



PICTURE OF OPTIMISM

Aditi Rao Hydari says she can have hard days but she always tries looking at silver linings

LEISURE P2



PIPLI BYPOLL NOTIFICATION

The CEO office Tuesday issued the notification for the by-election to Pipli Assembly seat

DOWNTOWN P3



GANEMAT-ANGAD TRIUMPHS

Shooters Ganemat Sekhon and Angad Vir Singh Bajwa claim the skeet mixed team gold at ISSF World Cup

SPORTS P12

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IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Now we know why our friend is always angry and tense. His monthly target is much higher than ours!

5 cops killed as Naxals blow up bus in Chh'garh

AGENCIES

Raipur, March 23: Five police personnel were killed and 13 others injured as Naxals blew up the bus in which they were traveling in Chhattisgarh's Narayanpur district Tuesday, senior police officials said.

The landmine explosion took place between Kanhargao and Kadenar villages under Dhaudai police station limits. Personnel of the police's District Reserve Guard (DRG) were returning in the bus to Naryanpur town, 300 km away from capital Raipur, after a counter-insurgency operation, said Inspector General of Police (Bastar range) Sundarraj P.

"Five DRG personnel, including the driver, were killed in the explosion," he told PTI. Reinforcement was rushed to the spot and bodies and injured personnel were evacuated from the forest. The injured personnel are being airlifted to Raipur in an Indian Air Force chopper for treatment, the IG added.

| MARKET WATCH | | | |
|--------------|----------|---|-----------|
| INDEX | | | VARIATION |
| SENSEX | 50051.44 | ▲ | 20.10 |
| NIFTY | 14814.80 | ▲ | 280.15 |
| DOLLAR | 72.96 | ▲ | ₹0.14 |
| EURO | 86.23 | ▼ | ₹0.16 |
| GOLD | ₹44,734 | ▼ | ₹171 |
| SILVER | ₹65,428 | ▼ | ₹903 |

| WEATHER | | | |
|----------|--------|--------|-------------------------|
| | BHUB | CTK | |
| TEMP MAX | 39.0°C | 36.4°C | |
| TEMP MIN | 25.5°C | 24.4°C | |
| Humidity | 81% | 85% | Forecast |
| Rainfall | Nil | Nil | Fog/mist in the morning |

SC RELIEF TO GOVT ON LOAN MORATORIUM

AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 23: In a relief to borrowers, the Supreme Court Tuesday directed that no compound or penal interest be charged during the six-month loan moratorium period announced last year amid the COVID-19 pandemic and the amount already charged shall be refunded, credited or adjusted.

The apex court refused to interfere with the Centre's and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI)'s decision to not extend the loan moratorium beyond August 31 last year, saying it is a policy decision.

A bench headed by Justice Ashok Bhushan said the SC cannot do judicial review of the Centre's financial policy decision unless it is mala fide and arbitrary. The apex court said it cannot interfere with the government's decision to fix priorities for relief during the pandemic which has hit all across the country and the government has been under

severe financial constraints. The bench said this in its verdict on a batch of pleas filed by various trade associations, including from real estate and power sectors, seeking extension of loan moratorium and other reliefs in view of the pandemic. The RBI had March 27 last year issued the circular which allowed lending institutions to grant a moratorium on payment of instalments of term loans falling due between March 1, 2020 and May 31, 2020, due to the pandemic. Later, the moratorium was extended till August 31 last year.

In its verdict, the top court said that from various steps taken by the government, it cannot be said that the Centre and the RBI have not considered the relief for the borrowers. The bench said it cannot strike down a policy decision merely at the behest of petitioners on grounds that the other view is possible and the other decision could be more beneficial.

AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 23: The government Tuesday announced that from April 1, all people above 45 years of age will be eligible to get COVID-19 vaccines and requested them to get registered for the inoculation.

Union Minister Prakash Javadekar said now even people without comorbidities who are more than 45 years of age can get vaccinated. He requested people entitled to get themselves registered to take the jabs. He said the second dose of the vaccine can be taken between four and eight weeks, on the advice of doctors. It was allowed to be taken between four to six weeks earlier, but scientists have now said that taking the second dose between four and eight weeks gives improved results.

The Union Cabinet discussed about the vaccination drive which has already achieved speedy and good progress, Javadekar said. "Today after discussion and on the advice of the task



force and scientists, it was decided that from April 1 the vaccine will open for everybody above 45 years of age.

"We request that all eligible people should immediately register from April 1 and get vaccinated, as it is the shield against the disease," Javadekar told reporters. He said till this day, 4.85 crore vaccines have been adminis-

tered for COVID-19 and more than 32 lakh people administered the vaccine in last 24 hours.

Another decision taken, on the advice given by scientists and world scientific bodies, was that the second dose of vaccine can be administered between fourth and eighth week, particularly for Covishield, he said. "Our appeal is that all above 45 years should take vaccine as early as possible, that will provide them the shield against coronavirus and they should register for getting vaccinated," the minister said.

Vaccines are available in enough number and there is no scarcity and the supply chains and supply line is intact, he said, adding that "I am sure everyone will welcome this decision and come forward to get vaccinated." The minister said he was confident that vaccination will increase at a fast pace.

On 80 per cent cases in Punjab found to have UK variant of the virus, Javadekar said, the virus is coming out in new variants and forms. That is why getting vaccinated is important as that is the only shield, he said.

CM SEEKS STRICT ENFORCEMENT

BHUBANESWAR: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Tuesday asked senior officials to ensure strict enforcement of Covid norms like wearing masks, washing hands and maintaining social distance in the state. While reviewing the COVID situation in the state, Patnaik asked the Chief Secretary and other officials to give emphasis on three things - testing, enforcement and containment. Enforcement of Covid appropriate behaviour by police, especially in urban areas and a close watch on returnees from states where cases are more were also discussed. If cluster cases are reported from any part, the area will be declared as containment zones. He instructed Collectors and SPs to personally look after enforcement of Covid norms. Meanwhile, the government revised its order for conduct of marriage and funeral processions. Now, a maximum of 200 persons will be allowed for marriage while only 50 people can gather at funeral-related events.



REMINISCING BAPU'S 1ST VISIT



A procession is underway in Cuttack to commemorate the centenary of Gandhiji's first visit to Odisha, Tuesday

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 23: The State Cabinet Tuesday approved the State Level Sports Infrastructure Development Project worth ₹356.38 crore. The government said investments for the project will be primarily used in two components—expansion of Kalinga Stadium Sports Complex and construction of a new international hockey stadium in Rourkela which will be the host venue for the Men's Hockey World Cup-2023.

It has been decided that out of ₹356.38 crore, ₹90 crore will be allocated from the state government's budget from three financial years starting from 2020-21. The remaining funds will be used from Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), District Mineral Foundation (DMF) from Sundargarh and Odisha Sports Development Funds (OSDF). The government has fixed a 16-month deadline to complete the project.

The cabinet also approved sev-

eral other decisions. In another development, the cabinet allowed settlement of urban slum dwellers living in 30 sq feet or lesser areas in land adjacent to them. For this the government has planned to amend the Odisha Land Rights to Slum Dwellers Act.

The government has also planned to amend the Orissa Minerals (prevention of theft, smuggling & illegal mining and regulation of possession, storage, trading and transportation) Rules, 2007 to enable inclusion of IT-based technologies to monitor illegal mining.

The cabinet also decided to waive interest payments from allottees against delayed payment of premium who received houses constructed by the Odisha State Housing Board and Bhubaneswar Development Authority (BDA) from the land given by the general administration department. The move may help 2803 allottees. Out of these, 1925 were allottees from OSHB and 878 from the BDA in 17 projects.

₹356cr for stadiums

283 companies went bankrupt amid pandemic

AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 23: The National Company Law Tribunals (NCLT) across the country admitted a total of 283 companies into insolvency amid the pandemic after the announcement of the nationwide lockdown last year.

