version was called Baaghi 2 and Aadyaa in Kannada. The actress was re-

cently seen in the short film Chuha Billi, costarring Anupria Goenka, IANS

Rakul Preet joins the 'Pawri'

Mumbai: Actress Rakul Preet Singh is the latest Bollywood star to join the 'Pawri'. Rakul Friday shared a video performing yoga with her instructor while the Pawri ho rahi hai mashup plays in the background.

Yeh main hoon .. yeh @anshukayoga hai aur yeh Yamato pawri ho rahi hai. and that's how we pawriii," the actress captioned the video on Instagram.

Several Bollywood stars including Ranveer Singh, Deepika Padukone, Shilpa Shetty, Rajkummar Rao, Bhumi Pednekar, Vivek Oberoi, Shahid Kapoor, Randeep Hooda, and Vijay Varma have already created their versions of the Pawri mash-up. Rakul features alongside John Abraham in the upcoming action film Attack, which will release August 13. The fictional story is said to be inspired by true events, set against a hostage crisis. The film also stars Jacqueline Fernandez.

Rakul's other big upcoming release is MayDay starring Amitabh Bachchan and Ajay Devgn, and directed by Devgn. She also has Anubhuti Kashyap's comedy drama *Doctor G* co-starring Ayushmann Khurrana lined up.

Deepika mobbed outside eatery, video goes viral

Mumbai: Actress Deepika Padukone was mobbed while stepping out of a restaurant in the city's Khar area. The incident happened late on Thursday, and photos and videos of the incident have gone viral.

In a viral video, the actress can be seen stepping out of a restaurant when a couple of women selling tissue papers try to approach her. While the women kept insisting that the actress buy tissue boxes from them, an awaiting crowd tried to mob her.

Deepika managed the situation with calm, walking towards her car with a smile, but suddenly someone from the crowd pulled her red sling bag away from her shoulder. As soon as the bag was snatched, Deepika can be heard saying 'Ek minute, ek minute' helplessly trying to get it back.

The actress' security guards immediately snatched the bag back and returned it to her before helping her into the car and asking her to check if any valuables were missing. The ac-

tress waved at the paparazzi from inside the car and sped off. In the viral video, Deepika can be seen sporting a crop top, shrug and a pair of denims. A silver neckpiece and red sling bag add to the look. IANS



romantic, says wife Sunita

Mumbai: Govinda's wife Sunita Ahuja says the Bollywood actor, known for his comic timing and dancing skills on screen, is

a true romantic Sunita's confession came during the opening ceremony of Indian Pro Music League (IPML). The 57-year-old actor was asked how he impresses his wife, to which he started sere-

nading her with the song Roop tera mastana. When host Karan Wahi asked Govinda if that's how he woos his wife, the actor said: "I might have impressed many people on fire during the

with my acting and dance

moves, but I also love music

PEANUTS

and so I sing for her from

His wife Sunita added: "He truly is the romantic one and he sings very well, always leaving me speechless.'

Govinda is one of the celebrities on the music reality show, being promoted by Salman Khan. The show marks Salman's reunion with Govinda for the first time since their 2007

The duo set the stage

time to time.'

superhit film, Partner.

opening ceremony.

IANS





Ganesha says today you may be able to undertake travel for business or pleasure purposes. It may be a busy day for you work wise and you may not be able to completely focus on your family or family issues.

SCORPIO

You've been keeping things within for too long now, and today may just be the day when you vent it all out, says Ganesha. This overwhelming pres sure may have an effect on your health. Ganesha counsels you to spend quality time with your loved ones to ease up a bit.

SAGITTARIUS

Skilled at multi-tasking as you are, today you may just take things one by one. Instincts will rule the roost for most of the time. And govern your actions too. But as peculiar as the day may be, you shall find yourself back to being your own assured self.

CAPRICORN

If trouble happens to knock at your door today, your guardian angel will come to your rescue, foresees Ganesha. Unlike many others who waste life running after impossible goals, you will be content with your achievements.

You will seek spirituality as you feel thoroughly dejected by your present situation. Ganesha says that even struggling courageously with circumstances requires a spiritual endeavour. These trying times give you the patience to deal intelligently with challenges and setbacks





CALVIN AND HOBBES

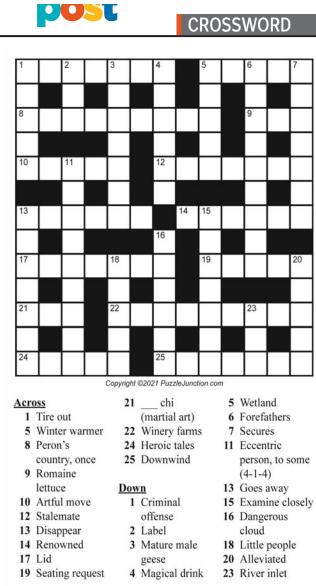


BREVITY

OK, WE HAD A GRILLED CHEESE, A GRILLED CHICKEN CAESAR SALAD AND A REQUEST FOR AN ICE AX, WHICH REMARKABLY ... WE HAD.







FUN

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

SUDOKU

To solve the Sudoku puzzle, each row, column and box must contain the numbers 0 to 9 and the letters A to E.

	1	D		6		0		7	3			Е	4	
	0			9								2	6	
	В	7			А		2		С					
				5	С		9		4		Е	1	0	
		5	8		1				D	7	6			
	Е						А			4	0	D		
5					6	С		4	А	D	1	8	1	
			0	3	1	Е	\square	9						
	А				5			6						
7					Е	3		1	6		8		9	
2									8			9	А	
			А		0							6		
0			С		7	А		5					2	
				4	3	D	6					В	8	
1	4						7	8	В				3	

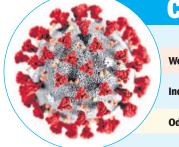






DRAMA FEST

Artistes stage play 'Tathapi Banchichhi' at the silver jubilee drama festival of Bhubaneswar Lawyers' Association at Rabindra Mandap in the Capital city, Friday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
orld	11,36,63,977	8,92,30,445	25,21,467
dia	1,10,63,491	1,07,50,680	1,56,825
disha	3,37,018	3,34,463	1,915

ଧରିତ୍ରୀ | OrissaPOST

EMIN JNCE

AWARDS

After corona, Holding **Tax terror for citizens**

Addition of half the benchmark value of land resulted in 10-50 times hike in the tax

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar. Feb 26: Even though serial lockdowns and shutdowns triggered by coronavirus have financially ruined the common man, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation's (BMC's) decision to not provide rebate on the inflated holding tax rates has put denizens in a tight spot.

Holding tax, a major source of revenue for the civic body, is collected at the rate of 17.5 per cent of annual rent value (ARV) of a property. The ARV of properties varies based on whether it is residential or commercial. However, for reader's convenience we would explain how ARV is calculated for a residential building.



PRAFULLA PANDA A SENIOR CITIZEN

First, the ARV takes into account the area of the property. This is multiplied by ₹13.65 which is the municipal tax. The calculated amount now adds 0.5 of benchmark value of land cost. The land cost varies for mouzas (tax wards) in the city. Then there is a deduction of 15 per cent on account of repair and maintenance costs. In certain cases where the holding has no establishment/building, no cost is deducted.

The problem occurred when the BMC, in October 2019, revised the benchmark value for land cost of different mouzas and effected the new rates from April 2020 onwards while complying with the instructions of the General Administration (GA) department. This resulted in an unprecedented hike in taxes with some property owners complaining about a 10 to 50 times surge in holding tax. And this happened during the



coronavirus pandemic.

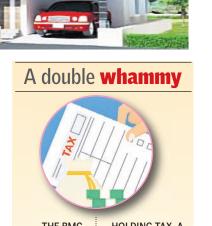
"Earlier, I used to pay about ₹800 as holding tax. However, it is now amounting to about ₹7,000 per month. How am I supposed to pay such large sums suddenly? The civic authorities haven't even considered the impact of Covid on the common man's pocket, especially on people like us who barely survive on pensions,' rued Prafulla Panda, a senior citizen at Bomikhal in city.

Sources say certain property owners who were earlier paying ₹2 core as holding tax annually will now have to cough up ₹18 crore. The new dynamics in taxes is also said to have affected small vendors and tenants who are now forced to pay more.

"I have loans adding up to ₹7 lakh. I need to pay ₹30,000 towards salaries of my employees. Now, the BMC is asking me to pay about ₹20,000 holding taxes instead of ₹1,000 earlier. This is becoming hard as we struggle to earn profits post lockdown," Binayak Mohapatra, a jeweller, said here.

It can be mentioned that the BMC presently has about 1,600 defaulters with an outstanding holding tax dues to the tune of ₹43 crore. The civic authority has recently taken various measures to retrieving the dues.

Defending the civic body's decision, BMC's Deputy Commissioner, Revenue, Srimanta Mishra said the move was taken following the state government's order and in best interests of the city. "Following High Court's interim order, we have decided to collect 50 per cent



THE BMC	HOLDING TAX, A
PRESENTLY	MAJOR SOURCE
HAS ABOUT	OF REVENUE
1,600	FOR THE CIVIC
DEFAULTERS	BODY, IS
WITH	COLLECTED AT
OUTSTANDING	THE RATE OF 17.5
HOLDING TAX	PER CENT OF
DUES TO THE	ANNUAL RENT
TUNE OF	VALUE (ARV) OF
₹43 CRORE	A PROPERTY

THE ARV OF PROPERTIES VARIES BASED ON WHETHER IT IS RESIDENTIAL OR COMMERCIAL

of revised assessment amount while rest can be paid in quarterly or halfyearly instalments. Moreover, we have also done away with retrospective taxes and only asked for amounts from the month the order took effect. There has also been no change in holding tax rate (17.5%) except for the benchmark value," he said.

SHARAD BAID 'REAL ESTATE PRICES TO GO UP MARGINALLY'

India's real estate industry faced unprecedented challenges due to coronavirus. The pandemic brought construction activities to a halt and severely eroded the market of its potential buyer-base. Property transactions dipped to near-zero level during the nation-wide lockdown. The real estate sector hopes for a better future. Managing Director of Utkal Builders Ltd, Sharad Baid shared with Orissa POST about his take on the future of the sector in the post pandemic period.



What is the current status of the real estate market of Odisha? How did the pandemic affect it?

Covid has certainly impacted the market but I guess the general public has realised the importance of a home. A home is where your safety net is. In March when the whole world was confined to their homes due to pandemic, nothing else mattered but a secure & safe home. So we have seen a lot of traction in ready properties. People want to shift from their rental accommodation to their own homes. People also need ready to move in flats where they exactly know what they are buying. So to that extent pandemic has caused a pragmatic shift in demand to ready homes.

How much more time will it take for normalcy to return?

Hopefully, things will come to normalcy by June this year when the vaccine is expected for general public. But again there are talks of a new variant of the virus which apparently is much stronger and is affecting the younger population and even people with stronger immunity.

- In Odisha which one is a bigger market: land or apartments?
- Land comes with a lot of baggage. It's not for everyone. Finding a clear and marketable title of a land is a Herculean task. For seasoned developers like us, who have a battery of lawyers for doing due diligence, sometimes we even find it difficult to get a clear land title. Apartments on the other hand are a safer real estate investment. From that perspective we feel apartments are a bigger market.

What is Utkal's future plan for Odisha?

This year we are celebrating our 31st foundation year in Odisha and we have massive plans for the state of Odisha because we feel there is a big mismatch in the premium housing segment. I believe our Utkal Royal Residency in Kalpana Sq, till date is one of the most premium residential projects in the city. We have plans to build such premium residential projects with top notch finishes where the owners get a sense of pride in staying in an Utkal property. In the commercial segment, we believe in building asset classes - a build to lease model, which makes it imperative to build non fatigue properties to earn attractive sustainable rents over time. When one builds to own, you treat the asset like an investment, which enhances quality. Our Utkal Kanika Galleria in Kalpana Square & Utkal Centre Point in a small city like Jajpur is a testimonial to that.

What is your take on current real estate price?

The construction costs have gone up because of rise in steel & other raw material prices. The project costs have gone up significantly due to new GST norms & increased fee structure of statutory clearances. On top of that the inventory of ready flats has come down significantly, hence I see the prices coming up marginally in the times to come especially for the ready apartment projects. For the under construction projects, prices may be consistent for sometime but eventually will go up. With the growth in urban population & rising aspirations, there is no substitute to MoGhara.

Ruckus in House over

BIGGEST NAME IN FASHION & LIFESTYLE EXHIBITION



State to conduct

Bhubaneswar, Feb 26: The state government has approved the recommendation of the Odisha State Commission for Backward Classes (OSCBC) to conduct a survey on the social and educational condition of the people belonging to backward classes in the state.

The ST& SC Development, Minorities and Backward Classes Welfare department has issued a notification in this regard, Friday.

The OSCBC started functioning last month. After assuming office, chairperson of the Commission, Raghunath Biswal, had said a database of OBC in the state will be prepared soon. The left out eligible ones will be included in the list while those found socially and economically developed would be excluded, he had stated.

Jagannath performs puja at Mamata's home

POST NEWS NETWORK

Puri, Feb 26: Ahead of the Assembly election in West Bengal, a senior Srimandir servitor reportedly performed some special puja at the residence of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

A photo shared by Banerjee on social media depicted senior Srimandir servitor Jagannath Swain Mahapatra performing the puia

"Banerjee is a devotee of Lord Jagannath. She offered puja to the Lord for smooth conduct of the Assembly poll," said Mahapatra, who is also the Mukhya Badagrahi of Lord Jagannath.

The senior servitor further revealed that Banerjee offers puja to the Lord at her residence every year. "Banerjee had specially invited me to perform the puja. She had arranged vehicles for me and seven other priests to reach her residence," Mahapatra added.

illegal sand mining

SPEAKER ASKS REVENUE MINISTER TO PREPARE SAND POLICY SOON



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 26: The Assembly witnessed uproarious scenes as members cutting across party lines expressed concern over sand smuggling across the state during the Question Hour, Friday.

The opposition BJP and Congress members created ruckus demanding formulation of a policy to curb illegal sand mining in the state. Even, Speaker SN Patro said that sand is being transported to Andhra Pradesh from his own constituency (Digapahandi).

Though a draft 'Odisha Sand Policy' was prepared by the state government in April, 2018, it is yet to be implemented, they alleged.

'The draft Sand Policy was prepared in 2018 and even after three years it is in consultation stage and being reviewed. I want to make it clear that there is rampant illegal mining and transportation of sand from Odisha," alleged Opposition Chief Whip, Mohan Charan Majhi.

The government doesn't have any control on fixing price for the sand. As a result, the mafia is fleecing the common people, he alleged. Congress MLA Taraprasad

Bahinipati said, "Common people

are charged hefty amounts as penalty when they lift sand for constructing their houses. But no action is taken against the sand mafia. The government is losing thousands of crores of rupees due to the lack of a specific policy."

The speaker too expressed concern and asked the Revenue and Disaster Minister Sudam Marndi why the government has not prepared the sand policy for lifting sand from different rivers. Sand is under minor mineral category and should be regularised

"In my constituency too sand is lifted and smuggled to Andhra Pradesh. Therefore, to stop the illegal activity the government should formulate a policy," Patro said in the House. As many other members requested to speak on the issue, he di-



In my constituency too sand is lifted and smuggled to Andhra Pradesh. Therefore, to stop the illegal activity the government should formulate a policy

SN PATRO SPEAKER

Govt to prioritise **Covid workers in jobs**

Bhubaneswar: In a relief for agitating auxiliary nurse midwives (ANMs) and other paramedics, the state government Friday announced that temporary health care workers who had worked in Covid-19 care facilities during the pandemic will get priority in regular appointments on the basis of their qualifications. This was announced by Health and Family Welfare Minister N K Das while replying to guestions raised by BJP whip Mohan Majhi and Congress whip Taraprasad Bahinipati in the Assembly. The minister said that about 21,000 ANMs, staff nurses, pharmacists, radiographers and multipurpose health workers (MPHW) were appointed purely on a temporary basis keeping in view the pandemic situation last year.

rected the minister to prepare the policy soon.

The minister, in his reply, said that the government is in the process of consultation with different stakeholders and will soon formulate a policy on sand mining.

The minister also informed the House that though a decision was taken April 11, 2018, for deploying police to check sand theft from different rivers, it could not be implemented due to Covid-19 pandemic.

The minister informed the House that the state government has already identified 144 tehsils in the state as sensitive areas. Special squads consisting of officials, including revenue inspectors and amins have been formed in those areas to keep tabs on illegal activities.

FROM KOLKATA



OrissaPOST SATURDAY | FEBRUARY 27 | 2021 | BHUBANESWAR

downtown

State sees surge in daily Covid-19 cases

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 26: State's Covid-19 tally rose to 3,37,108 Friday as 94 more people tested positive for the infection, a senior Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department official said.

While 56 new cases were reported in quarantine centres, 38 fresh infections were detected during contact tracing, said the official.

Sambalpur district reported the highest number of new cases at 17. followed by Bargarh (10).

The state is witnessing a rise in new Covid-19 cases. It had reported 89 cases Thursday, 68 Wednesday and 62 Tuesday. The coronavirus death toll remained unchanged at 1,915, while 53 patients have died due to comorbidities so far.

Dhenkanal is the only district in the state which does not have any active coronavirus case.

The state now has 650 active cases, while 3,34,400 people have recovered from the disease so far. Odisha has so far tested over

82.77 lakh samples for Covid-19, including 22,632 Thursday.

Covid surveillance heightened

In view of sudden surge in Covid cases elsewhere in the country, the

SEASHORE SCAM

confiscation of property

Cuttack, Feb 26: Cracking whip

cial Odisha Protection of

Interests of Depositors (OPID)

The court has ordered confis-

cation of around 197 acre of land.

1.385kg of gold, 2 quintal silver

and a bank deposit of ₹1,88,75,000

belonging to the Seashore Group.

all the confiscated property which

is valued at nearly ₹650 crore, will

go under hammer and the money

received through auction will be

distributed among the duped de-

The CBI had already served no-

tices to two bureaucrats - Parag

Gupta posted as secretary of

Tourism department and Sangram

As per the direction of the court,

to the Seashore Group.

