



STRAIGHT TALK

Actor Khatija Iqbal feels that actors often get stereotyped because filmmakers don't explore their talent

LEISURE

P2



KEJRIWAL WOOS JATS IN UP

In view of the upcoming Assembly polls in UP, AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal is wooing 'Jat' community

TWO STATES

P7



J&J'S 1-DOSE VAX APPROVED

The US is getting a third vaccine, as the FDA cleared a Johnson & Johnson shot that works with just one dose

INTERNATIONAL

P10

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Can't you think of 20 fresh promises? These ones we've already made in other states and were never fulfilled!

SHORT TAKES

1.08L voters may not vote in Assam

Guwahati: Assam has 1.08 lakh D or doubtful voters who will not exercise their franchise in the forthcoming Assembly polls to be held in three phases - March 27, April 1 and April 6, Chief Electoral Officer Nitin Khade said. The figure of D-voters has decreased in comparison to the number of 1.13 lakh provided in the state Assembly last year. Doubtful voters are those persons who are identified during electoral roll revision as D-voters, cases of which are pending with the Foreigners Tribunals or declared as foreigners by the Tribunal.

Flights from City to Prayagraj, Patna

Bhubaneswar: Come March, denizens of Bhubaneswar can travel by air to Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh. Budget carrier IndiGo airlines is likely to commence a flight service from Prayagraj to Bhubaneswar from March 28. According to an IndiGo release, the airline is also planning to launch an exclusive flight service between Bhubaneswar and Patna under the Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) from May 1.

Sabya-Archita to tie the knot today

Bhubaneswar: Actor Sabyasachi Mishra and Archita Sahu will tie the knot in Rajasthan, Monday. Both the actors shared the news on their respective social media platforms. They wrote "With the blessings of Lord Jagannatha & our families it gives us immense happiness in sharing that our wedding is happening tomorrow..." The two actors had worked together in multiple hit movies including 'Pagala Karichi Paunji Tori' and 'Mu Eka Tumara'.

WEATHER			
	BHUB	CTK	
TEMP MAX	40°C	39.2°C	
TEMP MIN	23.2°C	20.2°C	
Humidity	57%	44%	Forecast
Rainfall	Nil	Nil	Dry weather likely

Major fire breaks out at Satkosia Eco Retreat Fest

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Feb 28: Three cottages set up at the Satkosia Eco Retreat festival near Baliput in Cuttack district were completely gutted after a major fire broke out at the site in the wee hours of Sunday.

The visitors to the festival, who had put up in these cottages, had a narrow escape. While the exact cause of the blaze is yet to be ascertained, it is suspected that the fire was triggered by an electric short circuit.

There was no injury or loss of life in the fire incident, the tourism department said in its Twitter post, adding that safety of tourists was paramount and steps will be taken to ensure that no recurrence of such an incident happens in future. Transport Commissioner Sanjeeb Panda and his wife Santosh Bala, who is the Home Department Special Secretary, were staying in one of the tents at the Eco-Retreat site when the fire started. They escaped the fire mishap by a whisker. Later, Panda took to his Twitter handle to inform that the fire broke out at 5 am.

"By the grace of God, me and Santosh escaped without any injury as fire broke out in



our tent at Satkosia Eco Retreat at about 5 am on 28.2.2021 due to electrical short circuit. Three tents were burnt and there was no injury to anyone," Panda wrote.

On being informed, fire services personnel and police rushed to the spot and doused the flame. However, the three cottages were completely gutted by the time.

BJD Badamba MLA Debi

- At least three cottages set up at Satkosia Eco Retreat festival near Baliput in Cuttack district were completely gutted
- The visitors to the festival, who had put up in temporary cottages, had a narrow escape
- The Odisha Tourism Department introduced the Eco Retreat Festival at Baliput December 9 last year in order to revive the COVID-19 hit tourism sector

Mishra visited the spot and took stock of the situation. Meanwhile, the Odisha

Tourism Department confirmed that there was no injury or loss of life and an in-

quiry into the matter is being conducted.

It is worth mentioning here that the Odisha Tourism Department introduced the Eco Retreat Festival at Baliput December 9 last year in order to revive the COVID-19 hit tourism sector. The three-month-long festival was inaugurated by Union Tourism Minister Prahlad Singh Patel via video conferencing.

GO FOR GOAL



Odisha Police players invade the Sports Hostel goal in the inaugural match of the Indian Women's League (IWL) played at the Kalinga Stadium, Bhubaneswar, Sunday

OP PHOTO

COVID-19 threatens a comeback across India

PNN & AGENCIES

New Delhi/ Bhubaneswar, Feb 28: In December-January, it appeared coronavirus was tapering away in India. The three major aspects of the pandemic - the e-curve of cases, deaths and hospitalisations - which have been fluctuating, suddenly plummeted drastically. Many believed this may be the end of the pandemic. But February brought out some harsh reality and dashed hopes that the pandemic was retreating. Scientists believe this is an important phase in the pandemic, as apprehensions are ripe that cases may begin to rise again. In the backdrop of emerging mutations, Prof. NK Ganguly, former Director General, Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), said, "As mutations interact with the natural environment, they are likely to increase transmissibility and also increase virulence. Mutations and the new strains are endemic not pan-

dem. The surge in cases is mostly due to a drop of guard against the virus (non-appropriate COVID behaviour)."

He stressed that decline in cases during winter season in northern India, not sufficient to conclude that virus was less active during winters, and indicated that cases might increase in summers, as it happened last year. Ganguly added that Maharashtra and Kerala have never experienced long winters, unlike northern India, yet cases have begun to increase this month. "In Maharashtra, they started train travel and cases increased", he said.

Except Maharashtra and Kerala, after a couple of months of lull, cases have also begun to rise in Karnataka, Telangana, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Gujarat and Punjab. The surge in cases has come, after it fell below 10,000 daily in early February, from a peak of over 90,000 cases in September last year.

Chandapalli villagers want to merge with Chhattisgarh

Locals have urged Sareipalli MLA in Chhattisgarh for merger their panchayat with the neighbouring state

POST NEWS NETWORK

Padmapur, Feb 28: People of Chardapalli panchayat under Paikamal block of Bargarh district are leaning towards Chhattisgarh, alleging administrative apathy and step-motherly attitude of the Odisha government.

Upset over lack of development, people of Chardapalli urged Sareipalli MLA Kismat Lal Nanda of Chhattisgarh to merge their panchayat with the neighbouring state.

A delegation of local people including Shankar Sahu, Arakshit Pradhan, Dasrath Nayak, Rakhyapal Sahu, Seshadev Nayak, Janata Pradhan, Prafulla Pradhan went to Sareipalli Saturday evening and met the MLA in this regard.

According to the locals, they had staged protests and road blockades several times, demanding a bridge across Anga river; a road between Chardapalli and Luharakote on Chhattisgarh-Odisha border and a road at Debadarha. "Despite repeated agitations, the state government has not paid heed to the issues," they lamented.

Following the meeting with the Chardapalli people, the Sareipalli MLA immediately had apprised the Collector of the neighbouring district in Chhattisgarh about the development.

The MLA has also assured the people of Chardapalli that as the issues raised by the people are an inter-state problem, steps will be taken to sort them out with help of the Chhattisgarh government.

PSLV-C51 lifted off with e-Gita, PM's picture, 19 satellites

ISRO PSLV-C51 LAUNCH IS CARRYING BRAZIL'S 637-KG AMAZONIA-1, AN OPTICAL EARTH OBSERVATION SATELLITE, AS ITS PRIMARY PASSENGER

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, Feb 28: The Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) PSLV-C51 blasted off the agency's launchpad at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, SHAR, Sriharkota, Sunday, a little before 10.30 am, carrying 19 payloads and ringing in its schedule for 2021 in all glory.

The 53rd Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) launch happened at 10.24 exactly as planned, carrying Brazil's 637-kg Amazonia-1, an optical earth observation satellite, as its primary passenger. This satellite would further strengthen the existing structure by providing re-

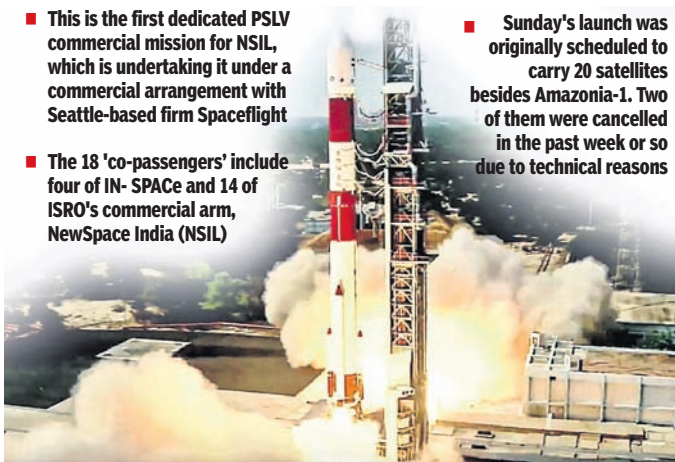
mote sensing data to users for monitoring deforestation in the Amazon region and analysis of diversified agriculture across the Brazilian territory.

The 18 'co-passengers' include four of IN-SPACE and 14 of ISRO's commercial arm, NewSpace India (NSIL).

The IN-SPACE satellites include three UNITYsats from a consortium of Indian academic institutes and one Satish Dhawan unit from Space Kidz India, which will study space radiation, among other things. It also includes an engraved picture of Prime Minister Narendra Modi symbolising his Atmanirbhar

- This is the first dedicated PSLV commercial mission for NSIL, which is undertaking it under a commercial arrangement with Seattle-based firm Spaceflight
- The 18 'co-passengers' include four of IN-SPACE and 14 of ISRO's commercial arm, NewSpace India (NSIL)

- Sunday's launch was originally scheduled to carry 20 satellites besides Amazonia-1. Two of them were cancelled in the past week or so due to technical reasons



initiative and Space privatisation. An e-copy of the Bhagavad Gita, saved on an SD-card, is also part of the package, Space Kidz has said. SKI said besides the picture of Modi, it was also sending 25,000 names on-board the SD-SAT.

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The ISRO is lining up its geo-im-

aging satellite GISAT-1 next. This launch, using a GSLV-F10 rocket, was originally planned for March 5 last year, but was postponed a day before blast-off. The 2,268 kg GISAT-1 is the first state-of-the-art agile earth observation satellite which will be placed in a Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit by GSLV-F10, according to ISRO officials.

Earlier, at the end of the 25.5 hour countdown, the four-stage 44.4 metre tall PSLV, a workhorse launch vehicle of ISRO in its 53rd mission, soared into clear a sky at the scheduled time of 10.24 am from the first launch pad here, over 100 kms from Chennai.



KIM, KANYE'S DIVORCE PAPERS REVEAL DETAILS

Socialite Kim Kardashian and rapper Kanye West's divorce papers cited "Irreconcilable differences" as the reason to end the marriage. It also revealed that Kim has filed for the physical custody of their four children.

'IT IS IMPORTANT NOT TO BE INTIMIDATED IN HOLLYWOOD'

Actress Zendaya feels it is important not to be intimidated in Hollywood. "I think it's important not to be intimidated. We're sometimes made out to be difficult or hard to work with, but we are just doing what everyone else is doing," she said.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES

You feel lost and thoroughly depressed today. This will make you turn towards spirituality, says Ganesha. You will devote more time to meditation and will pray a lot. Despite the adverse circumstances, Ganesha says you will make a good deal of material headway.

TAURUS

Luck is a four-leaf clover in your pocket. You might get the long desired success in education related matters today – a favourable result of a competitive examination, maybe. You will proudly smile at your power of resilience and sense of proportion, says Ganesha.

GEMINI

You are on your way to falling in love. Your parents or children are likely to fetch you substantial gains, financially or otherwise. You may want to make a few changes at work, probably a new business strategy.

CANCER

Financially, you may be in a bit of a bother today. Payment of bills, taxes and loans may keep you busy for most part of the day. You may even contemplate borrowing money to meet the demands. However, you are likely to receive one of your pending payments, which will be enough to get you out of the fix.

LEO

Today, Ganesha advises you to keep the Bhagavad Gita's verses in mind, and persist in fulfilling your duties without bothering about the fruits of your labour. Put in some extra effort to finish off whatever you undertake today.

VIRGO

Matters of religion and spirituality rise to the fore today. Throw yourself into a single-minded pursuit to be successful in your chosen field, and make the most of your skills and natural talent, says Ganesha.

LIBRA

The clock ticks on, but chances are it can hardly beat you in the race, thanks to your prompt and sincere efforts. Today, you shall be a paragon of excellence. However, Ganesha waves the red flag of caution: it always pays to be safe rather than sorry.

SCORPIO

It is likely that you shall learn an important lesson in life today. Remember that spite and envy beget enemies. Ganesha advises you to display some errors so as to make you seem more human and approachable.

SAGITTARIUS

Today, arranging meetings with customers and suppliers will eat into most of your time. Your patience will enable you to listen to suggestions and opinions offered by people. The result of all this, however, is slated to be most favourable and productive.

CAPRICORN

You have always been generous by nature, but your benevolent attitude will do you no good, warns Ganesha. People will try, almost blatantly, to take advantage of you, and for once, you will feel that being crafty and unrelenting would have helped keep those blood-sucking leeches at bay.

AQUARIUS

Today, you work hard and party harder! The morning sees you sweating it out at work, as you do your best to implement your plans. In the evening, you will don your best attire and get ready to have a gala time with your beloved.

PISCES

For you, today may all be work and no play, says Ganesha. This, however, will not stop you from putting in extra efforts to finish your pending projects and to meet your deadlines. But then who else but a Pisces is known to handle the pain nonchalantly without bemoaning the lack of pleasure?



Big B undergoes cataract surgery

Mumbai: Although there has been no official confirmation, unconfirmed reports have stated that iconic actor Amitabh Bachchan has undergone cataract surgery. The reports add that the star will be back home in 24 hours.

"It was nothing, just a cataract surgery. Amitabh Bachchan will be home in the next 24 hours," a source close to the actor revealed, according to the entertainment portal Bollywood Hungama.

The veteran actor wrote about going in for surgery on his blog on Saturday night.

"Medical condition .. surgery .. can't write," wrote the 78-year-old actor.

However, he did not elaborate on the medical condition or talk about the procedure which he was to undergo. Worried fans took to social media to wish the actor a quick recovery.

Last year, Big B had been admitted to hospital after contracting Covid-19, along with son Abhishek, daughter-in-law Aishwarya, and grand-daughter Aaradhya. The actor's office is yet to officially confirm details.

Big B recently hosted season 12 of the quiz show *Kaun Banega Crorepati*. **IANS**

'Streaming platforms are next big thing'



Mumbai: Actress Nauheed Cyrusi, who has been a part of the films such as *Qurban* and *Shirin Farhad Ki Toh Nikal Padi* as well as TV show *Hip Hip Hurray*, has made her debut on the web with the series *Dev DD 2*.

The *Piya Basanti Re* actress essays the role of a reporter on the show.

This is her first project since the lockdown and Nauheed says that she is very excited about it. "This is my OTT platform debut. I was also shooting after a really long time. It felt so good to get back to work and get in front of the camera. Especially knowing that OTT platforms are going to be the next big thing in the entertainment industry," she says.

The second season of *Dev DD* also stars Asheema Vardaan, Sanjay Suri and Aman Uppal and airs on ALTBalaji and ZEE5 platforms. **IANS**

Khatija speaks on actors' exploitation

Mumbai: Actress Khatija Iqbal, who will soon be seen in the third season of web series *Inside Edge* feels that actors often get stereotyped because makers don't explore an actor's talent, resulting in stereotyping of artists.

The actress feels strongly about issues of exploitation, stereotypes and growth of artists.

She says, "I feel it (stereotyping) comes from lack of knowledge and the ability to actually invest time into exploring actors and their potentials.

Give them a chance to at least test for different parts and see the newness they are bringing to the table. Only when someone gets a platform, he/she can showcase what more he/she can offer."

The other thing that the *Ragini MMS* Web series actress points out is how actors, especially newcomers and extras are being treated by some production houses.

"Supporting actors are being called on sets and to sit for hours and hours just for a suggestive few seconds take. I have seen how tired they get, all sleep deprived but focused on their dreams," adds Khatija. **IANS**



No filter in Rakhi's heart or mouth

Mumbai: Rakhi Sawant has never minced words, in life real or reel. As the recently-concluded *Bigg Boss 14* proved again, she utters whatever comes to her mind without trepidation.

"I am very upfront. Whatever comes to my mind or my heart I just say it. There is no filter in my heart or my mouth," Rakhi said.

Rakhi, who gained popularity courtesy her dance numbers such as *Pardesiya*, *Jhagde* and *Dekhta hai tu kya*, reached the top five in the grand finale of *Bigg Boss 14* after entering the show mid-season as a challenger. She was brought in to create some fireworks in an otherwise boring season, and she did live up to her tag of being a drama queen.

Finally, she chose to walk out of the show in the finale by accepting a briefcase containing Rs 14 lakh.

Rakhi's mother Jaya is currently undergoing cancer treatment in a city hospital. **IANS**



City celebs honoured with 'Charan Sparsh' awards



Veteran actress Isha Bhabra being felicitated on the occasion

BHUBANESWAR: Kanyaa Anmol Hai (KAH), a leading social organisation known for its work on protecting girl children, Sunday felicitated four eminent personalities of the city with 'Charan Sparsh' award 2021. The award is given every year to a few celebrities from various spheres of the society.

The personalities who received the award this year included veteran actress Isha Bhabra, poet Manorama Biswal Mahapatra, sculptor

Raghunath Mahapatra and art director Sangram Maharana.

This sort of felicitation will certainly inspire the awardees to set bigger goals in their respective fields, said sculptor Mahapatra.

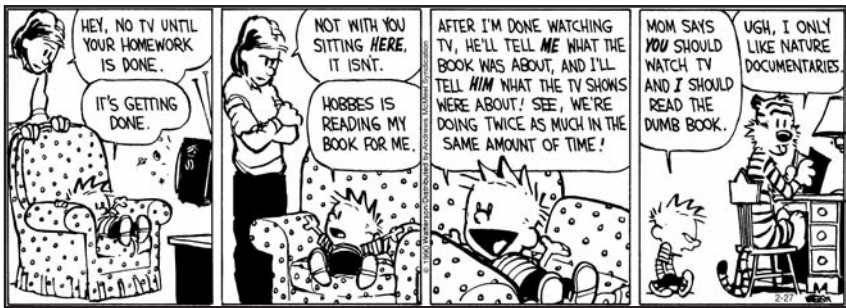
KAH's national convener Saroj Dash said that the main objective behind the award show is to celebrate the life, work and legacy of living legends of Odisha who have inspired generations through their achievements.