The Minister of State for Corporate Affairs, Anurag Thakur, also said that during the period of April 1, 2020 and December 31, 2020, a total of 76 corporate insolvency resolution processes ended in resolution, 128 CIRPs were closed due to withdrawal or appeal or settlement and 189 companies went into liquidation.

Further, the government temporarily suspended the initiation of CIRP under Sections 7, 9 and 10 of the code for six months or such further period not exceeding one year from March 25, 2020.

The benefit of the suspension is applicable to all those defaults of the corporate debtor that occur from March 25, 2020 and till the end of period of suspension.

The 283 bankruptcies declared the pandemic pertain to defaults made before March 25, 2020. Thakur told the house that 30 corporate persons were dissolved or sold as a going concern or undergone compromise or arrangement under section 230 of Companies Act, 2013 under liquidation process.

Further, 59 corporate persons were dissolved under voluntary liquidation process. Retailers, airlines, restaurants, oil producers, mall landlords and gyms these are some of the more than 340 companies that declared bankruptcy in the US in 2020 and blamed Covid-19 in part for their demise.

Many were in deep financial trouble even before governors ordered non-essential businesses shut to help contain the spread of the virus. Some, like opioid-maker Mallinckrodt and a number of Catholic dioceses, filed primarily to get relief from huge lawsuit liabilities but also said the pandemic contributed to their financial woes.

Now, Bengal polls in Odisha villages

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhograi, March 23: Even as Andhra Pradesh had conducted panchayat polls in Odisha villages in Koraput, the poll-bound West Bengal has made a similar bid to conduct Assembly polls in Odisha villages. The WB government has made Sankhamedi village under Bhograi block as part of its Ramnagar Assembly constituency in East Midnapur district.

Leaders of various political parties were seen electioneering in Sankhamedi where banners, posters and festoons were found all over the village.

The WB government has changed the name of Sankhamedi as 'Sankhamudi' just like Andhra did with regard to Kotia villages. Besides, a school in the middle of the village has been named as 'Sankhamudi Sishu Sikhya Kendra'.

In 1954, Odisha government had made a provision of education in the village by setting up a non-formal school. In those days,



Sankhamedi was under Analia panchayat.

In 2008, a two-storied building was set up at Sankhamedi with the efforts of Bhograi MLA and former minister Ananta Das. However, the problem was that the state government stopped collecting revenue from the village since 1962. But it continued to provide benefits like electricity, Anganwadi serv-

ice, roads, ration cards and toilets to villagers. Locals said students suffer as they cannot avail of cast and income certificates. The villagers also get a lot of benefits from West Bengal.

Ajay Jena, ward member of Sankhamedi, said, 'We are Odias and our forefathers were Odias. We are born in Odisha and will die in Odisha.' He demanded that

Odisha government provide them land pattas and caste certificates.

However, Akhila Giri, the TMC MLA nominee for Ramnagar constituency, said voters of Sankhamedi usually take part in Odisha and West Bengal elections. Bhograi MLA Ananta Das said the state government has been providing every benefit to the villagers of Sankhamedi. "This village was, is and will be in Odisha," he asserted.

Surprisingly, Bhograi tehsildar Kamalakant Panda said Sankhamedi is not a revenue village of Odisha. It may be noted that the residents of Sankhamedi have long been demanding that their village be declared as a revenue village under Bhograi block and the state government collect revenue from them.

They said even seven decades after freedom, they have no identities although they identify themselves as Odias. Owing to lack of a revenue village status for Sankhamedi, they do not get residential, caste and income certificates.



15% quota in state-run medical, engg colleges

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 23: The State Assembly Tuesday unanimously passed a resolution setting aside 15 per cent of seats in engineering and medical colleges of the state for state-run high school students. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik moved the resolution that was passed unopposed in the house.

The move was in keeping with the recommendation of a high-powered committee constituted under the chairmanship of retired High Court judge AK Misra. After introduction of the common entrance examinations like NEET and JEE, the number of students from government schools and colleges of Odisha in professional courses is getting considerably reduced, Naveen said, adding, this is not due to lack of merit. Rather the students are un-

able to fare better in these tests due to lack of proper coaching facilities.

The students studying in government schools and colleges lack both physical and economic access to coaching centres which has resulted in inequitable conditions for a majority of students of Odisha, he said. In this backdrop, the Cabinet in December last had resolved to reserve adequate number of seats for the students of government high schools in medical and engineering colleges of the state.

The high-powered panel said, about 86 per cent of the students in Odisha are in government schools and they get 23 per cent of seats in state medical colleges and 21 per cent seats in state engineering colleges. However, 12 per cent of the students studying in private schools get almost 60 per cent of seats in both medical and engineering colleges.



JAMIE FOXX TO PLAY TYSON IN TV SERIES

American boxer-actor Mike Tyson has announced a TV mini-series based on his life. The 54-year-old former heavyweight champion said Oscar-winning actor Jamie Foxx will portray him on screen. Tyson and Foxx will produce the show.

MILLIE BOBBY BROWN RELATES TO ROLE IN GODZILLA VS. KONG

Millie Bobby Brown, who plays Madison in the upcoming *Godzilla Vs. Kong*, is excited about reprising the role of the young activist from the earlier *Godzilla* movies. "I've always felt Madison is a really relatable teenager who goes through things that are quite extraordinary," she said.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES

You will achieve things today, not by the sleight of your hand but by your communication skills, says Ganesha. Your eloquence shall win many hearts. The stars suggest monetary benefits, but you need to guard against injury and minor ailments.

TAURUS

You are likely to confront a turning point in relationships today, foresees Ganesha. Because you are in need of some compassion and support, you will feel the need to spend time with friends and relatives.

GEMINI

You will be lost in the memories of the past today. You will be in a nostalgic frame of mind. Intellectual pursuits will attract you. Do not let your past lay a shadow upon your present and your future, says Ganesha.

CANCER

Today is a crucial and fascinating day for you, predicts Ganesha. You will learn and gain from your bosses and elders. Peers and siblings may extend their full support to you. Your chances of winning legal battles are remote, so an out-of-court settlement may be your best bet.

LEO

You need to curb down on your expenses. You need to moderate the risks you take on in the share market. It is a good day for financial gains though. You need to understand the value of compromise, says Ganesha.

VIRGO

The thinking cap is on your head, and a passionate pulse shall run through you today. Yet, by the mid-day, expect a laid-back, cavalier attitude to grip you. Government officials and other professionals will have an inspiringly assenting day.

LIBRA

Your concern for your family surmounts all else, that much Ganesha knows. Today, you will fulfil your filial duties in all that you undertake. As Ganesha rightly points out: All good things begin at home, including your fortune and good luck.

SCORPIO

A healthy and hectic day is in store for you today. You are likely to finish your pending tasks with new zeal. But the chaotic day will blossom into a fabulous evening when you hang out with your sweetheart, says Ganesha.

SAGITTARIUS

It is time you look back and introspect at what has gone wrong in your life so far. Work to mend your lifestyle and attitude, advises Ganesha. Since it is not possible to be a sage in today's world, adapt to a simple living, shunning all luxuries. Possibly become a vegan. Life may be much better.

CAPRICORN

Today, you will remain unruffled by the commotion around you, says Ganesha. However, the emotions locked up inside you will probably cloud your power of reasoning and may leave you feeling a little lost. But this will only be a passing phase, and you will come out of the bewilderment in no time.

AQUARIUS

You will prove yourself today by staying ahead of your rivals in all ways. You will conquer your frustrations, and will soon be raring to go. Your pleasing demeanour endears you to others and you win admiration from all quarters, says Ganesha.

PISCES

An action-packed day awaits you, busy as you will be corresponding with old contacts, telephonic interviews, organising meetings and scheduling tasks, says Ganesha. Do not forget to breathe!

'Big B makes people around him comfortable'

Mumbai: Filmmaker Rumi Jafri, who directs Amitabh Bachchan and Emraan Hashmi in the film *Chehre*, feels both actors were apt for the project.