Special court orders

AGENCIES

positors



The state had reported 89 cases Thursday, 68 Wednesday and 62 Tuesday

Sambalpur district reported the highest number of new cases at 17, followed by Bargarh (10)

Odisha has so far tested over 82.77 lakh samples for Covid-19. including 22,632 Thursday

Health and Family department has directed all municipal commissioners and airport, railways to prepare measures to prevent spread of the virus. In a letter to all the Collectors, District Magistrates undergo thermal scanning and those (DM), municipal commissioners, with symptoms will go for rapid airport directors Bhubaneswar antigen test on site," the letter read.

and Jharsuguda, Manager of East Coast Railway, PK Mohapatra, Additional Chief Secretary, emphasized on enhanced surveillance. 'There has been an upsurge in

Covid-19 cases in 12 states of the country. It has therefore been decided to enhance surveillance in our state to prevent a resurgence of the Covid cases. Passengers disembarking at airports/railway stations

coming from Maharashtra, Kerala, Telangana, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Punjab, Delhi, Chandigarh, Madhva Pradesh. Tamil Nadu. Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh will

Govt to buy paddy from all registered farmers

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 26: After a on chit fund fraudsters, the spehue and cry over paddy procurement issues, both inside and outside the State Assembly, the govcourt here Friday directed to ernment Friday agreed to procure confiscate all movable and impaddy from all registered farmers of the state. This was stated by movable properties belonging Parliamentary Affairs Minister Bikram Keshari Arukha in the Assembly.

Demanding lifting of paddy from his constituency, Deogarh MLA

Subash Chandra As farmers threaten to Panigrahi sat on a commit suicide blaming me dharna as soon as for non-lifting of paddy in the sitting began. the mandis, I will be forced Panigrahi, however,

to committee suicide returned to his seat SUBASH CHANDRA PANIGRAHI after Speaker SN Patro assured him that he would give

him the first chance to raise the Legislature Party leader Narasingha issue. Zero Hour began As

DEOGARH MLA

tralised token system, do not end He said Deogarh district doesn't have mines or industries and peo-

ple there depend on farming for their livelihood. But tokens are given to farmers before paddy is harvested. By the time the crop is ready for sale, the validity of tokens is gone, Panigrahi said.

"As farmers threaten to commit suicide blaming me for non-lifting of paddy in the mandis, I will be forced to committee suicide," he

added. Leader of **Opposition** PK Naik said, "It is very sad to hear that an MLA announced to commit suicide. We will continue our protest till the farmers' issue is resolved.' Congress

Mishra too slammed the government for not resolving the pro-

Govt plans spot registration of elderly

Registration could be done

application

online by self through Cowin

However, those who are unable

register themselves on the spot

at government setups and with

to register themselves online

can visit the registration cen-

tres directly and could

Vaccination would be free

charges at private hospitals

INOCULATION DRIVE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 26: The state government Friday said that the registration process for senior citizens for Covid-19 vaccination would be online as well as on spot at the vaccination centres.

This comes days before the registration drive for vaccination is likely to start. "Registration could be done online by self through Cowin application. However, those who are unable to register themselves online can visit the regis tration centres directly and could register themselves on the spot," Bijov Panigrahi, Director of Health and Family Welfare said.

The official also talked about the criteria for consideration for elderly for the vaccination drive. Panigrahi said. "From March 1 we are going to see the process to vaccinating the senior citizens. Those who are



going to complete 60 years by January 1, 2020 will be considered as senior citizens for the vaccination drive.

He also said that those who are above 45 years and having co-morbidities would be allowed to get inoculated. Those below 45 years will need to furnish a medical certificate

Panigrahi told the media, "Under the BSKY scheme, we have several empanelled hospitals. Those will be used for the vaccination. Vaccine will be free at government hospitals while at private hospitals it will be charged. The price has not been fixed as yet."

He also added, "Decisions will be taken whether empanelled private hospitals will give the vaccine for free or on payment basis. We have ample vaccines to start the drive March 1 and we are also going to get more vaccines soon. We are fully prepared to vaccinate the elderly too.'

before the vaccination centres. The Health department also said Nevertheless, the latest data that vaccination would be free at govclaimed that the state has been able ernment setups and with costs at prito achieve 88 per cent success in vaccinating the health care workvate hospitals. He said that the state insurance scheme of Biju Swasthya ers in the first phase of the vacci-Kalvan Yojana (BSKY) empanelled nation drive while in the second private hospitals were allowed by round 86 per cent of the health care the Centre as Covid vaccination workers have been vaccinated.

SC vacates stay on Cuttack housing projects

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Feb 26: The Supreme Court Friday vacated the stay it had granted on construction of houses for economically weaker sections (EWS) under Rajiv Awas Yojna and Integrated Housing Slum Development program in Cuttack. A two-judge bench of the apex

court comprising Justices Rohinton Fali Nariman and BR Gavai vacated the stay order after hearing an application filed by Odisha government through its advocate Som Raj Choudhury.



becomes clear is that the stay was granted on a reading of the writ petition which had stated that the dwelling units were under construction. It now transpires that 192 units were already completed by March 16, 2017, before the writ petition was filed. This being the case, we vacate the stay ... " the bench said.

Significantly, the SC had ordered the stay in April 2017 on the construction of EWS houses after hearing a petition filed by Anchalik Unnayan Parishad which opposed the construction.The state government had filed an application seeking vacation of the stav to handover the houses to the beneficiaries.

completed and it is also averred that

₹11.44 crore have been on these

units and 142 allotments have been

made. The state government said

The average loan size in SHG sector is ₹1.49 lakh, which needs to be improved to at least ₹2 lakh. that 192 houses have already been

Lottery route to settlement of liquor OFF shops in state

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 26: In a major decision, the state government has decided to go for fresh settlement of all the existing sanctioned India made foreign liquor (IMFL) 'OFF' and country liquor shops through lottery process from 2021-22 onwards.

Excise secretary Sushil Kumar Lohani has asked the commissioner Ashish Singh to initiate process for settlement of liquor shops through lottery process.

All IMFL 'OFF' shops and country liquor retail shops were being renewed annually in favour of existing licensees for last many years. As a result, many of the licensees have been continuing since 2005 or even earlier. Therefore, the government has taken the measure, he said.

Further, he said, the exclusive privilege once granted shall continue

BSKY empanelled hosps to offer vax

Bhubaneswar: The state government Friday allowed 183 Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana (BSKY) empanelled hospitals to provide Covid-19 vaccination and allowed them to be designated as authorized Covid Vaccination Centres. The department also wrote to all the district Collectors to verify that the minimum criteria for Covid vaccination centre like cold chain, adequate waiting room space, mechanism to monitor adverse reactions and other could be met or not. Separate norms for them were also issued to them.

unreachable, the official pointed

The accused had also cheated a

Satyanarayan Jena of the

Millennium City told media per-

sons here that he had given around

₹7 lakh to the accused for secur-

resident of Cuttack, assuring him

a Group-C job with the Indian

out.

Railways.

fraud

for a period of five years including the year of grant unless otherwise directed by the state government.

The exclusive privilege holder shall renew his/her licence on terms & conditions generally prescribed by the state government from year to year till completion of five years.

As explained in the guideline, the submission of application will be online through a portal. However, the lottery will be in physical mode by the Collector in presence of the applicants or their representatives.

CM SEES IMPROVEMENT IN PRIORITY SECTOR LENDING

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 26: Reviewing the progress made on credit linkages to farmers, Mission Shakti and MSMEs, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Friday said there has been a considerable progress in credit disbursement to priority sector during the last two months.

privilege holder shall renew the licence from year to year, till completion of five years

The exclusive

The entire process of lottery will be videographed, he pointed out.

The government has also deshops. Lohani said.

However, in case of country liquor shops, there will be no increase in the Monthly Consideration money for FY 2021-22.

help groups (SHGs) which is about

₹500 crore more than the annual

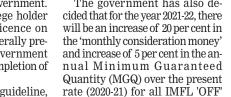
target, he said. Sources said that the

annual credit target for SHGs was

₹3,240 crore. But by January, the

SHGs have already received loans

of over ₹3.745 crore.



"After hearing the counsels, what

The state government contended

Keshari Ray, the then General Manager of Odisha Tourism Development Corporation (OTDC) when Odisha government had signed MoU with Seashore

BGU LAUNCHES NEW COURSE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 26: Birla Global University (BGU) organ ised the commencement day of certificate course on Applied Data Analytics'.

The programme was graced by Vice Chancellor of the University PP Mathur. Chief Guest Prabin Kumar Panigrahi from IIM Indore, P Nayak, Dean, School of Management, Registrar BK Das, Deans of Schools. Faculty members and newly admitted student.

Professor P Nayak extended a warm welcome to the participants and emphasised on the importance of data analytics in various applications in the society. Vice Chancellor PP Mathur invigorated the gathering by highlighting the technical and social aspects of the certificate course. Chief Guest Prabin Kumar Panigrahi appreciated the course curriculum and elucidated the contribution of technology in adequate advancement of the humanity

Panigrahi was allowed to speak first. The BJP MLA said he will commit suicide if the sufferings of farmers not being able to sell paddy in mandis because of the cen-

POST NEWS NETWORK

mostly with Indian Railways.

Dhauli police officials have ar-

rested Saroj Kumar Jena, who hails

from Kakatpur and was residing at

Nuagaon under the police juris-

diction, in connection with a case

(24/21) registered under Sections 420

and 34 of the IPC. The police are on

the lookout for a woman, reportedly

Jena's wife, suspecting her com-

plicity in the series of cheatings.

police official said that Babita

Biswal of Satasankha area in Puri

approached them February 14 ac-

About the latest fraud, a senior

curement issue. "If the government does not procure paddy from farmers, where will they go? They will be forced to sell paddy to middlemen at low prices," Mishra said.

for cheating job seekers

Collectors and top officers of the state government Friday on virtual platform, the Chief Minister said during the last review Kakatpur man lands in jail

meeting held two months ago, he had requested all concerned to go an extra mile in these crisis times and ensure adequate and timely credit supply to help the most vulnerable sections of society and economy -farmers, women and MSMEs.

"Our government

is always concerned

about safeguarding and protecting the interests of the vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. The farmers, Mission Shakti groups and MSMEs are our lakhs of entrepreneurs who are in need of credit to run and expand their business. We need to support them in true letter and spirit," he said

Highlighting the importance of agriculture, MSME and Mission Shakti, he said that for taking forward the momentum created in the last few months, the budgetary provisions for these sectors have been substantially increased for the Financial Year 2021-22. The state is also providing interest subvention under various schemes to reduce the interest burden on people and enhance credit linkage, he added. About ₹1,600 crore has gone to self

Holding a meeting with bankers, The Chief Minister, therefore, cautioned over the need to focus on increasing the average size of loan for the SHGs.

> Govt plans to felicitate well-performing banks for the cause them of farmers, small entrepreneurs and SHGs at the end of the financial year in most districts.' It was informed in the

> > crop loan was ₹20.000 crore. This

year, it has been ₹20,606 crore by

happiness that overall credit flow

to MSMEs during the last two

months' has been satisfactory. The

MSME sector has received credits

over ₹26,000 crore which is ex-

pected to touch the target of ₹20,457

I will inform the Union Finance

Minister about the good perform-

ance of some of the banks. We will

also felicitate the well-performing

banks for the cause of farmers.

small entrepreneurs and SHGs at

the end of the financial year." The

meeting was moderated by

Secretary (5T) to Chief Minister VK

He said, "As promised last time.

crore by March.

Coming to MSMEs, he expressed

now

Focusing on that the possession to the confarmers, Patnaik cerned beneficiaries have been said, "They are stalled because of the stay order. the backbone of "The housing project which has our state. We been built for creating an ecosystem should provide of good, habitable and affordable housing having basic amenities timely credit. He said for the poor and EWS of the society and utilising the public money that overall. we have been able to are getting damaged due to the pashelp the farmers sage of time. Also the underpriviwith credit so far

meeting that the

leged beneficiaries are being deprived of their legitimate right," the government had contended

2 DETAINED OVER CUTTACK HORROR

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Feb 26: Lalbag police Friday detained two persons in connection with the immolation attempt on a college girl at Mansinghpatna here Thursday Some miscreants had tried to kill the girl by setting her ablaze at her rented house.

"At least four persons, including a woman, were involved in the incident. We are probing all angles to the incident," said a police officer. Sources, meanwhile, claimed that one among the two detained persons is the maternal cousin of the victim.

Bhubaneswar, Feb 26: The Commissionerate Police Friday arrested a 29-year-old man on charges of duping several youths of lakhs of rupees on the promise of facilitating them with government jobs,

Corporation (IRCTC).

"The victim [Biswal] came across advertisement. Jena took the call. signed a notarised agreement, promising return of the money in case

cusing Jena of defrauding her of ₹30,000 on the pretext of facilitating the victim's police complaint. her with employment with Indian



Railway Catering and Tourism

an advertisement promising help for securing jobs in government agencies. Lured, she dialled the contact number as displayed in the After a few days into the conversation, Jena took ₹30,000 from the victim after promising her a job with IRCTC. The fraudster even

of failure," the official said quoting



ing a railway job, but in vain. "In a bid to gain the faith of gullible job seekers, the fraudster had even arranged bogus persons

Bengal. The police are likely to seek remand of the accused to elicit if a

However, the accused was later

who would usually identify themselves as the ones who have successfully secured high-paid government jobs through the accused," Satyanarayan said, adding that the crook used to take job aspirants to a fake training centre in West

Pandian.

FOR CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS CONTACT OUR BOOKING STATIONS

few others are also involved in the

Acharya Vihar-Dayal Agency-9437135727, A.P. Tours and Travel, Maitri Vihar, C.S. Pur-9861301598, Aurobindo Market-Sai Audio & Electronics-9438304668, Airport Road-Sai Baba Variety Store-9090071530, Anish Infotech-Tankapani Road-9861341488. Bapuji Nagar- Dreamland Studio- 9777517314, Baramunda Rental Colony-Maa Ramchandi Communication-9658821469, Baramunda Housing Board Colony-Pappu Variety Store-9040500106, Cuttack Road-Alishan Snacks-8984236754, District Center (Chandrasekharpur)-Sai Google Mart-9776056507, Forest Park-DTDC Couriers & Services (HB Services)-7381024156, IRC Village-Bapi Xerox-9090090404, Gift Hut(Antriksh Gifts & Decors Pvt. Ltd.)-9954781084, Pruthvi Medicine-9853314816, Janpath-Krupajal Book Store-7978646669, Jaydev Vihar-AK Enterprises-7978116618, Subam Sai Books Store-8895550649, Swain Graphics- 9337121249, Jagannath Mobile Point- Janpath Road, Ram Mandir- 9938475415, Kanan Vihar-Auro Electronics-8260697560, Khandagiri- Swosti Mobile Centre- 7992914045, World Solution- 9938317559, KIIT Road-Jugad Jn-9338545031, Laxmi Sagar-Aditya Mobile-9438191836, Lewis Road-Spider Web-7809186415, Metro Satellite City-Arogya Mitra Medicine Store-9853621640, Madhusudan Nagar-Mohapatra Communication-9124446664, Maa Santoshi travels- Gajapati Nagar- 9777675867, Nayapalli- The Cake Room- 7873660137, Near Mayfair Lagoon-Cookieman-9439491273, Nigamananda-Omm Sai Travels-9668284823, Nr Cosmopolis Main Gate- Shreeram Medical Store- 8763711714, Net Square- Niladri Vihar (C.S. Pur)- 7205634821, Priyadarshini Market-Astro Point-9938134346, R.N. General Store-Nilakantha Nagar-9438642501, Sahid Nagar- Maa Communication- 9437353424, Sahini General Store- Near Patia Railway Station, Mahavir Vihar- 9937586626, Satya Nagar-Baishnavi Mixture & Sweets-7894821764, Samantapur- Download Point-7504557743, Sailashree Vihar-Harsha Book Store-8093449515, Saheed Nagar-Jagannath Graphics-7978652670, Photo World-7978468191, Sainath Photo Studio-8984436129, Shanti & Co-9937071063, Siripur-Omm Maa Sarala Communication-9777682449, Sushree fashion-Jagmara-9938714347, Shree Vision- Sailashree Vihar-9861476678, Unit-3-LIC of India Premium Point-9337787080, Unit-7- LIC Premium Point- 9338227422, VSS Nagar-Friends Cake & Bake-8658200930, Jeet Infoworld-7205195782, XIMB Square-LD Books-9658061373











state

Chhatisgarh sets its sight on **Mahulapahad reserve forest**

JHARSUGUDA ADMIN HAS CONDUCTED AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE ROW

During the field survey, it was found that Chhattisgarh has intruded into Odisha

boundary lines in Kanaktora revenue circle.

The neighbopuring state has set up pillars

reserve forest has been affected, alleged the

Buckled under pressure, the gov-

ernment has sought reports about

the status from the Collectors in

A total of 21 villages under

the districts having border issues.

Lakhanpur tehsil are on the borders

of Chhattisgarh. All these villages

are under Chantipalli, Kanaktora

and Bhikampalli revenue circles.

Jharsuguda Collector Saroj

Kumar Samal had been asked to

look into the border dispute in

these areas and submit a report. The

Collector directed the Lakhanpur

tehsildar Biswakesan Pandey to

investigate the issue. Following a di-

rective from the tehsildar, revenue

inspectors of these areas conducted

a ground zero survey recently.

During the field survey, it was found

that Chhattisgarh has intruded

well within the territory of Odisha near

villagers of Jharigaon

Jharigaon. As a result, the Mahulapahad



total of 21 villages under Lakhanpur tehsil are on the borders of Chhattisgarh. All these villages are under Chantipalli, Kanaktora and Bhikampalli revenue circles

POST NEWS NETWORK

Lakhanpur; Feb 26: Even as the border dispute over Kotia panchayat of Koraput remains unresolved between Andhra Pradesh and Odisha, Mahulapahad reserve forest in Jharsuguda district has been under occupation of Chhattisgarh. The neighbouring state has even pitched in boundary pillars within the territorial area of Odisha here, a report said.

According to reports, after Andhra Pradesh forcibly conducted panchayat elections in three villages of Kotia recently, the opposition parties have been targeting the state government over the border issue and failure to checkmate Andhra's expansionist move.

neighbopuring state has set up pillars well within the territory of Odisha near Jharigaon. As a result, the Mahulapahad reserve forest has been affected, alleged the villagers of Jharigaon. Taking serious note of the border encroachment, a team of offi-

cials from the district administration comprising sub-collector Shiba Toppon, Lakhanpur tehsiladr Biswkesan Pandey, BDO Sanjib Patel, RI Hemsagar Patel has taken stock of the border status at

into Odisha boundary lines in

Kanaktora revenue circle. The

Jharigaon The sub-collector said following a government order, the border issue was investigated in 2017. "It was then made clear that there was no border issue. Now, no serious border dispute is at Jharigaon," he added

Notably, before the formation of Odisha, Jharigaon was part of Madhva Pradesh, After formation of Odisha Pradesh, Jharigaon came under Odisha. Mahulapahd reserve forest is close to the village.