FUN post

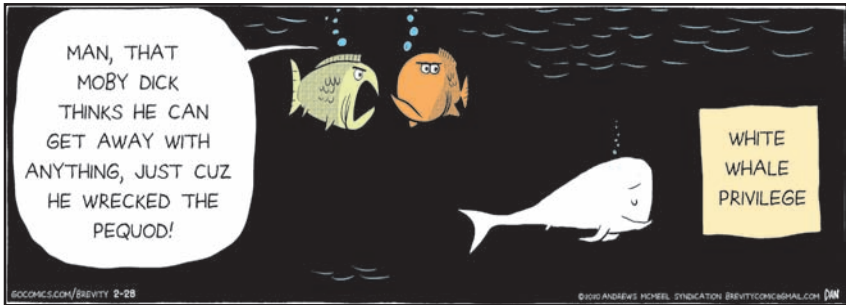
PEANUTS



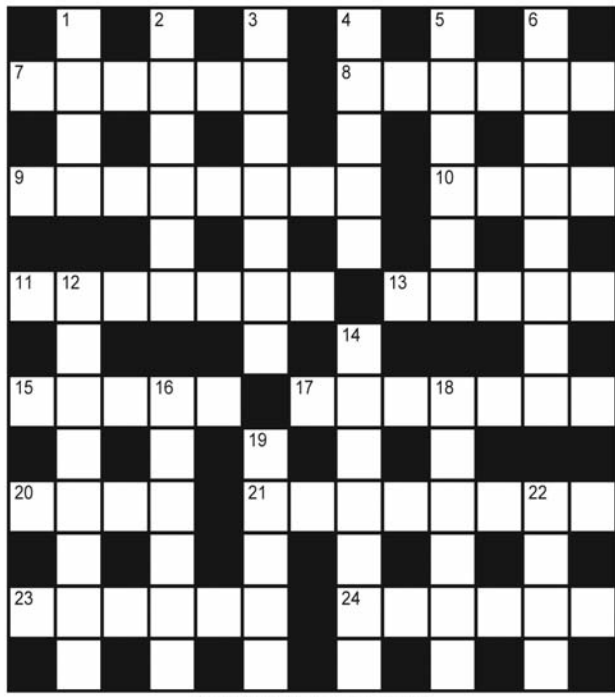
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



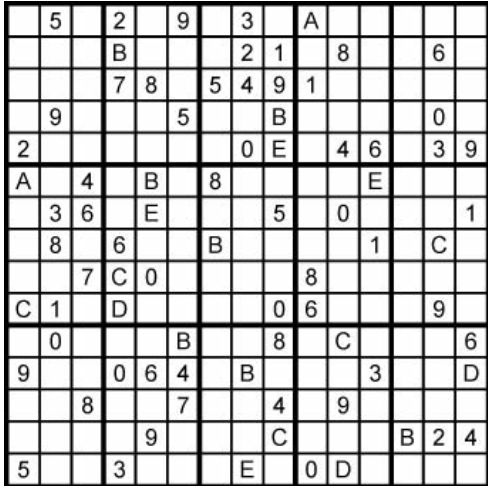
CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 7 Some like it hot
 - 8 Ballet company
 - 9 Kennel
 - 10 Cookbook direction
 - 11 Affluent
 - 13 Dish
 - 15 Pile up
 - 17 Gambling game
 - 20 "Tosca" tune
 - 21 Promised land
 - 23 Heavy overcoat
 - 24 Peers
 - 26 Maps
- Down**
- 1 Goose egg
 - 2 Deadly
 - 3 Detectives
 - 4 Have the helm
 - 5 Tidbit
 - 6 Short distance runner
 - 12 Completely
 - 14 Excursion
 - 16 Maps
 - 18 Ennui
 - 19 Not together
 - 22 Peddle

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD



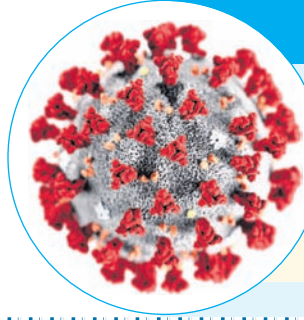
SUDOKU

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



ART EXPO

Women visit an art exhibition at CDA Sector-2 Sati Nagar in Cuttack, Sunday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	11,44,97,002	9,00,26,088	25,39,514
India	1,10,63,140	1,07,48,907	1,56,863
Odisha	3,37,191	3,34,571	1,916

Staff crunch, poor infra ail food safety exercise

STATE DOESN'T HAVE A SINGLE FULL TIME DESIGNATED OFFICER, SHOWS DATA

MANISH KUMAR, OP

Bhubaneswar, Feb 28: Staff crunch in the state Food Safety department exacerbated with lack of necessary infrastructure seems to be taking a big toll on public health in the state as many unregulated erring food outlets go undetected.

Data collected by this correspondent revealed that there has been a massive shortage of staff in the department, carved out of the state public health department eight years ago. It was to monitor the issues of food safety. Notwithstanding the central Food Safety and Standards Act of 2006 which talked about creation of several posts to regulate the food safety issues, the state government is yet to come onboard for the same.

Government data claimed that the state does not have a single full-time designated officer who could be entrusted with the task of monitoring the food safety works as per the act.

The act empowers the designated officers to issue or cancel licences of food business operators, prohibit sale of adulterated food items, recommend food safety commissioner to launch prosecutions in cases where imprisonment of the erring persons are needed. Such posts are now handled as additional charges by officials of the health department.

Districts like Koraput do not have full-time Food Safety Officers (FSO) who play key role in ground works of inspection and raids. The state now has 30 FSOs while it has plans to expand



The Police Sunday destroyed huge quantities of adulterated ghee and sauce seized from a manufacturing unit at Choudwar September 14, last year

STAFF CRUNCH IN FOOD SAFETY DEPT		
POSTS	IDEAL	CURRENT POSITION
Designated Officers	37	No full-time designated officers
Food Safety Officers	105	Only 30 posts filled
Deputy Director	1	Vacant
Analytical Chemist	5	All 5 posts vacant
Senior Lab Assistant	2	1 post vacant
Junior Lab Assistant	3	All posts vacant

FOOD SAFETY PART-2

the capacity in the future. Moreover, the state also has a lone government food testing lab in Bhubaneswar and lone food analyst. Several of the food testing equipment are also said to be outdated which fail to detect several types of new adulter-

ation and items like virus, heavy metals and others. The Food Safety department, however, said that the exercise to fill up the posts would soon be taken up. "We're taking steps to fill up the vacancies. Now, we're planning to have 105 FSOs and also steps are taken to have full-time designated officers. We've also collaborated with a private lab

FOOD TESTING IN ODISHA		
YEAR	SAMPLES ANALYSED	SAMPLES FOUND ADULTERATED/MISBRANDED
2016-17	508	75
2017-18	229	54
2018-19	327	91
2019-20	702	73

for food testing and now four more government food testing centres will come up in the state soon," Dr Pradipt Mohapatra, Director, Food Safety department told **Orissa POST**.

Experts on food toxicology, however, claimed that most of the state governments hardly give adequate importance to food safety. Amit Khurana, Programme Director (Food Safety and Toxins) at the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), New Delhi told **Orissa POST** that not only enforcements are often less in adulteration cases, the infrastructure in food testing labs in states also lag behind. "There are several new types of adulteration where pesticides, antibiotics and high-end adulterants are added in food and beverages which can't be traced with conventional food testing equipment. They keep penetrating into the food items which people keep on consuming without detection," he said.

"There are provisions of recalling erring brands. But hardly any state has dared to recall a brand or set deterrence by strong legal actions which created less deterrence for the food adulterators," he added.

'Foresight of our CM, helped the state a lot'

I tried to do my best to lessen the pain and sufferings of the people associated with us in different businesses during the pandemic



After the spread of Covid-19 in China, our business associates warned about this taking a pandemic form. I cautioned all the prawn farmers associated with us well in time about the disruption the pandemic would cause to farming and alerted them about the dangers it could bring to their lives. Taking all precautions and maintaining safety protocols, I continued managing the affairs of our business. Courage overtook fear as several lives and livelihoods had to be protected. I tried to do my best to lessen the pain and sufferings of the people involved and associated with us in different businesses during the pandemic.

Thanks to the foresight of Chief Minister of Odisha, the state was ahead of the country in clamping lockdown. The state also tackled the issue arising out of the pandemic successfully. This was only possible with the dynamic management of our Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik along with his team. Though relaxation was given to our industry for operation during the lockdown, yet these instructions could not percolate down to the grass-root level

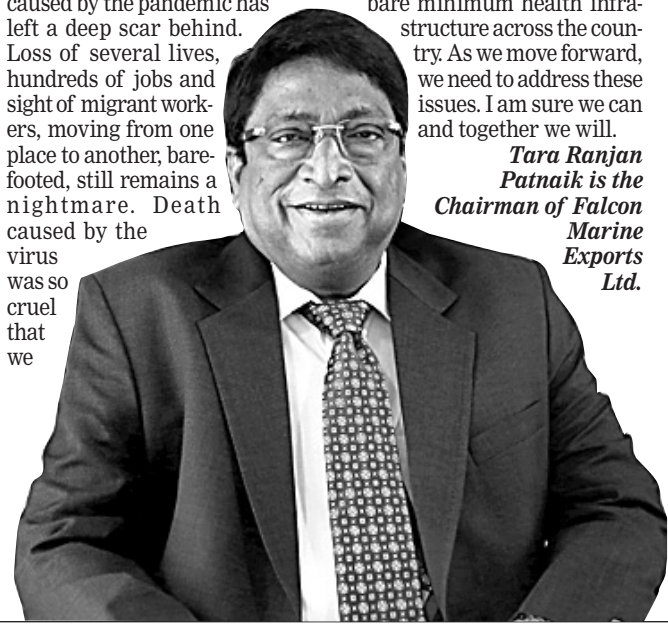
fully. Businesses faced huge losses due to the displacement of manpower and logistics. Personal mobility remained a major concern during the lockdown. Restoration of supply chain took longer time than expected. Certain losses were inevitable but some are irreparable.

The situation is gradually normalising now though the injury caused by the pandemic has left a deep scar behind. Loss of several lives, hundreds of jobs and sight of migrant workers, moving from one place to another, barefooted, still remains a nightmare. Death caused by the virus was so cruel that we

could not bid a decent farewell to the deceased. Hope none see it again in their lifetime.

This pandemic has left behind a few questions like overcrowding and high pollution level in big cities, lack of employment opportunities in rural areas and bare minimum health infrastructure across the country. As we move forward, we need to address these issues. I am sure we can and together we will.

Tara Ranjan Patnaik is the Chairman of Falcon Marine Exports Ltd.



IIT-Bhub congratulates ISRO scientists on PSLV-C51 launch

The IIT celebrated National Science Day and 11th Research Scholars' Day of the institute, Sunday

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 28: The Indian Institute of Technology, Bhubaneswar observed the National Science Day here, Sunday. The IIT also celebrated the day as the Research Scholars' Day of the institute. It was the 11th Research Scholars' Day of the institute.

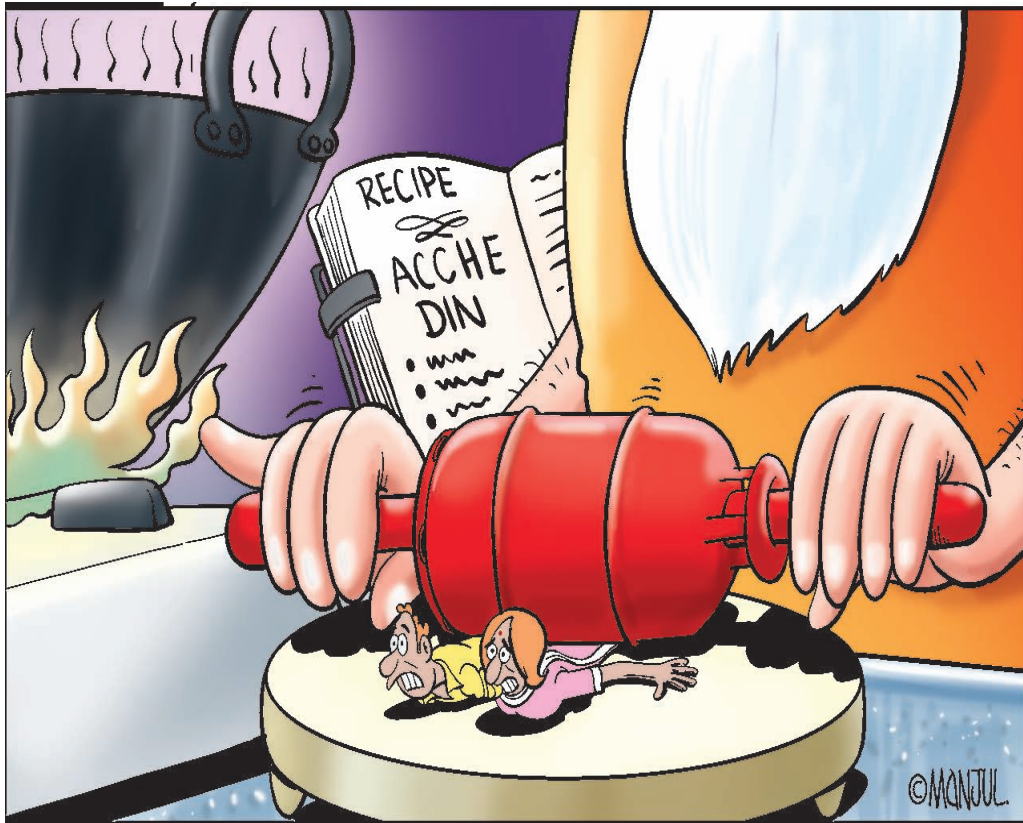
It may be mentioned here that the National Science Day is observed to honour the invention of the Raman Effect by the Indian physicist and Nobel Laureate Sir CV Raman.

On the eve of the Research Scholars' Day, the institute conducts a poster presentation competition among the research scholars and awards prizes to best posters. This year, the competition was conducted Saturday with the inauguration by Prof. R.V. Rajakumar, Director. The Chief Guest of the National Science Day event was

Prof. Ashok Kumar Mahapatra, Former Director, AIIMS Bhubaneswar and Current Vice Chancellor, SOA University, Bhubaneswar. The event was presided over by the Director Prof. R.V. Raja Kumar.

Prof. R.V. Rajakumar, Director, IIT-Bhubaneswar, emphasised on the contribution of science and technology in bettering human life. On this occasion, he complimented the ISRO scientists for the commercial launch of satellites through PSLV C-51 paving the doors in to the new era of use of Indian space science for other nations. He said that the poster presentation by the research scholars of IIT Bhubaneswar provides a sample overview of the breadth of the research being conducted at the institute. He mentioned about IIT, Bhubaneswar being honoured with the University of Year Award' at FICCI in its 13th year of its existence.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



CPI(M) protests fuel price hike in Capital

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 28: Members of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) Sunday held a demonstration in the state capital here to protest against the fuel price hike.

The agitators accused the Union government of adding to the woes of the middle class by hiking the prices of petrol, diesel and cooking gas frequently.

The Left party activists raised slogans against the Union government and blamed Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan for passing the buck to the common people.

"The skyrocketing prices of diesel, petrol and cooking gas have affected several sectors of the economy. As a result, prices for all es-

sential commodities have gone up. The living conditions of people have been affected by the fuel price hike. We organised the protest seeking complete repeal of the hike in oil prices," said state CPM unit secretary Suresh Panigrahi.

The skyrocketing prices of diesel, petrol and cooking gas have affected several sectors of the economy. As a result, prices for all essential commodities have gone up. The living conditions of people have been affected by the fuel price hike

SURESH PANIGRAHI | STATE CPM UNIT SECY

He also added, "While the price of crude oil is steadily declining in the international market, there is no reason for the rise in fuel price in the country.

The Narendra Modi government at the Centre is imposing taxes on the oil products. The government's oil policy is against the interests of the people."

The agitators blamed the government for complex taxation process and withdrawal of subsidies.

Women attempts suicide in City PS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 28: In a shocking incident, a woman Sunday attempted suicide inside Balipatna police station premises here over the news regarding the marriage of her alleged boyfriend. The victim lady was undergoing treatment at the Capital Hospital.

According to sources, the lady along with her parents came to the police station to lodge a complaint against her boyfriend, Gopala Behera Sunday morning. While her parents were seeking the help of police, she suddenly went outside and started drinking poison from a bottle kept in her bag.

She was immediately rushed to the nearest Primary Health Centre where the doctors later referred her to Capital Hospital. She had been admitted to the Intensive Care Unit of the hospital.

Notably, police had earlier arrested Behera over the allegations of sexual abuse in connection with a complaint lodged by the lady last year. Both the families have been at loggerheads over the issue since long. The lady has been under severe mental pressure over the news regarding the marriage of Behera to another girl.

Expos, webinars mark National Science Day celebrations

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 28: The Regional Science Centre (RSC) here in association with the Odisha Chapter of National Academy of Sciences hosted a series of webinars and exhibitions to celebrate the National Science Day (NSD), Sunday.

RSC project coordinator Somen Ghosh said that the theme for this year's NSD was 'Future of STI: Impacts on Education, Skills, and Work'. "The NSD 2021 aims at motivating the students to gain hands-on experience in the field of science. And RSC, Bhubaneswar is hosting a series of activities to serve the purpose," Ghosh added.

An exhibition on 'Simple Camera', which was inaugurated by former head of department of Physics, Regional Institute of Education (NCERT) on RSC premises, was one of the major attractions of the day. The expo witnessed many experiments, especially on optics.

Over 100 students and teachers from across the country took part in the webinars on different topics related to science.

A session on 'Biotechnology: Building India as an innovation nation' was presented by Nivedita Jena, Chief Operating Officer Bio-incubator, Institute of Life Sciences.

The Odisha Geo-Spatial Data Centre also hosted an exhibition



to mark the NSD 2021 at Survey Bhawan here, Sunday.

The expo is an effort to inculcate map awareness and usage of geo

spatial data in different fields of development. "The exhibition focussed on the latest technology being adopted in the field of survey



Snapshots from the exhibition

OP PHOTOS

engineering, digital map making, satellite image processing, application of global positioning system and geographic information system," said a senior official who

attended the exhibition.

G Varuna Kumar, director of Odisha Geo-Spatial Data Centre, said that the exhibition aimed at making students and public in gen-

eral aware about the job of Survey of India and help make them realise the importance of Geo-Spatial Data Centre.

According to Kumar, Survey of India dedicates itself to the advancement of theory, practice, collection and applications of geospatial data, and promotes an active exchange of information, ideas, and technological innovations amongst the data producers and users who will get access to such data of highest possible resolution at an affordable cost in the near real-time environment.

Notably, NSD is celebrated February 28 every year to honour the discovery of the 'Raman effect' by noted physicist Sir CV Raman back in 1928. For this discovery, Sir CV Raman was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1930.

Malkangiri’s counter to Andhra’s encroachment bid

The dist edu dept admits 14 children of Chitrakonda Swabhiman Anchal of Malkangiri district to Badapada residential school

POST NEWS NETWORK

Chitrakonda, Feb 28: In an attempt to deflect the attention of neighbouring Andhra Pradesh from grabbing land belonging to Odisha, the district education department admitted 14 children of Chitrakonda Swabhiman Anchal of Malkangiri district at Badapada residential school, Saturday.

The children including six girls are natives of Jumadanga village under Dhuliputa panchayat of Swabhiman Anchal. Andhra Pradesh is reportedly trying to wrest the villages in the Swabhiman Anchal of the state.

The development comes after the block education officer (BEO) Gayatri Devi visited the village and interacted with the villagers regarding their problems. The BEO during the visit assured the villagers that arrangements will be done for the education of the children.

Accordingly, the BEO accompanied by the officials arrived at



THE VILLAGERS HAD INFORMED THE ADMIN THAT THEIR CHILDREN WERE FORCED TO STUDY IN TELUGU SCHOOLS AS THERE WERE NO EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN THE VILLAGE

THE VISITING OFFICIALS TOOK THE MATTER SERIOUSLY AND ADMITTED THE CHILDREN IN THE RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

the village Saturday and admitted 14 children including eight boys and six girls in the Badapada residential school. The children during their admission were given books, copies, uniform and shoes free of cost.

As a result, the children will not have to go anymore to Telugu

medium school. They can now study in their own mother tongue in the residential school where they have been admitted, the BEO said while speaking to media persons.

Reports said that the Andhra Pradesh government is trying to claim Jumadanga village as its

own territory. So it is luring the villagers with various development plans and offerings. The village is on the fringes of Malkangiri district and Andhra Pradesh.

Andhra Pradesh is also going ahead in implementing the development plans in the area despite being illegal. The neighbouring

state recently conducted panchayat elections in the area when its officials and candidates pleaded with the voters to participate in the election by making attractive promises to get their votes.

On being informed, the district officials accompanied by the BEO visited the village and held discussions with the villagers about their various problems. The villagers talked about their problems while stating their children are being forced to study in the Telugu school as there are no educational institutions in the village.

The visiting officials took the matter seriously and admitted the children in the residential school. ABEO Anjan Choudhury, CRCC Pitambar Khara, former CRCC Nitai Ray accompanied the BEO during their visit to the village. Villagers Nagesh Khil, Sitaram Hantal, Ram Hantal participated in the meeting with the officials on behalf of the residents.

Skill development on agri machinery and apiculture

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 28: The Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), Khurda, Saturday inaugurated two skill development training programmes of five days each on 'Agricultural Farm Machinery Operation' and 'Rural Income Generation Through Honey Bee Cultivation'.