Talking about Big B, Rumi says it was his honour to have got the chance to direct him.

"The best part about working with Amit ji is that he makes people around him comfortable. It's like one won't feel that one is around 'the leg-



endary Amitabh Bachchan'. He makes a smooth bond and connection with co-stars. So,

while shooting all the scenes, the chemistry looks effortless," he says.

He adds: "I think there won't be even a single person in our industry who wouldn't want to work with Amitabh Bachchan. I feel fortunate that I got an opportunity to work with him as a writer in my early days." IANS

Parineeti feels more liberated now

Mumbai: In 2011, when Parineeti Chopra made her debut with the film *Ladies Vs Ricky Bahl*, and followed it up with films like *Ishaqzaade* and *Shuddh Desi Romance*, few would have imagined the cute, bubbly girl in an intense role as Mira Kapoor in *The Girl On The Train*, or that



she would one day transform into ace shuttler Saina Nehwal in the biopic *Saina*.

If she has managed to prove her versatility, Parineeti says she seems to have rediscovered herself.

"I feel more liberated now, I feel like I found myself again and I feel great to be myself. You see I introduced to the world through the films and the kind of characters I played in those films. Most of them were the bubbly, happy-go-lucky Punjabi girl who is a drama queen too! Those characters were entertaining and people loved me in those avatars. So people started believing that even in reality I am that girl," said Parineeti.

"Somewhere the reel life and real life got mixed and I also thought that I have to be that person in public. Whereas in reality, I am a deep thinker," added the *Namaste England* actress. IANS



Aditi always tries looking at silver linings

New Delhi: Actress Aditi Rao Hydari admits she is sensitive. Being thick-skinned is hard for her, despite being in an industry where criticism is part and parcel of a celebrity's life.

"People revel in comparing, pulling people down and criticising. I am very sensitive. So, the thick-skinned thing is hard for me. I feel everything. I will laugh as loudly as I cry and I am okay with that. The whole sensitive side as an actor -- I am like that as a person. So, I can have hard days and it is tough, but I feel I always try looking at the silver lining," said Aditi, who was recently seen in the digitally-released film *The Girl On The Train*.

She added: "An actor's rejection is so personal. They are rejecting you. It is always you. It is so personal. It can be very difficult and it can be very heart-breaking." IANS

State level 5-day drama fest Ranga Sangam concludes



BHUBANESWAR: City-based theatre troupe Expressions presented the play *Cupboardra Kankala* (Skeleton in the cupboard) on the last day of theatre festival Ranga Sangam here at Bhanja Kala Mandap, Tuesday. The five-day event was organised by Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi in collaboration with the Department of Odia Language, Literature and Culture, Government of Odisha. The 80-minute play was written, designed and directed by Debananda Nayak (Soni). PNN

100 YEARS OF MAHATMA'S MAIDEN ODISHA VISIT

Gandhinka Odisha staged at 30 centres in state

Written by Shankar Tripathy, the play was staged in all districts of Odisha at the same time and directed by 30 different directors

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar: Mahatma Gandhi had visited Odisha for the first time March 21, 1921. Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi (OSNA) and Odia Language, Literature and Culture Department, Government of Odisha, celebrated the 100 years of Gandhi's maiden visit to the state in a unique manner Tuesday. To pay tribute to the Father of the

Ramadevi or Harekrushna Mahtab have ever been appeared on Odia stage. So, this play will certainly help the future generation to know about these great people."

Many renowned theatre directors including Kesharanjan Pradhan, Abhinna Routray, Sudhanshu Dwivedi, Satya Ranjan Behera, Dinesh Das, Narendra Kumar Mishra, Sharat Acharya, Raju Padhi, Nalini Nihar Nayak and Sriman Narayan Mishra directed the play at places like Padmapur, Kendrapara, Angul, Sambalpur, Dhenkanal, Rayagada, Nayagarh, Berhampur, Rourkela and Paradip.

'BAPU' IN BHUBANESWAR

The play was presented by city-based theatre troupe Nabina Barnali at Rabindra Mandap here.



A scene from Gandhinka Odisha staged at Rabindra Mandap, Tuesday op photo

Nation, *Gandhinka Odisha*, a play written by eminent playwright Shankar Tripathy, was staged at 30 cultural centres of all districts of Odisha at about 6.30 pm.

During his visits to Odisha, Gandhi came in contact with several freedom fighters of that time. The play showcased the interactions between them, Mahatma's address to the gatherings at various places and his love for Odisha.

Playwright Tripathy said, "Gandhi's life and works have been documented at national and international level through films and documentaries. Therefore, after given the responsibility by the Akademi, I decided to keep my script limited to Gandhi's interactions with top Odia leaders of that time and his love for the state."

Speaking about another important feature of the play, he added, "Barring Utkalamani Gopabandhu Das, none of the state's top freedom fighters like Acharya Harihar, Pandit Nilakantha,

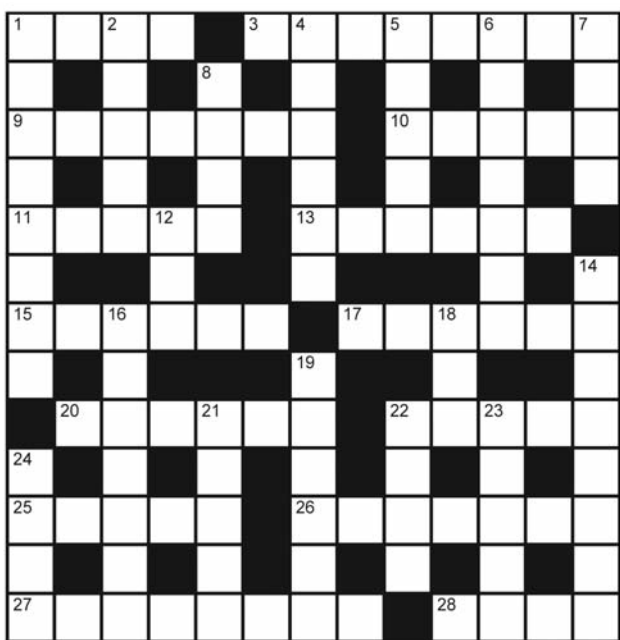
Speaking on the play, director Nabin Parida who also portrayed Mahatma Gandhi's character in the play said, "I felt honoured to direct such a historic play, more so for I played the character of the Mahatma. In fact, I am at a loss of words to express my excitement playing such a great man."

"Earlier I played Gautam Buddha in *Tata Niranjana* and now acted as Mahatma. I am thankful to the Odisha government, the Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi in particular, for taking such a unique initiative," added the ex-principal of Utkal Sangeet Mahavidyalay.

The dignitaries who attended the evening at Rabindra Mandap included Commerce and Transport Minister Padmanabha Behera, Energy Minister Dibyashankar Mishra, Culture Minister Jyoti Prakash Panigrahi, Principal Secretary of Culture department Bishnupada Sethi and OSNA Secretary Prabodh Kumar Rath.