Villagers said, at that time, Jharigaon was categorized as a reserve forest during a land settlement. Later, a major settlement was done in the area. Without the knowledge of the state government, the Chhattisgarh government has grabbed a part of the area, they lamented.

In the past, people of fringe villages in both the sides had confrontations over the boundary issue. Even people's representatives had raised the issue in the Assembly several times in the past, seeking a permanent solution to the issue.



After closure of their school, students and teachers of a primary school in Baliguda area of Kandhamal district stage protests at the block office to revoke the closure decision, Friday OP PHOTO

IPL betting kingpin held from Kolkata

POLICE HAVE FROZEN BANK ACCOUNTS OF DINESH HAVING A DEPOSIT OF ₹72.96 LAKH

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, Feb 26: Berhampur police got a major breakthrough in cracking the online IPL cricket betting racket by arresting its kingpin from Kolkata, police said Friday

Addressing media here, Berhampur SP Pinak Mishra said the accused was identified as Dinesh Kumar Rathi (46). He was the stock ist and had many distributors or business agents while some of whom had been arrested by Berhampur police in October last vear. The distributors created panels, or IDs and passwords, after re-

Admin steps up bid to clear hurdle



ceiving administrator rights from betting sites and used to distribute them down the line. Dinesh, a businessman in Kolkata, had been under the scanner of Berhampur Police.

After efforts of nearly five months, a special team of Gosaninuagoan IIC and Cyber Cell Inspector raided Sovaram Basak Street under Posta Police Station in Kolkata and arrested him.

Police produced Dinesh before the court of the Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Kolkata, which allowed the police to take

him on a five-day transit remand. The SP said the police are now investigating Dinesh's criminal antecedents. A laptop and other electronic gadgets seized from his possession will be sent for forensic analysis.

Several bank accounts of Dinesh having a deposit of Rs 72.96 lakh were frozen. Meanwhile, police will forward him to court and seek his remand.

Earlier, five distributors namely R Lali Acharya, K Prashant Kumar Subudhi, Vishal Agarwal, Ajaya Kumar Panda, Sanjit Kumar Behera and one seller Ajit Kumar Barada alias Badal had been arrested. Rs 30 lakh cash, mobile phones, SIM cards, ATM cards, PAN cards, vehicles and screenshots from the mobile phone handset used for facilitating online IPL betting were seized. Several bank accounts hav-

ing deposit of Rs 5,29,26,499.69 had

4 months on, forest guard untraceable

also been frozen.

Bhawanipatana: Four months have passed since a forest guard of Biswanthpur range in Kalahandi went missing. However, he has not been traced out till date. His family, anxious about his fate, has sought Crime Branch probe into his missing. The forest guard is Suhag Ranjan Panda. Police had conducted mobile tracking of Panda, but it failed. His family members alleged that police investigation has gone awry, hoping the Crime Branch investigation will crack the case.

Covid warrior sets out on foot seeking reinstatement

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhadrak, Feb 26: Seeking reinstatement in job, a COVID-19 warrior has set out on foot from Bhadrak to Naveen Niwas in Bhubaneswar.

Ashwini Padhy offered puja at Hanuman Temple at Charampa Friday morning. Thereafter, he put on PPE kits, garlanded the bust of Utkalmani Gopabandhu Das at Dahani Gadia square and then began his journey. Padhy said he is determined to cover the distance of 130 kilometres on foot to draw the attention of the government to the plight of those who have been sacked from their jobs



It is worth mentioning that Ashwini was in news a few months ago when he was spotted moving from shop to shop asking for alms.

Notably, paramedical workers putting their lives at risk served the state in the initial time of the pandemic when the situation was grim. They were terminated from their contracts as the situation started improving, rendering them jobless. They are finding it difficult to run their families. The COVID-19 warriors have been staging a sitin at Lower PMG in Bhubaneswar for 55 days now. "The demonstration will continue till the government considers our grievances," Ashwini said.

E-Tender/58 Dt.: 23.02.2021 (1) Tender No. e-Tender-North-273-2020 Dt.: 18.02.2021 THE HIRING OF ONE LIGHT MOTOR VEHICLE (TATA SUMO/BOLERO OF EQUIVALENT VEHICLE) FOR ASSISTANT DIVISIONAL ENGINEER/JAJPUI KEONJHAR ROAD OF KHURDA ROAL Approx cost of the work : ₹10.36 Lakhs (2) Tender No. e-Tender-Estate-275-2020 Dt.: 17.02.2021 Description : PROVISION OF BALCONIES FOR TYPE-IV SPECIAL QUARTERS (6 BLOCKS) AT RAIL KUNJ, BHUBANESWAR Approx cost of the work : ₹98.28 Lakhs

EAST COAST RAILWAY

File No. DRM/Engg/KUR/20-21/

fender closing date & time : at 1500 hrs 0.03.2021 (for both tenders).

to manual offers sent by Post/Courier/Fax or i person shall be accepted against suc Complete information including e-tende documents of the above e-tender is available in vebsite : http://www.ireps.gov.in Note: The prospective tenderers are advised to revisit the website 10 (Ten) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes

Divisional Railway Manager (Engg)

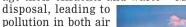
Industrial units spark pollution in Bargarh

OSPCB action limited to issuing show-cause notices

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bargarh, Feb 26: Pollution of water and air is emerging as another major problem in Bargarh district owing to lack of anti-pollution measures by the industrial units. Many industrial units were accused of throwing the directive of the OSPCB to the winds, a report said.

According to the report, the industrial units have failed to manage their effluents and waste disposal, leading to



has issued show cause notices to oilmanufacturing industries.

The errant units have been asked to file their replies within 15 days. The pollution watchdog also warned that if the replies were not submitted in the slated time, closure notices will be served on the errant industries. Sri Deo Sherwali Oil Industries set up in 2013 at Gobindapur, has got operational permission from the OSPCB till March 31, 2023. The industry was

POST NEWS NETWORK

Koraput, Feb 26: The Centre's ambitious Bharatmala Pariyojana project, sanctioned in 2017, passing through Koraput and Nabarangpur districts, is facing land hurdles. The district administration of Koraput has initiated efforts to clear the bottlenecks and hasten the work.

It has sought a detailed report about the land acquisition and compensation from the officials concerned within seven days.

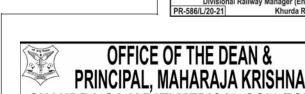
At a review meeting on the project, the Collector had directed tehsildars and other officials, to submit survey reports within seven days.

The survey will cover acres of overnment, private land to be ac-



Raipur-Vishakhapatna NH project sanctioned in 2017 has been hanging fire due to a host of problems like

district administration, people of Borrigumma, Koraput, Damantpur, Semiliguda and Potangi had demanded proper rehabilitation package including land for land, existing value of proposed land to be acquired and jobs for land losers



and water. People living in the periphery of the polluting industrial units are finding themselves at the

receiving end of pollution and facing health hazards.

Release of effluent-mixed water is affecting farming, it was alleged. Locals alleged that despite cases

of pollution issues, the Odisha State Pollution Control Board has failed to take action against the errant units. In some cases, the pollution watchdog confines its action to serving notices to polluting units. Recently, the regional office of the OSPCB in Sambalpur



A team of OSPB had visited the oil mill February 15 and found violations in

found to be violating

norms as prescribed

the matter of waste disposal management. Besides, air release system was in order while ash coming from broiler was dumped outside the factory.

Sri Krishna Solvent Extraction Pvt Ltd at Nagenpalli was also found to be violating anti-pollution norms. It was alleged that several other industrial units have been causing pollution in the district, but no action is being taken against them

quired, trees to be cut and the number of people to be affected in the project area. The executive engineer and officials of the NHAI were present at

> the review meeting. It may be noted here that under the Bharatmala Parivojana. Raipur-Vishakhapatna NH is being laid through Koraput. The project envisages a 464-km four-lane national highway which will be constructed

from Raipur in Chhattisgarh to Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh. Around 125 km of the national highway will pass through 58 villages in Borrigumma, Koraput, Dasmantpur, Semiliguda and

public resistance to land acquisition and delay in forest clearance

Potangi blocks.

The NH will pass through 70 villages in Nabarangpur and 59 villages in Koraput. The total outlay for the project has been estimated at Rs 8092 crore. Notably, the Raipur-Vishakhapatna NH proj ect sanctioned in 2017 has been hanging fire due to a host of problems like public resistance to land acquisition and delay in obtaining forest clearance.

During a public hearing by the

ful and shocking incident, a 22- year-

old youth raped an 81-year-old woman

in Bhawanipatna town of Kalahandi

district. The youth was arrested and

his bail plea was rejected.

occurred February 20 evening.

Many tribals, who are going to

lose their land, made it clear that they would not agree to the value proposed by National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) for land to be acquired in these five blocks.

Earlier, members of the Bharatmala Jami Surakhya Manch had submitted a memorandum to NHAI through the Collector for right compensation for their land.

The Odisha portion of the 6-lane expressway will have a length of 240.37 km and pass through Nabarangpur and Koraput districts The NHAI has already completed

the survey for the project but land acquisition is yet to start.

CHANDRA GAJAPATI MEDICAL COLLEGE BHAHMAPUR - 760004, GANJAM, ORISSA No. 1808/MCB-21/Welfare/Berhampur Dated the 25th February, 2021 **TENDER CALL NOTICE**

No. E-600: Sealed tenders are invited from the Registered Rate Contract holding firms (Stockist/Dealer/Manufacturer Firm) having valid GST Registration for "Supply 8 Installation of Gym Equipment" for MKCG MCB so as to reach in the office of the undersigned within 21 days from the date of publication of the advertisement following the terms & conditions. The detailed tender paper, terms & conditions along with list of articles to be supplied can be obtained from the office of the undersigned on payment of Rs.2000/- cash (non-refundable) at the Accounts Section. The details are also available in the website www.mkcgmch.org. Sd./- Dean & Principal

MKCG Medical College, Berhampur OIPR-10013/11/0020/2021

	'e'-procurement Notice	ai	I.com, Phone No06764-23634 No. EE-AID-16-2020-21
beh	alf of the Governor of Odisha invi	te	Angul Irrigation Division, Angul or s online percentage rate basis bid nent for the work mentioned below.
1	Total No. of works	:	01 (One) No. Civil Work
2	Estimated cost put to tender	:	Rs.29.17 lakhs
3	Tender paper cost	:	6.000/- (Non refundable)
4	Class of contractor	:	'C' & 'B' equivalent grade/class
5	Period of completion	:	90 days
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3-year-old selected for int'l model competition in Nepal

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhadrak, Feb 26: He is just three vears old. But what he has achieved at this age is definitely a cause of envy for many parents and kids in his age group. He has been selected as a lone participant from India in the International Model Contest to be held at Nepal in July.

Meet Sai Shreyansu Panda who is fondly called by his nickname 'Kanha'. He is the son of Sriram Panda and Pushpanjali Panda of Biridi village under Bhandaripokhari block in Bhadrak district.

According to Sriram and Pushpanjali, it is Shreyansu's talent of expressing his thoughts through his body language that has earned him an opportunity to become the only child from India to participate in the International Model Contest.

Since the news of his selection spread, both Shreyansu and his parents have been flooded with congratulatory messages and good wishes. Sriram and Pushpanjali



to hone his talents. His grandparents supported Shreyansu and the parents whole-heartedly.

As Sriram works as an engineer in Boudh district, he lives there most of the time. It was Shreyansu's mother who really groomed the kid with the help of a local model teacher, Prasanna. During the initial days, Shreyansu started participating in block and district level contests and winning trophies.

The parents came to know from an advertisement in September last year that the Global Beauty International Organisation was conducting an online talent hunt event for kids. It was titled 'Kids and Teen World Event-2020-21'. Sriram and Pushpanjali made best use of this opportunity and Shreyansu participated in the model category. He defeated 40 other contestants to emerge winner. This success made him a star kid overnight.

The proud parents also described said they spotted Shreyansu's inin detail the training Shreyansu is clination for dancing, modelling currently undergoing, Sriram and Pushpanjali said they are leaving no and posing for photographs when he was just one-and-a-half years stone unturned for their son to old. So they started helping him come out winner in the contest.

22-yr-old rapes 81 old POST NEWS NETWORK around 6.15 pm when Bhaja went to Bhawanipatna, Feb 26: In a shame-

her house and found her alone. He forced himself on her and threatened to kill her if she disclosed the matt ter to anyone

The victim's family lodged an FIR at local police station February 22.

produced in local court Thursday, He IIC Stava Nanda launched an inwas remanded to judicial custody as vestigation. They recorded the vic tim's statement in the presence of the The accused was identified as Bhaja magistrate and got a medical test Ghee, son of Tikaram Ghee, a resident done on her. On the basis of the reof Lane-17 of Irrigation Colony in port lodged, the police arrested the Bhawanipatna town. The incident youth and produced him in a local court Thursday. Since then the un-Police said, the elderly woman is a toward incident has become a hot neighbour of the accused. It was discussion in the locality.

IIC held while accepting ₹6K as bribe

POST NEWS NETWORK

Dhenkanal, Feb 26: In a case of fence eating the crop, the inspectorin-charge (IIC) of Nihalprasad police station in Dhenkanal district was arrested while receiving a bribe Friday.

The tainted IIC has been identified as Chittaranjan Behera. Vigilance sleuths caught him red-handed while taking bribe from a person to strike out Section 307 from a dowry-related case.

The wife of Dipuna Sethy, son of Aintha Sethy, had lodged a dowry torture case against her husband. The police had registered a case under several relevant sections including Section 307 of IPC. The section re lates to attempt to murder.

Aintha had been requesting IIC Behera to delete the section from the case. The deal was finalised at Rs 6, 000 and Friday was fixed for handing over the money.



power post

FOCUS FINDING DNA

The whole world yearns after freedom, yet each creature is in love with his chains; this is the first paradox and inextricable knot of our nature SRI AUROBINDO



8 IFS officers to be empanelled as JS

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has been quite keen to add more joint secretaries to the diplomatic pool to staff new embassies and consulates being set up in various countries. Now, after some wait, headway has been made in this direction with the government planning to empanel eight IFS officers of the 2003 batch as joint secretaries.

According to sources, the cadre controlling authority of the IFS was ready with its list in December last year but was asked to wait since the government was about to empanel 41 IAS officers from the 2003 batch. The Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) reportedly informed MEA that there should be a gap of one month in the empanelment process between the IAS and IFS. It is further learnt that except for Devesh Uttam who is posted in the country, the remaining seven IFS officers are posted abroad.

It is a known fact that India's Foreign Service is woefully understaffed, with most Indian missions abroad having too few diplomats. This could be a small step towards addressing this grievance.

SREEDHARAN PADS UP FOR ANOTHER INNINGS

The BJP wants to be a serious contender in Kerala and is hoping that 'Metro Man' E. Sreedharan's induction in the party will help it make inroads in the impending Assembly elections. Will

the gamble pay off? Sreedharan has enjoyed a full inning in his illustrious career, immense credibility with the *aam aadmi* as an honest and efficient technocrat as well as respect among politicians across party lines, and



picked up a Padam Shri, Padam Vibhushan and a host of national and international honours.

Why would the man who shot to fame with the Delhi Metro project and who advised the Kerala government on Metro projects in the state and who is also involved in the other metro projects in Jaipur and Lucknow want a stab at politics (and chief ministership, no less!) at the ripe age of 88 years?

Clearly, he enjoys wearing many hats. And a politician's topi would be the crowning glory of his career if he can manage the challenge of transforming from a technocrat into a neta. His future progress will be watched closely by not just politicians but also bureaucrats who may be nurturing similar ambitions themselves

MP CHIEF MINISTER FINDS HIS MOJO

The usually affable and soft-spoken Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan is a different man in his fourth term, according to the babus in the state. By some accounts, he seems to have set the proverbial cat among the pigeons! Chouhan, it appears, is attempting an image makeover. The soft-spoken veneer has been replaced by a hard-nosed leader in "full action" mode.

This result of transformation has been directed at the babus, who sources say, have begun to dread the CM's new-found penchant to order the transfer of officers, sometimes during a meeting itself. According to sources, Chouhan has unceremoniously transferred more than six district magistrates and SPs so far and seems to be in an unrelenting mood. One IPS officer, Vahini Singh, the SP of Niwari district, was transferred during a meeting by Chouhan, who also told the gathered officials in as many words that he was keeping a close tab on them. Other officers transferred in this period are the SP of Guna Rajesh Singh, and the DMs of Neemuch and Betul, JS Raje and Rakesh Singh.

Those in the know say that the Chief Minister is using the monthly meetings with state officials to scare them into submission through these tactics. Chouhan means business is the unmistaken message and it seems to be hitting its mark quite effectively!

> Share a babu experience! Follow dilipthecherian@twitter.com. Let's multiply the ef

WHY MARS MATTERS

The Perseverance rover. which landed on Mars this month, marks a new leap toward answering fundamental questions about our solar system, including where else we might find DNA. The rover will roam the surface of Mars looking for signs of life, make its own oxygen, launch a helicopter, and collect soil and rocks for a follow-up mission in 2028. If all goes as planned, NASA, with the help of European Space Agency (ESA) spacecraft, will return soil samples Finding DNA on Mars would not



Christopher E Mason

THE PERSEVERANCE **ROVER, WHICH** LANDED ON MARS THIS **MONTH, MARKS A NEW LEAP** TOWARD **ANSWERING** FUNDAMENTAL **QUESTIONS ABOUT OUR**

SOLAR SYSTEM, INCLUDING WHERE ELSE WE **MIGHT FIND DNA**

in the spring of 2032 - the first Martian material to visit Earth. be a complete surprise. Though Perseverance was constructed in the Spacecraft Assembly Facility (SAF) clean room at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL), even that setting cannot be made 100% free of background microbial or human DNA. We have known about "microbial hitchhikers" since the very first interplanetary missions in the 1960s, when scientists such as Carl Sagan highlighted the problem. It is a persistent, unavoidable risk of space science. Because scientists must build the spacecraft one layer at a time, shedding skin and droplets of saliva over years of construction, it is almost certain that a little bit of California DNA just landed on Mars.