KVK scientist S Singh coordinated the farm machinery operation training for the skill development of the tribal youths while scientist Sukanti Behera coordinated the honey bee rearing training for empowerment of rural women in Khurda district.

While inaugurating the programmes, ICAR-Central Institute of Freshwater Aquaculture (CIFA) Director SK Swain appreciated the initiatives and assured the participants of all technical support from the KVK and ICAR-CIFA. He praised

the efforts made by KVK-Khurda in helping the farmers for adopting advanced agricultural technologies for their socio-economic development.

Being the course director of the programmes, KVK-Khurda chief SS Giri highlighted the objectives and scope of the capacity building training programmes in empowering rural women and youths for strengthening livelihood and self-employment.

He mentioned that the expertise of ICAR-CIFA scientists, state agriculture university, line-departments of the state government, progressive farmers and entrepreneurs will be drawn for providing training and exposure visits to the participants.

A total of 20 rural women and tribal youths participated in these two five-day duration residential training programmes.

Forestry students’ demo enters 7th day

The students Sunday sold puffed rice and mixture as part of their stir



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 28: The students of College of Forestry at OUAH here Sunday sold puffed rice and mixture on the university road as part of their agitation urging the state government to make 4-year BSc degree in

Forestry as minimum qualification for recruitment to key posts like forest range officer, assistant conservator of forests, assistant manager of Odisha Forest Development Corporation (OFDC) and junior manager of OFDC.

"Our agitation reached its seventh day Sunday. We will con-

tinue our agitation till the fulfillment of our demands," said a Forestry student. The agitating students had earlier swept a road, polished shows and begged on the street to seek the state government's attention to their demand.

The agitating students had also met Forest and Environment Minister Bikarm Keshari Arukha to put forth their demand. The minister reportedly assured the students of taking up the issue with departmental officials. However, the students decided to continue with their agitation until their demand is met.

Several leaders including Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) president Niranjan Patnaik extended his support to the agitating students and asked Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik to accept their demand.

Classes must be over before noon: Cong

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 28: The Congress party Sunday opposed the state government's plan to continue classes at schools post noon in the wake of rising mercury level.

Congress leader Santosh Singh Saluja Sunday said that the classes should start by 6:30 am in the morning and end before the noon.

He expressed concern that the school kids may suffer illness due to the scorching sun and demanded the withdrawal of the state government's plan to continue classes till 1 pm.

The classes must start from 6 or 6:30am everyday and end by 11 or 11:30am. The mercury level is rising day-by-day. If any kid falls ill due to sunstroke, then the School and Mass Education minister should be held liable for the same

SANTOSH SINGH SALUJA | CONG LEADER

"The state government has announced rescheduling the classes but that is not good enough. The classes must start from 6 or 6:30am

everyday and end by 11 or 11:30am. The mercury level is rising day-by-day. If any kid falls ill due to sunstroke, then the School and Mass Education (S&ME) minister should be held liable for the same," Saluja said.

The State School and Mass Education department had earlier planned to hold classroom teaching for Class IX and XI students from 7am to 9am instead of their earlier timing of 8:30am to 10am. At the same time for the students of Class X and XII, the department had planned to conduct classes from 9am to 1pm instead of 11am to 4pm.

We are committed to development of Puri, says Pradhan

The minister was greeted with black flags by Youth Congress activists over the skyrocketing fuel prices

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 28: Union Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Dharmendra Pradhan Sunday said that the Union government under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi is committed towards the development of Puri.

He said that the PM has allocated Rs 175 crore for several developmental projects in Puri. The minister inaugurated several developmental projects worth Rs 1.5 crore undertaken under the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds of GAIL Gas Limited and Moel Limited.



The minister also said that the petroleum ministry is planning to invest Rs 27 crore (CSR funds) for the development of the city. The minister Sunday inaugurated a Kalyan Mandap and community centre at Jhadeswari Club in the city.

Meanwhile, the minister was shown black flags by the youth Congress leaders on his way to Puri. The youth Congress leaders were protesting against the skyrocketing fuel prices.

Vax registration for elderly from today

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 28: The Health department is all set to roll out the third phase of vaccination meant for senior citizens as the registration for the segment is set to open from Monday.

Health and Family Welfare director Bijoy Panigrahi Sunday told

the media about the preparedness and also talked about the process of registration.

"We'll start the registration and vaccination drive for the senior citizens from Monday. The persons will need to do the self registration on the COWIN website/application. They'll need to feed in an OTP after they give their mobile

number," he said.

He also said that they would also be asked about their age, gender, medical condition and others while registration. Post entry, they will get an acknowledgment. "After that they can choose where they want to get vaccinated. An appointment letter will be issued to them which can be used at the vaccination centre," he said.

Man impregnates minor, terminates pregnancy, arrested

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kuchinda, Feb 28: Police Saturday arrested a man from Kuchinda area of Sambalpur district for impregnating a minor girl and subsequently forcing her to undergo abortion. Two others who assisted him have also been arrested.

According to police, Vijay Prasad, a native of SRIT Colony in Sambalpur, lived in a rented house at Padripada of Ward No-7 under Kuchinda NAC. During his stay, he developed proximity with a minor girl there. Promising marriage, he allegedly established physical relationship with her.

Later, after realising that she was pregnant, the minor asked Vijay to marry her. In order to get rid of her, Vijay devised a plan and took her to Hirakud on a trip. There he secretly laced her food with pregnancy-terminating medicines and forced her to eat it. Upon return, he dropped her at Kuchinda.

Instead of going to her own house, the victim went to her friend's house fearing abuse. Her

friend's mother Sujata Pradhan assured the minor that she would do something to get Vijay and the victim married.

After Vijay's arrest, it came to fore that the woman had taken Rs 10,000 from the accused to help him out of the situation. The victim, however, sensed the plot and managed to escape from her friend's house. She confided about the developments to a woman who owns a tailoring shop.

With the help of a social organisation, a report against Vijay was filed at Kuchinda police station. On basis of the report, the police registered a case (No-44/21) under Sections 376 (2M), 376 (3), 313 and 506 of IPC and arrested Sujata, Vijay Prasad and Rajin Pradhan. After getting their medical tests done at Kuchinda government hospital, they were produced in a local court and remanded to judicial custody as their bail pleas were rejected.

The victim has been sent to Sambalpur for a medical test, it was learnt.

Man arrested for sending obscene video to woman

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, Feb 28: Police arrested a youth leader of a political party on charge of sending an obscene video to a woman through a fake Facebook ID in Silk City, Sunday.

The accused was identified as Sibaram Jena, 29, of Ankarada village under Digapahandi police limits in Ganjam district. Cyber police station IIC Kalpana Kaunri said. A mobile phone was seized from his possession. He was produced in court which remanded him to judicial custody.

During verification of his mobile phone, the accused was found to have sent several obscene videos to over 50 women, the IIC said.

Police said Jena had opened a fake Facebook ID through which he sent an obscene video to a woman in Messenger page, pleading for physical relationship. Despite opposition from the woman, the youth still kept on sending obscene videos to her. Finally, the woman finally lodged a complaint against Jena at the Cyber police station. Police registered a case and arrested Jena after an investigation.

RESPECT FOR MADHU BABU



Dignitaries including Orissa High Court Justice Sanju Panda and Cuttack District Judge Raj Kumar Sahu unveil the statue of Utkal Gourab Madhusudan Das on the premises of criminal courts bar association in the Silver City, Sunday

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Covid surge forces VSSUT shutdown

DISTRICT ADMIN HAS DECLARED 11 HOSTELS AS CONTAINMENT ZONES

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, Feb 28: With 29 students testing positive for COVID-19, Sambalpur district administration Sunday shut down Veer Surendra Sai University of Technology (VSSUT) in Burla until further orders.

In view of the increase in the COVID-19 infection cases, the district administration declared 11 hostels on the varsity premises as containment zones Sunday.

Collector-in-charge Sukant Kumar Tripathy issued a notification in this regard. People have been prohibited from either entering or going out of the campus.

Police, health officials and staff of the Sambalpur Municipal Corporation have set up a camp near the Pulah hostel.

In addition to VSSUT, several other areas with positive cases were also declared as containment and buffer zones to tackle any probable spread of the deadly virus, an official source informed.



MATTER OF CONCERN

People have been prohibited from either entering or going out of the university campus. Police, health officials and staff of the Sambalpur Municipal Corporation have set up a camp near the Pulah hostel of the university

Only essential services will be allowed in the containment zones. It will also be strictly ensured that there is no movement of local denizens and vehicles within the restricted areas

Sambalpur district administration will conduct contact tracing, surveillance and other clinical interventions as required. The local administration will arrange to provide medical services and supply of essential goods such as milk, medicines, vegetable as well as grocery

According to the source, only essential services will be allowed in the containment zones. It will also be strictly ensured that there is no movement of local denizens and vehicles within the restricted areas.

Sambalpur district administration will conduct contact tracing, surveillance and other clinical interventions as required. The local

administration will arrange to provide medical services and supply of essential goods such as milk, medicines, vegetable as well as grocery

going outside and coming inside, with intimation to the control room.

Vice Chancellor BB Pati said that all possible measures have been put in place to combat Covid spread. There are nearly 1,500 students lodge in VSSUT premises which are being sensitised amid prevention and security measures, he added.

Barusingh cries for development

POST NEWS NETWORK

Gumma, Feb 28: Over 70 years have passed since independence, but people of Barusigh, a village on a hilltop under Gumma block of Gajapati district, are living in misery as they are deprived of basic facilities and benefits of welfare schemes over years, a report said.

According to local residents, the village derives its name from its geographical location – in tribal dialect, Baru means hill and Sing means house. So Barusingh means hilltop house. Over generations, people of tribal communities belonging to 35 families have been living here.

“There is neither road con-

landslides make life more difficult.

Finding healthcare in the hill-top terrain is a dream. In emergency cases, pregnant women and patients are carried on cots for five km downhill till Gaiba village. From there, the patients are either taken in bus or hired vehicles to Paralakhemundi hospital.

It was learnt that the DRDA had made an attempt to lay a road in 2018-19 to the village. An amount of Rs 6,00,000 was sanctioned from the Odisha State Disaster Mitigation Fund for the road. After the cyclonic storm ‘Titli’, the condition of the road turned worse.

“The villagers has repeatedly been urging the administration to



TALE OF A HILLTOP VILLAGE

nectivity nor electricity. It seems we are leading a life in the dark. Drinking water is an issue here. If one wants to drink water then the person has to go downhill to get water from a well,” villagers said.

People usually depend on a hill stream. “In summer, finding water is a difficult proposition as the stream dries up. To get five litres of water, one has to wait for hours to collect it,” they pointed out.

In monsoon, life becomes more difficult when foot tracks in the hill become slippery. At times,

repair the road, but to no avail. After sunset, wild animals finds way into houses. So people remain indoors after sunset,” lamented villagers like Biswanth Raita, Ijikel Raita, Disa Raita and Premananda Raita. Five years ago, utility poles were pitched in the village to supply electricity. But the work has not progressed beyond that.

Sushant Kumar Acharya, an official of the energy department, said that the contractor had undertaken the electrification work in 2015, but since then he has disappeared.

Curtains down on Niyamraja fest

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhawaniapatna, Feb 28: The three-day annual Niyamraja Parva aka Niyamraja festival of Dongria and Jharnia Kondh tribes came to an end Sunday on the Niyamgiri hills which is on the fringes of Kalahandi and Rayagada districts.

Reports said that Dongria and Jharnia Kondhs, two of the primitive tribes living in Kalahandi and Rayagada districts, celebrate this festival for three days on the Niyamgiri hill under Lanjigarh block in Kalahandi district. The festival started February 26 and concluded Sunday.

The three-day festival witnessed the participation of over 8,000 tribals living in 200 villages of Kalahandi and Rayagada districts, president, Lodo Sikka of ‘Niyamgiri Suraksha Samiti’ said.



The festival known as the festival of unity has come to become an expression of self-assertion of the Dongria Kondhs that the hills are theirs and no can claim their rights on them. The festival is now an informal platform for ‘jal, jangal, zameen’ (water, forest, land) movement and to save the Niyamgiri hill from the evil eye of multinational companies, drawing participants from various states in India.

The tribals worship the Niyamgiri hill as their pre-

siding deity which they believe to be sustaining them since ages. It is a form of nature worship which hardly has any parallel anywhere.

The Dongria and Jharnia tribals earn their living by cultivating hilly crops like pigeon peas (Kandul), millet (raggi), horsegram, maize, oranges, banana, pineapples on the hill.

However, they were up in arms against the attempts by the state government tried to hand over the hill at throwaway prices

to a multinational company. They have resisted such takeovers alleging that the state government was trying to snatch away their livelihood.

The tribals have also been protesting the high-handedness and harassment by the police and CRPF jawans on the pretext combing operation against the Maoists.

The tribals conduct animal sacrifice in this festival before Niyamraja, their presiding deity as they believe this helps them get rid of all diseases and pain and in ensuring a good harvest.

This belief has taken the form of annual Niyamraja festival where Dongrias and Jharnias Kondh tribals attired in their traditional dress and weapons dance to the beating of drums and cymbals and sacrifice hens, pigeons, goats, pigs and buffalo before their deity.

FOLK CHARM



Artistes of Sambalpur Kala Kendra doing a rehearsal at GM Ground before leaving for a cultural programme to be held outside the state

OP PHOTO

Drunken warder assaults jailor, 2 others, arrested

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, Feb 28: In a bizarre incident late Saturday night, the jailor and two subordinate staff of Sambalpur Circle Jail were allegedly attacked by a warder under influence of alcohol. The accused official was identified as Ashok Thati.

According to sources, the accused warder wanted to join his duty at night in an inebriated condition. Jailor Alok Kar did not allow the official to join his night duty shift. This led to an altercation and Thati assaulted the jailor and two other employees inside the prison premises injuring them.

Some other staff of the jail caught hold of the drunken warder and immediately alerted Dhanupali police about the incident.

On being informed, Dhanupali police rushed to the spot and took the warder into custody. Police have registered a case against him in this connection and launched a probe. The warder has been detained for interrogation.

PLAN FOR CAGE FISH FARMING

Hirakud fishermen fear loss of income

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, Feb 28: The government’s plan to promote cage fish farming in Hirakud reservoir is may disastrously affect livelihood of thousands of fishermen in three western Odisha districts. Fishermen alleged that the cage fish farming is being planned in the reservoir and this will be handed over to a private company.

Addressing a presser, Gopinath Majhi of Hirakud Budi Anchal Sangram Samiti, said that the government is planning to introduce cage fish farming in reservoir which will be later handed over to the private companies.

“If this plan is put into use, then 8,810 fishermen of Bargarh, Jharsuguda and Sambalpur districts will lose their age-old livelihood,” lamented Majhi.

He pointed out that thousands of people were displaced when the dam project was executed, but till date many displaced families have not been given compensation.



“After leaving their home and hearth, scores of families found fishing a livelihood in the Hirakud reservoir. But now, the government is doing something that will take away their livelihood. Sales and purchase of fish in the local market will fall into a stalemate,” rued Majhi.

Many youths engaged in the fishing sector will be rendered jobless.

Earlier, 126 species of fishes used to be found in the reservoir; but over years, their number has come down to 15 due to pollution in the water, he said. People had lost their land for the dam and now they are going to lose their livelihood, he alleged.

BOOSTING KEONJHAR DISTRICT’S ECONOMY

Chief Secretary stresses on promotion of ecotourism

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, Feb 28: Odisha Chief Secretary Suresh Chandra Mahapatra reviewed Sunday the ongoing development works in Keonjhar during a visit to the district. He emphasised on promotion of ecotourism to boost the economy of the district.

Sources said, the Chief Secretary directed officials concerned to develop nature as well as ecotourism in Keonjhar district with active participation of local youths. Locals should be directly involved in the development process, maintenance and upkeep of nature and ecotourism sites in the district, Mahapatra said.

Mahapatra also instructed the officials to identify suitable sites for jungle safari and boating facilities as well. “Such activities while creating new employment opportunities will directly boost economic activities in the district. The local



Mahapatra also instructed the officials to identify suitable sites for jungle safari and boating facilities

community will develop a sense of belongingness with the forest and ecosystem once they get earnings from those sites,” the Chief Secretary stated.

Mahapatra reviewed the ‘ground

zero’ progress of irrigation projects, road works and national highway works in the district as well. He ordered Keonjhar district administration to chalk out plans for mega lift-irrigation projects to harness the existing irrigation potential available in the district.

The Chief Secretary also fixed deadlines for completion of projects including ongoing construction of a medical college in Keonjhar. Later in the day, he had a meeting with the district collector Ashish Thakare and other concerned officials.

3 held for duping youth

POST NEWS NETWORK

Angul, Feb 28: Three persons including a woman were Saturday arrested for duping a youth on the pretext of giving him a job in an industrial company. The accused have been identified as Ranjan Kumar Tripathy, his wife Mitali from Rajkishorepada and Ranjan Kumar Sahu from Rengali area in Angul district. The victim is a resident of Paralakhemundi in Gajapati district.

According to the police, the victim came to know from an advertisement that an industrial company was looking for suitable candidates for some of its vacant posts. He had applied for the job. The trio then contacted him, asking him to deposit Rs 52,000 towards registration fees.

Taking the bait, the youth deposited the asked amount in a given

YOUTH ASKED THE TRIO TO RETURN THE MONEY HE HAD GIVEN

bank account. However, he did not get the appointment letter as promised. Few days later, the trio again contacted him and asked him to deposit the last installment of Rs 15,000 to get the job.

As he was already frustrated, the youth asked the trio to return him the money he had given. The accused trio then asked him to deposit another Rs 2,000 to get back his money. By this time the youth was at the end of his tether. He lodged a report at the police station against the trio. Registering a case, the police launched a probe and arrested the accused.

**OFFICE OF THE
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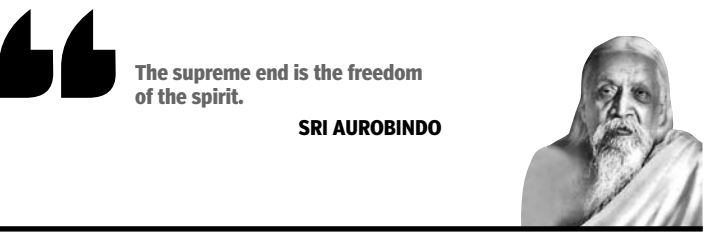
QUOTATION CALL NOTICE
Letter No.268 Dt.25.02.2021

The Executive Officer, NAC, Tusura invites sealed quotations from Authorised CAG Empanelled CA firms for Maintenance, Preparation and Audit of Books of Accounts & Financial Statement of NAC, Tusura which was newly constituted as per DEBAS through Accounts Module for the F.Y. 2015-2016 to 2020-2021 (6 yrs.) as per Odisha Municipal Accounts rules-2021 (OMAR). The sealed quotation should reach to this office as per prescribed format on or before **dt.08.03.2021 upto 5.00 P.M.** through Speed Post/Registered Post. The quotation shall open on **Dt.09.03.2021 at 4.00 P.M.** in the presence of quotationer or their authorized representative. The quotation paper will be available at NAC, Tusura from **Dt.01.03.2021 to 08.03.2021 upto 4 P.M.** during the office hours on submission of non-refundable cost of quotation paper of **Rs.600/- (Six hundred)** in shape of Cash/Bank Draft/Banker Cheque in favour of Executive Officer, NAC, Tusura. The quotationer must enclose **EMD Rs.5,000/- (Five thousand)** only in shape of Bank Draft/Banker Cheque in favour of Executive Officer, NAC, Tusura along with sealed quotation paper in due date and time, failing which quotation cannot be considered. The quotationer must have submitted experience certificate at least two year under E-Municipality Software and ascertain of opening balance of each year. The authority shall not be liable for any postal delay.

The authority reserves the right to cancel/modify the quotation without explaining any reasons thereof.