FUN post

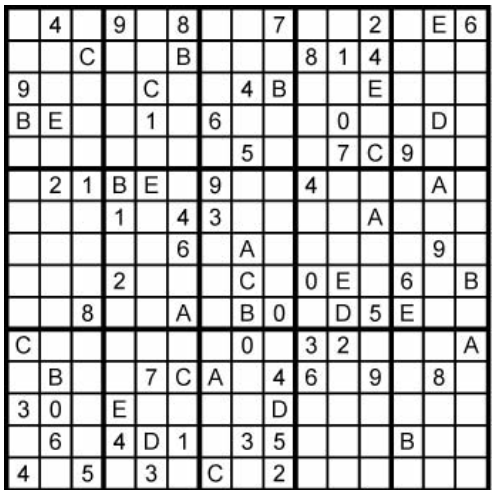
CROSSWORD



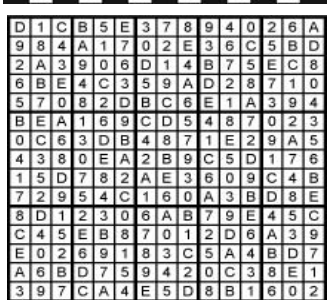
- Across
- 1 In addition
 - 3 Forebear
 - 9 Mild powdered seasoning
 - 10 Subsidised
 - 11 Separately
 - 13 Purchasers
 - 15 Examine (4,2)
 - 17 Desk item
 - 20 Acts
 - 22 Doctrine
 - 25 French farewell
- Down
- 1 Ovation
 - 2 Old photo colour
 - 4 Close at hand
 - 5 Hostile force
 - 6 Knights' tunics
 - 7 Engine parts
 - 26 Urge
 - 27 Junkets and pies
 - 28 Cross to bear
- Clue
- 12 Lobster coral
 - 14 Salted pub treats
 - 16 Horror movie characters
 - 18 Citrus drink
 - 19 Help out
 - 21 Armistice
 - 22 Gratuities
 - 23 Parachute material
 - 24 Lyric poet

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

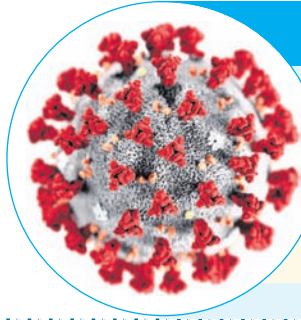


CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



DEMOLITION IN CITY

Civic authorities demolish illegal buildings at BJB Nagar in Bhubaneswar, Tuesday



COVID-19 TRACKER

| | INFECTED | RECOVERED | DEAD |
|--------|--------------|--------------|-----------|
| World | 12,44,72,759 | 10,04,09,458 | 27,38,534 |
| India | 1,16,86,796 | 1,11,81,253 | 1,60,166 |
| Odisha | 3,39,076 | 3,36,266 | 1,919 |

HOUSE PASSES RESOLUTION ON INSERTION OF 'AHIMSA' IN PREAMBLE

Bapu's belief in pluralism still relevant: CM

IF HUMANITY IS TO PROGRESS, GANDHI IS INESCAPABLE, SAYS CHIEF MINISTER NAVEEN PATNAIK QUOTING MARTIN LUTHER KING JR

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 23: The Assembly Tuesday unanimously passed a resolution to include the word 'Ahimsa' (non-violence) in the Preamble of the Constitution of India.

The resolution was moved by Culture Minister Jyoti Prakash Panigrahi and was unanimously passed in the Assembly commemorating the 100th anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi's first visit to Odisha, March 23, 1921. Mahatma had visited Odisha eight times. The House, from 10:30am to 1pm, discussed various aspects of Gandhiji's visit to Odisha.

Participating in the discussion, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik said Odisha had a special place in the heart of Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation.

"During his visits to Odisha, Gandhi had extensively travelled in different parts of the state and interacted with cross sections of the people. He took many Padayatras through which he became very close to the hearts of people of Odisha. His visits created greater awareness about various social issues apart from energizing the Freedom Movement," Patnaik said.

"Of all the things that this country has given to the world, Gandhi's philosophy and his message stand out as one of its greatest contribu-

tions," he said.

He said Gandhi's emphasis on the shunning of individual greed and his exhortation to think of the community is the reminder that the world needs.

The resolution was unanimously passed in the Assembly commemorating the 100th anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi's first visit to Odisha

"There is also an increasing polarisation and divisiveness globally. Gandhi's commitment to pluralism and his message of tolerance and harmony is as relevant now as it was then. Mahatma's non-violent resistance is a spark that ignited peaceful movement around the world," he added.

Quoting Martin Luther King JR, the Chief Minister said, "If Humanity is to progress, Gandhi is inescapable. We may ignore at our own risk". Patnaik said this statement was relevant for today's world as well.

When Mahatma came to Odisha for the first time in 1921, it was not a separate Province. This aspiration of millions of Odia speaking peo-



Speaker Surya Narayan Patro, ministers and MLAs pay floral tributes to Gandhiji on the Assembly premises, Tuesday, to commemorate the centenary of the father of nation's first visit to Odisha

ple became a reality in 1936. When Gandhi came to Odisha for the last time in January 1946, Odisha was nearly a decade old as a linguistic

Province, he mentioned.

The Chief Minister said the state government was totally committed to the principles and ideals of Mahatma, and renaming the state Secretariat as 'Loka Seba Bhawan' was not a symbolism.

Participating in the debate, Leader of Opposition PK Naik said, "Tributes to the Mahatma can only be reflected in ways we all have lived up to inculcate his doctrines in our lives." He said Gandhi's philosophy needed to be reflected in the government's policies.

Naik also raised the issue of rampant sale of liquor and illegal cattle trafficking. The state government is pursuing a policy of earning more from liquor sale by rewarding people who sell more alcohol. "What kind of tribute is paid to Gandhiji," asked the opposition leader.

Congress legislature party leader

Narasimha Mishra said that people, who are inspired by the ideology of Gandhi's assassin, are ruling the country. They are also building temple of Gandhi's murderer and shooting at a picture of Gandhiji. "Though Prime Minister had condemned the incident, the person concerned was not removed from party," the Congress leader said. BJP members opposed such statement of Mishra. Stating that people have started forgetting Mahatma Gandhi, he said life and his teachings should be taught in schools.

Congress lawmaker Taraprasad Bahinipati demanded total prohibition and ban on illegal trafficking of cattle. Speaker SN Patro, government chief whip Pramila Mallick and many members irrespective of party spoke about Gandhi's ideology and visit to Odisha.



Culture Minister Jyoti Prakash Panigrahi (middle), MP Bhartruhari Mahtab (2nd from L), MLA Muhammad Moqim (2nd from R) and other dignitaries release a commemorative postage stamp at Swaraj Ashram in Cuttack, Tuesday

City woman accuses hubby of forcing her into flesh trade

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 23: A woman from the Capital city has accused her husband of forcing her into flesh trade. Chandrasekharpur police have been looking into the matter by detaining the accused husband.

Accused Chandan Acharya, who hails from Pattamundai in Kendrapara, has been residing in Damana under Chandrasekharpur police limits. Acharya works as a driver in Bhubaneswar.

According to sources, the couple was in a relationship and tied the nuptial knot nine years ago. Their married life went on smoothly



for the initial two years but later the husband allegedly forced her to have sexual relationships with strangers and his friends. The victim claimed that he used to beat her mercilessly upon refusing to comply.

However, she finally mustered courage to file a complaint with the police Monday night when

Acharya beat the victim with an iron rod and reportedly hurt her private parts with a broken alcohol bottle for resisting him.

On the other hand, Chandan's relatives alleged that the lady has recently engaged in an illicit affair with a 25-year-old boy who was staying along with the couple. Chandan's father claimed that he burst into anger after coming to know about the alleged extramarital relationship and beat the victim in a fit of rage Monday.

Notably, many objectionable videos of the lady and her paramour are doing rounds on the web as well. Police have been looking into all the angles.