As such, when the samples arrive on Earth in 2032, they will need to go through a "planetary-scale genetic filter" to rule out any DNA that might have been present in the SAF during the rover's construction from 2015-20, as well as any other fragment of DNA observed on Earth up until the launch of the spacecraft in July 2020. This is an ongoing project between our laboratory at Weill Cornell Medicine and JPL. By sequencing the DNA found in, around, and on the SAF during the construction of robots, we will draw up a genetic map to avoid or minimize any forward or backward contamination (where we send genetic material somewhere else, or genetic material



The successful landing of NASA's Perseverance rover on Mars is about far more than scientific curiosity or national prestige. For the sake of humanity's long-term survival, it is imperative that we embrace our technological know-how to establish life beyond planet Earth

from somewhere else lands here). Ever since the first two Soviet probes landed on Mars's surface in 1971, followed by the US Viking 1 landing in 1976, some fragments of microbial and possibly human DNA are likely to have ended up on the red planet. And given the planet's global dust storms, this DNA is almost certainly located in various places across the surface.

Fortunately, we are living in an extraordinary era for genetics. The low cost of DNA sequencing allows us to build an ever-growing genetic catalogue of life on Earth, genetic maps of SAF clean rooms, and the firstever planetary-scale genome maps (MetaSUB and the Earth Microbiome Project). Moreover, in a 2016 mission with astronaut Kate Rubins, we showed that we can sequence DNA in space and match it to profiles of novel organisms on Earth. Anything that can survive in space, on spacecraft, or in extreme conditions on Earth is a decent candidate for life that can survive on Mars. Eventually, instead of sending DNA to Mars by accident, we will do it deliberately, for a purpose.

After all, manned missions to Mars are technologically achievable. They can bring out the best in humanity, and we already have the physical, pharmacological, and biological means to pursue them. In my new book, The Next 500 Years: Engineering Life to Reach New Worlds, I highlight studies that we performed on dozens of astronauts, including the twins Scott and (US Senator) Mark Kelly, following Scott's one-year mission in space. Based on our findings, we are now confident that humans can travel to Mars, and with some additional inno-

vation and technology, stay there. Enjoy unlimited access to the ideas and opinions of the world's leading thinkers, including weekly long reads, book reviews, and interviews; The Year Ahead annual print magazine; the complete PS archive; and more – All for less than \$9 a month.

We need humans to be able to live on Mars sustainably, responsibly, and safely not so that we can abandon Earth, but because the best way to ensure our species' survival is to make it possible to live elsewhere. Mars is not Plan B: it is Plan A, and always has been.

We have an ethical duty to prevent our own species' extinction as well as that of all others on Earth. No other species (that we know of) possesses such awareness of its potential future, nor the ability to preserve life. Only we can perform this function; and in the long term, doing so requires that we make our way to other planets. Settling Mars is the necessary first rung on the ladder of longterm survival (not least because Venus is too hot).

To meet this imperative, however, we will need to bring NASA's budget back to 1960s levels, when it was 4.4% of the federal budget (compared to 0.48% today). We will need more international cooperation (including with China) as well. To that end, my colleagues and I recently published a series of papers and launched an international collaboration on aerospace medicine that includes representatives from NASA, ESA ROSCOSMOS (Russia), and JAXA (Japan). The United Arab Emirates and others have also started studying space biology, and more space agencies are working with commercial platforms such as SpaceX and Blue Origin.1

Some duties we choose for ourselves. But the duty to preserve life is inextricably bound up with the awareness of our own mortality and the possibility of extinction. Humanity's stewardship of life is both a selfish imperative and an innate, unique obligation. By doing what it takes to preserve life as we know it, we may yet find new life in the universe.

The writer, a geneticist and computational biologist, is Associate Professor at Weill Cornell Medicine.

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SPECTRUM ASSAM



Weaknesses of Assam tea

/hanks to the upcoming elec- buyer/agent, 1 to the tea auction- cost borne by them, the compa- it is yet to be implemented. Civil tion in Assam, the develop- eer/broker, and a mere 0.16% to the nies call for cost-sharing between Society Organisations have not ment issues of tea tribes are tea plucker.

government agencies and the tea

been able to intervene as they have

WISDOM CORNER

UNKNOWN	Invest in your dreams. Grind now. Shine later.	66
	Greatness only comes before hustle in the dictionary.	66
GARY VAYNERCHUK	Without hustle, talent will only carry you so far.	66

WORDS**WORTH**

Buckley's chance

his term for a very slim hope or no chance at all is well known in both Australia and New Zealand but isn't, I think, recorded anywhere else. That suggests that the Buckley concerned is a local person. The expression has been known in various forms; as well as the ones you quote, there are also the older and longer forms Buckley's chance, Buckley's hope and Buckley's show; the name is used alone in "There are just two chances, Buckley's or none", two notional possibilities that in reality amount to next to no chance at all. There are, as it happens, just two known choices for the answer. One points to William Buckley, a convict in the early days of European settlement in Australia, who escaped in 1803 from the short-lived penal settlement at Port Philip Bay (where Melbourne is today) and lived for 32 years with the Aborigines in southern Victoria, gaining the sobriquet of The Wild White Man, before giving himself up and being pardoned. The implication is that, like Buckley, you have no chance of success, it being assumed that you measure success by an escape to a part of Australia colonised by European immigrants. One problem is that Buckley died in 1856, whereas the expression doesn't appear in print until 1895.

LOL

PLANTING POTATOES

An old Arab lived close to New York City for more than 40 years. He would have loved to plant potatoes in his garden, but he is alone, old and weak.

His son is in college in Paris, so the old man sends him an e-mail. He explains the problem: "Beloved son, I am very sad, because I can't plant potatoes in my garden. I am sure, if only you were here, you would help and dig up the garden for me. I love you, Your Father.'

The following day, the old man receives a response e-mail from his



son: "Beloved Father, please don't touch the garden. It's there

that I have hidden 'the THING'. I love you, too, Ahmed"

At 4pm the US Army, The Marines, the FBI, the CIA and the Rangers visit the house of the old man, take the whole garden apart, search every inch. but can't find anything. Disappointed they leave the house.

A day later, the old man receives another e-mail from his son. "Beloved Father, I hope the garden is dug up by now and you can plant your potatoes. That's all I could do for you from here. I love you, Ahmed."



Bisoya Loitongbam **THANKS TO THE** UPCOMING **ELECTION IN ASSAM, THE** DEVELOPMENT **ISSUES OF TEA TRIBES ARE IN THE NEWS AND HAVE RECEIVED SOME**

ATTENTION

etters

are most welcome to contribute letters

postal address/email ID. They may also

and suggestions, preferably by email, to: edit@orissapost.com

Orissapost

B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

send in their valuable comments, opinion

(0)

TO THE EDITOR

Readers of Orissa POST

(200 words), articles and

words). Contributors are

requested to send their contact numbers and full

columns (between 750-1250

in the news and have received some attention. For one, the Finance Minister made a Budget allocation of Rs 1.000 crore for the welfare of tea workers in Assam and West Bengal. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in an election rally in early February at Sonitpur, Assam, said that those who were out to malign India's image also wanted to "systematically" attack Indian tea. India's tea has been "systematically" attacked, but not by external forces. Systemic weaknesses in the Assam tea industry and the plight of tea garden workers in Assam are all manifestations of the joint failure of the market, state and civil society. There are three systemic weak-

nesses in the tea ecosystem in Assam that require urgent attention from the government. First, Assam's tea industry is mostly confined to the tea supply chain's unremunerative plantation activities. In the tea value chain, value addition such as blending, packaging, and even more lucrative marketing takes place outside the state. An ILO-funded study observes that 53 per cent of the profit from tea goes to the retailer, 33 to the blender, 7 to the factory, 6 to

Tea corporates engaged in plantation activities have not evolved with time. They lack innovation and imagination, evident in the colonialstyle practices that are still followed in human resources, labour management and outdated production technology. A plantation manager has to oversee tea planting and related activities like pruning, 'tea making' in the factory and the management of an entire community of workers, their families, schools, ration, health centres etc. In such a context, it provides little room for management in the plantation to innovate or maybe that is the reason for lingering colonial practices like 'Bichaar Din', where the plantation management ridiculously resolves

household conflicts. Second, the tea garden workers are a marginalised community. Tea plantations come under the Plantation Labour Act (PLA), 1951, which requires the tea company to provide several social benefits apart from wages. Tea companies in Assam, therefore, raise concerns about the high labour cost of producing tea which is roughly 60 per cent of the total cost of production. To bring down the social

company to make the sector competitive. Several studies, however. show that very few tea plantations fully implement the welfare schemes guaranteed under the Plantation Labour Act (1951), while the state turns a blind eye to such violations.

Low development indicators of Assam and more than that the abysmal condition of tea tribes reflect the systemic weaknesses. The community is among the most marginalised in the state. This is evident because the tea workers are still considered 'outsiders' and denied affirmative action benefits in a state where they have lived for more than 150 years. The community constitutes 20 per cent of the population and is the backbone of this industry, and one of the state's main revenue generators, yet it remains the most marginalised!

Thirdly, the tea tribes are denied the Scheduled Tribe status in Assam, thereby depriving them of various constitutional provisions and government schemes for STs. The government reaffirmed its commitment to provide ST status to the tea tribes to garner the support of the community during the anti-CAA uprising in the state, but

limited access to the community, as the majority is confined within the tea company's property. In most cases, it is NGO intervention that usually highlights the plight of the community.

A series of systemic reforms are needed to address conditions that sustain a low level of equilibrium in the local tea industry. First and foremost, reforms are needed to create incentives for investment in improving tea quality and adopting sustainable practices in the plantation. For the last six to seven years, the average price of tea has remained flat and may have even declined in real terms. While the poor prices may be partly due to the weak demand for tea in the recent period, this alone does not appear to be the complete explanation for unremunerative prices. It is suspected that large buyers of tea are coordinating on low prices in tea auctions and keeping prices artificially low.

The writer is a social development specialist with 15 years of cross-functional experience. THE BILLION PRESS

Quarry blasts

Sir, The unprincipled operators of illegal establishments do not believe in licences and are past masters in fudging them. It goes without saying that most of the immoral institutions function with the blessings of the bureaucracy and the government. In Karnataka's Shivamogga district, land owners, explosive suppliers and crushing unit operators were apprehended after a massive stone quarry blast that claimed six lives January 21. Almost exactly after one month, another blast killed as many people in Chikkaballapur district of the state. It is said those involved with the quarry were hurriedly moving the explosive gelatin sticks used for stone crushing below the land, at their disposal, away to "safer places" at unearthly hours to escape detection leading to an unimaginable blast. Those carrying the sticks were killed on the spot. The police had raided a few unauthorised quarries nearby, and, fearing a similar action, the owners of the quarry in question, were trying to hide the gelatin sticks. In both the Shivamogga explosion and the Chikkaballapur blast it is more than evident that the people handling them were ill-trained or not trained at all, in the nuances of the materials used in gelatin sticks and in their safe transport. The question also for consideration is why there is always a piecemeal action on illegal crushers and quarries. Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

Tiger Woods rollover

Sir, It is unfortunate to note that the world-renowned golfer Tiger Woods had got injured in a dramatic rollover crash involving his SUV. In fact, the American golfer was lucky enough to get the immediate help in the accident spot from the authorities nearby, I have been a big admirer of Tiger Woods. I would usually collect and follow so many news tidbits of Woods, especially when I had been working in Hyderabad and Cyberabad between 2005 and 2010. In life, an accident is unavoidable but a great measure of precaution will surely avert it. Personally speaking, the memories of a road accident with no casualties involving my many family members are fresh in mind even now. As for such accidents, the first aid, immediate timely treatment and helping hands always play a major role in recovering the victims. I am hoping that many sport personalities like Woods take to and turn to driving as a way away from the tense situations, meaning stress-buster tactics. Rather than driving and beat the stres

P Senthil Saravana Durai, MUMBAI





Ahead of poll date declaration; TN, DMK plans to contest 190 seats **Bengal announce populist schemes** AGENCIES more seats in 2016, the DMK would TAMIL NADU have been in power five years ago,' The candidates The DMK

Kolkata/ Chennai, Feb 26: Pollbound West Bengal and Tamil Nadu Friday rushed to announce populist schemes hours ahead of the election dates being announced. The two states introduced various policy changes seemingly aimed at electoral prospects.

The model code of conduct, which came into effect immediately after the Election Commission (EC) declared the poll dates Friday, now prohibits governments from mak ing fresh welfare announcements so as to minimise any undue advantage accruing to ruling parties. Barely an hour before the Model

Code of Conduct kicked in. Mamata Banerjee announced a hike in minimum wages for daily wage labourers As per the new WB Urban

Employment Scheme, an unskilled labourer in West Bengal will now be paid ₹202 per day instead of ₹144. A semi-skilled worker, who was earlier paid ₹172 will now get ₹303 per day. A skilled worker, a new category introduced in the new policy, will be paid ₹404 per day.

"A total of 56,500 workers (40,500 unskilled, 8000 semi-skilled, 8000 skilled) will benefit from this. These wages are in parity with rural workers' enhanced pay (MNREGA unskilled & semi-skilled). Budget provision for this step has been made available for both FY21 & FY22," West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee



Barely an hour before the Model Code of Conduct kicked in Friday evening; Mamata Banerjee announced a hike in minimum wages for daily wage labourers

said in a tweet.

On the other hand, it is loan waiver season in Tamil Nadu ahead of the Assembly polls. Tamil Nadu Chief Minister K

Palaniswami Friday announced in the state Assembly the waiving of loans taken by pledging ornaments by the poor and farm labourers and women self help groups from cooperative societies and cooperative banks.

Palaniswami said poor people and farm labourers are finding it difficult to pay back these loans taken to tide over their financial difficulties during the COVID-19 pandemic period

Tamil Nadu CM K Palaniswami Friday announced the waiving of loans taken by pledging ornaments by the poor and farm labourers and women SHGs from cooperative societies and cooperative banks

He said in order to help them out the government has decided to write off loans taken by pledging up to six sovereigns by poor and farm labourers from cooperative societies

Similarly, in order to help the women self help groups who are finding it difficult to pay back their loans taken from cooperative banks and cooperative societies, the government has decided to waive their loans, Palaniswami said.

Palaniswami pointed out that the government had earlier waived farm loans to the tune of ₹12,110 crore taken by about 16.43 lakh

BJP's double-engine will be non-starter in Bengal: Trinamool

While campaigning for the upcoming Assembly polls in the state, BJP leaders are highlighting the need for same party's government both at the Centre and the state

minister said.

Castigating the BJP for allegedly making false promise to Matua community members while doing little to stop discrimination among lower castes, Basu said that in BJPruled states like UP and Madhya Pradesh, the backward castes are not given equal treatment via-avis upper castes. "They (backward caste members) are discriminated

Veteran CPI leader D Pandian no more

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, Feb 26: CPI veteran and the party's former state secretary D Pandian died here Friday following illness, the party said.

The 88-year old former MP was not keeping well and had been admitted to a government hospital where he breathed his last Friday.

Tamil Nadu Governor Banwailal Purohit, Chief Minister K Palaniswami, DMK president MK Stalin and others condoled his death. In his six decade-long political career. Pandian was an active trade union leader among others and had participated in



Chennai, Feb 26: Even as seat sharing talks began between the Congress and DMK, the latter aims to field at least 190 candidates, which is more than 80% of seats in the 234-member Tamil Nadu Assembly

All these 190 candidates would contest on the DMK's 'rising sun' symbol in the April 6 Assembly election. The candidates contesting on the 'rising sun' symbol may include the DMK's allies, including MDMK, VCK and Kongunadu Makkal Desiya Katchi. The argument of the Dravidian major is that lending the party symbol to allies would help them approach the electorate with a popular symbol as all these parties have lost their state-party status as well as dedicated symbols.

What is significant is that the DMK leadership considers it prudent to keep allies on a tight leash in case they throw up post-poll



The DMK leadership considers it prudent to keep allies on a tight leash in case they throw up post-poll challenges, such as demanding greater share in power

smaller allies

contest the

on its "rising

sun" symbol

tional party.

April 6

contesting on the

'rising sun' symbol

may include

Kongunadu

Katchi

ture, sources in the Congress said.

A source in the DMK said it would

at best concede 20 seats to the na-

"Anything more would amount

to conceding those seats to the

AIADMK. The Congress is strong

only in few pockets like

Kanvakumari district and some

parts of Tirunelveli and Tuticorin

districts. In fact, the Congress

would be riding piggyback on the

DMK's strength in other regions of

the state. If we had contested in 20

MDMK, VCK and

Makkal Desiya

challenges, such as demanding greater share in power.

Sources said that talks within the UPA are in an advanced stage and the DMK is waiting to finalise the numbers with the Congress. While the Congress began with a demand to retain all the 41 seats it contested in the 2016 election, the DMK gave a counter offer of 15 seats, which it increased to 18 later. The Congress too has scaled down its demand but is hesitant to communicate to the DMK at this junc-

GARNERING SUPPORT



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh during a public meeting ahead of the state Assembly elections, at Balurghat in South Dinaipur district of West Bengal, Friday

Mamata questions EC decision to conduct Bengal polls in 8 phases

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Feb 26: Trinamool Congress chief and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee



game is on. We play and win. They are dividing the entire country. But let me tell you, I know Bengal very well." she said.

ple on lines of Hindu-Muslim. The

said the DMK leader.

Meanwhile, the DMK's gameplan is to tackle other allies after finalising the numbers with the Congress. "We have offered four seats each to the MDMK, VCK, CPI and CPM. ER Eswaran's Kongunadu party, the MMK and the Indian Union Muslim League have been offered two seats each and smaller parties like the Forward Bloc and the Tamizhaga Vazhvurimai Katchi have been offered one seat each. Except for the CPI and CPM and a couple of seats given to the VCK, all others have been told categorically that they would have to contest on the 'rising sun' symbol," said the DMK leader.

It has been learnt that after initial hesitation, most of the allies have agreed to contest on the DMK symbol. However, they have not agreed upon the number of seats though.

ED searches 15 locations in poll-bound Bengal

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kolkata, Feb 26: Multiple teams of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) Friday carried out searches at 15 locations in poll-bound West Bengal in connection with the coal smuggling money laundering case.