Sd/- Executive Officer, NAC, Tusura

	ZONAL OFFICE 18/1, Ainthapalli Road, Sambalpur	POSSESSION NOTICE												
<p>(Under Section 13(4) of the Securitization & Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act., 2002 read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002 for Immovable Property)</p> <p>Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorized Officer of UCO Bank under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under Section 13 (12) read with Rule 8 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002, issued Demand Notice under section 13(2) of the said Act calling upon the borrower(s), guarantor(s) to repay the amount mentioned below within 60 days from the date of the said notice.</p> <p>The borrower(s) having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower(s) and guarantor(s) and the public in general that the undersigned has taken POSSESSION of the property/ies described here-in-below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said Rules.</p> <p>The borrower(s), guarantor(s) in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property/ies and any dealings with the property/ies will be subject to the charge of the UCO Bank for the amount plus interest plus other expenses thereon.</p> <p>DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY/IES</p> <table><thead><tr><th>BRANCH / Name & Address of the Borrower(s) / Guarantor(s)</th><th>Liability due as per notice</th><th>Demand / Possession Notice Date</th><th>Description of the Property/ies</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>BARGARH BRANCH Borrower: Mr. Anil Kumar Dash, S/o: Banamali Dash / Guarantor: Mrs. Mamata Dash, W/o: Mr. Anil Kumar Dash, both are At: Flat No.: 111, 1st Floor, Block-B, Badripasad Apartment, PS/Tahasil/Dist.: Bargarh, Odisha.</td><td>₹5,37,578.00 as on 29.02.2020 + further interest & expenses thereon</td><td>22.04.2020 / 23.02.2021</td><td>All that part and parcel of the property consisting of Flat No.-111 in the name of Mr. Anil Kumar Dash at 1st Floor, Block-B, Badripasad Apartment, Mouza: Brahmachari, Ward No.: 16, PS/Tahasil/Dist.: Bargarh, Odisha.</td></tr><tr><td>KATAPALI BRANCH Borrowers: (1) Sri Kunal Panda, (2) Sri Sampat Panda, (3) Sri Sambit Panda, all are S/o: Sadhu Charan Panda / Guarantors: (1) Mr. Sadhu Charan Panda, S/o: Baikuntha Panda, (2) Mrs. Bijaya Panda, W/o: Sadhu Charan Panda, (3) Trupti Panda, D/o: Kusheswar Panda, all are At: Basant Vihar, P.O.: Jyotivihar, P.S.: Burla, Dist.: Sambalpur, Odisha.</td><td>₹33,86,977.00 as on 30.06.2020 + further interest & expenses thereon</td><td>26.08.2020 / 25.02.2021</td><td>All that part and parcel of the property consisting of land and building in the name of Mr. Kunal Panda at Mouza: Katapali, Tahasil/Dist.: Sambalpur, Khata No.: 11, Plot No.: 530(P), Area: Ac. 0.015 dec.</td></tr></tbody></table> <p>Place: Sambalpur, Date: 27.02.2021</p> <p>Sd/- Authorized Officer, UCO Bank</p>			BRANCH / Name & Address of the Borrower(s) / Guarantor(s)	Liability due as per notice	Demand / Possession Notice Date	Description of the Property/ies	BARGARH BRANCH Borrower: Mr. Anil Kumar Dash, S/o: Banamali Dash / Guarantor: Mrs. Mamata Dash, W/o: Mr. Anil Kumar Dash, both are At: Flat No.: 111, 1st Floor, Block-B, Badripasad Apartment, PS/Tahasil/Dist.: Bargarh, Odisha.	₹5,37,578.00 as on 29.02.2020 + further interest & expenses thereon	22.04.2020 / 23.02.2021	All that part and parcel of the property consisting of Flat No.-111 in the name of Mr. Anil Kumar Dash at 1st Floor, Block-B, Badripasad Apartment, Mouza: Brahmachari, Ward No.: 16, PS/Tahasil/Dist.: Bargarh, Odisha.	KATAPALI BRANCH Borrowers: (1) Sri Kunal Panda, (2) Sri Sampat Panda, (3) Sri Sambit Panda, all are S/o: Sadhu Charan Panda / Guarantors: (1) Mr. Sadhu Charan Panda, S/o: Baikuntha Panda, (2) Mrs. Bijaya Panda, W/o: Sadhu Charan Panda, (3) Trupti Panda, D/o: Kusheswar Panda, all are At: Basant Vihar, P.O.: Jyotivihar, P.S.: Burla, Dist.: Sambalpur, Odisha.	₹33,86,977.00 as on 30.06.2020 + further interest & expenses thereon	26.08.2020 / 25.02.2021	All that part and parcel of the property consisting of land and building in the name of Mr. Kunal Panda at Mouza: Katapali, Tahasil/Dist.: Sambalpur, Khata No.: 11, Plot No.: 530(P), Area: Ac. 0.015 dec.
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Wipe Out Blemish

The vitriolic criticism by some social media users, directed against additional sessions judge of a Delhi court Dharmender Rana, has surprised many. Judge Rana made certain pronouncements on the Disha Ravi toolkit case wherein he upheld the values of freedom of speech and granted her bail. The strong negative reaction against the judgement reveals the vicious form of intolerance that is getting free play when anything considered unfavorable to the central government takes place. Union Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad was rather too economical with his words when he, instead of condemning outright the sinister move to cow down even the judiciary, merely said February 27 a “disturbing trend” of activists criticizing judges for unfavourable verdicts had started.

It is well known that criticism of judgements in good faith is not only permissible but also healthy for democracy. But under no circumstances individual judges should be made targets of criticism. This is an axiom followed traditionally in all free societies. Quite correctly legal experts have demanded stringent punitive action be taken against the culprits who have criticised judge Rana.

The judge, in his order, made a series of laudable observations to buttress his ruling exonerating Disha of the draconian charge of sedition. One of these was: “The offence of sedition cannot be invoked to minister to the wounded vanity of the governments.” These were actually not his words. He was quoting the ruling of a British judge in favour of an Indian citizen against the colonial government of pre-independence India.

Everyone knows that the social media activists, who tried to vilify the judge, were not ignorant of the context nor of the author of the words. They were doing their paid job of brow beating anyone and anything that seems uncomfortable to the powers that be.

The reason for the intolerance of these apparent pro-government activists is not difficult to gauge. For some time the government has been getting judgements from most of the courts - be it the apex or subordinate courts - which have not only been extremely favourable to it, but also greatly helpful in legally sanctifying its political-social agendas. This has set such a trend that many politicians in power have boasted in public domain that the judiciary is favourable. Those boasts seem to hold water as many judgements do, indeed, seem very lopsided and grossly crossing the barriers to help the government. This triumphalism was witnessed when these leaders predicted, well before the verdict could be pronounced, that the Ayodhya Ram Janmabhoomi case would go in favour of the advocates of the construction of Ram temple at the disputed site.

Viewed in this backdrop, judge Dharmender Rana seems to have not only showed extraordinary uprightness, but also exemplary courage in upholding the rule of law without fear or favour. This happened at a time when the citizens of the country are getting disillusioned with the judiciary. One of the most disturbing development was when the last Chief Justice of India, Ranjan Gogoi, was nominated as a Rajya Sabha member by the ruling BJP soon after he retired after passing several controversial judgements that visibly assisted one particular political idea.

Judge Rana's ruling might have helped restore the people's faith in the judiciary somewhat when he ordered the release of Disha Ravi on bail with the stinging observation that the Delhi police investigation was “scanty and sketchy.” At the same time he defended the right of citizens to disagree with the government and underlined that any claim, even if false, exaggerated or even with the mischievous intent, “cannot be stigmatised being seditious unless they have a tendency to foment violence.”

His memorable words were “citizens are conscience keepers of government in any democratic nation and they cannot be put behind bars because they choose to disagree with the State policies.”

The Delhi Police had sought to link the violence in Delhi on 26 January 2021 Republic Day during the tractor rally to the toolkit case implicating Disha Ravi. The judge said there was no evidence to back the charge that there was any link between the two or that Disha had subscribed to any secessionist idea. He also found there was nothing wrong for Disha sending the Google document to Greta Thunberg. Freedom of speech and expression includes the right to seek a global audience and there are no geographical barriers on communication.

Obviously, supporters of the government found these pearls of wisdom from the judge to be unpalatable. For them, those words exposed the government's sinister attempts to go for witch-hunting against those who lent support to the farmers' agitation. The Delhi police, which is under the Union government, proceeded in the Disha Ravi case with a convicting mind without a shred of evidence as the government seemed desperate to silence attempts to get international support to the farmers' cause. However, whether by intent of the government or accident, this Disha Ravi matter did succeed in diverting the nation's attention away from the farmers' struggle to some extent.

The government could now wipe out this blemish by acting not only against the malevolent social media users but also if it would punish the involved Delhi Police officials for their dereliction of duty. It ought to act with the same alacrity it had demonstrated in arresting Disha or the manner in which it has issued a huge list of fresh new regulations to rein in social media, news websites and other internet based platforms that are refusing to toe the official line.

WISDOM CORNER

- “The way to get started is to quit talking and begin doing.” **WALT DISNEY**
- “Love and work are the cornerstones of our humanness.” **SIGMUND FREUD**
- “High expectations are the key to everything.” **SAM WALTON**

WORDSWORTH

Mastigophorous

Mastigophoros is classical Greek, derived from mastix, a whip, and -phoros, bearing or carrying. A mastigophore was an attendant or officer carrying a whip. This rare word has celebrated its 200th birthday, having been used in English in a letter from the writer and minister Samuel Parr to his close friend Charles Burney on 12 December 1812. The letter is effusive and academically humorous in the way of one scholar of the time to another, peppered with classical allusions in Latin and Greek. It may have been some mental association with Parr, who had been a schoolmaster, and Burney, who then still was, but the word was used subsequently as a jocular way to refer to a pedagogue who was over-fond of corporal punishment. Sydney Smith wrote in 1826 of a boy who was trying to look up words in his dictionary while his “mastigophorous superior” frowned over him; another writer in 1832 described how the boys of Winchester College rebelled against their “mastigophorous tyrant”; the reviewer of Sir Walter Scott's biography of John Dryden in 1842 noted that Dryden was educated at Westminster School under “the celebrated Dr Busby,” who had “mastigophorous propensities” and “who revelled in groans, and tears, and learning.” Mastigophorous, a bit of obscure academic drollery, is now as dead as dead can be, but the Greek word and its Latin successor remain in the vocabularies of zoologists. The Mastigophora are single-celled organisms that propel themselves with whip-like flagella (another Latin word, singular flagellum, a whip or scourge). The related adjective is mastigophoran.

FOCUS TAXATION

GST NOT EL DORADO



Shivaji Sarkar

IN THE TRADER CIRCLE THE GST HAS EARNED THE NICKNAME OF BST – BURDENSOME TAX

The GST or ‘one nation one tax’ is not the kind of El Dorado the country had promised to itself. The players are all unhappy – the States, traders, manufacturers, CAs and possibly even the Centre as it is burdened with all problems along with the collection and sharing of revenue and too much non-cash digitisation. In the trader circle it has earned the nickname of BST – burdensome tax.

No wonder the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) the umbrella body of over 8 crore traders belonging to more than 40,000 trade associations across the country, led the country February 26 to a ‘Bharat Vyapar Bandh’ to protest against what they sum up as the “draconian, arbitrary and critical” amendments made recently in GST rules. The All India Transporters Welfare Association (AIWA) also joined the strike on issues of “un-practicable” e-way bill and unviable pricing policy of diesel, because of high taxes on fuel.

The States are in a quandary. They agreed to the ‘one nation one tax’ subsuming their sovereignty to the GST Council as also did the Centre in 2017. The tax collection now has become complex. The Centre collects GST to distribute to States. But there are a host of VAT and other taxes that States and the Centre also levy on fuel and liquor. It does not prevent States from collecting other kinds of charges either. State specific taxes thus still continue. The larger share of taxes, that were earlier the domain of States, however, is collected by Centre. The Centre owes Rs 2.06 lakh crore to States, which is one-third of the total GST collected across the country since July 2017, the Union Finance Ministry data reveal. The pending dues are in addition to Rs 84,000 crore, which was recently released by the Centre as compensation under a special borrowing window. Since October



There is a bigger problem with opaque GST. It is stated to be skewed against the unorganised sector, and is thus annihilating jobs

2020 average monthly collections are around Rs 1 lakh crore and in January 2021 Rs 1.20 lakh crore collections surpassed the January 2020 collections of Rs 1.19 lakh crore.

Between July 2017 and February 2021, the Centre has accumulated Rs 5.43 lakh crore in GST, which should have been paid to States. Of this amount, two-third has been paid as of February 2021, says Finance Ministry data. States have been collectively given Rs 3.37 lakh crore while an amount of Rs 2.06 lakh crore is still pending for April to November 2020. It means that post-lockdown States have not been paid their share. The Centre insists that they survive on borrowings.

The interest burden would be borne by States. Most State governments were aware of the anti-federal nature of the law, but the carrot of a guaranteed 14 per cent revenue growth

bought their acquiescence. It is just not during COVID-19 that payments to States are delayed. Since August-September 2019, records show that compensation to States has never been released on time.

There is a bigger problem with opaque GST. It is stated to be skewed against the unorganised sector, and is thus annihilating jobs. It has always been an open secret that small, unorganised manufacturers and service providers in India, survive because they don't pay their full share of taxes.

So it is becoming an all-problem tax. The tax return filing is becoming a complicated and oppressive issue as rules of the game are changed without any discussion – since 2017 the rules changed 950 times and compliance is in oppressive mode. The GST return (GSTR 3B) is a monthly self-declaration to be filed by a registered dealer along

SPECTRUM ECONOMY

The case for bank privatisation



Bharat Jhunjhwal

PRIVATISATION OF PSBs IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN INVESTING HUGE AMOUNTS IN THEM TO KEEP THESE BANKS FROM COLLAPSING

The Finance Minister has announced in the Budget that two Public Sector Banks (PSBs) will be privatised. The government policy in the last three decades of economic reforms was to sell a part of the shares in PSUs including PSBs to the public while retaining the controlling share in its own hands. This is known as “disinvestment.” The secretaries of respective ministries, and more often than not, IAS officers continued to head the management of these PSUs. In contrast, the controlling shares of a PSU are sold to a private buyer in “privatization.” The management is transferred to the hands of the buyer and government interference in the affairs of the privatised company ends.

Privatisation of PSBs is important because the government has been investing huge amounts in them over the last decade to keep these banks from collapsing. This is called “capitalisation” of banks, that is, augmenting capital to compensate for the losses incurred by them. One aspect of this investment is to bring the capital of PSBs in line with international norms. The other aspect is this investment covers up the losses incurred by PSBs. More capital is required because they have incurred losses and their existing capital has been wiped off. The present policy marks a departure because the govern-

ment will be able to earn monies from privatisation of PSBs instead of having to invest more monies to keep them afloat.

The first criticism of this step is that the money earned from privatisation will be used to support increasing consumption expenditures of the government such as paying higher salaries and dearness allowance to its employees. This criticism is only partially correct. The government is expected to obtain revenue of Rs 20,000 crore from disinvestment in 2020-21. The target for 2021-22 is Rs 175,000 crore. In tandem, the capital expenditures of the government are targeted to be increased from Rs 430,000 crore in 2020-21 to Rs 554,000 crore in 2021-22. The targeted increase in receipts from privatisation is only marginally higher than the targeted increase in capital expenditures. Indeed, it would have been better if the increase in capital expenditures was more. Yet, we should appreciate the government's efforts in this direction.

The second criticism of privatisation is that the government is stepping back from its responsibilities of “welfare state.” The banks were nationalised in 1971 with the idea that private banks were not serving rural areas and poorer sections of society. They were nationalised so that they could be directed to open branches in rural areas and

provide loans to priority sectors. This objective has largely been fulfilled. PSBs are today providing services in interior areas. However, another problem has arisen. PSBs are incurring losses due to inefficiency and corruption. And, the government is investing to keep them afloat. The people are being taxed to raise money for this investment.

Truly speaking, it was not necessary to nationalise banks in order to provide banking services to rural areas. The RBI had adequate powers to direct private banks to open branches in backward areas. The government made a mistake in 1971. Private banks were nationalised instead of setting right this failure of RBI to give suitable directions to them. In the process now these nationalised banks are incurring losses. We have fallen from the frying pan into the fire. The need today is that RBI should mandate private banks to provide services in rural areas along with privatising PSBs.

The third criticism of privatisation is that private banks indulge in giving loans to sister concerns of their owners. This is correct. However, the same problem exists in PSBs. They provide loans to doubtful entities at the asking of secretaries and ministers coupled with corruption by bank officials. The large NPAs of PSBs have arisen in large measures due to such lending.

The problem of ‘bad’ lending, therefore, has no relation with the lender being a PSB or a private bank. The solution of this problem, again, is for RBI to vigilantly track lending portfolios of private banks. The RBI has indeed behaved in this manner in the Yes Bank and other cases in recent past. This proactive approach of RBI must be strengthened.

Knowledgeable sources indicate two small PSBs could be privatised initially, so to say, to test the waters. The Finance Minister should move fast and take steps to privatise major PSBs. The stock market conditions are favourable at present. Let us not forget that the efforts of the government to privatise Air India were put on the backburner, in part, because of adverse stock market conditions. The Finance Minister must use the present buoyancy in the stock market to privatise larger PSBs. That will provide much-needed revenues to meet contingencies arising out of the pandemic. The additional receipts from privatisation should be used to make public investments in new areas such as genetics, big data and space research. This will lay the foundations of our technological prowess in coming decades.

The writer is a former Professor of Economics at IIM Bangalore.

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

Readers of Orissa POST are most welcome to contribute letters (200 words), articles and columns (between 750-1250 words). Contributors are requested to send their contact numbers and full postal address/email ID. They may also send in their valuable comments, opinion and suggestions, preferably by email, to: edit@orissapost.com

OrissaPOST
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Minimum power bill

Sir, Jharkhand's minimum monthly electric bill is Rs 42. The BJP's state level functionaries recently visited the Odisha-Jharkhand border adjacent to Sukruli in Mayurbhanj district led by Samir Mohanty and found a village whose one half is in Odisha while the other half is in Jharkhand. Households in the portion that comes in Jharkhand pay a minimum electricity bill of Rs 42 per month while those living in the part that comes under Odisha pay around 24 times higher than that amount. It is amazing that the BJP is keeping silence instead of making it a major issue.

Janakiballav Dash, BARIPADA

Crucial polls ahead

Sir, The upcoming elections in West Bengal, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Pondicherry assume profound significance in Indian politics because they are happening against the backdrop of a tempestuous political environment. The future course of national and regional parties is dependent on the results of these polls. Three national-level changes will have an impact on these polls. First, the pandemic, which has impacted the lives and livelihoods of millions. Second, the government's economic reforms. The farm laws and the protests against them have political ramifications. Issues related to immigrants, CAA, NRC and the issue of Tamil rights in Sri Lanka will have an impact on the polls in Assam, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu. These elections will determine the political future of several parties. As for the BJP, it is keen to retain power in Assam, come to power in West Bengal, become a part of the ruling coalition in Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry and strengthen its presence in Kerala. For the Congress, a win in Assam and the DMK-led government's return to power, settling of old scores in Pondicherry and expansion of its presence in Bengal will enhance its status. The most important state for the party is Kerala where it is facing a do or die situation. For parties such as TMC, DMK, AIADMK, and the Left the upcoming elections are crucial for political existence. The outcome of these elections will have an impact on the federal structure as well. If BJP wins in Bengal and becomes a part of the government in TN, it will strengthen the Centre. On the other hand, the win of TMC and DMK will strengthen the voice of states.

Venu GS, KOLLAM

Protest against ‘unsustainable’ farming in western UP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Muzaffarnagar, Feb 28: The old saying that agriculture is the best occupation and working for others the worst no longer holds true, says Raj Kumar, a farmer from western Uttar Pradesh, where farmers' agitation seems to be driven more by "stagnant" sugarcane prices and the stray cattle menace, than by the three contentious agri laws.

Kumar, a Rawa Rajput from Satheri village in this district, says sugarcane prices have not been raised for the past several seasons, whereas companies have reduced the size of Urea and DAP bags, making manure costlier and agriculture "unsustainable".