Notification for Pipli bypoll out

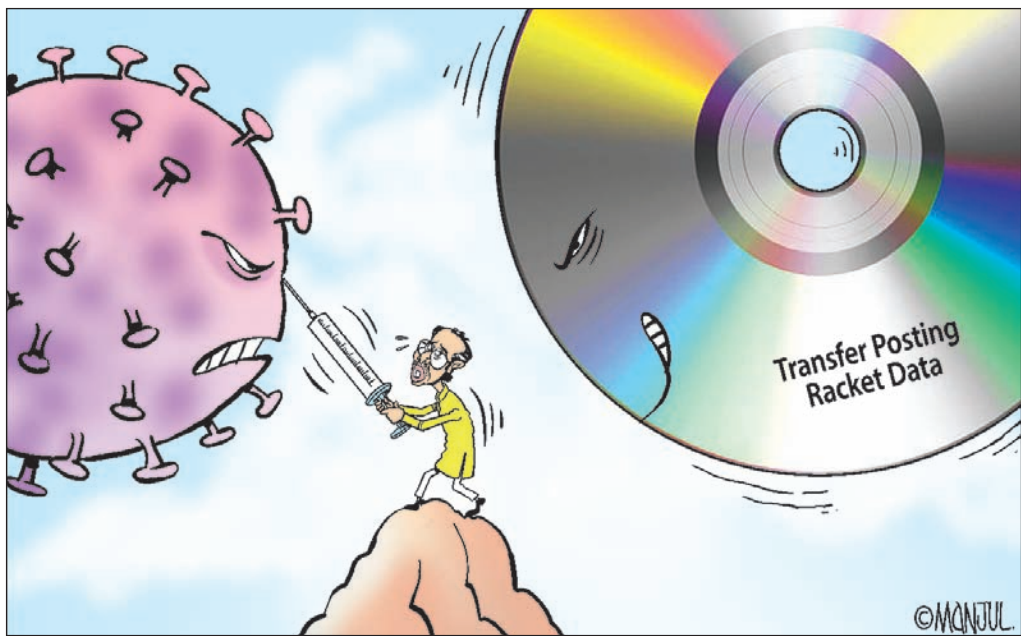
POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 23: The office of the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Tuesday issued the notification for the by-elections to Pipli Assembly seat as per the earlier schedule issued by the Election Commission of India (ECI).

The notification said that the by-elections for Pipli Assembly segment must end by May 4 of this year. The notification said that the election should be conducted April 17 between 7am to 6pm.

It also reads that the nominations for the bypolls must conclude by March 30 and the scrutiny of the nominations should be done by March 31. It also allowed the nominees to withdraw their nominations by April 3.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



1.12 lakh forest fires in 10 years

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 23: Forest and Environment Minister Bikram Keshari Arukha said in a written reply in the Assembly Tuesday that the last decade experienced a total of 1,12,406 incidents of forest fires from across Odisha.

The department gave a detailed account of forest fires in the last 10 years, between 2010 and 2020.

A total of 33,185 incidents were reported from February 1 to March 15, 2021. Out of these, verified fire incidents stood at 23,258.

The total area affected by the incidents stood at 15,992.731 hectares.

The Assembly also approved demand for grants of Rs 1891.60 crore for the department. Out of the total grant, Rs 1389.90 crore is earmarked for programme expenditure while Rs 501.70 crore given for administrative expenditure.



Forest department officials and fire brigade personnel trying to douse the flames at Barunei forests

OP PHOTO

POST NEWS NETWORK

Khurda, March 23: A major fire broke out at Barunei forests here Tuesday. At least two hectares of the forest were gutted, said a Forest department official adding, "It is suspected that some miscreants might have set the forest on fire."

Some locals spotted the fire on the hilltop at around 1 pm. Soon the fire spread to the nearby areas, sources said.

"Employees of Forest department and fire brigade personnel tried to douse the inferno manually as no fire engine could access the spot," said a local.

Department sources said that at least 30 personnel were engaged to contain the blaze.

"Our personnel doused hilltop flames manually while fire engineers were pressed into service for other areas. The fire was contained by around 3pm," said a source in the Forest department.

It is worth mentioning here that fire had broken out at two places in Barunei forest March 14.

The fire brigade personnel had taken several hours to contain the flames at Gadakhurda and Podapada inside the forests. At least five acres of the forests were gutted in the two incidents.

Portal launched for posting of Anganwadi workers

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 23: Women and Child Development (W&CD) and Mission Shakti Minister Tukuni Sahu Tuesday inaugurated the engagement-awc portal for Anganwadi workers and helpers.

As part of the 5T action plan of the department, this portal had been developed for engagement of Anganwadi workers and helpers. Principal Secretary to W&CD department, Anu Garg and other senior officers were present in the launching ceremony.

Using this portal, engagement process will be streamlined and overall governance will be much easier. Its key objectives are operational efficiency, publication of engagement advertisements, automating the engagement process and bringing transparency in data reporting.

This portal primarily consti-



tutes modules like vacancy management, engagement advertisement management, online registration, applicant scrutiny & selection, engagement and disengagement, dashboard and MIS reports.

With technological intervention, the manual process of engaging Anganwadi workers & helpers is now being moved towards this online portal. It aims to reduce errors and introduce more efficient ways of conducting and managing engagement process.

Crackdown soon on forgers in GIA claims

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 23: Higher Education department Tuesday directed all the principals of aided degree colleges in the state to scrutinise forged documents for claiming grant-in aid (GIA) by staffers of the colleges.

Saswat Mishra, Principal Secretary of Higher Education department, said that while verifying some proposals received by the department for post approval under GIA orders, some cases of forged documents were detected.

He said that steps are being taken to initiate criminal proceedings against the offenders. “You are hereby advised to scrutinize all supporting documents carefully before sending any proposal to the Higher Education department in future for post approval in favour of teaching/non-teaching staffs of the college.”

He also stated that detection of forged documents in future will be viewed very seriously and criminal as well as disciplinary action will be taken against the said principal and the person responsible for such forgery.

4 bike lifters held

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, March 23: The twin city Commissionerate Police Tuesday claimed to have arrested four members of a bike-lifting gang here.

The accused were identified as Sk Naddeem, Sk Aspakh, Sk Sonu and Seikh Wasif of the Millennium City. According to ACP Sk Sarifuddin, they got the lead while investigating into a bike lifting incident reported from Mala Sahi under Mangalabag police March 10.

“During investigation, we discovered that a seven-member gang [the four along with three others] was involved in lifting at least five two-wheelers, including the March 10 one, from Malgodown area. The gang used the stolen two-wheelers to commit petty crimes like chain snatching in the Silver City,” the ACP said, adding that efforts are on to track down three others who are on the run.

WASSUP TODAY

- BHUBANESWAR**
- Meet by contractual launch drivers’ association, Nagabhushan Bhawan, A/13, Ashok Nagar, 10.30am
 - 29th Nikhila Utkala Natya Utsav by Aarohan, Rabindra Mandap, 6.30pm
 - ‘Odissi Aasara’ by Gurukulcharan Mohapatra Odissi Research Centre, Utkal Rangamancha, 6.30pm
 - Stage play by Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi, Rabindra Mandap, 6.30pm
- KHURDA**
- Biju Premiere League, BJB High School ground, 5pm
- CUTTACK**
- Camp by ‘Dibyaloka Sandhane’, Twin City Mandap, Telengapentha, 6pm
- PURI**
- Inaugural occasion of Basanta Utsav, Annapurna Rangamancha, 11am
 - 36th annual function of Shree Mahavir Temple, Sundara Jaga, 6pm

Programmes/announcements for **wassup** today may be sent to opwassup@gmail.com for record, it must also carry the sender’s mobile number for our verification, but not for publication.

CLASSIFIED
AFFIDAVIT

I, Madhusmeta Khuntia, W/o. Sudhansu Nayak, R/o. Sikharpur Talashai Cuttack has changed my name from Madhusmita Surendranath Khuntia to Madhusmeta Khuntia for all future purpose.

BJD decries Sambalpur rly stn shutdown plan

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, March 23: Opposing the decision to close down the century-old Sambalpur Road railway station, Biju Janata Dal (BJD) MP Prasanna Acharya sought intervention of the Union railway minister to allow the continuation of the station as it bears the memories of Mahatma Gandhi’s visit to the state.

Speaking during the Zero Hour in Rajya Sabha, the BJD Parliamentary Party leader in the Upper House expressed anguish over the decision saying that the Railways has taken such an unfortunate decision while the whole of Odisha is celebrating centenary of Gandhi’s visit to Odisha.