The ED action comes almost one-and-half month after it had carried out searches at 12 locations in the state in the same case.

An ED official related to the probe told this news agency, 'Multiple teams of ED are carrying out searches at 15 locations in Kolkata, Purulia and Durgapur of West Bengal.



train will not have bogies for the common man to ride. These engines must be driven at a very slow pace on chord lines, if you take into account the number of killin attacks on Dalits and women in **BJP-ruled** states BRATYA BASU | WEST BENGAL MINISTER

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Feb 26: Taking a dig at the BJP for pitching that governments formed by the same party both at the Centra and the state will accelerate development in West Bengal, the Trinamool Congress Friday said the double-engine analogy by the saffron party will be a non-starter in the state.

Senior party leader and minister Bratya Basu told reporters at a

press meet here that while campaigning for the upcoming Assembly polls in the state, BJP leaders are highlighting the need for same party's government both at the Centre and the state. "This double-engine train will not have bogies for the

common man to ride. These engines must be driven at a very slow pace on chord lines, if you take into account the number of killings, attacks on Dalits and women in BJP-ruled states,' he said. "....They are not

saying how their government (BJP) is working on the agenda to hand over

railways to private parties. The saffron party wants to do something similar for Bengal. They only work to fulfill the interest of big corthe porate,'

while being served food, which is never practiced in Bengal," he said. During a recent meeting at Thakurnagar in North 24 Parganas

district of the state, Union Home Minister Amit Shah had assured members of the Matua community about providing citizenship to them. "While the Matuas are already citizens in the country, BJP leaders are making promises to enforce Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) before the Matuas at meetings after vaccination for COVID-19 gets over. This is akin to total eradication of influenza. pneumonia and other virus-borne

diseases in the world which will never happen," he said. Matuas, originally from East Pakistan, are weaker section of Hindus who migrated to India during the Partition and after the creation of Bangladesh. Many of them have been accorded Indian citizenship but a sizeable section of the population has not got it.

THEY ARE NOT SAYING HOW THEIR GOVERNMENT (BJP) IS WORKING ON THE AGENDA TO HAND OVER RAILWAYS TO PRIVATE PARTIES. THEY ONLY WORK TO FULFILL THE INTEREST OF BIG Sabha polls.

CORPORATE: TMC MINISTER WE HAVE BEEN WITH THE PEOPLE FOR 365 DAYS IN PAST 10 YEARS WE HAVE BEEN WORKING FOR THEM. THE FIRST BOY IN THE CLASS IS NEVER AFRAID OF EXAMS AS HE HAS STUDIED THROUGHOUT THE YEAR: TMC

them. The first boy in the class is never afraid of exams as he has studied throughout the year. Those who had never been on the side of people are afraid of exams."

Railway and port union activities, CPI state secretary R Mutharasan said in a party release.

He represented the then North

He was injured in the bomb blast at an election rally at Sriperumbudur near here in 1991 in which former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was killed and lived with shrapnel's throughout his life, Mutharasan said.

mouthpiece 'Jakansakthi.'

The Matua community, with an estimated population of three million in the state, can tilt the scales in favour of a political party. It once stood behind the TMC but had supported the BJP in the 2019 Lok

Asked about the announcement of Assembly poll dates by the Election Commission, Basu said, "We are ready. We have no problems with the number of phases to be declared by the poll panel. "We have been with the people for 365 days in past

10 years. We have been working for

Madras Lok Sabha segment in 1989 and 1991

Pandian headed the party's state unit from 2005 to 2015 and is hailed as a good orator while he had also written over 30 books and penned a number of articles in the party

has questioned the Election Commission's decision to conduct the West Bengal Assembly Election in eight phases.

She asked the EC that if the Assam polls can be conducted in three phases and Tamil Nadu in one then why Bengal polls were being bifurcated into eight phases.

She also alleged that the decision was taken to suit the convenience of the BJP.

"Has this been done with the advice of (PM Narendra) Modi and Amit Shah? Has this been done to facilitate their campaigning? So that they can finish Assam and Tamil Nadu before coming to Bengal? This won't help BJP. We will demolish them," Banerjee said at a press conference in Kolkata.

Mamata Banerjee's statement came soon after the Election Commission announced the poll dates for West Bengal Assembly Election, along with Tamil Nadu, Assam, Kerala and Pondicherry.

Banerjee also objected to the Election Commission's decision to hold polls in the same districts in different phases. "They have divided districts in part 1 part 2. Since we are powerful in South 24 Pargana it is being done in three phases. They are teaching us BA part 1. part 2....," Mamata said.

The TMC chief alleged that the BJP was trying to divide the people on religion. "They are diving peo-

BATTLE FOR BENGAL

During her presser, Mamata alleged that the BJP was misusing its authority as the ruling party at the Centre to influence state polls. "We know all their games. The BJP has the agency power, GoI power. But the Centre cannot misuse its power for one state election. They will have to face the music." she said.

Urging the Election Commission to stop the misuse of money in Bengal polls, Mamata Banerjee claimed that the BJP had sent money to districts to influence the voters. She also accused Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Prime Minister Narendra Modi of misusing their position during the poll campaign.

"If the BJP wants to destroy Bengal. let me say this ... bring all their leaders they can...But people of Bengal will respond," Banerjee said.

named, said that the action of the financial probe agency was based on the assessment of the documents it seized during the raids it carried out at a dozen locations January 11. The official further said the agency sleuths are also searching the premises of Subhas Arjun, a chartered accountant in Kolkata's Princep Street.

The official, wishing not

The official said the searches are on at the premises at Mahatma Gandhi road and Ganesh Chandra Avenue area of some other persons. He also said that a team of ED sleuths has reached Howrah.

The agency had in January searched the offices and residential addresses of businessman Ganesh Bagadia and Sanjay Singh. The duo of Bagadia and Singh are believed to be linked with the illegal coal racket kingpin Anup Majhi.

How BJP became TMC's main rival in Bengal

THOUGH THE BJP'S PRE-2016 ELECTION CLAIM OF WINNING 75-80 SEATS IN BENGAL ASSEMBLY DID NOT FRUCTIFY. ITS SHOW IN THE STATE POLLS REFLECTED ITS ORGANISATIONAL STRENGTH

AGENCIES

Kolkata, Feb 26: Union Home Minister Amit Shah is leading the BJP's campaign in the upcoming West Bengal Assembly election as the party eyes victory over Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress

For a party that won just three seats in West Bengal Assembly election 2016, a lead in over 120 segments in the Lok Sabha election 2019 was a huge boost. The BJP was ahead in just 23 Assembly segments in 2014 Lok Sabha polls. To put things in perspective, the BJP had won two seats in 2014 and 18 in

2019 parliamentary polls. Though the BJP's pre-2016 election claim of winning 75-80 seats in Bengal Assembly did not fructify, its show in the state polls reflected its organisational strength. The BJP won three seats in West Bengal Assembly for the first time in 2016. But more than that, its vote share proved to be a shot in the arm of the BJP leadership. Overall, the BJP's vote share reduced from 17.5 per cent to 10 per cent.

But the devil lies in details. In 2011, the BJP had polled just four per cent of votes in the Bengal Assembly election and later won two by-polls. In micro-analysis, the BJP improved its number of votes from 19.5 lakh to around 56 lakh a near three-fold jump.

Further, the BJP became a player in over 260 of 294 Assembly constituencies by polling more than 10.000 votes. The BJP secured 20.000-30,000 votes in 66 Assembly seats,



30.000-40.000 votes on 16 seats, and 40.000-50,000 votes in six seats.

With this pan-Bengal show in 2016 Assembly poll, the BJP not only showed its organisation presence across the state but also played a spoil-sport to the Congress-Left alliance. Some analysts pointed out that the Congress-Left alliance suffered

at around 70 seats due to the rise of the BJP. The Congress-Left alliance had won 77 seats in 2016 Bengal poll. This was why Bengal CPM chief Surya Kant Mishra had alleged that

the BJP and the TMC had a tacit understanding in the state.

The Left was particularly rattled as it got less number of seats

parties that allied with a 'weak' Congress in Bengal The BJP improved both its 2014 Lok Sabha election, 2016 Bengal Assembly polls and 2017 local polls in 2019 emerging as the real threat

than the Congress just five years

after it lost power in Bengal, which

it ruled for 34 years. A large num-

ber of Left Front workers were said

to have voted for the BJP considering

it a viable alternative to their own

to Mamata Banerejee's electoral supremacy in the state. The BJP won 18 of 42 Lok Sabha

seats. Mamata Banerjee's TMC won 22 but the difference between their vote shares was just three per cent – 40 per cent of the BJP versus 43 per cent of the TMC. The TMCwould hope that the BJP does not improve its performance any further.









It seems Yogi Adityanath had eaten some red chillies in his childhood, that's why he is scared of the Samajwadis' red cap AKHILESH YADAV SAMAJWADI PARTY LEADER

NO TWO-WHEELERS TO SCHOOL

The Goa Education **Department Friday** banned students from driving two-wheelers to school



uote

A cumulative sum of Rs 1,18,455 crore has been deposited in the bank accounts of the poor and farmers under

different welfare schemes during the COVID-19 outbreak. Of this. Rs 86,493 crore has been deposited in the accounts of farmers

SHIVRAJ SINGH CHOUHAN MADHYA PRADESH CHIEF MINISTER

If the government is serious about farmers, it must bring an ordinance to hold in abevance

the three agriculture laws for one-and-a-half years. For three months, farmers have been protesting, but no solution could be found due to the arrogance of the Central government

DIGVIJAYA SINGH SENIOR CONGRESS LEADER

The British had tried to divide the country by fanning separatist sentiment among the Muslims community. I appeal to all to live with unity and contribute to the development of the country

MOHAN BHAGAWAT RSS CHIEF

SHORT TAKES

Man riding scooter killed by Mercedes

New Delhi: A man was killed allegedly after a speeding Mercedes hit his scooter in south Delhi's Vasant Vihar area, police said Friday. The victim has been identified as Antony Joseph, a domestic help. The police said Joseph died on the spot after the accident at 11.45 pm Thursday. "A case was registered under relevant sections and accused Aryan Jain (18) has been arrested. Medical test was done and no alcohol found in his blood," Deputy **Commissioner of Police** (Southwest) Ingit Pratap Singh said.

Farmer found

'Bharat Bandh' evokes lukewarm response AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 26: The day-long 'Bharat Vyapar Bandh' known as by the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) evoked a lukewarm response with most outlets and business institutions open by way of the day.

The merchants' physique, nonetheless, claimed that shopkeepers supported its nationwide business shutdown name to protest in opposition to points associated to the Goods and Services Tax (GST) and "unethical business practices of foreign e-commerce companies".

Various markets in the national capital remained open Friday during the 'Bharat Vyapar Bandh' called by traders' union with many saying that despite supporting the cause, they did not want to suffer another day of losses. The Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) Thursday had said all commercial markets across the country will remain closed February 26 in view of its 'Bharat Bandh' call demanding

ISRO lining up

geo imaging

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

C51 mission.

launch of India's

satellite GISAT-1

Bangalore, Feb 26: The Indian

Space Research Organisation is

lining up the launch of its geo im-

aging satellite GISAT-1 close on

the heels of the February 28 PSLV-

GSLV-F10 rocket was originally

planned for March five last year,

but was postponed a day before

the blast-off due to technical rea-

sons. Secretary in the Department

of Space and ISRO Chairman K

Sivan told PTI that the technical

The launch of GISAT-1 onboard



a review of the provisions of the goods and services tax (GST) regime. The CAIT said dharnas (protests) will be held nationwide at 1,500 places to urge the Centre, state governments and the GST Council to keep in abevance the "draconian"

provisions of GST. Brijesh Goyal, president of Chamber of Trade and Industry (CTI), said most of the markets in Delhi opened but the associations extended their support to the 'bandh'. "Around 98 per cent markets, ho-

tels, restaurants and industrial areas were open except in some

parts of Chawri Bazaar and Karol Bagh. However, they have extended their support. We also held a protest at Kashmiri Gate around 12.30 pm, Goyal said. Although various market bodies said they support the cause for which the 'bandh' was called, they however, could not shut down their shops or outlets due to multiple reasons. The bandh was not enforced at Connaught Place market. "We are completely in support of the cause. However, it was not practically feasible to enforce the 'bandh' in the market this time. The traders are already reeling

under the losses they incurred during the lockdown and they have heavy burden of rents. We completely support the cause and feel the demands are right," said Atul Bhargava, president, New Delhi Traders Association. Echoing his views, Sanjeev Mehra, president, Khan Market Association, said, the issue is very genuine but the traders are already suffering and we did not want to add another day of losses so we did not participate in the 'bandh'. Later in a statement, CTI said traders protested at different places in the national capital against the latest provisions of the GST Friday and demanded their withdrawal from Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. "The present form of GST has increased the anxiety of traders and many new rules are coming in GST which are very dangerous from the traders' point of view. We have also written a letter to Sitharaman, in which important points have been mentioned and also sought time to meet her," Goval said in the statement.

"The next day, when I went to

get my car, it could not be

found....Following which I lodged

a complaint at Vikhroli police sta-

tion," he said. Besides gelatin sticks,

a letter was also found in the SUV,

in Hindi but written in English al-

phabet and purportedly threaten-

ing Ambani, his wife Nita and the

family, police said. This was only a

"Jhalak" (glimpse) but the next

time the "saaman" (explosives) will

MHA extends COVID-19 guidelines till March 31



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 26: The home ministry Friday said the existing COVID-19 guidelines will remain in force till March 31.

In a statement, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) said while there has been a substantial decline in the active and new COVID-19 cases, there is need to maintain surveillance, containment and caution so as to fully overcome the pandemic.

The states and union territories have also been advised to speed up the vaccination of the target population so as to break the chain of transmission and overcome the pandemic. Accordingly, containment zones continue to be demarcated carefully; prescribed containment measures strictly followed within these zones; COVID-appropriate behaviour promoted and strictly enforced; and the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) prescribed in respect of various permitted activities followed scrupu-

on surveillance, containment and strict observance of the guidelines and SOPs, as envisaged in the guidelines issued January 27 need to be enforced strictly by states and union territories, it said.

The MHA issued an order Friday extending the existing guidelines for surveillance, containment and caution and they will remain in force up to March 31, the statement said.

As per the existing guidelines, cinema halls and theatres are allowed

Security scare for Ambanis

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 26: The vehicle with explosives found near industrialist Mukesh Ambani's residence in south Mumbai had been stolen last week, and a letter found inside said this was only a "glimpse" of things to come, police said Fridav.

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has also started a parallel probe and contacted the Mumbai police crime branch, a senior official said here. A Scorpio with around 2.5 kg of gelatin sticks was found parked on Carmichael Road near 'Antilia', the multi-storey residence of Ambani, the chairman of Reliance Industries, Thursday evening.

There was no assembled explosive device with detonators and batteries inside, police said. CCTV footage showed that the SUV was parked there in the early hours of Thursday, and its driver left in an



Innova which had accompanied it

"The owner of the vehicle (Scorpio), Hiren Mansukh, visited the police commissioner's office in south Mumbai this afternoon after he saw visuals of the SUV found near Ambani's house, which was similar to his vehicle," the police official said. Mansukh. a resident of neighbouring Thane, told reporters that he had parked the SUV near Airoli Mulund Bridge February 17 after its steering got jammed while he was on his way to attend a fam-

HP Guv 'manhandled' in Assembly complex



to the spot.

ilv function.

Mirchi's family declared fugitive

economic offenders

to operate with more people while swimming pools have also been permitted for use by all. There is no restriction on

inter-state and intra-state movement of persons and goods including those for cross land-border trade under treaties with neighbouring countries.

No separate permission or approval or e-permit will be required for such movements.

All activities have been permitted outside containment zones, except a few which will be subject to strict adherence of SOPs.

Social, religious, sports, entertainment, educational, cultural, religious gatherings have already been permitted up to a maximum of 50 per cent of the hall capacity, with a ceiling of 200 people in closed spaces; and keeping of the size of the ground or space in view, in open spaces.

"Now such gatherings will be allowed subject to SOP of the state and UT concerned

Cinema halls and theatres have already been permitted up to 50 per cent of seating capacity. Now they will be permitted to operate at higher seating capacity, for which a revised SOP will be issued by Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in consultation with MHA," the ministry said.

The guidelines said swimming pools have already been permitted for use of sports persons. Now swimming pools will be permitted for use of all, for which a revised

lously, the home ministry said. Therefore, the focussed approach



sultation with MHA.



be fully assembled, the letter said. The letter had several misspellings, which seemed to be an attempt to masquerade the writer's identity, the official said, adding that police were as yet clueless about the intention behind the act. The letter was in a blue bag next

to the driver's seat, while the gelatin sticks were kept in a packet with the name of its manufacturer, "Solar Industries, Nagpur". Also a bag with `Mumbai Indians' printed on it was found in the car.

with bullet injury

Budaun (UP): The body of a 40-year-old farmer was found with gunshot injury in a field in Uttar Pradesh's Budaun district Friday, police said. The farmer, Avnaish Kumar, had gone to his field in Behti village Thursday night and he was found lying dead in the morning, they said. Superintendent of Police Sankalp Sharma said a First Information Report (FIR) is being registered.

Man stabbed to death

New Delhi: A 25-year-old man was stabbed to death allegedly by two people over a petty issue in east Delhi's Shahdara area, police said Friday. The victim has been identified as Saalim. He was involved in several criminal cases, police said, adding that the incident took place Thursday at Kanti Nagar. The two accused called Saalim to a place in Kanti Nagar. An argument took place between them during which the duo stabbed him with a knife.

issues have been resolved and the

delay in the launch was due to COVID-19-induced lockdown which affected normal work

Sources in the Bengaluru-headquartered space agency said ISRO is now looking at March-endearly-April timeframe for the mission from Sriharikota spaceport, about 100 km from Chennai. According to ISRO, GISAT-1 will facilitate near real-time observation of the Indian sub-continent, under cloud-free condition, at frequent intervals.

Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV-F10) will launch GISAT-1 from the Second Launch Pad of Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) SHAR, Sriharikota. Weighing about 2268kg, GISAT-1 is the firststateof- the-art agile earth observation satellite which will be placed in a Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit by GSLV-F10, according to ISRO officials.

"Subsequently, the satellite will reach the final geostationary orbit using its onboard propulsion system". ISRO had said a few days before the planned launch in March last year.