Muzaffarnagar, a western Uttar Pradesh district, is not very far from Delhi which has seen its three border points turn into tent cities as farmers protesting against the three new Central agricultural laws, which open up the sector for private players, have been camping there for close to three months now.

But on the question of farm laws, Kumar says he doesn't know much about them but he has been supporting the protesting farmers as agriculture has become "unsustainable".

Echoing similar sentiments, Roshan Lal, a Saini by caste and a small-scale farmer, said more than the three farm laws, it is delay in payment for sugarcane and the rising diesel prices, along with the problem of stray cattle that have made their lives miserable.

"More than farm laws, no hike in cane prices, delay of over a year in payments of sugarcane and the



menace of stray cattle have broken our back," Lal said, standing by Kumar. "All this has forced us to raise their voices for farmers' issues."

Sohan, a Kashyap (Jhimir) by caste from Ganshampura village who owns less than one acre land and uses his crop mostly in his jaggery workshop, says until and unless sugarcane prices are increased the prices of jaggery would also remain stagnant.

Sohan said he has heard about farm laws but doesn't know much about them. He also flagged the issue of stray cattle.

All three – Ram Kumar, Roshan and Sohan – underlined the importance of sugarcane prices and timely payments to farmers and expressed limited reservations

about farm laws which is based on the information shared by farmer leaders. The opposition to these laws becomes louder and more visible as one moves towards the Jats-dominated areas in the western Uttar Pradesh. In the Shoram village, which is seen as the headquarters of Khaps (caste councils) of Jat community, a mere mention of farm laws evokes strong response.

"These laws are not only against the farmers but against the country... Those who are guarding the borders are our sons and behind their back you are trying to snatch the rights of their brothers who are into farming," said Bhupender Choudhary, a villager.

Choudhary, a middle-aged farmer, said the sentiment against the farm

laws became more pronounced after people in the region saw Bhartiya Kisan Union Leader (BKU) Rakesh Tikait crying on TV channels. Tikait, himself a Jat, hails from Sisoli village in Muzaffarnagar district.

The protest will continue till the government takes back farm laws, says Vipin Balyan, a 35-year-old farmer from the Shoram village. "The proponents of these black laws will pay heavily in coming elections."

Both Bhupender and Vipin also expressed concern about the "stagnant" sugarcane prices, delay in payments to sugarcane farmers and the havoc caused by stray cattle, saying that all these are damaging farmers economically.

However, most of the farmers

CANE CONCERN

The entire western Uttar Pradesh has been witnessing a number of Mahapanchayats organised either by khaps or farmer leaders or political parties against the farm laws

The sugarcane crop, the mainstay of the farmers in the region, is cultivated on more than 80 per cent of the arable land in the districts of western Uttar Pradesh

As per the data provided by All India Sugar Traders Association (AISTA), the Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) of Sugarcane was at ₹255 per quintal for 2017-18 season and increased to ₹285 per quintal in 2020-21 season

The Uttar Pradesh government's State Advisory Price (SAP) is fixed at ₹315 per quintal for the last four seasons from 2017-18

Agriculture experts say a farmer cultivates on an average 900 quintal of sugarcane in one hectare of land in one season which is of about nine months

The farmer spends on an average around more than ₹2 lakh per hectare including all its expenses during a season on sugarcane crop

whom the PTI spoke to in the region said they are receiving annual ₹6,000 government assistance under the PM-Kisan Samman Nidhi Scheme started by the Centre.

Eye on 2022 Assembly polls, Kejriwal woos Jats in UP



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 28: In view of the Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh slated for next year, AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal Sunday tried to woo the 'Jat' community in the western part of the state while addressing a Kisan Mahapanchayat in Meerut.

The AAP's Mahapanchayat came months after the party had announced to contest the UP Assembly polls next year. Kejriwal's address focused mainly on the ongoing farmers' protest against the three Central farm laws. The AAP convener reiterated his party's slogan calling the three farm laws as "death warrants" for the protesting farmers.

In a gesture of his party's support, the Delhi Chief Minister had torn the farm laws' documents in the Assembly in December last year, terming the laws as "death war-

rants". Amid slogans of 'Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan' and 'Kisan Ekta Jindabad', Kejriwal said that the protesting farmers have faced atrocities which were not meted out even during the British rule. He also accused the BJP of making false cases against protesters.

"Our farmers can be anything but traitors. But the BJP has called them terrorists and Khalistanis," Kejriwal said. Through his speech, he also tried to woo the villagers in the western part of UP reiterating his own line - 'at present, one son of a farmer is at the border and another at Delhi's border'.

He also accused BJP of orchestrating Republic Day violence at the Red Fort and extended his support to the protesters, claiming that AAP has provided civic and WiFi facilities at the protest sites in Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur borders, where farmers have been protesting.

Bhim Army inches closer to SP-RLD alliance in UP

Political analysts feel that the SP-RLD-Bhim Army combine could bring Muslims, Jats and Dalits on a single platform and this could upset the BJP's apple cart in region

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, Feb 28: The ongoing farmers' agitation and the changing political scenario in western Uttar Pradesh are now throwing up new political combinations, ahead of the 2022 Assembly election.

The Samajwadi Party and the Rashtriya Lok Dal alliance in the region is likely to be joined by the emerging Bhim Army's political wing - Azad Samaj Party. According to highly placed sources, channels of communication have been opened between Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav and Bhim Army chief Chandra Shekhar.

"The two leaders have spoken to each other thrice and if all goes well, western UP may see a SP-RLD-Bhim Army combine in the 2022 Assembly elections," said a source. In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, SP-RLD alliance was joined by Bahujan Samaj Party in Uttar Pradesh. Chandra Shekhar, when asked, evaded all questions about the possible alliance but said that all parties must come together to defeat the BJP which has caused irreparable damage to the state and its people, particularly weaker sec-



tions. A senior Bhim Army functionary, meanwhile, said that in the present situation in western UP, the SP-RLD-Bhim Army alliance could prove to be a winning combination. "The best thing is that Bhim Army and RLD are not in the race for the chief minister's post. Alliances break only when there are more than one claimants for the top post," he said.

Chandra Shekhar told reporters that his first priority was to contest the upcoming panchayat elections under his own banner. "We

will build up our organisation till the booth level in the panchayat elections and then decide our future course of action," he said. Political analysts feel that the SP-RLD-Bhim Army combine could bring Muslims, Jats and Dalits on a single platform and this could upset the BJP's apple cart in region. For the Samajwadi Party, this could be the much-needed shot in the arm. Akhilesh has also been looking for a formidable ally for the Assembly polls after the BSP walked out on him last year and Bhim Army fits the bill.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, Feb 28: Over 60 per cent voter turnout was recorded in the elections to Gujarat's 81 municipalities, 31 district panchayats and 231 taluka panchayats that were held in a largely peaceful manner Sunday, barring an incident of booth capturing and reports of clash as well as snags in EVMs at some places, officials said.

As per the provisional figures, voter turnout of 54.95 per cent across 81 municipalities, 62.41 per cent in 31 district panchayats, and 63.42 per cent in 231 taluka panchayat, was recorded, the State Election Commission (SEC) said.

The average voting percentage across all these local bodies together was around 60.26 per cent, it said. There was an attempt to capture a booth at Ghodiya village in Jhalod taluka of Dahod district after three persons forced their way inside and damaged two EVMs kept there. Polling was stopped after the incident that took place around 2 pm, police said. The election staff collected the damaged EVMs and said they would try to retrieve the stored data, and a decision on whether to conduct re-election will be taken by the Election Commission.

Police said that one of the three persons was held while two oth-



ers managed to escape, and attempts were on to nab them.

In another incident, some persons were injured after two groups supporting rival candidates clashed and hurled stones at each other near a polling booth in Viramgam taluka of Ahmedabad district.

Police said they brought the situation under control and rounded up a few people in this connection.

Further investigation is underway, an official said, adding that polling was not affected due to the incident.

A minor clash also broke out near a booth in Vyara municipality of Tapi district in south Gujarat, with groups representing a BJP and an independent candidate coming face to face.

COVID-19 CASES RESURGE IN GUJ

AGENCIES

Gandhinagar, Feb 28: Gujarat is once again seeing a rise in the number of coronavirus cases. The state reported 407 COVID-19 cases Sunday, taking the tally to 2,69,889, while 301 people recovered and one patient died during the day, an official said.

The state has so far seen 4,410 deaths, while the recovery count is 2,63,116, which is 97.49 per cent of the caseload, leaving the state with 2,363 active cases, of which 32 are on ventilator support, he added.

Of the new cases, Ahmedabad accounted for 108, followed by 74 in

Surat, 63 in Vadodara, and 52 in Rajkot, while Anand reported 13 cases, Kutch and Gandhinagar 11 each, Kheda 10, Mehsana and Jamnagar eight each, the official said. In the neighbouring Union territory of Daman, Diu and Dadra and Nagar Haveli, the caseload and recoveries remained unchanged on Sunday at 3,378 and 3,372 respectively, while the number of active cases was four.

Gujarat's COVID-19 figures are as follows: Positive cases 2,69,889, new cases 407, death toll 4,410, discharged 2,63,116, active cases 2,363, people tested so far - figures not released.



Can battered Cong in Gujrepeat 2015 show?

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Gandhinagar, Feb 28: From the results of the recently-held six municipal corporation elections in Gujarat, it seems the Congress will struggle to even come close to repeating its feat of winning upcoming local body elections across the state against the mighty BJP, which it managed to do in 2015.

Even before the poll campaigning began for the six municipal corporations, the Congress lost more than 200 seats in elections to various local bodies. Some seats were lost because the nominations were rejected, more were lost because the candidates themselves withdrew their papers at the eleventh hour.

While at some places candidates with the party's mandate couldn't file papers for they had been replaced at the last moment. In some such cases, those disgruntled candidates raised monetary allegations.

The results of the municipal corporations came as a big blow to the party, as it not only lost in all the elections, but fared pathetically. While the BJP improved upon



its 2015 tally of 389 seats out of total 572 to as many as 483 out of 576 this time, the Congress plummeted from 174 seats in 2015 to 55 in 2021.

The worst case was that of the Surat Municipal Corporation (SMC) elections, where the party failed to secure a single seat. While, by winning 93 seats in the 120-member SMC, the ruling BJP retained power, it was Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal-led Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), that made inroads in Gujarat politics by winning 27 seats of the SMC. Whereas, the Congress, which

had won 36 seats in 2015, could not even open its account and was left once again resorting to the blame game.

Although, the success of AAP in Surat is being clearly credited to the support its candidates received from the Patel Anamat Andolan Samiti (PAAS), an agitation body once led by Hardik Patel, demanding reservation for the Patel community. The PAAS members just prior to the elections, had severed their ties with the Congress, disagreeing over the seat sharing quota in one

I have not been consulted for a single seat selection for any of the local body elections in Gujarat. I have not even been assigned tasks by the party regarding any of the preparations for the elections. Right now, whatever rallies I am carrying out everyday for the party's good performance in these elections are entirely on my own

HARDIK PATEL | GUJARAT CONGRESS LEADER

of the SMC wards.

Surat, the Diamond City, has a sizable population of the Patidar community in certain pockets. It was particularly in one such pocket, where the imbroglio between the Congress and the PAAS transpired.

Similarly, in the Municipal Corporation elections in Rajkot, the hometown of Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani, BJP gained all of the 18 wards, except one. BJP captured 68 seats out of the total 72 seats of the RMC. While, the Congress had to be content with the

rest 4 seats. The Congress had secured 34 seats in the previous elections in 2015. In Rajkot, after BJP, it is AAP which has secured the second highest vote share.

It appears that the Congress wants to keep itself aloof from the young Patidar brigade by not giving much weightage to them in the state politics. The party did well in the previous local body elections in 2015, primarily riding the wave of the OBC reservation status demands in the Patidar community.

Working president of the Gujarat Congress Committee Hardik Patel told IANS Saturday that despite him being in a significant position in the party, he was never consulted for any of the seat selection and distribution for the local body elections.

"I have not been consulted for a single seat selection for any of the local body elections in Gujarat. I have not even been assigned tasks by the party regarding any of the preparations for the elections. Right now, whatever rallies I am carrying out everyday for the party's good performance in these elections are entirely on my own," Hardik Patel told the IANS.

of the day quote

I will request the PM and Shah to direct authorities there to cooperate with Mumbai police when they visit Dadra for investigation in Delkar's death case



UDDHAV THACKERAY | MAHARASHTRA CHIEF MINISTER

I am afraid to say this. God's own country (Kerala) is now gradually becoming fundamentalists' own country



NIRMALA SITHARAMAN | UNION FINANCE MINISTER

The farmers at the Singhu border in Delhi are fighting against the (Narendra) Modi government's anti-people policies. If farmers who provide us with food can put up such a gallant fight, we too can do it in West Bengal



SITARAM YECHURY | CPI(M) GENERAL SECRETARY

SHORT TAKES

LJP post-poll meeting held

Patna: After its dismal performance in the Bihar Assembly polls, the first major meeting of the Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) was held at the party's head office in Patna Sunday. The meeting was headed by LJP chief Chirag Paswan. The party invited all important leaders to analyse the defeat in the recent Assembly polls. Besides, leaders are also accessing the situation after several members left the party and joined JD-U. Ex-LJP MLC Nutan Singh recently joined the BJP. LJP contested 143 seats in Bihar and managed to win just one seat. Moreover, the only MLA Raj Kumar Singh and MP Chandan Singh met with Chief Minister Nitish Kumar February 15.

Pondy Assembly Speaker quits

Pondicherry: Pondicherry Assembly Speaker V P Sivakolundhu quit Sunday citing health reasons even as his brother joined the BJP just over a month ahead of the elections in the union territory. In the resignation letter to Lt Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan, a copy of which was made available to mediapersons here, Sivakolundhu, a Congress leader, said he quit as Speaker only on health grounds.

Two crushed to death

Jammu: An over-speeding bus turned turtle here Sunday crushing to death two people who were on a two-wheeler, police said. The bus, coming from Narwal towards Sidhra, overturned at a curve and hit the two-wheeler, killing two of its riders, they said. One person travelling in the bus was also injured in the accident, while the driver escaped unhurt. Police have registered a case and further investigation is on, the officials said.

NCB seizes drugs

Mumbai: The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) conducted searches at three places in south Mumbai and recovered drugs worth Rs 16 lakh, an official said Sunday. Three persons were arrested in this connection, he said. "The searches were conducted in Colaba, Nagpada and Dongri during the intervening night of Saturday and Sunday. The agency recovered around 162 grams of mephedrone (MD), a psychotropic substance, and small quantity of charas," the official said.



I want the Congress to unite and fight divisive forces in the country. People are looking forward to the Congress sorting things out in the country. It is a part of this nation and has been a 150-year-old party

FAROOQ ABDULLAH | NATIONAL CONFERENCE (NC) PRESIDENT

SRINAGAR-LEH ROAD REOPENED

After remaining closed for nearly two months due to snow, the strategically important Srinagar-Leh highway was opened Sunday



6 states continue to lead Covid-19 spike

The Centre has also deputed high-level multi-disciplinary teams to Kerala, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Jammu and Kashmir to ascertain the reasons for the surge and coordinate with the state health departments in COVID-19 control and containment measures

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 28: India's total number of active COVID-19 cases has reached 1,64,511, which comprises 1.48 per cent of the country's total infections, the Union Health Ministry said o Sunday highlighting six states that have shown a surge in new cases in a span of 24 hours.

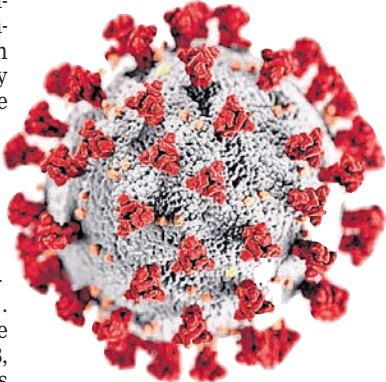
It said 86.37 per cent of the new cases are from Maharashtra, Kerala, Punjab, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat. A total of 16,752 new COVID-19 cases were registered in a span of 24 hours. Maharashtra continues to report the highest daily new cases at 8,623, followed by Kerala with 3,792 cases while Punjab reported 593 fresh COVID-19 cases.

Eight states are displaying an upward trajectory in the daily new cases, the ministry said.

"The Centre has been engaging with states and union territories exhibiting higher active number of cases and those reporting a spike in the daily new COVID-19 cases," the ministry stated.

The cabinet secretary chaired a high-level review meeting on Saturday with states and union ter-

ritories exhibiting a surge in cases, including Telangana, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Punjab, Jammu and



Kashmir and West Bengal. The cabinet secretary reiterated that states need to maintain a continued rigorous vigil in terms of containing the spread and not squander away the gains of the collective hardwork of last year.

They were advised not to lower their guard, enforce COVID-19 appropriate behaviour and deal firmly with violations. It was strongly underlined that they need to follow effective surveillance strategies in

respect of potential super spreading events, the ministry said.

Need for effective testing, comprehensive tracking, prompt isolation of positive cases and quick quarantine of close contacts were also strongly emphasised.

REGISTRATION FOR NEXT PHASE OF VACCINATION WILL OPEN TODAY: The next phase of the COVID-19 vaccination drive for people above 60 years and those aged 45 and above with comorbidities will begin from March 1 and registration on the Co-WIN2.0 portal will open at 9 am Monday.

Citizens will be able to register and book an appointment for vaccination, anytime and anywhere, using the Co-WIN 2.0 portal or through other IT applications such as Arogya Setu. Registration will open at 9 am March 1 at www.Cowin.Gov.In, the ministry said. All citizens that are aged, or will attain the age of 60 or more as January 1, 2022 are eligible to register, in addition to all such citizens that are aged, or will attain the age of 45 to 59 years as on January 1, 2022, and have any of the specified 20 comorbidities.

TikTok star suicide: Maha minister resigns

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, Feb 28: Amid mounting pressure and fierce attacks from the opposition Bharatiya Janata Party, Shive Sena leader and Maharashtra Forest Minister Sanjay Rathod - whose name cropped up in the death of TikTok star Pooja Chavan - resigned Sunday.

A prominent leader of the Banjara community, Rathod (49), accompanied by his wife Shital, met Thackeray at the latter's official residence and discussed the issue for around 30 minutes before handing his resignation to the CM.

The Chief Minister also refused to consider pleas from the 'mahants' of the Banjara community even as the probe report into the social media star's death is awaited.

Toughening BJP's stance, Leader of Opposition Devendra Fadnavis threatened to withdraw the BJP legislators from the joint select committee of the Shakti Bill, which is being brought on the lines of the Disha Act proposing crucial changes to the existing laws on violence against women and children. "Sanjay Rathod resigned... However, it does not imply that he is innocent," said Pravin Darekar, the Leader of Opposition in the Maharashtra Council.

Both the leaders have demanded that an FIR should be lodged against Rathod in the Chavan case, though the ex-minister has consistently denied all the allegations levelled against him. Rathod's name cropped



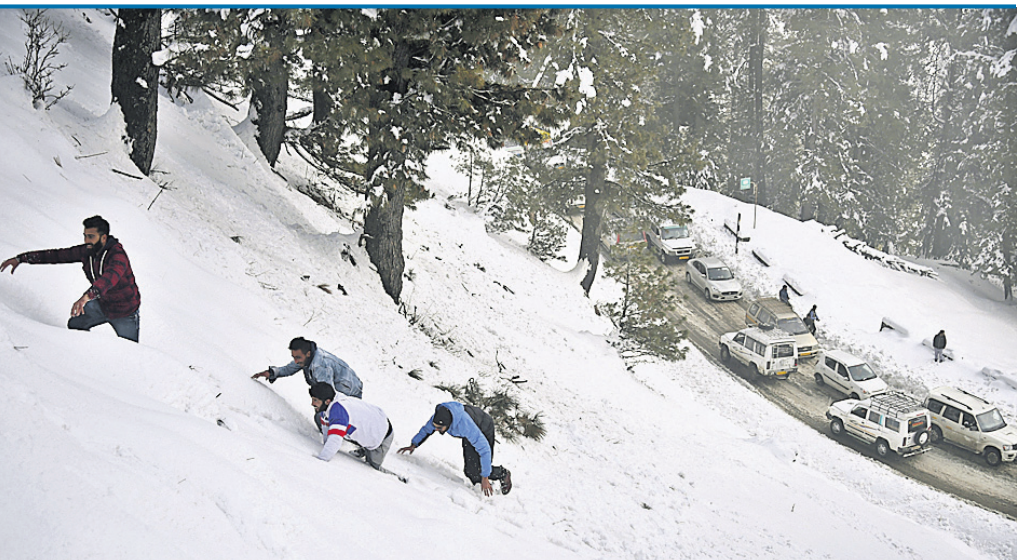
Rathod met Uddhav Thackeray and tendered his resignation on the eve of the Budget session of the Maha legislature starting Monday

up after the death of Chavan (22) in Pune February 7.