“Odisha is celebrating, at a wide scale, the centenary year of Mahatma Gandhi’s visit to the state. The Sambalpur railway station, which is a divisional headquarter of



Sambalpur railway station, which is a divisional headquarter of Railways, is a century-old railway station and bears the memory of Gandhi’s visit to Sambalpur

Railways, is a century-old railway station and bears the memory of Gandhi’s visit to Sambalpur. Gandhi alighted at that railway station, had a public meeting on the sands of River Mahanadi, which started the Independence Movement there,” Acharya said.

The BJD MP told the House that the decision has sent tremors all over the region in Sambalpur and wide-spread agitation are going on there.

“Sambalpur was having the Railway Survey Division Office since 1880 which conducted survey, while laying of railway network to Raigarh-Jharsuguda Section of Bombay-Kolkata line, which was opened in 1890, and Jharsuguda-Chakradharpur section came up in March 1981. Passenger trains started running via Sambalpur Road Station in 1893 and the sta-

tion came up full-fledged in 1895 and continued since then,” Acharya said.

He asserted that station is giving good revenue to the Railways and it comes under East Coast Railway zone. The Railways had, in 2007, taken similar decision to close it down but the decision was changed following a tripartite meeting among the district administration, Railways and the public representatives.

“I would request the Railway Minister to kindly reconsider the decision and allow the Sambalpur Railway Station to continue further. In 2007, the Railways had also



Tax big farmers, Pinaki tells Centre

NEW DELHI: Pitching for bold steps on direct tax front, BJD MP Pinaki Misra from Puri Tuesday suggested that the Centre should tax the big farmers of the country.

Speaking on the Finance Bill, 2021 in the Lok Sabha, the BJD Parliamentary Party leader said that the tax revenue is supposed to increase 16 per cent in 2021-22 and the government needs to be bold about the direct taxes.

“Tax revenue is supposed to increase 16 per cent in 2021-22. Don’t understand how that is going to happen. You have to be bold about direct taxes. If only 1.5 crore pay taxes out of 135 crore, you have to be bold,” Misra said.

The BJD MP opined that the current BJP government at the Centre perhaps has the courage to tax big farmers. He also clarified that he is not speaking on behalf of his party but he feels that the government needs to take bold steps.

“Why not the rich farmers be

Why not the rich farmers be taxed. Poor and marginal farmers cannot be taxed but I want to ask to tax the big contract farmers who move around in SUVs. The Prime Minister can do it

PINAKI MISRA | PURI MP

taxed. Poor and marginal farmers cannot be taxed but I want to ask to tax the big contract farmers who move around in SUVs. The Prime Minister can do it,” Misra said.

He also asserted that the demonetisation was a complete failure and there is still very large volume of cash in the economy. “Tens of thousands of crores are being transferred through hawala,” he added.

Misra also cautioned the government that retrospective taxation dampened the foreign direct investment (FDI) inflow.

“On FDI, I have to caution the government. Retrospective taxation is an anathema in this country. Ministry officials should hold discussion with investors in this regard,” he states.

Amar seeks recognition to women farmers

NEW DELHI: BJD MP Amar Patnaik Tuesday urged the Centre to recognise the rights of women farmers as it would help have a sustainable growth of agricultural practices in the country.

Speaking during the Zero Hour, the BJD MP informed the Rajya Sabha that currently around 15 crore women are engaged in agricultural activities right from sowing seeds to harvesting. Hence, the demands of the women farmers to uphold their rights have to be addressed both at the policy and implementation levels.

“Recently, women farmers came together demanding the government to recognise them as well as uphold their rights. Currently, we’ve around 15 crore women engaged in several agricultural activities. Many of them are widows as their spouses had committed suicide. It’s very essential for them to be recognised,” Patnaik said.



The BJD MP suggested that the definition of farmers should include terms like women farmers, tenant farmers, fisherwomen and women dependent on forest.

Citing a report of Oxfam, he said that agriculture sector provides employment to around 80 per cent of economically active women in the country. The report identifies farmers as per their land holdings and that is the crux of the problem, the BJD MP added.

“I demand that we must operationalise a definition of farmer that includes all these activities. There’s a joint registration of land, a registry of women farmers, equal access to credit, better access to technology and quality seeds. Unless we assure them space at the policy level and also give support services just as we give to our male farmers, we cannot actually have a sustainable agricultural practice in this country,” Patnaik pointed out.

Singh rakes up Gadakhai renovation in Parl

POST NEWS NETWORK

NEW DELHI: BJD MP Subhash Singh Tuesday urged the Centre to take steps regarding renovation and conservation of Gadakhai heritage project in Cuttack under Urban Infrastructure Development Scheme for Small and Medium Towns (UIDSSMT) program.

Speaking during the Zero Hour in the Upper House, Singh said the nine-storey Gadakhai was constructed in the 13th century by Sri Mukunda Dev and was an architectural marvel. The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) is tasked with its renovation and conservation work but it has not taken adequate

₹17.25 CRORE WAS SANCTIONED FOR THE CONSERVATION OF GADAKHAI IN 2008-09

ASI AND CUTTACK MUNICIPAL CORPORATION (CMC) WERE TASKED FOR THE RENOVATION AND CONSERVATION

CMC HAS ALREADY COMPLETED THE DESILTING OF THE MOAT, BUT IS UNABLE TO PROCEED FURTHER WITH THE INFRASTRUCTURE OR BEAUTIFICATION WORK UNTIL COMPLETION OF RENOVATION & CONSERVATION OF MOAT WALL, WHICH IS ASI’S RESPONSIBILITY

steps to this effect. “An amount of Rs 17.25 crore

was sanctioned for the conservation of Gadakhai in 2008-09. ASI and Cuttack Municipal Corporation (CMC) were tasked for the renovation and conservation. CMC has already completed the desilting of the moat, but is unable to proceed further with the infrastructure or beautification work until completion of renovation & conservation of moat wall, which is ASI’s responsibility,” Singh told the House.

The BJD MP also said that CMC has already deposited the requisite funds with ASI for conservation and written to ASI several times for the execution of the moat wall renovation work but no action has

been taken till now.

“As the heritage project comes under the prohibited zone of ASI, Cuttack Municipal Corporation is unable to work on it any further. It has been repeatedly persuading ASI to accord permission for taking up the beautification, illumination and other infrastructure development works outside of moat, but no such permission is forthcoming from ASI,” Singh mentioned.

The BJD MP asserted that the renovation and conservation work of the historic heritage project is severely hampering the renovation and conservation work and requested the Union government to take necessary steps in this regard.

HITTING THE STREETS



Farmer outfits demonstrate at Lower PMG in Bhubaneswar, Tuesday, to press for fulfilment of their demands including revocation of the new farm laws

CP starts Covid-19 awareness in twin city

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 23: Following the instructions of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik to ensure stricter implementation of Covid-19 guidelines, Commissionerate Police started public awareness campaigns across the twin city Tuesday evening.

PCR vans of various police stations patrolled busy places requesting common people to adhere to Covid-19 guidelines strictly. Commissioner along with DCPs of Cuttack and Bhubaneswar Tuesday

Priyadarshi sought cooperation of people by means of wearing mask, avoiding large gatherings and washing hands to curb resurgence of Covid

personally visited many places in the city in order to spread awareness. Speaking to media, Commissioner Saumendra

Priyadarshi said, “We will first try to bring awareness among denizens to follow Covid-19 guidelines once again, keeping in view the increase in infection at various places for the last few days. We will take stringent action if anyone is found violating the guidelines to rein in the spread of Corona virus infection.”

He also sought the cooperation of people by means of wearing mask, avoiding large gatherings, washing hands with soaps and using sanitizer to fight against the re-emergence of Covid-19 in the state.

113 new nCoV cases

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, March 23: The state’s Covid-19 caseload Tuesday rose to 3,39,076 after 113 more people tested positive for the virus, a Health department official said.

The coronavirus death toll remained unchanged at 1,919 as no new fatalities were reported since Monday.

A total of 53 other Covid-19 patients have also died in the state due to comorbidities, he said.