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Shimla, Feb 26: Himachal Pradesh Governor Bandaru Dattatraya was allegedly manhandled by some Congress members in the Assembly complex Friday, following which five MLAs were suspended for the remainder of the Budget Session.

The incident took place outside the Speaker's office when the Governor was leaving for the Raj Bhavan after he cut short his adresss in the House following a ruckus create by the Congress on the opening day of the Budget session.

Speaker Vipin Parmar said the Opposition members tried to stop the Governor, who was accompanied by Chief Minister Jai Ram wards his cavalcade.

They hit on the Governor's back with copies of his address. They also hit the bonnet of the Governor's car, the Speaker said, adding that he is examining the Assembly rules to lodge an FIR against the Congress legislators.

Thakur, when he was going to-

The Speaker told PTI that this is for the first time in the history of the Himachal Pradesh Assembly that a Governor was manhandled by Opposition members. After the incident, the Speaker suspended Leader of Opposition Mukesh Agnihotri and four other Congress MLAs Harsh Vardhan Chauhan, Satpal Raizada, Sunder Singh and Vinay Kuma for the entire Budget session till March 20 on a motion moved by Parliamentary Affairs Minister Suresh Bhardwaj.

Earlier, the Congress MLAs cre ated a ruckus in the House during the Governor's address. He then skipped to the last sentence after reading initial few pages and stated that the entire speech should be deemed as read. Suspended Congress MLA Harsh Vardhan Chauhan told PTI that they were waiting outside the Speaker's office and just wanted to ask the Governor why he cut short his address but they were not allowed to do so.

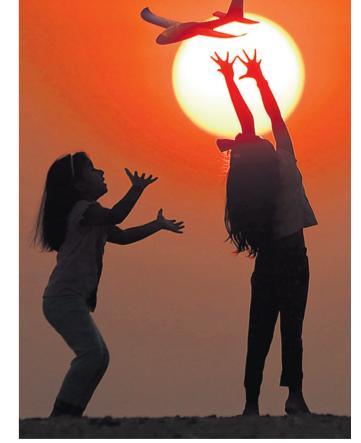
INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, Feb 26: In a major boost to the Enforcement Directorate (ED) probing the money laundering case against slain underworld gangster Iqbal Mirchi and his family members, a Special Court here Friday declared his wife and two sons as "fugitive economic offenders" and also ordered the seizure of their properties in India and abroad.

A Special PMLA court here said that Mirchi's wife Hajra Memon, and his sons Asif Iqbal Memon and Junaid Igbal Memon are hereby declared as Fugitive Economic Offenders as per Section 12 of the Fugitive Economic Offenders Act, 2018.

The court said that "their properties in India and abroad are directed to be seized by following due process of law"

A Special PMLA Court December 16 last year had issued notices to two sons and the wife of Mirchi to appear before it February 21 this year under the Fugitive Economic Offenders Act (FEOA) 2018 and warned that they would be declared fugitive economic offenders if they failed to comply.



Children play with a toy aeroplane during sunset in Bangalore

Drugs recovered

Bahraich (UP): In a joint operation by the Narcotics Control Bureau, SSB and local police, four Nepalese women were arrested after over 15 kg charas was allegedly recovered from their possession, officials said Friday. Three women were arrested near Mihinpurwa bus station Thursday and 10 kg charas was recovered from them, Senior Superintendent of Police said. The arrested women identified themselves as Rangina Roka, Manju Roka and Sirjana Roka of eastern Rukum district of Nepal, the SSP said.

Farmers' cycle rally from Kanyakumari to Kashmir

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Ghazipur, Feb 26: It has been three months since the farmers have been protesting against the Union farm laws at the borders of the national capital.

Now, a cycle march will be held across the country to intensify the farmers' protest and mobilise the people against the farm laws.

This cycle march will cover 8,308 kms from Kanyakumari to Kashmir. It will start March 12.

The rally will pass through 20 states and those who cannot ride bi-

cycles will be able to join the protest on other vehicles. According to the farmers who are participating in the cycle march, more than 50 people from the Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur borders at Delhi have shown interest in this march. At the same time, from youngsters to the elderly, all are joining this cycle march. Akshay, who is involved in the cycle 'yatra', told IANS, "We are tak-

ing out a cycle march which will be held from Kanyakumari to Kashmir. We will make people aware about the farmers' protest through this 'yatra' and will inform them about the



Union farm laws." "This cycle march will be launched from March 12, with nearly 70 to 80 people from

PROTEST AGAINST FARM LAWS

A cycle march will be held across the country to intensify the farmers' protest and mobilise the people against the farm laws

This cycle march will cover 8,308 kms from Kanyakumari to Kashmir. It will start March 12

the Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur borders set to join the yatra. Sanjay Singh told IANS about

the cycle 'yatra' and said,"We are taking out a 'Kisan Cycle March' of 8.308 km from Kanyakumari passing through 20 states.

'We will try to gather farmers from all over the country to protest against the way the corporate sector is tightening its grip on the Central government.

There have been 11 rounds of talks between the Central government and farmer organizations, but no consensus has been achieved so far. On the other hand, both the farmers and the Union government are ready to start negotiations again, but have not yet been able to come to the negotiating table.

Farmers have been protesting at various borders of the national capital since November 26, 2020 against the three newly enacted farm laws. The farmers are protesting against the Central government bringing in the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020; Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020 and the-Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020.

















The government's primary responsibility is to protect people from inflation, and it should not adopt a trader's approach of looking at profit and loss while taking decisions

SANJAY RAUT | SHIV SENA MP

TOUGH RULES

The Delhi government's excise department has warned clubs, hotels and restaurants of strict action if they are found serving alcohol to customers from liquor bottles not bearing 2D bar-code





growing, and growing fast, credit flow has also become equally important

NARENDRA MODI PRIME MINISTER

Today in 2019, the Indian Air Force (IAF) had responded to the Pulwama terror attack and reiterated the country's policy

against terrorism in 'New India'. I remember the brave martyrs (army personnel) of Pulwama and salute the valour of the Air Force

AMIT SHAH UNION HOME MINISTER

If the BJP is elected to power in the WB state polls, political violence will come to an end

RAJNATH SINGH SENIOR BIP LEADER

SHORT TAKES

NIA chargesheets ISI agent in UP

New Delhi: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) Friday said that it has filled a supplementary chargesheet against a Gujarat-based resident Rajakbhai Kumbhar, who worked as an ISI agent, in connection with its probe into the espionage case of Uttar Pradesh. An NIA official said that a supplementary chargesheet against Kumbhar was filed under several sections of the IPC and the UA(P) Act.

CRPF personnel kills self with AK 47

Ranchi: A Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel allegedly committed suicide by shooting himself with his service weapon in Jharkhand's Gumla district, police said Friday. Sompal Singh, a resident of Uttar Pradesh's Meerut district allegedly shot himself with his AK 47 rifle Thursday night. He was posted at the India, China agree to establish hotline between foreign mins

AGENCIES

New Delhi/Beijing, Feb 26: India has told China that disengagement at all friction points is necessary to contemplate de-escalation of troops in eastern Ladakh even as the foreign ministers of the two countries agreed to establish a hotline for "timely" communication and exchange of views.

In the first high level contact after the two countries agreed early this month to disengage from the Pangong Tso area in eastern Ladakh, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar told his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi during a telephonic conversation Thursday that peace and tranquillity on the border is essential for development of bilateral relations.

The armies of the two sides last week concluded withdrawal of troops and weapons from the North and South banks of the Pangong lake. Releasing details of the 75minute conversation, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said in a statement on Friday that China was told that bilateral relations have been impacted severely over last year. The tense military standoff in eastern Ladakh erupted May 5 last. The two leaders discussed the situation along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh and issues related to overall India-China relations. "EAM said that Boundary Question may take time to resolve but disturbance of peace and tranquillity, including by violence, will inevitably have a damaging impact on the relationship,"

the MEA said. "The two ministers



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Chinese State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi

agreed to remain in touch and establish a hotline." "A prolongation of the existing situation was not in the interest of either side. It was, therefore, necessary that the two sides should work towards early resolution of remaining issues. It was necessary to disengage at all friction points in order to contemplate de-escalation of forces in this sector. That alone will lead to the restoration of peace and tranquillity and provide conditions for progress of our bilateral relationship," the MEA statement said.

According to a late-night press release issued by the Chinese Foreign Ministry in Beijing on Thursday, the two foreign ministers agreed to set up a hotline for "timely communication and exchange of views". Wang said China and India should firmly follow the right path of mutual trust and cooperation between neighbouring major countries, and not go astray with suspicion and distrust nor fall back on a road of "negative retrogression".

Wang, also a State Councilor, noted that the two countries need to properly handle the border issue so as to prevent the bilateral ties from being trapped into a "vicious cycle" because of it. When asked for an update on disengagement of troops in other areas after the withdrawal of soldiers by both sides from the Pangong lake area. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin told a media briefing Friday that the situation on the ground has significantly eased. "Recently frontline troops of both sides completed disengagement in the Pangong Lake area and the situation on the ground has significantly eased," he said.

The MEA statement said Jaishankar also referred to his meeting with Wang Yi in September 2020 in Moscow where the Indian side had expressed its concern on provocative behaviour and unilateral attempts of the Chinese side to alter the status quo at the LAC. The border standoff between the Indian and Chinese armies erupted on May 5 last year following a violent clash in the Pangong Lake area and both sides gradually enhanced their deployment by rushing in tens of thousands of soldiers as well as heavy weaponry. Subsequently, 20 Indian soldiers were killed in a fierce hand-to-hand combat on June 15 in Galwan Valley, an incident that marked the most serious military conflicts between the

(FILE PHOTO)

NIA files chargesheet against 11 terrorists

The NIA officer said the terror group members planned to attack individuals whom they consider 'kafirs'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 26: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) Friday filed a chargesheet against 11 terrorists of Al Qaeda, who were planning to execute terror attacks in several parts of the country.

An NIA Spokesperson said the agency had filed the chargesheet in a Special NIA court here against 11 members of Al Qaeda from West Bengal and Kerala - Murshid Hasan aka Sofiq, Mosaraf Hoseen, Mainul Mandal. Lea Yean Ahmed aka Leion, Najmus Sakib, Iyakub Biswas, Samim Ansari, Abu Sufian, Atiur Rahman, Al Mamun Kamal, Abdul Momin Mandal under several sections of the Indian Penal Code as well as sections of the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act and the Arms Act.

The NIA had registered a case based on information about an Al Qaeda-inspired module sprouting and operating in West Bengal and Kerala under the leadership of Murshid Hasan and that the members of this module were in an "advanced stage" of the conspiracy to execute terrorist attacks in different parts of the country.

The NIA carried out raids September 19, 2020 in West Bengal and Kerala and arrested nine terrorists

The official said that two more Al Qaeda operatives were arrested from West Bengal on August 26 and November 1 last year.

The official said, "Investigation has revealed that Murshid Hasan was in touch with Al Qaeda handlers based in Pakistan and Bangladesh and had received in-



structions along with radical propaganda material through encrypted social media platforms from them."

Murshid Hasan along with his other associates conspired to radicalise and recruit more individuals into the terrorist organisation Al Qaeda, the NIA official added.

"They disseminated radical material through social media and encrypted chat platforms with an intention to radicalise and recruit others for establishing an Islamic State by waging jihad in India," the official said.

"The group members had conducted a series of conspiratorial meetings for raising funds for the purchase of arms and ammunition or explosive materials, radicalising and recruiting more members and charting out the future course of action, including establishing a 'Markaz' (a training centre for providing religious and weapons training to new recruits)," the official added.

He said, "The accused persons were also in active communication with an arms dealer through their foreign-based handlers and were planning to receive a consignment of sophisticated arms and ammunition in New Delhi. However, their nefarious plans were obviated by their timely arrest by the NIA."

MANDATORY FASTag **SC REFUSES TO ENTERTAIN PLEA**

PNN/AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 26: The Supreme Court Friday refused to entertain a plea challenging the Centre's decision to make FASTag mandatory for all the vehicles.

The government has made FASTag mandatory from February 15 midnight and any vehicle not fitted with it will be charged double the toll at electronic toll plazas across the country, the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has said. A three-judge Bench of Chief Justice Bobde, Justice Bopanna and Justice Ramasubramanian asked the petitioner to approach the Delhi High Court and granted the petitioner liberty to withdraw the plea. 'Counsel appearing for the petitioner prays for withdrawal of this petition with liberty to approach the High Court of Delhi. Prayer is allowed. Accordingly, the writ petition is dismissed as withdrawn with the liberty aforesaid," the bench said.

SC AGREES TO HEAR PLEA FOR **CASTE-WISE CENSUS FOR BCs**

PNN/AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 26: The Supreme Court Friday agreed to hear a plea seeking direction to the Centre for conducting a caste-wise 2021 census for backward classes for efficient allocation of budgetary resources and excluding the 'creamy layer' and 'non backward class' citizens from a particular caste.

A bench of Chief Justic

vey. The plea said that the number of backward castes and communities was 3,743 in the initial list of 80.

Mandal Commission setup in 1979 "The number of backward castes in central list of OBCs has now increased to 5013 in 2006 as per national commission for backward classes but no survey has been made by the governments caste wise," the plea said.

two sides in over four decades. PEDALLING FOR A CAUSE



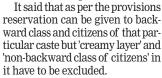
Bishunpur picket of Gumla district in September 2020.

U'khand disaster toll climbs to 71

Gopeshwar: One more body was recovered from the banks of Alaknanda river in Kaleshwar Friday taking the toll in the recent avalanche in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district to 71, officials said. So far, 71 bodies and 30 human body parts have been recovered from different places in the avalanche hit areas out of which 40 bodies and one human body part have been identified. Chamoli district police said.

and Justices AS Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian issued notice to the Centre and National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC) and tagged the matter along with other pending matters.

Advocate G S Mani, appearing for petitioner G Mallesh Yaday, a Telangana based social activist. said due to lack of caste wise survey, governments are facing a lot of difficulties in sharing the budget to every caste in backward classes



The plea further said that central and state governments are also facing statutory and legal hurdles in decision making for the purpose of allocation of seats to back-



ward classes in villages Panchayats and municipal bodies and Zila Parishads in the absence of caste wise census of Backward



RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav rides a bicycle on his way to reach Bihar Assembly to attend the Budget session during a protest against the hike in fuel price, in Patna

'Work from home leading to eye, hearing issues'

"Before the pandemic, a few patients used to visit hospitals/clinics who were developing hearing problems after Diwali last year due to firecrackers but amid Covid-19, a number of patients from all age groups are visiting doctors' clinics due to hearing problems and eve infection complications," a doc said.

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Gurugram, Feb 26 : Doctors in Gurugram district say online classes and work from home due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic is causing eve and ear problems among children, adolescents and young adults.

Doctors have warned that this could lead to hearing and eye difficulties among those who failed to curb the use of earphones, mobile phones and laptops.

However, the doctors also asserted that one other reason which causes hearing problems is the noise pollution in Gurugram.

Rahul Garg, Head of RG Ear-Nose-Throat (ENT) Hospital, said lifestyle choices lead to more cases of hearing and eye impairment than age-related factors.

"Before the Covid-19 pandemic, a few patients used to visit hospitals/clinics who were developing hearing problems after Diwali last



year due to firecrackers but amid Covid-19, a number of patients from complaints are directly linked to extensive use of headphones at all age groups are visiting doctors' clinics due to hearing problems higher volume, mobile and laptops. and eve infection complications.

use of earphones, mobiles and laptops at high volume is leading to such problems among people.

"120 decibels is harmful for ears and 140 decibels can permanently damage our ears. Any noise more than 100 decibels can impact the physical as well as the mental health of our body," Garg said, adding that adults can set the volume of earphones or headphones but children don't know to set the volume of earphones which causes hearing problems. ENT Specialist Yogesh Goyal said, "Multiple people are working for more than eight hours wearing headphones and in front of laptops. This is putting a lot of stress on their ears and unsterilised earbuds or ear-plugs could spread infection.

Goyal advises removing the earphones from time-to-time in order to allow fresh air to go inside the ears. He said school children should not be using headphones at all. If they are attending classes on a laptop or personal computers, then the device volume is sufficient.

The doctors also suggest that the concerned authorities should strictly tackle noise polluters who are responsible for noise pollution. The traffic police should increase the use of audio meters which help to catch noise polluters.

D.K. Bhardwaj, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Traffic), informed that 326 challans were issued for pressure honking and 291 fines were issued for removal of silencer from motorbikes and other vehicles in 2020. "We will not tolerate anyone in Gurugram who breaks traffic rules. The Traffic police from time-to-time has launched various campaigns to catch traffic violators. I would like to appeal to the motorists in Gurugram to follow traffic rules across the district or be ready to face hefty traffic fines, Bhardwaj said.

Experts welcome ceasefire pact between India and Pak

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 26: The cease fire agreement announced by India and Pakistan is a welcome move as any measure that saves lives on the border and reduces violence must be given a chance, experts said Friday, but cautioned that cross-border terrorism needs to be closely watched.

A joint statement issued in Islamabad and New Delhi said the Director Generals of Military Operations of the two countries held discussions over the established mechanism of hotline contact and reviewed the situation along the LoC and all other sectors in a "free, frank and cordial" atmosphere. The agreement came into effect from the midnight of February 24/25. Lt. Gen. (retd) Satish Dua, who was the Corps Commander of the Srinagar based XV Corps when the Indian Army undertook surgical strikes

post the Uri attack in 2016, said the ceasefire is a welcome step and more importantly, a joint statement on it is "rare". He said the agreement comes at the time of commencement of summer when there is a rise in infiltration bids and CFVs.

At the regional level, Pakistan's attempts to create unrest in Kashmir post August 2019 have also not been successful. Even during the stand-off with China in eastern Ladakh, the Indian forces stood strong and did not back down. The United States has also welcomed the agreement, saying it is a positive step towards greater peace and stability in South Asia. White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki also said at her daily news conference Thursday that the Biden administration remains closely engaged with a range of leaders and officials in the region, including those in Pakistan.