"The opposition is playing dirty politics on this matter... The truth will emerge in the probe. They threatened not to allow the Legislature Session and disrupt the proceedings," Rathod said after quitting. Chavan hailed from the Banjara community and was a native of Parli-Vaijanath in Beed district. Her family wrote to the CM decrying the moves to politicise her death, and killing her multiple times after she died.

Chavan died after falling from the balcony of an apartment in Pune's Hadapsar area. The police have registered an accidental death report (ADR) and are probing the matter.

WHITE BLANKET



Locals climb up a snow covered mountain after fresh snowfall at the ski resort of Gulmarg, Kashmir

PTI PHOTO

Farmers announce series of Mahapanchayats

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 28: Farmers protesting against the three Central farm laws have announced a series of Mahapanchayats in March as the stalemate between the farmers and the government continues over the withdrawal of the laws.

The Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) has released the list of Mahapanchayats to be held from February 28 to March 22 in various parts of the country. BKU leader Rakesh Tikait will be attending all the 'Mahapanchayats' starting from February 28 at Saharanpur in Uttar Pradesh.

In March, Mahapanchayats will be organised in Rudrapur in



Uttarakhand March 1, in Jhunjhunu district in Rajasthan March 2, in Nagaur March 3, in Etawah March 5 and in Telangana

March 6. After this, Tikait will be attending a programme at Ghazipur March 7 and the reach Sheopur in Madhya Pradesh March 8.

On March 10, a Mahapanchayat will be organised in Ballia in UP while in Jodhpur March 12, in Rewa (MP) March 14 and three Mahapanchayats in Karnataka March 20, 21 and 22. The farmers have announced the series of Mahapanchayats with an aim to intensify their agitation against the contentious farm laws. The 11 rounds of talks between the farmers and the government have been inconclusive as the farmers are adamant on their demand of withdrawal of the laws.

Azad praises Modi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, Feb 28: Senior Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad Sunday praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying he speaks frankly about his past as a tea-seller and does not try to hide his background from the world.

Addressing a function by Gujar Desh Charitable Trust here, the former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister said a person should be proud of his roots. "I admire several things about a number of leaders... I am from a village and I am proud of it. A big leader, our prime minister, says he is from a village, he used to sell tea.

"We may have political differences, but at least he doesn't hide his reality," the opposition leader said. Modi had recently profusely praised Azad, who was the Leader of the Opposition in Rajya Sabha, during the Congress MP's farewell in the Upper House.

An emotional prime minister had recalled how Azad had reached out to him in 2006 after tourists from Gujarat were killed in a terrorist attack and had said the per-

son who will replace the Congress leader will find it tough to match his contribution. Azad's remarks come a day after he and other 'G-23' dissident leaders, who have been pressing for a leadership change and organisational overhaul in the Congress, gathered on one stage at an event here and said the party is weakening.

In a brief interaction with media persons, Azad did not agree with the suggestion that the presence of senior party leaders at a function here on Saturday was a show of strength to convey a message to the party high command. The leaders, including Anand Sharma, Kapil Sibal, Manish Tewari and Raj Babbar, were part of the group which had triggered a storm in the party last year with their letter to Congress chief Sonia Gandhi, expressing unhappiness over its functioning and demanding a full-time party president.

"I have returned after a gap of one-and-a-half years. Before the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic (in March last year), there was a budget and winter session. There was a long demand that a function be organised," he said.



Now, Customs finds hair smuggling scandal in Bengal

ACCORDING TO OFFICIALS, HAIR EXPORT MARKET IN INDIA IS WORTH RS 70 MILLION APPROXIMATELY AT THE MOMENT

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 28: Even as the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Enforcement Directorate (ED) are tightening the noose around the coal mafias and the cattle smugglers in West Bengal, the Central Customs department has found another smuggling racket of undervaluing the value of the export of the raw human hair from India to other countries and then "smuggling" it to China via land route, officials said.

After identifying the new modus operandi of the undervaluation of the raw human hair variety, which is also called goli or thutti or choti the Customs department has alerted the officials of the multiple agencies including Goods and Services Tax

(GST), Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) and Airport Authorities across India.

In a note to multiple agencies, the Customs department explained the modus operandi of "the export of raw hair variety by undervaluing the price by exporters.

According to senior Customs officials, the department worked on the leads it received and during its investigation it was found that few exporters "decreased" the value of export consignments of raw human hair to Myanmar, Bangladesh and Vietnam as compared to their actual value.

The Customs department said that the modus operandi of deflating procurement of export quality raw human hair was adopted by traders primarily in West Bengal



Representative image

and Telangana. The officials of the Custom department further said the exporters sent the consignments of raw human hair variety to three countries by undervaluing the value more than hundred times of its original price. The official related to the inquiry

said that multiple teams of Customs department were formed and during surprise survey in several districts of West Bengal it was found the same raw human hair was being sold between Rs 3,000 per kg to Rs 6,000 per kg while the export bills were undervalued as less than Rs

100 per kilogram. Meanwhile, a senior Custom official related to the development said that there were two-fold objectives of undervaluation of raw human hair.

He said one objective was for under-reporting foreign exchange to escape Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) compliance and income tax generation in India while another was to smuggle Indian-origin human hair to China. He explained that land routes were identified to escape close to 28 per cent Chinese import duty on raw human hair.

The official said that there are two types of hair collected in India - Remy hair (the highest grade of human hair; a preferred choice for hairpieces and wigs because it creates a natural look) collected from

New Parl likely to use Tripura's bamboo products

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Agartala, Feb 28: After Rashtrapati Bhavan and Prime Minister's Office (PMO), Tripura's eco-friendly bamboo products or bamboo artifacts are now expected to be used in the construction of the new Parliament building which is underway in the national capital.

Union Minister for Road Transport, Highways and MSMEs Nitin Gadkari while talking to the Lok Sabha Member from Tripura Rebati Tripura said that the bamboo products from the state are likely to be used in the new Parliament House. "I have given Gadkari ji some value added bamboo products like bottle, basket, mobile stand. Then I have proposed to him to utilise Tripura bamboo in a larger way as the bamboo products are very eco-friendly, heat resistant and sustainable that would serve many purposes and won't cause any harm unlike those products made of plastic and iron materials," Tripura said.

Tripura, who represent Tripura East parliamentary constituency, said that already the bamboo tiles (Bamboowood) made from Tripura bamboo are being used in a large scale manner across the country and appreciated by all for its positive utility and effectiveness.

Woman stabbed to death during robbery bid

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 28: A 25-year-old woman was stabbed to death while resisting a chain-snatching bid in northwest Delhi's Adarsh Nagar area, police said on Sunday.

A senior police officer said the woman, Simran Kaur, was returning home from the market along with her two-year-old daughter and mother when the incident occurred around 9:30 pm Saturday. Police said they have arrested two men in connection with the incident.

The accused have been identified as Fardeen (19) and Aqibul (22), both residents of Jahangir Puri, they said, adding that Aqibul allegedly stabbed the woman during the snatching bid.

The incident occurred hardly 20 metres from the her house and there is a police post around 100 metres from the spot.

The accused stabbed the victim and fled, police said, adding that



she was taken to a hospital where she was declared brought dead.

A CCTV footage of the incident went viral on social media.

In the video, the two women can be seen walking when a man chases them and tries to snatch the victim's chain from behind. Simran chases the man following which he falls on the road. Thereafter, he stands up, stabs her and flees from the spot.

of the day quote

Rahul, you were on vacation when the Modi government created this department in 2019. People of Pondicherry should decide whether they want to bring to power a party whose leader has no knowledge that the department of fisheries exist at the Centre

AMIT SHAH | UNION HOME MINISTER

It is my dream to see India and Pakistan become true good friends and that we can visit each other's countries. You can continue to watch Pakistani dramas, we can continue to watch Bollywood movies and enjoy cricket matches

MALALA YOUSAFZAI | NOBEL LAUREATE

We have to make sure that the science that we do of course, the fundamental science is important, translational science is important (but) it has to be solution-based science. It has to be people centric

HARSH VARDHAN | SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Two Naxals held while planting IEDs

Bijapur: Two Naxals were arrested when they were planting improvised explosive devices (IEDs) to target security forces in Bijapur in Chhattisgarh, while one ultra surrendered elsewhere in the district, police said Sunday. A patrolling team of the District Reserve Guard nabbed Bhadrup Punem (40) and Sannu Punem (35) when they were planting explosives on a dirt track in the forest near Pusnar village under Gangaloor police station limits on Saturday, an official said. Two cooker bombs, gelatin sticks, wire, medicines, Maoist pamphlets, banners etc were recovered from them, he added. On Sunday, ultra Rama Potam (30) surrendered before police and CRPF officials, he said.

Teenager commits suicide

Bhadoli: A 16-year-old boy allegedly hanged himself to death at his house in Bhadoli's Gopiganj area after being scolded by his father, police said Sunday. In a repeat tragedy for the family, the boy took the extreme step barely six months after his brother had committed suicide, Gopiganj police station's SHO Guru Gyan Patel said. The SHO said the boy had left his studies after class 6 due to which his parents remained upset and usually scolded him.

Cop found dead

Sambhal (UP): A 26-year-old police constable was found dead under mysterious circumstances in the barracks of Naraura Bairaj flyover police post under Gunnaur police station in Sambhal. He had been married two months ago. The deceased, Shailendra Yadav, 26, was deputed at Sambhal Police Lines and was on duty at Naraura police picket under Gunnaur police station limits on Saturday when he was found lying unconscious in the barracks.

4-yr-old raped

Chandigarh: A four-year-old girl was allegedly raped by a 36-year-old man in Haryana's Sonipat district, police said Sunday. The accused living near the victim's house falling in an area under the Rai police station allegedly lured her to his place and raped her on Friday night, said police.



We have not entered politics for power but to take India to the pinnacle of glory. After coming to power, our target is to change fortune of India

JP NADDA | BJP NATIONAL PRESIDENT

'BEWARE OF ONLINE PITFALLS'

The cyber wing of Mumbai police Sunday issued a social media advisory asking people not to share personal information with strangers online and to ensure the internet activities of their children is monitored



'Bengal needs to be rescued from TMC'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Feb 28: The opposition 'grand alliance' will win the upcoming assembly elections in West Bengal, senior Congress leaders asserted Sunday while addressing a mega rally in Kolkata, maintaining that the country needs to be saved from the BJP and the state rescued from the ruling Trinamool Congress.

Addressing lakhs of supporters at the Brigade parade grounds, state Congress president Adhir Chowdhury said the gathering proved that the Bengal elections will not be a two- cornered contest. "The grand alliance of the Left Congress and other secular forces will defeat both the TMC and the BJP," Chowdhury, the leader of the Congress in the Lok Sabha, said. He said that the BJP and the TMC want that other than the two, there should not exist any other political force in Bengal and that no other party should come between them.



"But in the future, there will not be any BJP or TMC. Only the grand alliance will remain," he claimed. Those trying to propagate the idea that TMC and BJP are the only ones contesting the polls in West Bengal have been proved wrong by the huge gathering, he said.

"Morning is the harbinger of the day, and this meeting proves that the TMC and BJP will be defeated in the coming elections," Chowdhury said. He said that the goal of the alliance

is to ensure the victory of secularism and democracy and to defeat communal and repressive politics in Bengal. Alleging that both the BJP and the TMC are trying to divide the people, Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel said that the country has to be saved from one, and Bengal has to be rescued from the other. Baghel claimed that the Narendra Modi government is selling off public sector enterprises and infrastructure like railway sta-

tions and airports built by the earlier Congress governments. "Both the BJP and TMC are trying to divide the people. The country has to be saved from one and Bengal has to be rescued from the other," he said, addressing the rally.

"We had fought earlier against the Whites and now we have to fight against the thieves," he said, remembering Bengal's contribution to the freedom struggle.

Noting that Modi had earlier given the slogan that the "country will not be sold", Baghel questioned why are railway stations and airports being privatised.

"Now it has become the 'West India Company', handing over everything to two entities," he said, without naming anyone.

"On Netaji's 125th birth anniversary on January 23, we have named the police training academy in Chhattisgarh after Subhas Chandra Bose, while Narendra Modi has got a stadium named after himself," the Chief Minister said.

School students discover 18 new asteroids

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 28: The International Astronomical Union (IAU), an organisation which assigns official names and designations to celestial bodies, has recently confirmed the discovery of 18 new asteroids by Indian students as part of a global science programme.

The International Asteroid Discovery Project was conducted by STEM and Space, an organisation working towards the learning of astronomy and space science

The International Asteroid Discovery Project was conducted by STEM and Space, an organisation working towards the learning of astronomy and space science in India

in India, along with the International Astronomical Search Collaboration (IASC) as part of a NASA citizen science project.

Over the last two years, 150 students from all around India participated in this two month long campaign to find asteroids, making this the largest asteroid discovery project in India, Mila Mitra, Co-founder and Academic Head of STEM and Space, told PTI.

In the project, the students from India, and across the globe analysed the high quality astronomical data provided by IASC - an online scientific program for kids to discover Asteroids and Near Earth Objects (NEO).

NEOs are rocky objects in an orbit between Mars and Jupiter, which pose a challenge to Earth as they may get perturbed out of their orbit and pose a threat of impact. According to Mitra and her team, NASA has initiated programs like IASC to track such asteroids regularly, also open to citizen scientists and students to enable the discovery and tracking of more asteroids.

MCD bypolls amid COVID

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 28: A turnout of about 42 per cent was recorded in the first eight hours of voting for the bypolls to five municipal wards in Delhi Sunday, the first electoral exercise being conducted in the national capital amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The results of these bye-elections are likely to have an impact on the big-ticket 2022 Delhi civic polls. Polling began at 7:30 AM amid tight security arrangements, and it is scheduled to end at 5:30 PM.

By 3:30 PM, the overall turnout across the five wards was 42.91 per cent, with Kalyanpuri ward recording the maximum 50.56 per cent, as per the data shared by a senior official of the State Election Commission in Delhi. In Kalyanpuri ward in east Delhi, two of the seven



polling locations are in "critical" category. A total of 16 polling locations out of the total 44 have been kept in this category, as per official data.

According to the State Election Commission, around 2.42 lakh people are eligible to cast their votes in two wards under the North Delhi Municipal

Corporation (NDMC) and three wards under the East Delhi Municipal Corporation (EDMC). The main contenders are the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), the BJP and the Congress. All of them have expressed confidence that they will emerge victorious in the bypolls, being held under strict COVID protocols.

MATTER OF FAITH



Hindu devotees offering prayer after take holy dip in the Sangam, in Prayagraj

UNI PHOTO

ARMY CANCELS RECRUITMENT EXAM AFTER PAPER LEAKE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 28: The Army has cancelled an examination for pan-India recruitment of general duty personnel after paper was found to have been leaked, officials said Sunday.

They said at least three persons have been arrested in Pune so far in this connection.

"The Indian Army has zero tolerance towards corrupt practices in the recruitment process for selection of suitable candidates," an official said.

Based on a proactive joint operation with local police at Pune, a case of possible leakage of question paper for the Common Entrance Examination for Recruitment of Soldiers (General Duty) was reported last night, the official added.

While further investigation is still underway, it was decided to cancel the examination to ensure continuous transparency in the recruitment process, he added.

Kuru Kolumn

Dissidents gearing up to take on Rahul

Rahul Gandhi is neither Congress president nor Parliamentary Party leader. But he continues to call the shots in the party, Parliament and makes no bones about it. The way Ghulam Nabi Azad was shown the door, has left the Group of 23 Dissident leaders in any doubt that they too will be meted out the same treatment sooner. Though Priyanka Gandhi held a series of meetings with Ghulam Nabi Azad and Anand Sharma to sort out the issues, Rahul seems to be

unruffled with them. He is on his own trip. Rahul Gandhi has created a team of his own confidantes which include AICC general secretary KC Venugopal who is emerging as a point's person for him. Venugopal is like what late Ahmed Patel was for Sonia Gandhi. Randeep Surjewala, Praveen Chakraborty, Gaurav Gogoi, Ravneet Singh Bittoo are considered very close to him. Mukul Wasnik is in poor light after he signed the letter. It now transpires that Ghulam Nabi Azad in consultation with Anand Sharma and Bhupinder Singh Hooda are working out G-23 strategy. Hooda and Sharma were spotted recently at IIC and confabulated for one there. Later, they drove down to Azad's residence. Azad is now a rising star in the company of the BJP leaders and made Guest of Honour at the Minority Ministry function. Something serious is cooking and all eyes are set on the Parliament session which will begin after the recess March 8.

Case against Greta falls flat

After the initial heat, the government seems to have backed off. It is unlikely

to pursue a case against global climate activist Greta Thunberg. Delhi Police and Intelligence agencies are of the view that Greta was not actively behind the making the controversial 'Toolkit'. Police are of the view that Greta tweeted the toolkit at the prodding of Disha Ravi and the role of Nikita Jacob & Shantanu Muluk is being probed. But after the Delhi Judge gave a tongue lashing to the Police in the Disha Ravi case, the Union Home Ministry and Delhi Police are running for cover. Home Minister Amit Shah who stoutly defended the action of the Delhi Police in arresting Disha Ravi and others, may have to look the other way now. The police brass admits that no direct or indirect link has been found between Greta and pro-Khalistani organizations as per documents scanned so far. It was due to this very reason that the Police had not named Greta in the FIR and case was registered against 'unknown persons.'

Pawar's silence in RS

The entire political class is baffled about the silence of NCP supremo Sharad Pawar when the Rajya Sabha discussed

three farm laws for days together during the Budget session. It was expected that the tallest leader in the Upper House who has been Agriculture Minister for ten long years during the UPA regime, will put the record straight. If a leader of stature like Pawar had spoken in the House, farmers and the government would have listened to him carefully. He is the only one who could have told the farmers to end the agitation as the government had stayed the three farm laws for 18 months. But he maintained a mysterious silence in Rajya Sabha and fielded his bete noire Praful Patel instead. Though former Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda spoke in Rajya Sabha, he has lost his rhythm and touch. The Opposition benches had no leader of stature who could have made the difference. Former PM Dr Manmohan Singh was present. But he chose to remain silent as usual. Pawar could have made the difference. But he looked the other way. Why?? No answers are coming from the NCP.

Cooking golden goose

When the Employees Provident Fund (EPF) scheme was launched, Pt.

Jawaharlal Nehru had not imagined that it would become a tool in the hands of the rich to cook golden goose. It was to help employees in the public and private sector with employers contributing their 12% share in their EPF accounts. There was no limit of the amount for employees to deposit in their accounts. The interest income is tax-free and there is no limit. For 70 years, the rich private and PSU sector employees and bureaucrats raked in mullahs. There are instances where employees deposited their full salary into the EPF accounts. But they did not realize that PM Modi has the uncanny knack of tracking those making a killing. Interestingly, top bureaucrats who are big beneficiaries of this scheme never pointed it out to successive Finance Ministers about rich employees raking mullah. There are 5 crore EPF account holders. The EPF has a corpus of ₹7 lakh crore as February 1, 2021. The scheme was for employees earning ₹15,000 or more a month. The Union Budget has capped interest free income at ₹2.50 lakh per year now, down from ₹50 lakh earlier. Another loot and scoot stopped!

of the day quote

Our incredible vaccination programme is accelerating and well over one in three people across the UK have now received their first jab



NADHIM ZAHAWI | UK VACCINE DEPLOYMENT MINISTER

We firmly believe that only a two-state solution will deliver enduring peace that the people of Israel and Palestine desire and deserve. This should be achieved through direct negotiations between both sides on final status issues



K NAGARAJ NAIDU | INDIA'S DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE UN

We will not accept hatred in New York City. Stop Asian hate. This is the message we have to get out, not just in New York City but all over this country



BILL DE BLASIO | MAYOR OF NEW YORK CITY

SHORT TAKES

Pak arrests 17 Indian fishermen

Karachi: Pakistan has arrested 17 Indian fishermen and confiscated their three boats for allegedly straying into the country's territorial waters near Sir Creek. The fishermen, arrested Friday, were produced before a judicial magistrate Saturday and handed over to the police, said a spokesperson for the Pakistan Maritime Security Agency. The official said the Indian fishermen were warned that they were in Pakistan's territorial waters and should turn away but did not heed the warning.