Odisha now has 898 active cases, while 3,36,206 patients have recovered from the disease.

Tech interventions in MSME stressed

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 23: CSIR Institute of Minerals and Materials Technology Tuesday organised a workshop to touch upon the scientific and technological interventions that are required by Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector with a focus on enabling technological solutions in metal crafts, waste-to-wealth and intellectual property.

The director of CSIR-IMMT, S Basu, inaugurated the workshop in the presence of Yatendra S Chaudhary (Coordinator, IMMT-DSIR CRTDH), SK Mishra (Advisor, IMMT-DSIR CRTDH), entrepreneurs from SME/MSMEs, metal craft artisans, technologists, scientists along with other delegates and students.

Inaugurating the workshop, Basu said, “This will provide an opportunity for hand-holding between

you (MSMEs) and IMMT-DSIR CRTDH, to develop innovations for the value addition of the products/processes, new products, less energy intensive metal craft processes etc. It’s a feedback workshop between artisans and expert of MSE and MSME.

“Dokra, brass metal, alloys and metal products now lose their beauty and in this workshop we help the workers to change their way of working on the products that can bring a change.”

The primary objective of IMMT-DSIR CRTDH is to nurture and promote innovations in MSE/MSMEs and provide them research and development (R&D) or knowledge-based support in the area of new materials and chemical process.

More than 50 entrepreneurs, metal craft artisans, technologists, scientists participated in the workshop.



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STATE TO FACE POWER LOSS TO THE TUNE OF 460 MEGAWATT DAILY

They claimed that the state will face power loss to the tune of 460 megawatt daily if the plant is not made operational soon. Apprehending a law and order sit-



The manch member alleged that the plant authorities had shut down the plant a week before as there was fear of the plant getting closed after March 31 due to non-compliance of an order of the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) by NTPC

Earlier, the CPCB had issued an order that the TTPS cannot gener-

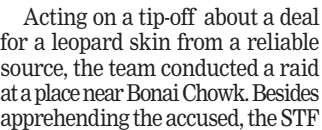
The plant, however, remained operational as the state Pollution Control Board reportedly permitted it to run it till March 31, 2021.

Talcher sub-collector Rajanikant Swain, however, denied of having any information regarding closure of the plant from the TTPS authorities.



QP PHOTO

The accused have been identified as Somanath Patra and Rajib Lochan Patra of Salohi village under Barkote police limits. Both are known to be poachers.



The accused persons could not produce any valid document in support of possessing the leopard skin, for which they were arrested under Sections 379/411/120 (B) of IPC and Section 51 of Wild Life Protection Act, 1972. They were produced in the Court of SDJM, Deogarh, Tuesday and were remanded to judicial custody after their bail pleas were rejected.

Rs 42 core more has been sanctioned for 1200 metre-long runway for operation of ATR-72 seater aircrafts at the airport.

District Civil Supplies officer

Members of SHGs have met the district Civil Supplies officer over the issue.

The SP said that the mastermind of the loot case is Sunil Mohara, who is ATM officer of Writers' Safeguard Agency in Bhubaneswar, while

As he reached Baghalpur Chhak, these five people came in three bikes and looted the cash by brandishing a gun and sharp edged weapon from Sudhansu.

Notably, some second year students were asked by their fourth year counterparts to come to the basketball court, March 10. However, they did not turn up. This infuriated the fourth year students. They went to the hostel meant for the sec-



The authorities had formed a three-member team to probe into the allegations. After the accused were found guilty a decision to impose fines on them was taken by

The VIMSAR authorities had then taken action against 23 senior students by asking them not enter their classroom for a period of one month.

Some locals said that the two were in love. However, their respective families were against their relationship and did not want them to get married.

यूको बैंक  **UCO BANK**

that, I had lost the previous linked document having Original RSD. No 2650 at 02.13.1998, RSD. No.2617 at 21.07.1997 & RSD. No. 2569 at 09.10.1995 somewhere at Sohela, PS-Sohela, Dist.-Barghar since five year ago. Further I declared that I had never mortgaged the above land/R.S.D. in any Bank/I. Now I am applying for a loan from Bank of Baroda Barghar Branch, Barghar by mortgaging the same. If anybody has any objection may kindly draw a notice before Bank of Baroda, Barghar Branch within 30 days of publication of this notice. Later on no objection or claim will be acceptable in any circumstances.

Mohan Lal Agrawa
Sohela, Barghar



TIMES WASTED

All of us would remember this day one year ago. The nation was pushed into a so called ‘Janata Curfew’ and Prime Minister Narendra Modi asked citizens to bang gongs and ring bells, we were told, to scare away the coronavirus by creating a vibration in the atmosphere. A movie star of great repute told the nation, through a video message, that the timing was appropriate keeping in mind the conjunction of planets and the results would be miraculous. Unfortunately, that very aged actor along with his son and other family members later fell prey to Covid-19 and needed hospitalization. Two days later after the Janata Curfew and ringing of bells, at 8 pm on 24 March 2020, the Prime Minister of India announced a complete lockdown that paralysed normal life across the length and breadth of the country. Come midnight of 24 March 2020, all air and rail services came to a halt. From 25 March last year, even private cars and motorbike riders were stopped by police and the drivers heavily penalized. This kicked off the long march of migrant labourers from one end of the country to another. Children, women and men started out on foot from their places of employment and headed back home. The factories or fields they were working at were suddenly and forcibly shut. Owners refused to take care of their labour force which resulted in one of the greatest humanitarian crisis of modern times. International media termed Modi’s lockdown as one of the most inhumane and stringent compared to actions of other governments which too were facing the same predicament.

While all this was being done, a very crucial action was consciously ignored. International flights were not stopped which resulted in infected people from other countries pouring into India. In the usual political style of current times, efforts were made to blame the Tablighi Jamaat, a congregation of international Moslem preachers, for spread of the virus in India. No one bothered to question how the Indian embassies in highly infected countries of that time, such as Malaysia and Indonesia, sanctioned visas to the preachers who sought to visit New Delhi. The idea that coronavirus is a rich man’s disease seems applicable to India. Instead of dramatizing and creating a farce, the Central government could have easily cancelled the US President’s Namaste Trump trip and stopped Indians stuck abroad from returning back home. Interestingly, Prime Minister Modi not only offered doctors and medical assistance in the early days in late 2019 but also sent Air India aircrafts to Wuhan and brought back Indians living in that city. This morbid joke continued with the Vande Bharat inward flights which ferried stranded Indians from highly infected countries like Italy, Spain and England. Such poor judgement pushed the country into a stage where everything seemed to collapse inwards. The past saga should have taught us Indians a great big lesson.

Times gradually changed. The rate of infection seemed to dissipate. Indians took pride in the new knowledge that their country was one of the largest vaccine manufacturers of the world. Companies like Serum Institute of India suddenly became household names and the Central government did not hesitate to politically cash in on the situation. First, it used the vaccine manufacturing infrastructure to gain international acceptance by sending huge batches of vaccines overseas. That, supposedly, gained credibility for Prime Minister Narendra Modi. On the other hand, domestic vaccination drive has not, even till date, been properly organized and it has resulted in barely 3 per cent of the population getting the jab till now. According to reliable estimates, a complete vaccination of all Indians would take slightly over a decade. Nobody seems to notice this grand failure. On the other hand, extremely valuable time has been wasted by the government by inciting people with crazy new farm laws being enacted and wild efforts of curbing social media by issuing new regulations. These were times which should have been used positively to build awareness and create an atmosphere of cooperation and understanding. Resultantly, the Indian society has not learnt much from the sufferings of 2020. Now we are faced with a second wave leering at our faces. We have people like the Chief Minister of Uttarakhand who claimed that India was enslaved by America for 200 years and while America has failed to control the spread of Covid-19, India has done remarkably well in that field because of Modi’s leadership. Unfortunately, the CM himself has been infected by the coronavirus pretty much soon after his utterances. The government of India claims that more than 280 companies went bankrupt in the past year. Reality, however, may be very different. It is not only the sky rocketing fuel prices that have hit the citizens of India but more the overall mismanagement of the entire economy, the results of which will be even more cruel in the months to come.