Garg pointed out that all these

The doctor said the continued



OrissaPOST SATURDAY | FEBRUARY 27 | 2021 | BHUBANESWAR international

Once you've had the vaccine vou have a feeling of, you know, you're protected, which I think is very important ELIZABETH II I QUEEN OF UNITED KINGDOM

US MARKS 50M VACCINE DOSES

Days after marking a solemn milestone of 500,000 deaths in the pandemic, President Joe Biden is celebrating the pace of his efforts to end it. Thursday, Biden marked the administration of the 50 millionth dose of COVID-19 vaccine since his swearing-in

Twitter. All we wanted was an edit

button." The Super Follower tool will

only be beneficial for those who

have a sizable chunk of followers.

during the virtual event that the

company aims to more than double

Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey said





Clearly, the violence is too high right now, and more progress needs to be made in the Afghan-led

negotiations, and so I urge all parties to choose the path towards

LLOYD AUSTIN US DEFENCE SECRETARY

We need to limit movement for three weeks because the new variants are more aggressive. We can see a dramatic increase of patients in hospitals

ANDREJ BABIS PRIME MINISTER, CZECH REPUBLIC

Technology and online learning are a permanent part of modern education and should dramatically reduce the cost of learning and make it more skills based DAN ROSENSWEIG PRESIDENT AND CEO OF CHEGG

SHORT TAKES

Hong Kong kicks off vax drive

Hong Kong: Hong Kong began administering its first Covid-19 vaccines to the public Friday, kicking off its program offering free vaccinations to all 7.5 million residents. People aged 60 and older and health care workers are among the some 2.4 million people currently prioritised to receive vaccines at community centers and outpatient clinics across Hong Kong. Participants so far will be receiving the vaccine by Chinese biopharmaceutical firm Sinovac.

Another Boeing 777 emergency landing

Moscow: Russian media report that a Boeing 777 plane made an emergency landing in Moscow in the early hours of Friday after the pilot reported a problem with the engine. The Interfax news agency cited an anonymous source saying that the pilot on the flight from Hong Kong to Madrid reported a failure of one of the left engine control channels and requested an emergency landing at the Moscow Sheremetyevo airport.



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Baghdad, Feb 26: A US airstrike in Syria targeted facilities belonging to a powerful Iranian-backed Iraqi armed group, killing one of their militiamen and wounding a number of others, an Iraqi militia official said Friday

The Pentagon said the strikes were retaliation for a rocket attack in Iraq earlier this month that killed one civilian contractor and wounded a US service member and other coalition troops.

The Iraqi militia official told The Associated Press that the strikes against the Kataeb Hezbollah, or Hezbollah Brigades, hit an area along the border between the Svrian site of Boukamal facing Qaim on the Iraqi side. He spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to speak of the attack. Svria war monitoring groups said the strikes hit trucks moving weapons to a base for Iranian-

backed militias in Boukamal. "I'm confident in the target that we went after, we know what we hit," Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin told reporters flying with him from California to Washington, shortly after the airstrikes which were carried out Thursday evening Eastern Standard Time.

The airstrike was the first military action undertaken by the Biden administration, which in its first weeks has emphasized its intent to put more focus on the challenges posed by China, even as Mideast threats persist. Biden's decision to attack in Svria did not appear to signal an intention to widen US military involvement in the region but rather to demonstrate a will to defend US troops in Iraq. The US has in the past targeted facilities in Syria belonging to Kataeb Hezbollah, which it has blamed for numerous attacks tar-



The airstrike was the first military action undertaken by the Biden admin, which in its first weeks has emphasized its intent to put more focus on the challenges posed by China, even as

geting US personnel and interests in Iraq. The Iraqi Kataeb is separate from the Lebanese Hezbollah movement.

Mideast threats persist

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based group that monitors the war in Svria said the strikes targeted a shipment of weapons that were being taken by trucks entering Syrian territories from Iraq. The group said 22 fighters from the Popular Mobilization Forces, an Iraqi umbrella group of mostly Shiite paramilitaries that includes Kataeb Hezbollah, were killed. The report could not be independently verified.

personnel.

Austin said he had recommended the action to President Joe Biden.

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Washington/New Delhi, Feb 26: The social media went berserk over a controversial new Twitter feature called Super Follower that will let famous personalities and celebrities on the platform monetise their tweets by charging their followers and, in turn, will help the micro-blogging platform grow its revenue.

The phrase RIP Twitter was trending all over and people said that the micro-blogging platform must push for an 'edit' button, not a feature that will hurt common users the most

During its Analysts Day virtual event late Thursday, Twitter showed



Twitter slammed over 'Super Follower' feature

#RIPTwitter was trending all over and people said that the micro-blogging platform must push for

an 'edit' button, not a feature that will hurt common users the most

a slide that read "We are rethinking incentives and exploring solutions to provide monetary incentive models for Creators and Publishers to be directly supported by their audience.

A Twitter user posted "RIP

PLAYFUL POLAR



Nan, a 26-year-old female polar bear from the Brookfield Zoo outside of Chicago, played with a ball as she took a swim during her first day on exhibit

317 NIGERIAN SCHOOLGIRLS TAKEN IN MASS ABDUCTION

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Lagos, Feb 26: Gunmen abducted 317 girls from a boarding school in northern Nigeria Friday, police



its total annual revenue to over \$7.5 billion in 2023 with at least 315 million mDAU (monetisable daily active users).

Dorsey said that the company plans to double its development velocity by the end of 2023, resulting in doubling the number of features per employee that directly drive either mDAU or revenue.

Our goal is to more than double our total annual revenue to over \$7.5 billion in 2023. This requires us to gain market share with performance ads, grow brand advertising, and expand our products to small and medium sized businesses throughout the world, the Twitter CEO added.

LANKA ENDS FORCED COVID CREMATIONS

AGENCIES

Colombo, Feb 26: Amidst mounting international criticism. Sri Lanka has revised a controversial mandatory order to cremate the bodies of Covid-19 victims, which denied minority communities, including Muslims, their religious rights.

The government Thursday revised a gazette notification issued April last year. The new notification has allowed both burials and cremations

For 10 months, Muslim and Christian minorities in the country and international rights groups have been lobbying the government to end the policy of forced cremations.

The government was resisting calls to allow burials citing health concerns. It cited the opinion of some experts who claimed that the burial of Covid-19 victims would contaminate the water table thereby spreading the pandemic further.



The country had earlier come under intense criticism from rights groups, including the UNHRC, over the cremation order.

They said it failed to respect he religious feelings of the victims and their family members, especially of the Muslims, Catholics and some Buddhists. The cremation of bodies is forbidden in Islam. The decision to end forced cremations followed the visit of Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan. The Muslim minority leaders, who met Khan, said the decision to allow burials was linked to Sri Lanka seeking the support of the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC) at the ongoing UN Human Rights Council session in Geneva.

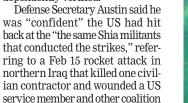
Hope other countries follow your example: WHO lauds India, Modi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Geneva, Feb 26: WHO chief Tedros hebrevesus has laude







S Korea starts vax campaign

Seoul: South Korea Friday administered its first available shots of coronavirus vaccines to people at long-term care facilities, launching a mass immunisation campaign that health authorities hope will restore some level of normalcy by the end of the vear. The rollout of vaccines comes at a critical time for the country, which is struggling to mitigate the pandemic's economic shock that decimated service sector jobs. The vaccinations began shortly before the country reported another new 406 cases of the coronavirus, bringing its caseload to 88,922, including 1.585 deaths.

27 dead in

Yemen brawl

Sanaa: Heavy fighting

government forces in

Yemen's oil-rich Marib has

killed at least 27 people,

tribal leaders and security

resurgence of violence in

Houthi rebels earlier this

officials said Friday, amid a

the area. The Iranian-backed

month renewed their attack

on Marib, a stronghold for

Yemeni forces allied with

recognized government.

the internationally

between rebels and

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's commitment for supporting vaccine equity and sharing Covid-19 vaccines with over 60 countries across the world, hoping that other nations will follow his example.

In a tweet, Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organisation, said that India's support in supplying its vaccines is helping over 60 countries to begin the vaccination process.

Thanks India & Prime Minister @narendramodi for supporting #VaccinEquity. Your commitment to #COVAX and sharing #COVID19 vaccine doses is helping 60+ countries start vaccinating their #healthworkers and other priority groups. I hope other countries will follow your example," he said in the tweet

Thursday. India Wednesday dispatched the first batch of six lakh Covid-19 vaccine doses to the African country of Ghana under the COVAX facility in collaboration with UNICEF,

which aims to cover 92 countries under the initiative. The doses are a part of the first batch of Covid-19 vaccine the country is acquiring through the Covid-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility (COVAX), which Ghana among nearly 92 countries have signed into.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said February 12 that India has provided over 229 lakh doses of coronavirus vaccines to various

countries out of which 64 lakh doses have been supplied as grant assistance and 165 lakh on commercial basis.

MEA Spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said India will continue to take forward the global vaccine supply initiative and cover more countries in a phased manner.

The vaccines are even being sent to Latin American countries.

India, the largest drug producer in the world, is currently manufacturing two Covid-19 vaccines-Covishield and Covaxin.

While Oxford-AstraZeneca's Covishield is being manufactured by the Serum Institute of India in Pune, Covaxin is being produced by Bharat Biotech.

said, the latest in a series of mass kidnappings of students in the West African nation.

Police and the military have begun joint operations to rescue the girls after the attack at the Girls Science Secondary School in Jangebe town, according to a police spokesman in Zamfara state, Mohammed Shehu, who confirmed the number abducted.

One parent, Nasiru Abdullahi, told The Associated Press that his daughters, aged 10 and 13, are among the missing.

"It is disappointing that even though the military have a strong presence near the school they were unable to protect the girls," he said. "At this stage, we are only hoping on divine intervention.³

Resident Musa Mustapha said the gunmen also attacked a nearby military camp and checkpoint, preventing soldiers from interfering while the gunmen spent several hours at the school. It was not im-

mediately clear if there were any casualties. Several large groups of armed men operate in Zamfara state, described by the government as bandits, and are known to kidnap for money and for the release of their members from jail.

'We are angered and saddened by yet another brutal attack on schoolchildren in Nigeria," said Peter Hawkins, UNICEF representative in the country. "This is a gross violation of children's rights and a horrific experience for children to go through." He called for their immediate release.

Nigeria has seen several such attacks and kidnappings over the years, notably the April 2014 mass abduction by jihadist group Boko Haram of 276 girls from the secondary school in Chibok in Borno state. More than a hundred of the girls are still missing.

grees Fahrenheit) and a global ca-

tastrophe if this is not curtailed

quickly," said Bill Hare, director of

Climate Analytics, a private group

that tracks countries' emissions

targets. The 2015 Paris climate agree-

ment had nations submit voluntary

targets for how much heat-trapping

gases they would spew by 2025 and

With the big pandemic-delayed cli-

mate negotiations in Glasgow set for

later this year, nations are supposed

to submit updated and tougher

goals for 2030. The US, the second

biggest carbon polluter behind

China, promises its goal will be an-

nounced before a special Earth Day

Fewer than half of the world's

countries, accounting for 30 per

cent of the world's carbon emis-

sions, submitted targets by the dead-

line. Only seven of the top 15 car-

bon polluting nations had done so.

summit in April.

update them every five years.

Russian envoys hand-push trolley over N Korea border



AGENCIES

Moscow, Feb 26: A group of Russian diplomats and their family members returned to Russia from North Korea on a handpushed rail trolley Thursday because the coronavirus pandemic has halted all passenger traffic between the countries, Russia's Foreign Ministry said in a Facebook post.

"Since the borders have been closed for over a year and passenger traffic has been halted,' staff members of the Russian Embassy in North Korea and their family members embarked on "a long and difficult journey to get home," the ministry said.

The group of eight people took a 32-hour train ride, followed by two hours on a bus. They then boarded a rail trolley and pushed themselvesfor about a kilometer (half a mile) across the border into Russia.

'Carbon-cutting pledges by nations nowhere near enough'

MOST COUNTRIES MISSED THE DEC 31 DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING OFFICIAL EMISSION-CUTTING TARGETS

ASSOCIATED PRESS

United Nations, Feb 26: The newest pledges by countries to cut greenhouse gas emissions are falling far short of what's needed to limit global warming to what the Paris climate accord seeks, a new United Nations report finds.

So the UN climate chief is telling nations to go back and try harder. Most countries — especially top carbon polluters China, United States and India — missed the December 31 deadline for submit-



ting official emission-cutting targets for November's climate negotiations in Scotland.

Friday's report provides an incomplete snapshot of the world's efforts: The world's pledges so far are only enough to reduce global carbon dioxide emissions to less than

1 per cent below 2010 levels by 2030. The world has to cut carbon pollution 45 per cent below 2010 levels to achieve the more stringent official Paris goal of limiting future warming to another half a degree (0.3 degrees Celsius) from now, UN Officials said. "We are very, very far

from where we need to be," UN Climate chief Patricia Espinosa said. "What we need to put on the table is much more radical and much more transformative than we have been doing until now."

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called the report "a red alert for our planet."

UN Officials applauded the more than 120 nations, including the US and China. that have made longterm goals of net-zero carbon emissions by mid-century. But those same nations must translate longterm talk into immediate action "that people and the planet so desperately need," Guterres said.

Instead of limiting the world to only 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) of warming since preindustrial times - the more stringent of two Paris accord goals — the data shows that world "is headed to close to 3 degrees Celsius (5.4 de-















The tax sops announced in the **Budget will give traction to the** international financial sector in **GIFT City. The government has** rapidly built on the IFSC owing to its cost-effective feature NIRMALA SITHARAMAN FINANCE MINISTER

UBER, AMAZON PAY JOIN HANDS

Ride hailing platform Uber Friday said it has partnered with Amazon Pay for installing plastic screens in 40,000 Uber Autos across seven cities in the country. The move is aimed at enhancing the safety of riders and drivers, and will cover Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Chennai, Pune and Jaipur





'GDP in positive trajectory a promising sign'

I am sure the industry will show big heart across the world and support the TRIPS waive that India has

proposed at the WTO so that the entire world can come out of the Covid-19 pandemic much faster and bring back the 'V 'shaped recovery to the entire world

PIYUSH GOYAL COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY MINISTER



BRAJENDRA NAVNIT INDIAN AMBASSADOR TO WTO



near the port near Venice, which will reach by March end to this port SANJAY BANDOPADHYAYA ADDL. SECRETARY, MOPWS

SHORT TAKES

Housing sales in Mumbai rises 33%

Mumbai: Housing sales in Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) rose 33% year-onyear to 28,366 units during January this year, mainly on the back of reduction in stamp duty by the Maharashtra government, according to a report by **CREDAI-MCHI** and CRE Matrix. In January 2020, 21,339 units were sold in the MMR. In value terms, housing sales rose by more than 50% to ₹18,339 crore in January from ₹12,451 crore in the same month last year.

MCL awarded for best practices

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Sambalpur: MCL has been awarded for best practices in

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 26: India Inc Friday said the recouping of the country's economy to a positive trajectory in the third quarter is a promising of 2019-20, acsign as it portends the end of the pancording to the demic-induced recessionary phase data released by seen in the first-half of the fiscal year. the National Industry bodies expressed con-(NSO).

fidence that the GDP will improve further in the coming months on the back of positive growth stimuli emanating from the Union Budget and initiatives like the Production Linked Incentive scheme unveiled by the government. After contracting for two quarters in a row, the Indian economy grew by 0.4 per cent in the October-December quarter amid coronavirus pandemic, official data showed Friday.

PERFORMANCE OF

JANUARY 202

-5.3 -4.6

8 CORE INDUSTRIES

Coal Crude Oil Natural Refinery Fertilizers Steel

Gas

Products

has a weight of 10.33% in the index, showed a

decline of (-) 1.8% in January 2021 over the same

month of the previous year

Sector-wise

Growth Rate (%)

2.6

The gross domestic product (GDP) had recouping of expanded by 3.3 per **GDP to the positive** cent in the correterritory by posting a sponding period growth of 0.4% in Q3 is a promising sign as it portends the end of the pandemic-induced recessionary phase seen in Statistical Office the first-half of the year CHANDRAJIT BANERJEE I

Chandrajit DIRECTOR GENERAL, CI Banerjee, Director General, CII, said that

"recouping of GDP to the positive territory by posting a growth of 0.4 per cent in the third quarter is a promising sign as it portends the end of the pandemic-induced recessionary phase seen in the firsthalf of the year" He observed that one of high-

(Weight in IIP:

Base: 2011-12=100

JAN 2021

JAN 2020

5.1

40.27 %)

lights of the data is the positive momentum seen in investment demand as it grew by 2.6 per cent in the third quarter after being in doldrums for several quarters now.

G

"This bears testimony to the unrelenting efforts of the government

to go all-out to revive investments under the ambit of the various measures which formed a part of the Aatmanirbhar Bharat package,'

D

Baneriee said. "Going forward, we are confident that the growth stimuli avail-

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the additional measures including the PLI will lead to a sturdy growth path over the recovery horizon,' he added. The GDP growth of 0.4 per cent for the third quarter of FY21 is no surprise, but it marks a significant turnaround into the Indian economy returning to a positive trajectory after sharp drops in the first two quarters, even as the war against COVID-19 is continuing, said Assocham Secretary General Deepak Sood

able from the Union Budget and

According to him, the last quarter of the current fiscal should be far better. "As pointed out by Assocham in its earlier projection, the real recovery would be seen in the FY22, beginning with the first quarter and then picking up pace later." Sood said.

Micromax to bolster product portfolio; bring in 5G phones

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhiwadi, Feb 26: Micromax Friday said it will significantly bolster its product portfolio this vear, bringing in 5G devices as well at "aggressive price points", as the homegrown handset maker looks to re-capture its leadership position in the hyper-competitive Indian smartphone market.

Micromax, which has created a ₹500 crore war chest to invest across is operations, is also scaling up its smartphone manufacturing capacity in the country to meet the strong demand it is witnessing for its products



Core industries' output April-Jan fiscal deficit hits grows 0.1% in January 66.8% of full-year target On a sector specific basis, the output of coal, which

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 26: The central government's fiscal deficit soared to ₹12.34 lakh crore or 66.8% of the revised budget estimates at the end of January of the current fiscal. The fiscal deficit at the end of January in the previous financial year was 128.5% of the Revised Estimates (RE).

In the current fiscal ending March 31, the fiscal deficit is likely to touch ₹18.48 lakh crore or 9.5% of the GDP.

In absolute terms, the fiscal deficit stood at ₹12.34.004 crore at the end of January 2021, as per the data released by the Controller General of Accounts (CGA).

The lockdown imposed to curb spreading of coronavirus infections had significantly impacted business activities and in turn contributed to sluggish revenue realisation.