10 killed in Mexico shooting

Mexico City: Ten men were killed and a woman and two boys were wounded in a shooting attack on a home in western Mexico Saturday. Prosecutors in the state of Jalisco said the bullet-ridden bodies of the 10 men were found by police on the sidewalk in front of the home. The prosecutors' office said the attack was carried out by unidentified assailants travelling in an SUV. The state is home to the Jalisco New Generation Cartel, one of Mexico's most violent and powerful.

Virginia to legalise cannabis

Richmond: Virginia lawmakers gave final approval Saturday to a bill that will legalise marijuana for adult recreational use, but not until 2024, when retail sales of the drug would also begin. With a compromise bill clearing the House and Senate, Virginia becomes the first Southern state to vote to legalise marijuana, joining 15 other states and the District of Columbia. The legislation now goes to Democratic Gov Ralph Northam, who supports legalisation.

Thailand starts vax roll-out

Bangkok: Thailand Sunday started its Covid-19 vaccination roll-out, with the first shot, using China's Sinovac vaccine, going to Deputy Prime Minister and Public Health Minister Anutin Charnvirakul. Thai Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha presided over the event at the country's infectious disease institute, where other officials, including deputy public health minister, agriculture minister, culture minister and deputy education minister, were also vaccinated with the Sinovac vaccine.



You (Americans) are going to need Mexican and Central American workers to produce, to grow. It is better that we start putting order on migratory flows

ANDRÉS MANUEL LÓPEZ OBRADOR | PRESIDENT OF MEXICO

RUSSIA LAUNCHES 1ST ARCTIC MONITORING SATELLITE

Russia successfully launched its first Arctic monitoring satellite 'Arktika-M' Sunday, the Russian state space corporation Roscosmos said



US FDA okays J&J's 1-dose vax

ONE DOSE WAS FOUND TO BE 85% PROTECTIVE AGAINST THE MOST SEVERE COVID-19 ILLNESS IN A MASSIVE STUDY SPANNING THREE CONTINENTS

AGENCIES

Washington, Feb 28: The US is getting a third vaccine to prevent Covid-19, as the Food and Drug Administration Saturday cleared a Johnson & Johnson shot that works with just one dose instead of two.

Health experts are anxiously awaiting a one-and-done option to help speed vaccinations, as they race against a virus that already has killed more than 510,000 people in the US and is mutating in increasingly worrisome ways.

The FDA said J&J's vaccine offers strong protection against what matters most serious illness, hospitalisations and death. One dose was 85% protective against the most severe Covid-19 illness, in a massive study that spanned three continents — protection that remained strong even in countries such as South Africa, where the variants of most concern are spreading.

"This is really good news," Dr Francis Collins, director of the National Institutes of Health, told The Associated Press Saturday. "The most important thing we can do right now is to get as many shots in as many arms as we can."

J&J initially is providing a few million doses and shipments to states could begin as early as Monday. By the end of March, J&J has said it expects to deliver 20 million doses to the US, and 100 million by summer.

J&J also is seeking authorisation for emergency use of its vaccine in Europe and from the World Health Organisation. The company aims to produce about 1 billion



doses globally by the end of the year. The island nation of Bahrain became the first to clear its use Thursday.

"This is exciting news for all Americans, and an encouraging development in our efforts to bring an end to the crisis," President Joe Biden said in a statement. "But I want to be clear this fight is far from over," he added, encouraging people to stick with masks and other public health measures.

A US advisory committee will meet to recommend how to prioritise use of the single-dose vaccine. And one big challenge is what the public wants to know: Which kind is better?

"In this environment, whatever you can get — get," said Dr Arnold Monto of the University of Michigan, who chaired an FDA advisory panel that unanimously voted Friday that the vaccine's benefits outweigh its risks.

CHINA ROLLS OUT OWN 1-DOSE JAB

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Beijing, Feb 28: China has given conditional approval for a single dose Covid-19 vaccine, touted to be a rival to Johnson & Johnson's one-jab shot cleared by the US drug regulator Sunday.

China's first Ad5-nCoV Covid-19 vaccine was rolled out Friday, the state-run Global Times reported Sunday.

Phase-I clinical trials of the vaccine started March 16, last year, making it the world's first

Covid-19 candidate vaccine that entered clinical trials, it said.

It is the only single-dose Covid-19 vaccine that has been given conditional approval to be rolled out in China; the report quoted last Friday's story by the state broadcaster China Central Television (CCTV). People can get desirable protective effect after 14 days of inoculation.

The protective effect can last at least six months after a single-dose inoculation and it can increase immune response by 10

to 20 times if the second dose is taken half a year after the first one, the report said.

With this, China's medical products regulator has approved five coronavirus vaccines which include Sinovac, Sinopharm, CanSinoBio and another by Wuhan Institute of Biological Products.

Though China has been supplying its vaccines to different countries, none of them have been approved by the World Health Organisation (WHO).

Pakistan may resume import of cotton from India: Report



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Islamabad, Feb 28: Pakistan may allow cotton import from India through land route as prospects of gradual restoration of bilateral trade ties have brightened after the new ceasefire agreement along the Line of Control, according to a media report Sunday.

Citing sources in the Ministry of Commerce, The Express Tribune reported that Adviser to the Prime Minister on Commerce Abdul Razak Dawood may take a decision on whether to import cotton and yarn from India next week.

They said that the issue of cotton shortfall has already been brought to the notice of Prime Minister Imran Khan, who also holds the portfolio of the commerce minister. Once a principled decision is taken, a formal order will be presented before the Economic

Coordination Committee of the Cabinet, the sources told the daily.

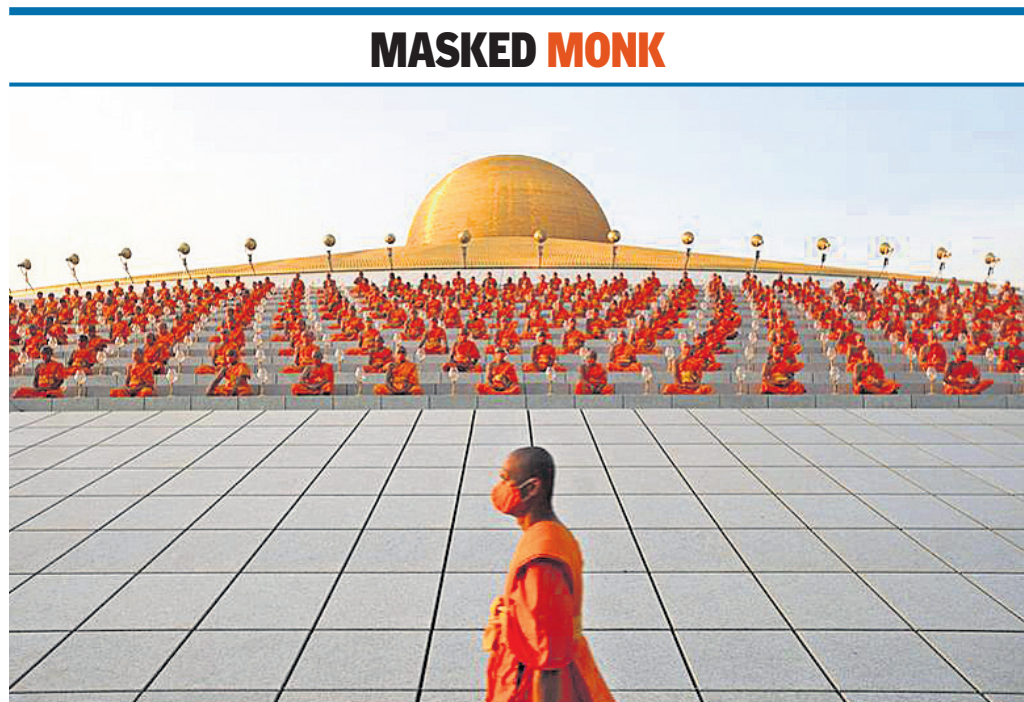
The sources said that in-house deliberations have already begun but the final decision would be taken only after seeking the approval of the prime minister.

"I cannot say yes or no at this stage and would be in a better position to respond Monday," Dawood told the daily, responding to a question on whether Pakistan was considering allowing cotton import from India.

The trade ties between both the countries can help minimise cost of production in Pakistan and ensure sustained food supplies, the daily said. India and Pakistan issued a joint statement Thursday to strictly observe all agreements on ceasefire along the LoC and other sectors after the hotline discussions by their Director Generals of Military Operations.

The two countries signed a ceasefire agreement in 2003, but it has hardly been followed in letter and spirit over the past several years. Relations between the two neighbours have nose-dived after a series of terror attacks in India perpetrated by terror groups based in Pakistan.

Bilateral ties deteriorated further after India revoked the special status of Jammu and Kashmir in 2019. The move angered Pakistan, which downgraded diplomatic ties and expelled the Indian High Commissioner in Islamabad. Pakistan also snapped all air and land links with India and suspended trade and railway services.



Buddhist monks wearing face masks pray during a ceremony to commemorate Makha Bucha Day at the Wat Phra Dhammakaya temple in Pathum Thani province, Thailand

REUTERS

Hong Kong detains 47 pro-democracy activists

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Hong Kong, Feb 28: Hong Kong police Sunday detained 47 pro-democracy activists on charges of conspiracy to commit subversion under the city's national security law.

The former lawmakers and democracy advocates had been previously arrested in a sweeping police operation in January but were released. They have been detained again and will appear in court Monday, police said in a statement.



They allegedly violated the new national security law that was imposed by Beijing for participating in unofficial election primaries for

the semi-autonomous Chinese territory's legislature last year.

The defendants include 39 men and eight women aged between 23 and 64, police said.

The pro-democracy camp had held the primaries to determine the best candidates to field to win a majority in the legislature and had plans to vote down major bills that would eventually force Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam to resign.

In January, 55 activists and former lawmakers were arrested in

Europe-bound migrants die at sea off Libya: UN

AGENCIES

Cairo, Feb 28: At least 15 Africans drowned when their boat capsized Sunday off Libya, a UN spokeswoman said, the second shipwreck involving migrants seeking a better life in Europe in just over a week.

Safa Msehli, a spokesman for the International Organisation for Migration, said the dead were on a rubber boat carrying at least 110 migrants, who embarked from the Libyan coastal town of Zawiya Friday.

The boat started to sink early Sunday and the Libyan coast guard managed to rescue at least 95 migrants, including six women and two children, she said.

Msehli said many of the survivors suffered from burns from engine fuel, and hypothermia, with some taken to hospital.

POPE'S TRIP TO IRAQ 'NOT A GOOD IDEA': EXPERTS

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Vatican City, Feb 28: Infectious disease experts are expressing concern about Pope Francis' upcoming trip to Iraq, given a sharp rise in coronavirus infections there, a fragile health care system and the unavoidable likelihood that Iraqis will crowd to see him.

No one wants to tell Francis to call it off, and the Iraqi government has every interest in showing off its relative stability by welcoming the first pope to the birthplace of Abraham. The March 5-8 trip is expected to provide a sorely-needed spiritual boost to Iraq's beleaguered Christians while furthering the Vatican's bridge-building efforts with the Muslim world.

But from a purely epidemiological standpoint, as well as the public health message it sends, a papal

trip to Iraq amid a global pandemic is not advisable, health experts say.

Their concerns were reinforced with the news Sunday that the Vatican ambassador to Iraq, the main point person for the trip who would have escorted Francis to all his appointments, tested positive for Covid-19 and was self-isolating.

In an email to The Associated Press, the embassy said Archbishop Mitja Leskovar's symptoms were mild and that he was continuing to prepare for Francis' visit.

Beyond his case, experts note that wars, economic crises and an exodus of Iraqi professionals have devastated the country's hospital system, while studies show most of Iraq's new Covid-19 infections are the highly-contagious variant first identified in Britain.

"I just don't think it's a good idea," said Dr Navid Madani, vi-



rologist and founding director of the Center for Science Health Education in the Middle East and North Africa at Harvard Medical School's Dana-Farber Cancer Institute.

The Iranian-born Madani co-authored an article in The Lancet last

year on the region's uneven response to Covid-19, noting that Iraq, Syria and Yemen were poorly placed to cope, given they are still struggling with extremist insurgencies and have 40 million people who need humanitarian aid.

In a telephone interview, Madani

said Middle Easterners are known for their hospitality, and cautioned that the enthusiasm among Iraqis of welcoming a peace-maker like Francis to a neglected, war-torn part of the world might lead to inadvertent violations of virus control measures.

"This could potentially lead to unsafe or superspreading risks," she said.

Dr Bharat Pankhania, an infectious disease control expert at the University of Exeter, College of Medicine, concurred.

"It's a perfect storm for generating lots of cases which you won't be able to deal with," he said. Organizers promise to enforce mask mandates, social distancing and crowd limits, as well as the possibility of increased testing sites, two Iraqi government officials said.

The health care protocols are

"critical but can be managed," one government official told The Associated Press, speaking on condition of anonymity.

And the Vatican has taken its own precautions, with the 84-year-old pope, his 20-member Vatican entourage and the 70-plus journalists on the papal plane all vaccinated.

But the Iraqis gathering in the north, center and south of the country to attend Francis' indoor and outdoor Masses, hear his speeches and participate in his prayer meetings are not vaccinated.

And that, scientists say, is the problem.

"We are in the middle of a global pandemic. And it is important to get the correct messages out," Pankhania said. "The correct messages are: the less interaction with fellow human beings, the better."

of the day quote

Our study says there is big potential that exists for us in premium segment. It also says that we can have fair business volume which could make our exclusive BigWing network to be viable and sustainable



YS GULERIA | DIRECTOR (SALES & MARKETING), HMSI

IIFCL has been playing its role as a policy institution and financial institution of the Government of India for financing infrastructure development. The Budget has laid down a solid foundation for taking the infrastructure to the next scale



One of the major challenges being faced by the real estate sector is the completion of stalled projects, which are majorly trapped due to the prevailing liquidity crunch. As the country faces an overall economic slowdown, revival of the sector would play an integral role in kick-starting the economy



GETAMBER ANAND | CMD, ATS INFRASTRUCTURE LTD

SHORT TAKES

No change in fuel prices

New Delhi: Fuel prices, which have been soaring to unprecedented levels in the country of late, remained unchanged Sunday. In the national capital, petrol was priced at ₹91.17 per litre, same as Saturday. Similarly, in Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata, the fuel was sold for ₹97.57, ₹93.11 and ₹91.35 a litre respectively. Oil marketing companies pressed the pause button after raising the pump price of petrol and diesel by 24 paise and 15 paise per litre Saturday.

Zipaworld forays into ocean freight

New Delhi: Logistics startup Zipaworld announced its foray in the ocean freight booking segment and expects at least three-fold growth in its turnover in FY22 on the back of the expansion in its business. Ambrish Kumar, Founder of Zipaworld and Group CEO of AAA 2 Innovate Private Ltd, said that the company also plans to come up with an intercity courier service in 2021, which would give further boost to its revenues.

Coal import drops 12 % in Apr-Jan

New Delhi: India's coal import registered a drop of 11.59% to 180.84 million tonnes (MT) in the first 10 months of the ongoing fiscal. The company had imported 204.55 MT of coal in April-January period of the previous fiscal year, according to provisional data compiled by mjunction services. Mjunction -- a joint venture of Tata Steel and SAIL -- is a B2B e-commerce company and also publishes research reports on coal and steel verticals.

Birla to ramp up capacity

New Delhi: With a shift in the global supply chain amid the pandemic and companies looking beyond China for sourcing, auto component firm Birla Precision Technologies Ltd is ramping up its capacity to tap emerging opportunities in India, according to a top company official. To start with, the company plans to invest up to ₹30 crore in the next one year to ramp up its drill manufacturing capacity under its cutting tools division.



Petroleum products should be brought under the ambit of GST. However, the decision rests with the GST Council
KV SUBRAMANIAN | CHIEF ECONOMIC ADVISOR

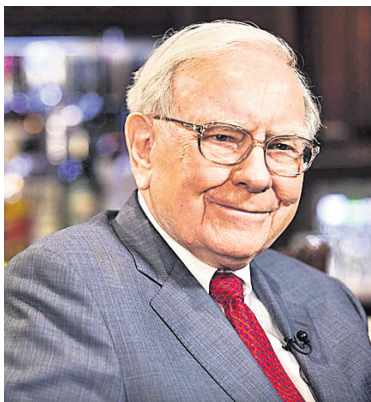
INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 28: Ace investor Warren Buffett is of the view that fixed-income investors might face a bleak future. In his letter to the shareholders of Berkshire Hathaway, Buffet said: "Fixed-income investors worldwide -- whether pension funds, insurance companies or retirees -- face a bleak future."

He also said that bonds are not the place to be these days.

"Can you believe that the income recently available from a 10-year US Treasury bond -- the yield was 0.93 per cent at yearend -- had fallen 94 per cent from the 15.8 per cent yield available in September 1981? In certain large and important countries, such as Germany and Japan, investors earn a negative return on trillions of dollars of sovereign debt," he wrote.

He noted that some insurers, as well



as other bond investors, "may try to juice the pathetic returns now available by shifting their purchases to obligations backed by shaky borrowers". Risky loans, however, are not the answer to inadequate interest rates, added the

FPIS INVEST OVER ₹25K cr

As the Indian equities continued to scale new highs post the Union Budget for FY22, the net foreign portfolio investments (FPI) into the Indian equities in February was ₹25,787 crore. The total net FPIs in 2020 now stand at ₹45,260 crore, as per NSDL data



MCL produces 12.79 MT coal in first month of Q4



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 28: One of the leading coal producing companies Mahanadi Coalfields (MCL) manufactured about 12.79 million tonnes (MT) of coal in the first month of Q4, FY'21.

The company has targeted to produce 15.98 MT of coal during the same month. According to the report, the company produced 0.048 MT from underground and 14.05 MT from open cast mining.

The subsidiary of Coal India Limited ended its third quarter with total coal production of about 37.98 MT during current financial year. MCL fell short to achieve its target for third quarter. The company had set target to post about 47.42 MT of coal production during Q3 of current fiscal.

According to a media report, MCL has set a target to achieve 173 MT of coal during current fiscal in Odisha. According to sources, the company expected to extract around 5 lakh tonne of coal per day and 15 MT coal in a month.

Also a media report claimed that the coal producer has also set a target to produce 263 MT of coal by 2023-24.

Women's Fest celebrated at Max Store in City

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 28: To celebrate upcoming Women's day Max store at Esplanade One Mall organised #YOUARESOBEAUTIFUL through doodle art on ceramic plate workshop, Sunday, here.

More than 50 contestants participated in the workshop under the supervision of Dibyush Jena, an art expert. Interacting with Orissa POST, Max store's Odisha head, Biswaranjan said, "Across INDIA, Max store is celebrating this Women's fest and salutes the spirit of womanhood. They are always at par with men and this workshop celebrates beauty."



Dibyush Jena said, "The inner beauty of woman power is being celebrated through this workshop. More than 400 participants have registered online and they will upload their art work and the top 3 amongst them will be felicitated."

Actress Devika Arundhati, Jasmine Rath and Odia singer Antara chakraborty were the celebrity guests and encouraged the participants. Kalpana Rout, a participant at the workshop said, "It is a rare opportunity to showcase what inner beauty is all about beyond one's physical appearance. For me beauty is a balanced brain that observes magic in every creation that is attached to woman hood."

Buffett warns fixed-income investors of bleak future

The Berkshire Hathaway CEO noted that some insurers, and other bond investors, may try to juice the pathetic returns now available by shifting their purchases to obligations backed by shaky borrowers

CAIT to launch nationwide protest against GST, e-Comm

A video conference was held Sunday in which more than 275 prominent leaders from all the states and UTs of the country participated and decided unanimously to launch a nationwide campaign on these two issues



now the traders are either forced to resolve these issues or shut their business.

According to Secretary General of CAIT, Praveen Khandelwal a video conference was held Sunday in which more than 275 prominent leaders from all the states and union territories of the country participated and decided unanimously to launch a nationwide campaign on these two issues.

"It is not the Centre but the states that are more responsible for diluting the spirit of GST, to their own likings and now they can't escape from their responsibilities," it said. CAIT alleged that the state governments have left no stone unturned to distort the GST because of their own interests which has led to the sufferings of traders.

In this context, CAIT has urged the Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman that since is

the Chairperson of the GST Council, she should initiate dialogues with the traders' organisation immediately about the current distorted nature of GST. Further, it has also urged the Union Commerce Minister, Piyush Goyal to issue further amend and clarify the FDI policy and also finalise and release e-commerce policy since the FDI policy is being grossly violated by foreign e-commerce companies.

"Since elections will be held in five states in the next few months and as a vote bank in all the states, the trading community holds a huge majority in strength and numbers and can be a deciding factor for the victory and defeat of any political party. Hence the decision of CAIT to launch a nationwide campaign amid elections and the anger of traders can affect the prospects of every political party," said the CAIT statement.

BIZ BUZZ

ZHL appoints new MD-CEO

Bhubaneswar: Ziqitza Healthcare Limited (ZHL) announced the appointment of Amitabh Jaipuria, as the new MD & CEO of Ziqitza Healthcare Limited, a leading integrated emergency medical service provider in India. Amitabh has rich experience of over 30 years in leading Corporates in India such as Reliance Jio, Monsanto, PepsiCo, GE, Quess, First Meridian and VIP Industries, amongst others. His significant past roles include MD at Monsanto; President - Mobility at Reliance Jio; President, Staffing at First Meridian; President and CEO - Global Business Services at Quess and Executive Director at PepsiCo. "The pandemic has brought this sector into sharp focus and over the past few months ZHL's 10,000 strong workforce has rendered selfless service to all," said Jaipuria.



Haier expands its android TV series

Bhubaneswar: Haier, the global leader in Home Appliances & Consumer Electronics announced the expansion of its Google-certified Android LED TV series. The new additions to the K-series flaunt a stunning 4K picture quality on screen sizes -- 108cm (43), 127cm(50), 146cm(58), 165cm(65), and 190cm(75) respectively. The all-screen bezel-less display gives the series a slim and stylish design that enables lifelike crystal clear visuals. Inspired by Haier's advancing technology, the 4K HDR television series comes with the latest Android 9.0 version certification with AI and can act as an IoT hub for all smart devices, allowing the users to navigate and control their connected devices seamlessly.



PPT EXECUTES 27 MOUs, WORTH ₹27,450 CRORE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 28: Paradip Port, the second largest major port in terms of cargo handling has executed 27 numbers of MoUs with various stakeholders to further enhance the economic growth of Odisha and the country as a whole under the Maritime India Summit (MIS) 2021.

The MoUs were signed on behalf of Paradip Port Trust (PPT) by respective HoDs and senior officials and other officials representing organisations in the presence of PPT Chairman Vinit Kumar and deputy chairman AK Bose.

Addressing the Press Meet over video conferencing, Chairman, PPT appealed everyone to make the Mega International Event a grand success. He shared with the



press the details about the upcoming sessions and process of registration to participate in the Summit.

There will be a Special Session on Investment Opportunities in Odisha March 3, 2021, which will be presided over by Commerce & Transport Minister of Odisha Padmanabha Behera. Other senior state officials of the state government and heads of leading industries will also join via virtual mode.

Out of the 27 MoUs, 15 MoUs are

worth ₹3,878.81 crore under the category of Projects for development of World Class Port, 2 in Coastal Shipping Hinterland connectivity and Multimodal Logistics Park worth ₹355 crore, 2 in Port infrastructures focusing on Liquid Cargo worth ₹5,382.64 crore, 4 in Port Led Industrialization worth ₹16,218 crore and 4 under the category of Promoting Cargo and Passenger Movement and Seaplane Tourism worth ₹1,616 crore.

The Union Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways will conduct the MIS from March 2 - 4, 2021. The summit intends to be a powerful platform for international collaboration with partner countries for mutual exchange of knowledge and opportunities and also leading towards the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'.

'Insurance most preferred financial product to protect family'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 28: Insurance has become the most-preferred financial product to protect the family against health emergencies post the Covid-19 pandemic with more people inclined to invest in insurance products in the next six months, according to a survey from Tata AIA Life Insurance.

According to a consumer confidence survey on the impact of Covid-19 commissioned by research agency Nielsen, life insurance turned out to be the most preferred financial tool driven by the need to secure family's future financially and the concern around medical emergencies.

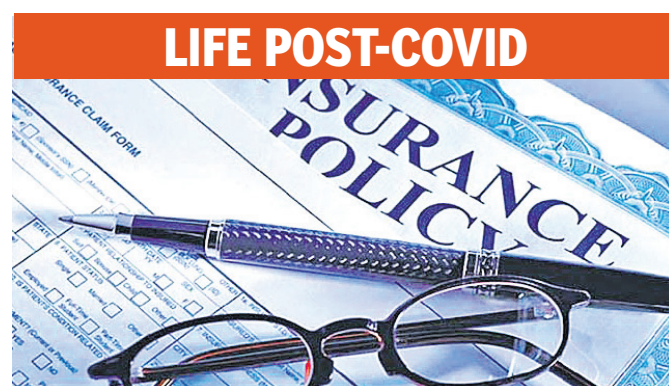
The survey also found that most consumers would like to buy life insurance in the next six months as part of their investment plans.

The survey conducted on 1,369 respondents across nine centres revealed that during the pandemic, 51 per cent of the respondents invested in life insurance, while 48 per cent invested in health-related insurance solutions, which is higher than other financial asset classes.

More than half of the respondents said their views towards life insurance have changed positively due to the pandemic and 49 per cent want to invest in buying a life cover in the next six months and 40 per cent intends to invest in health insurance.

The survey said 30 per cent of the people invested in life insurance for the first time during the pandemic, while 26 per cent invested in health-related insurance solutions for the first time.

Financial security against med-



ical emergencies and expenses has become the topmost priority, with as many as 62 per cent mentioning about it and a majority of 84 per cent saying they are still concerned about self and family due to coronavirus. 61 per cent were worried

about themselves/family and their top concern is the economic slowdown. "Of the respondents concerned about self and family, 50 per cent are worried about mental health due to increased workload due to Covid-19 pandemic. Among fe-

LIFE INSURANCE TURNED OUT TO BE THE MOST PREFERRED FINANCIAL TOOL DRIVEN BY THE NEED TO SECURE FAMILY'S FUTURE FINANCIALLY

MOST CONSUMERS WOULD LIKE TO BUY LIFE INSURANCE IN THE NEXT SIX MONTHS AS PART OF THEIR INVESTMENT PLANS

male respondents, 55 per cent said they are concerned about the mental health due to the increased workload during the pandemic.

"41 per cent people are buying financial products online more often than before Covid-19 pandemic," the survey said.

Among the other asset classes, one-third of the respondents said they invested in bank or company

fixed deposits, and 30 per cent invested in mutual funds, while 24 per cent invested in stocks, 17 per cent invested in gold/digital gold.

"Life insurance has clearly emerged as the preferred financial asset as per our Covid sentiment study. There is a distinct shift towards considering life insurance as the primary source of future financial protection, followed by health and wellness solutions.

"The survey findings have helped capture and unravel the transition in customer usage and attitude towards life insurance," said Venky Iyer, CDO and Head marketing, Tata AIA Life Insurance.

The survey reveals that with changing money needs and priorities, consumers' monthly allocation towards insurance, savings and investment, has increased.

GOOD PERFORMANCES IN JUST-CONCLUDED 3RD TEST AGAINST ENGLAND IN AHMEDABAD



Ashwin, Rohit move up in ICC rankings

AGENCIES

Dubai, Feb 28: Opener Rohit Sharma touched his career-best eighth position in the 'ICC Test Batsmen's Rankings' with a six-place jump Sunday. This improvement came after his impressive show in India's 10-wicket win over England in the low-scoring third Test in Ahmedabad. The match ended within two days with Rohit top-scoring in the first innings with 66 and remaining unbeaten on 25 in the second. He had also scored a swashbuckling century in the second Test at Chennai which helped India restore parity in the four-game series.

Rohit's current rating points aggregate is 742. It is 20 points more than his best of 722 in October 2019 when he was ranked 10th.

Player of the match Axar Patel and Ravichandran Ashwin have also made solid gains after playing a crucial role in India's win on a spin-friendly track.

Left-arm spinner Patel's 11-wicket match haul has helped him gain 30 slots to reach 38th position while off-spinner Ashwin's seven wickets have lifted

him four places to third position. During the course of the match, Ashwin also became the fourth Indian bowlers to capture 400 or more Test wickets. England spinner Jack Leach has entered the top 30 for the first time, moving up three places to 28th after taking four wickets. Captain Joe Root's maiden five-wicket haul has lifted him 16 places to 72nd among bowlers while he is now joint-13th among all-rounders.

Meanwhile, the ICC said that player rankings will move to a weekly updating system from March 2021 for both men and women. "The change will not impact

the way the rankings are calculated but what it means is that instead of rankings being updated at the end of a series (in ODIs and T20Is) or a Test match, they may be updated while a series or match is ongoing without performances in those matches being considered," ICC said in a release Sunday.

Lyon roars in support

Melbourne: Star Australia spinner Nathan Lyon is baffled by all the hullabaloo over the Motera pitch. He said Sunday 'everyone seems to start crying' when the ball starts spinning but no one speaks out when teams are bundled out for low scores on seaming tracks. The Motera track came in for criticism after England were bowled out for 112 and 81 in the third Test against India. "We play on seaming wickets around the world and get bowled out for 47, 60. Nobody ever says a thing (about the pitch). But as soon as it starts spinning, everyone in the world seems to start crying about it," Lyon was quoted as saying by 'The West Australian'. "I don't get it. I'm all for spinning pitches, it was entertaining," he added.

Odisha to host 2021 IWL event



AIFF president Praful Patel with the IWL trophy and captains of the participating teams in the inaugural year of IWL in 2017 (FILE PHOTO)

PNN & AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 28: Odisha will host the 2020-2021 Indian Women's League (IWL), the All India Football Federation (AIFF) said Sunday. The dates for the tournament are yet to be finalised and will be announced soon, the football body added.

AIFF president Praful Patel thanked the Odisha government for agreeing to play host to the event. "The government of Odisha has been a great supporter of Indian football. We are very thankful to Shri Naveen Patnaik ji, Mr Vishal Kumar Dev, Mr Vineel Krishna and the entire sports department of Odisha for extending all the support and help to organise the IWL," Patel said in a statement, Sunday.

"Over the years, the tournament has provided the platform for a lot of budding women footballers to show-case their talent. It has provided them the option of taking up football as a career," Patel added.

The AIFF further stated that it 'stays committed to the development of women's football in India'.

India is scheduled to host the AFC Women's Asian Cup in 2022 which will be followed by the FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup, the same year. The AIFF thus, is hoping to

The IWL has provided the platform for a lot of budding footballers to showcase their talent and make a career out of the game

PRAFUL PATEL

utilise the event to scout and unearth new talent for the women's national team.

Odisha Sports Minister Tushar Kanti Behera said, "Holistic development of sports in India, and Indian football in particular is Odisha sports' vision. Odisha has been synonymous with women's football in India for long. I am an ardent supporter of women empowerment, and the hosting of the IWL in Odisha allows us the opportunity to contribute to the development of women's football in India along with the AIFF."

Odisha Principal Secretary, Sports and Youth Services Department, Vishal Kumar Dev said: "Hosting the 2020-21 edition of the Indian Women's League will be another feather in the cap of Odisha sports. I am sure the IWL will lead to tremendous excitement amongst the football aficionados of Odisha.

SHORT TAKES

Para-archers shine

New Delhi: Indian para-archer Rakesh Kumar stood on top of the podium in the Compound event while the pair of Harvinder Singh and Pooja grabbed gold in the recurve mixed team event at the Fazza world ranking tournament in Dubai. Rakesh defeated compatriot Shyam Sunder 143-135 in the final after his 143-138 semifinal win over Turkey's Agyan. Harvinder and Pooja got the better of the No.1 ranked team from Turkey to finish with the yellow medal. This is the first event Indian archers attended since the COVID-19 lockdown in March.

Impressive return

Krefeld (Germany): Young Vivek Sagar Prasad scored a brace as the Indian men's hockey team outclassed Germany 6-1 in its Europe tour opener to make an impressive return to international circuit following coronavirus-forced break. Vivek (27th, 28th minutes), Nilakanta Sharma (13th), Lalit Kumar Upadhyay (41st), Akashdeep Singh (42nd) and Harmanpreet Singh (47th) were the goal scorers for India. The goal for Germany was scored by Constantin Staib in the 14th minute. However, India made their mark with Vivek scoring two back to back goals in the 2nd quarter. That more or less sealed up the game for the visitors.

Eves lose again

Dusseldorf: The Indian women's hockey team lost 0-1 to Germany in their second tour game, putting a much-improved show from their 0-5 thrashing in the opening match. Amelie Wortmann (24th minute) scored the only goal of the game as the Germans held on to their slender advantage to take a 2-0 lead in the four-match series. Midfielder Wortmann put her side in the lead six minutes before the end of the second quarter. The Indians responded quickly, earning a penalty corner just three minutes after going behind, but were unable to breach past the German backline. Late into the game, the Indian eves earned two more penalty corners, but failed to utilise those.

AGENCIES

Barcelona keep title hopes alive

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Madrid, Feb 28: FC Barcelona kept their La Liga title hopes alive and probably ended Sevilla's with a 2-0 win Saturday in the Sanchez Pizjuan Stadium. Ousmane Dembele and Lionel Messi gave Barca a win in the ground where they lost 0-2 in the Copa del Rey 17 days ago and just four days before the teams meet again at the Camp Nou.

Barca boss Ronaldo Koeman sprang a surprise in his line-up with Sergino Dest and Jordi Alba playing as wing-backs in front of three central defenders.

The first half saw both teams play a tactical game with Sevilla willing to sit deep. However, Messi found Dembele with a brilliant through ball and the latter threaded the ball past Bono in Sevilla goal.

Sevilla had their first look at the Barcelona goal in the 52nd minute, but Ter Stegen easily handled the situation easily.



Lionel Messi of Barcelona in action against Sevilla, Saturday

uation easily.

Sevilla were dominating the closing stage, but Messi put the issue beyond doubt five minutes from time after linking with Moriba.

Although Bono saved Messi's first shot, the Argentine was able to follow up and sidefoot the ball into the net. Messi scored a lot of opportunity to score.

Sports Hostel win



The ball is about to enter the Odisha Police goal during their game against Sports Hostel at the Kalinga Stadium, Sunday

OP PHOTO

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 28: Minati Nayak and Malati Munda both got hat-tricks as Sports Hostel demolished Odisha Police 6-1 in the inaugural football match of the Odisha Women's League (OWL) here Sunday at the Kalinga Stadium. Sonali Oram got a consolation goal for the losers.

In a one-sided encounter, Minati got her goals in the 23rd, 58th and 77th minutes of the game while Malati scored in the 12th, 29th and 68th minutes. The goal for Odisha Police came in the 53rd minute.

Sports Hostel players were very dominant all through the game. They rarely allowed opposition footballers to enter their half.

Sports Hostel could have easily scored more than 10 goals if they had utilised all the chances that came their way. Tikina Samal under the Odisha Police bar also effected a few stunning saves to prevent the margin from becoming more embarrassing.

R Vineel Krishna IAS (Special Secretary, CMO & Director of Sports & Youth Service, Govt of Odisha) was present in the opening ceremony as the chief guest.

27TH CONSECUTIVE VICTORY IN ALL COMPETITIONS

City's winning run continues

AGENCIES

Manchester, Feb 28: Manchester City moved 13 points clear at the top of the English Premier League table Saturday after a 2-1 win over West Ham – their 20th straight win in all competitions. Pep Guardiola's side are closing in on their third Premier League title in four seasons thanks to priceless contributions from their in-form centre-backs.

The hosts took the lead in the 30th minute with central defender Ruben Dias heading in a Kevin de Bruyne cross for his first goal for the club, but the Hammers drew level through Michael Antonio two minutes before the interval. City secured their 14th consecutive league win, however, when Dias' fellow defender John Stones slotted home after being picked out by a Riyad Mahrez pull back.

Fourth-placed West Ham, who performed well throughout, had a late chance to grab a point, but



MOMENT TO CHERISH: Goalscorer John Stones (2nd left) celebrates with Riyad Mahrez after scoring the second goal for Manchester City against West Ham

Issa Diop failed to connect well with a header from a Jesse Lingard cross from close.

The win moves City, unbeaten in 27 matches, on to 62 points from 26

games with Manchester United behind them on 49 points from 25 matches. Leicester are level on points with United but third on goal difference.

VIJAY HAZARE TROPHY MATCH

Odisha go down by six wickets to UP

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 28: Odisha's woes in the Vijay Hazare Trophy continued as they lost to Uttar Pradesh by six wickets in an Elite Group 'C' game played Sunday at Bangalore. After being put in, Odisha were bowled out for 148 runs in 40.3 overs. In reply, Uttar Pradesh easily knocked off runs and scored 150 for four in just 21.4 overs. This was Odisha's fourth loss in five games and they are now placed fifth in the six-team group.

Left-arm orthodox spinner Shivam Sharma (6/22) turned out to be the star performer for the winners. Only Subhranshu Senapati (49 n o, 68b, 5x4), Rakesh Patnaik (46, 63b, 5x4, 1x6) and skipper Shantanu Mishra (24) managed to get double-digit scores. The others just came and went. It should be stated here that India bowler Bhuvneshwar Kumar who is on a comeback trail, failed to get any

wickets in his seven-over spell.

The UP batsmen were always in control during the chase which was led by Upendra Yadav (32 n o). **Brief scores:** Odisha 148 all out in 40.1 overs (Subhranshu Senapati 49 n o, Rakesh Patnaik 46, Shivam Sharma 6/22) lost to UP 150 for four in 21.4 overs (Upendra Yadav 32 n o, Rajesh Mohanty 2/37) by six wickets.

New MOU signed

The Utikal Karate School (UKS) in the city here has got accreditation from 'Khelo India' to promote the discipline of weightlifting. A MoU to this effect was signed recently by the Sports Authority of India and UKS to promote the sport of weightlifting under the 'Khelo India' scheme. Under this agreement, many talented young weightlifters will get the chance to utilities available at UKS to pursue their dreams of becoming a reputed weightlifter in the future.

Vinesh bags gold with superb show

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kiev (Ukraine), Feb 28: Star Indian wrestler Vinesh Phogat pinned 2017 World Champion V Kaladzinskay to grab a gold medal Sunday at the 'Outstanding Ukrainian Wrestlers and Coaches Memorial' tournament here. She returned to the mat in style after a long coronavirus-forced break.

Up against the World No. 7 Belarusian, it was not an easy bout for the World No. 3 Indian as the two grapplers kept testing each other with consistent attacks in the sea-saw battle in which Vinesh prevailed.

Vinesh opened up a 4-0 lead in the 53kg final with a throw which she initiated with a left-leg attack but Kaladzinskay made it 4-4 with her brilliant move. Vinesh took the break leading 6-4, adding to her score with a takedown, 10 seconds before the break.

The Belarusian put pressure on the Indian with another four-point throw but with 25 seconds to go, Vinesh's move fetched her four more points for a 10-8 lead. She got into a position from where she pinned Kaladzinskay to ensure herself a gold medal.