The fiscal deficit or gap between

Retail inflation for industrial worker eases to 3.15% in Jan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

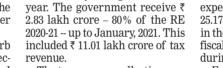
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The tax revenue collection was 82% of the RE of 2020-21 as compared to 66.3% of the RE (2019-20) during the same period last fiscal

the expenditure and revenue had breached the annual target in the month of July during this financial vear. The government receive ₹ 2.83 lakh crore -80% of the RE 2020-21 -- up to January, 2021. This included ₹ 11.01 lakh crore of tax revenue.

The tax revenue collection was



82% of the RE of 2020-21 as compared to 66.3% of the RE (2019-20) during the same period last fiscal. Non-tax revenue was 67% of the RE.



During the corresponding period of the last fiscal, it was 73%.

According to the CGA data, total expenditure incurred stood at ₹ 25.17 lakh crore or 73% of the RE in the current financial year. Last fiscal, it was 84.1 per cent of the RE during the same period.

For this financial year, the government had initially pegged the fiscal deficit at ₹ 7.96 lakh crore or 3.5% of the GDP in the budget presented in February 2020.

RBI extends deadline to apply for umbrella entity

He added that the company is already working on a 5G device, and it would hit the market in the second half of the year.

"People already have a lot of interest in 5G, they want 5G-ready smartphones...We are in advanced stages of working on our 5G prod-

ent in over 15 states.

end, we should have one more product in the market and from April onwards, the plan is to bring in 4-5 products every quarter and refresh the portfolio every 6-8 months," Micromax co-founder

right now but I must say it's been

a 'dreamy comeback'. By March-

Rahul Sharma said.

uct that will be priced most aggressively," Sharma said. He added that the company is also looking at now ramping up its offline presence, and will be pres-

Environment, Health & Safety by industry body Confederation of Indian Industry (CCI). At CII Odisha's Annual Meet, the award was conferred on MCL, a leading coal producing subsidiary of Coal India Limited. On behalf of the company, DK Khanda, Senior Manager (Mining)/ **Environment & Forests** Department, Rajeev Kumar, Sr Manager (Mining), S&R dept and J Mishra. Deputy Medical Superintendent, Anand Vihar Hospital were present.

Takeda launches mobile app

New Delhi: Drug firm Takeda India Friday said it has launched a mobile application for the exclusive use of healthcare professionals to address the digital ecosystem for the management of patients with genetic diseases. The application would enable an efficient digital ecosystem for disease updates and dose calculation for improved management of patients with rare lysosomal storage disorders, Takeda India said in a statement.

Pradhan bats for expansion

New Delhi: Oil Minister Dharmendra Pradhan has sought the personal intervention of his cabinet colleagues handling the chemicals and fertilizers and shipping ministries to get 175 acres of land needed for state-owned IOC's Haldia refinery expansion project in West Bengal. IOC is building a new processing unit to improve the quality and production capacity of lubricant base oils.

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

same month last year.

Production (IIP).

and electricity.

2020

tion of India's eight major indus-

tries remained flat on a year-on-

year basis during January 2021.

The Index of Eight Core Industries'

reading for last month showed a rise

of just 0.1 per cent in output from

an expansion of 2.2 per cent in the

On a sequential basis, the output

These industries comprise coal,

showed a decline of (-) 1.8 per cent in January 2021 over the same New Delhi, Feb 26: The produc-

Source: Ministry of Commerce & Industry

month of the previous year. Similarly, the output of refinery products, which has the highest weightage of 28.04, declined 2.6 per cent compared to the corresponding month of the last fiscal.

Cement Electricity **Overal**

GRAPHICS

However, electricity generation, which has the second highest weightage of 19.85, increased by 5.1 per cent, whereas the steel production

of eight major industries had exwas up 2.6 per cent last month. panded by 0.2 per cent in December The extraction of crude oil which has an 8.98 weightage, declined by ECI index comprises 40.27 per 4.6 per cent during the month under cent of the weight of items inconsideration. cluded in the Index of Industrial

The sub-index for natural gas output, with a weightage of 6.88, fell by 2 per cent.

crude oil, natural gas, refinery Cement production, which has products, fertilisers, steel, cement, a weightage of 5.37, slid by 5.9 per cent in the month under review. On a sector specific basis, the In contrast, fertiliser manufacoutput of coal, which has a weight turing, which has the least weighof 10.33 per cent in the index, tage - only 2.63 - grew by 2.7 per cent. New Delhi, Feb 26: Retail inflation for industrial workers eased to 3.15% in January against 7.49% in the same month last year, mainly due to lower prices of certain



"Year-on-year inflation for the month (January) stood at 3.15% compared to 3.67% for the previous month (December 2020) and 7.49% during the corresponding month (January 2020) of the previous year," the labour ministry said in a statement.

Food inflation stood at 2.38% in January compared to 2.89% in the previous month (December 2020) and 10.61% during the corresponding month a year ago.

AGENCIES

Mumbai, Feb 26: The RBI on Friday extended the deadline to apply for an umbrella entity, which the central bank wants to set up to focus on retail payments system in the country, by over a month to March 31 in view of the pandemic.

In August last year, RBI had released a framework for authorisation of an umbrella entity for retail payments in the country and had invited applications from desirous entities by February 26, 2021.

Requests have been received from various stakeholders including Indian Banks" Association for extending the deadline, keeping in view the COVID-19 related disruptions and inconveniences. RBI said in a release.

It has been accordingly decided to extend the timeline for making the application up to March 31. 2021, it said. The entity is to be set up as a company as a for-profit under the Companies Act, 2013 and

RETAIL PAYMENTS



will get authorisation under the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007 (PSS Act). Such entities will undertake tasks such as setting up. managing and operating new payment systems in retail space.

These activities include but not limited to ATMs, White Label PoS; Aadhaar based payments and remittance services; newer payment methods, standards and technologies; monitor related issues in the country and internationally; taking

care of developmental objectives like enhancement of awareness about the payment systems.

They are also expected to operate clearing and settlement systems for participating banks and non-banks, carry on any other business suitable to further strengthen the retail payments ecosystem in the country. Such entities are also expected to interact and be interoperable, to the extent possible, with the systems operated by NPCI.

Consumption, investment demand recovers: Moody's, ICRA

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 26: Moody's Investors Service has affirmed a stable outlook for non-financial corporates in India on the back of easing pandemic restrictions, the government stimulus aimed at boosting consumption and investment, and a benign funding environment.

Besides, its Indian affiliate --ICRA -- has changed its outlook for some sectors, such as auto and textiles, to stable from negative on expectations of a swift demand recovery

"A rising preference for personal

mobility vehicles, along with the

government's new voluntary vehi-

cle scrappage policy, will support au-

tomobile demand. In the housing sec-

tor, the shift toward flexible work

arrangements combined with tax in-

centives for affordable homes will

propel demand," said Moody's Associate Managing Director Vikas Halan.

"Increasing activity in the housing and auto sectors along with higher infrastructure spending will, in turn, drive demand in other key industries such steel, oil and gas and cement."

A joint statement from the two, said prevailing low interest rates and the government's reforms to boost domestic manufacturing will support corporates' credit profiles.

According to ICRA, payment moratoriums, additional funding lines and one-time restructuring options have enabled corporates in stressed sectors like textiles, healthcare and auto ancillaries to successfully navigate the challenging environment.

"Additionally, we believe that low commodity prices and companies'

tight control over their operating and capital expenses have enabled them to conserve cash and maintain good liquidity -- although rising commodity prices and the resurgence of coronavirus cases in some ex-

Alal-ult

porting countries remain key risks," said K. Ravichandran, Executive Vice President and Deputy Chief Rating Officer at ICRA.

Despite these improvements, India remains vulnerable to the threat of rising infections and fresh lockdowns, and to the risk of an uneven or underwhelming economic recovery

Consequently, ICRA has mainis undergoing. tained a negative outlook on sectors

A joint statement from the two, said prevailing low interest rates and the government's reforms to boost domestic manufacturing will support corporates'

credit profiles

that remain most impacted by the

pandemic in the near to medium

term, including the aviation, hos-

com sector remains negative, re-

flecting the structural changes it

Similarly, the outlook for the tele-

pitality and retail sectors.

the Indian government will drive infrastructure investment for the next 1-2 years, which will help address infrastructure constraints and support future private investment.

'Traditional infrastructure segments like power and transportation will likely receive the bulk of investments, as will segments with critical infrastructure gaps, such as healthcare, cold chain, water and sanitation, over the next 6-12 months.

ble outlook for infrastructure-related sectors such as roads and ports, noting that growth in toll collections and the steady recovery in cargo growth, along with government measures to improve sectors, will drive profit and revenue growth.

Furthermore, Moody's expects













sports

OrissaPOST SATURDAY | FEBRUARY 27 | 2021 | BHUBANESWAR

Intent to score was needed, says Rohit



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, Feb 26: Intent to score and not just survive was the key to flourish on the Motera pitch, asserted India opener Rohit Sharma who batted effortlessly on the 'interesting but normal' pitch that was declared difficult and challenging by visiting England batsmen.

Rohit attributed his sublime first innings half-century to the positive intent that he displayed during the day-night third Test in which England got thrashed by 10 wickets inside two days on the spin-friendly pitch.

"When you are playing on a pitch like that, you need to have an intent and look to score runs as well. You can't just keep blocking," Rohit said during the virtual conference after the match Thursday.

England captain Joe Root and Zak Crawley had earlier described the track as challenging. The senior opener scored India's only half century of the game with the home side spinners accounting for 19 wickets. England batsmen were deceived by left-armer Axar Patel's straighter deliveries that skidded straight instead of turning.

Rohit felt that during his innings of 66, he was a step or two ahead of England bowlers. "You just need to be slightly ahead at times and try

Bell slams England

LONDON: Former batsman Ian Bell has slammed England's much-debated rotation policy, saying they were guilty of thinking too far ahead and have gone wrong with the constant chopping and changing in a 'big' Test series like India. "I think England have been guilty of thinking too far ahead of having a squad for the Ashes when actual ly this is bigger than the Ashes, this is probably as big as the Ashes," Bell told 'ESPNcricinfo'. "Why are we rotating in the biggest Test series you are playing in? For me that's where England have gone a bit wrong," he added. Bell feels sticking to winning combinations is important while competing with the hest teams in the world. He said form is subject to playing.

and find ways to score runs. My intent was not just to survive but try and score runs as well, while respecting the good balls. That's all I tried to do.

'The pitch was an interesting one and odd ball was just coming in and some were taking turns. On a track like this, you need to have a clear mindset, which I think I did until I played that sweep shot.'

He felt that Patel's strategy of attacking the stumps paid off well. The spinner ended the game with 11 wickets in his kitty. "Axar was sim-

REACTIONS ON MOTERA WICKET

SUNIL GAVASKAR: It's more about the intent and application of the batsmen. It is a pitch where Rohit and Crawley hit half centuries. England were thinking of how to survive and not how to score runs. You have to credit Axar Patel for the way he has used the odd ball that straightens. Ashwin and Axar were superb.

GEOFFREY BOYCOTT: There is nothing in the rules that says what type of pitch should be prepared. We had first choice of the surface and they were better than us. Simple

VVS LAXMAN: It was not an ideal pitch for a Test match and even India collapsed (to 145 in their first innings.

HARBHAJAN SINGH: It is not an ideal pitch. India would also have been in trouble if England had scored 200 in their first innings. But it (the pitch) is the same for both sides.

ply brilliant," Rohit said, lauding the

bowler who had big shoes to fill, re-

placing an injured Ravindra Jadeja.

performing is never easy. He was out

injured, slightly down, came back

and bowled very well in Chennai.

He understands conditions well

and how to vary the pace and what

Coming wider off the crease was

also another effective ploy used by

Patel. "He made the batter play

most balls which is important as you

never know which one is going to

turn. He bowls little wider off the

crease and his slightly slinging ac-

tion makes it very difficult for bats-

man to either leave or play," said

For Mumbaikar, the second Test

track at the Chepauk was way more

challenging. "If you look at the sec-

ond Test, it was turning hell of a lot

than what it did here, to be hon-

est. But then a lot of batters got

runs there in the second Test," he

we have got to accept that we did-

n't bat well but in Chennai where

the pitch had a lot more to offer.

we batted well on that track. Ashwin

got a hundred, Virat got 60-odd, so

if you applied yourself, you could

still score runs," said Rohit, who

himself got 161 in that game.

"Like I said in this Test match,

lines to bowl."

Rohit.

said

"Coming out from nowhere and

MICHAEL VAUGHAN: If we are going to see these pitches. I have an answer to how it could work. Give the Teams 3 innings!!!

YUVRAJ SINGH: Finished in 2 days, Not sure if that's good for Test cricket! If Anil Kumble and Harbhajan Singh bowled on these kind of wickets they would be sitting on a thousand and 800? However congratulations to Axar Patel what a spell! Congratulations R Ashwin and Ishant Sharma.

GRAEME SWANN: You cannot come to India and play just one spinner in a Test match and get way on this wicket.

KEVIN PIETERSEN: To have a pitch like this for one match is fine as batsmen's skill is put to test. But I would not like to see a pitch like this again and I think none of the other players want to see it either. Well done India

(His another tweet) The batting from both teams was awful! The wicket wasn't horrendous! It's just that the batting was dreadful! 21/30 wickets were from straight balls! Nothing dangerous!

Europa League: Arsenal through

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Berlin, Feb 26: Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang scored late to steer Arsenal into the last 16 of the Europa League with a 3-2 win over Benfica, while Napoli and both German teams were knocked out.

Arsenal had to come from behind to advance 4-3 on aggregate, while Napoli is out despite beating Granada 2-1 in the second leg. The modest Spanish club surprisingly advanced 3-2 on aggregate.

Bayer Leverkusen and Hoffenheim went out with 2-0 losses at home to Swiss side Young Boys and Molde, respectively. Manchester United drew 0-0 with Real Sociedad for a 4-0 aggregate win, and AC Milan progressed on away goals, 3-3 on aggregate, after drawing 1-1 at home with Red Star Belgrade.

Goals from Lukas Provod and Abdallah Sima in the second half gave Slavia Prague a 2-0 win at Leicester to progress after their goalless first leg. Roma had little difficulty getting past Sporting Braga with a 3-1 win at home for 5-1 over two legs.

Aubameyang scored twice for Arsenal, including the decisive 87th-minute winner just as the Gunners were poised to go out on the away goals rule despite playing

NEWS IN BRIEF DEEPAK IN STRANDJA MEMORIAL FINALS

NEW DELHI: Asian silver-winner Deepak Kumar (52kg) Friday stunned Olympic and World Champion Shakhobiddin Zoirov of Uzbekistan to storm into the finals of the 72nd Strandja Memorial Boxing Tournament in Sofia, Bulgaria. Deepak clinched one of the most memorable wins of his career with a 4-1 win over more fancied Zoirov, who had claimed the 2019 World Championship title beating India's Amit Panghal. However, former youth world champion Jyoti Gulia (51kg) and Bhagyabati Kachari (75kg) bowed out of the women's competition. With their loss, India's challenge in the women's draw has come to an end. Manjeet Singh (+91kg), in the men's draw, also made his exit from the tournament. India had won three medals at the previous edition (one silver and two bronze).

SWIATEK TO TAKE ON BENCIC IN FINAL

ADELAIDE: French Open champion Iga Swiatek is into the Adelaide International final against second seeded Belinda Bencic after a 6-3, 6-2 win over Jil Teichmann. Bencic advanced later Friday with a 7-6(7 2), 6-7(4-7), 6-2 win over American teenager Coco Gauff in 2 hours, 45 minutes. Fifth-seeded Swiatek was dominant in the opening set. breaking the Swiss left-hander's serve in the fourth game. The 19vear-old Swiatek bothered her opponent with a series of powerful groundstrokes as Teichmann made 13 unforced errors in the first set. Teichmann failed to convert a break point in the fourth game of the second set and it was a turning point.



Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang (in red& white), avoiding a tackle from a defender, chips over the Benfica goalkeeper for one of his goals, Thursday

both games abroad due to coronavirus-related travel restrictions. The teams played the second leg

in Athens while the first leg ended 1-1 in Rome after Benfica's home game was relocated from Portugal. Aubameyang opened the scoring in the 21st, finishing clinically after Bukayo Saka played him through.

Diogo Goncalves equalised with a perfectly placed free-kick inside the top left corner in the 43rd. A mistake from Dani Ceballos gifted Benfica their second goal after an Arsenal corner in the 61st. Benfica goal-

ISL: NEUFC SECURE

Goa: NorthEast United FC (NEUFC)

moved to third position in the 11-

team standings, sealing a play-off

Kerala Blasters FC (KBFC) in their

play-off spot would be fought

have 30 points, and fifth-placed

Hyderabad FC (28 points). Both

Tilak Maidan Friday, Suhair

in the 34th minute after going

slot the ball into the back of the

their lead just before the halftime

break through Lalengmawia.

teams have a game in hand. At the

Vadakkepeedika broke the deadlock

around an onrushing KBFC goalie to

empty net. The Highlanders doubled

berth, after eking out a 2-0 win over

Indian Super League (ISL) encounter

at the Tilak Maidan. Friday. The final

between fourth-placed FC Goa, who

PLAY-OFF BERTH

PM INAUGURATES KIWG

around with a close-range header to

J&K 'to be' made winter sports hub

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 26: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Friday inaugurated the second Khelo India Winter Games (KIWG) in Gulmarg and said that the event is a step towards making Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) a hub of winter sports. Athletes from 27 states and Union Territories are competing in the Games which will conclude March 2.

'This is a step towards making India's presence felt in the international winter games arena and also make J&K a hub of winter sports,' he said in a virtual address.

"These games in Gulmarg show that J&K is eager to reach new heights of peace and development. These Games will strengthen the resolve for 'Ek Bharat, Shreshth Bharat'. I am told the participation has doubled this year and it is a reflection of the inclination towards winter sports in the country," he added.

The disciplines to be competed the Games include alpine skiing, nordic ski, snowboarding, ski mountaineering, ice hockey, and ice skating among others.

It was just the Portuguese team's second effort on target on the night. Aubameyang completed the turn-

But left back Kieran Tierney replied with a strike inside the far post in the 67th after showing good composure to elude a Benfica defender, and

keeper Helton Leite produced a long

kick out that Ceballos tried heading

back to his own goalkeeper, but only

inadvertently laid it off for Rafa

Silva, who rounded Bernd Leno be-

fore finishing into the empty net.

the 19-year-old Saka's cross.

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