Today, all of us Indians need to take a step back and re-assess what we learnt from the last year and prepare for a long drawn struggle ahead.

WISDOM CORNER

- Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul - and sings the tunes without the words - and never stops at all. EMILY DICKINSON
- It is beyond a doubt that all our knowledge begins with experience. IMMANUEL KANT
- When the power of love overcomes the love of power the world will know peace. JIMI HENDRIX

WORDSWORTH

Minigarch

Aminigarch is like an oligarch, only less well-endowed in the back-pocket department. It’s a weird formation, not least because oligarch means a member of a small group that holds power in a state (from Greek oligoi, few, plus arkein, to rule), and strictly has nothing to do with money. But the term has long been tainted with the implication that oligarchs use their great power to gather riches; in particular it has been used for members of the nomenklatura, former Communist Party appointees, who were most directly involved in gaining wealth in post-communist Russia. The Financial Times wrote in January 2001, “The oligarchs divided up among themselves the most valuable state companies, which Yeltsin privatized under fire-sale conditions.” Minigarch appeared in British newspapers in 2006, an early instance in the Independent on 26 May: “Vladimir Gusinsky, 53, used to be one of Russia’s most powerful media magnates, but he lost almost everything and is now more minigarch than oligarch.” It has never been common, though it turned up several times in 2007, but the global financial turmoil of 2008 hit the Russian super-rich especially hard and the word has had a resurgence. Moscow’s exclusive watering holes, so-called minigarchs and the merely wealthy further down the scale (NPR Morning Edition, 15 Oct. 2008). A lower oil price may affect the geopolitical ambitions of Russia and its allies. Some oligarchs may become minigarchs. But Russia will not need to beg for cash from the outside world (The Economist, 23 Oct. 2008).

LOL

Purchasing a turkey

A lady was picking through the frozen turkeys at the grocery store, but couldn’t find one big enough for her family.



She asked a stock boy, “Do these turkeys get any bigger?” The stock boy replied, “No ma’am, they’re dead.”

SACRED COW, POLITICAL COW

FOCUS SOCIETY

The recent initiatives of the Rashtriya Kamdhenu Ayog of the Government of India to disseminate information on economic, scientific, environmental, health, agriculture and spiritual relevance of indigenous cows has brought to the fore three major discourses associated with the ‘sacred cow’ going on between ‘right wing extremism’ versus ‘liberal’ social thinkers. Firstly, should the spiritual transformation of the Indian cow be understood through modern scientific terms? Secondly, should cow worship be a political debate? The theory of cultural ecology in anthropology brings the relationship between political conflicts and religious practices. Finally, should the prohibition of beef consumption be understood as a form of disaster insurance in the Indian society?



Debendra Kumar Biswal

THE THEORY OF CULTURAL ECOLOGY IN ANTHROPOLOGY BRINGS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POLITICAL CONFLICTS AND RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

The cultural ecology of ‘India’s sacred cow’ needs a restudy - why the Hindus in India would rather starve to death than eat the cow or even deprive it of food. Or for that matter, not eating beef can, in the right context, result in having more food. Firstly, history says that cow worship is a relatively recent development in India; it evolved as the Hindu religion developed and evolved. The earliest Vedas, the Hindu sacred texts from the second millennium BC, do not prohibit cow slaughter. Instead, they ordain its slaughter as a part of sacrificial rites and its consumption at ceremonial feasts presided over by Brahman priests. AN Bose, in Social and Rural Economy of Northern India, 600 BC-200 AD, writes that many of the sacred-cow passages were incorporated into the texts by priests of a later period. By 200 AD, the status of the Indian cattle had undergone a spiritual transformation and by 1000 AD all Hindus were forbidden to eat beef.

Three major justifications can be cited for the sacredness of cow and restrictions for beef eating - spiritual, religious and economic. Ahimsa, the Hindu belief in the unity of all life forbids it. Another important event that helped to shape the modern complex was the Islamic invasion. Hindus may have found it politically expedient to set themselves off from the



Practices and beliefs can be rational or irrational, but a society that fails to adapt to its environment is doomed to extinction

invaders, who were beef-eaters. Thirdly, Indian peasants who decided to save the cow for procreation to produce oxen were the ones who survived natural disasters. Those who ate beef lost the tools with which to farm. Over a period of centuries, more and more farmers probably avoided beef until an unwritten taboo came into existence. Later on, to remove temptation, the practice was codified by the priesthood, flesh of cattle became taboo and the cow became sacred.

Secondly, cow worship even carries over into politics, keeping aside the significance of its cultural ecology. The issue of cow protection was not a debate during the earlier governments. For instance, once the Ministry of Information maintained that “the large animal population is more a liability than an asset in view of our land resources”. Contrary to it, India’s neighbouring country Nepal equates cow slaughter as murder. Once, a car driven by an official of a United States agency struck and killed a cow. In order to avoid a situation that would have arisen if the official was arrested for murder, the Nepalese magistrate concluded that the cow had committed suicide. In India, the rise of cow protection committees is a recent development.

In modern India, cow is a symbol of health and abundance. It provides milk, which could be the substitute to mother’s breast-

feeding. The cow is the factory that produces ox, the mainstay of the Indian agricultural system and also treated as the peasant’s tractor. Unlike western countries, the food for cattle costs the human population virtually nothing in India. Indian cattle eat only the inedible remains of subsistence crops - rice straw, rice hulls, the tops of sugarcane, and mustard-oil cake. As American agronomist Odend’hal says, “Basically, the cattle convert items of little direct human value into products of immediate utility.”

More than 800 million tonnes of dung is used as cooking fuel and fertilizer. Dried dung burns slowly, cleanly, and with low heat - characteristics that satisfy the household needs of Indian women. It is estimated that the dung used for cooking fuel provides the energy equivalent to 43 million tonnes of coal. It would cost India more than two billion dollars extra in foreign exchange to replace the dung with coal. And if the 350 million tonnes of manure that are being used as fertilizer were replaced with commercial fertilizers, the expense would be even greater. Roger Revelle of the University of California has calculated that 89 per cent of the energy used in Indian agriculture (the equivalent of about 140 million tonnes of coal) is provided by local sources.

Thirdly, specialists in food habits argue that India, one of the world’s great civilizations, is being stran-

gled by its love for cow. Hinduism is an irrational ideology that compels people to overlook abundant, nutritious food for scarcer, less healthful foods. MN Srinivas, an Indian anthropologist, states: “orthodox Hindu opinion regards killing of cattle with abhorrence, even though the refusal to kill the vast number of useless cattle is detrimental to the nation”. The statutes prohibiting cattle slaughter are less important than the religious laws. Legally, the ban on cow slaughter is State, not Union law and not all States restrict it. But religious laws see it as consumption of flesh of cows, bulls and oxen. The cow is the most sacred because it can produce the other two. The peasant whose cow dies is not only crying over a spiritual loss but also over the loss of his farm as well. Thus, prohibiting beef consumption is a form of disaster insurance for Indian society. Indian agriculture is full of natural disasters like failure of monsoon and drought. Indian farmers and the cattle are accustomed to these natural disasters. Keeping alive the cows, that can later produce oxen, assures the recovery of the agricultural system from these great challenges, which has happened several times in the history of the Ganges valley.

The sacredness of the cow is not just an ignorant belief that stands in the way of progress. Like all concepts of sacred and profane, this one affects the physical world; it defines the relationships that are important for the maintenance of society. The practice arose to prevent the population from consuming the animal on which Indian agriculture depends. Practices and beliefs can be rational or irrational, but a society that fails to adapt to its environment is doomed to extinction. Only those societies that draw the necessities of life from their surroundings without destroying those surroundings, inherit the earth. They are not understandable in modern scientific terms.

The writer is an Assistant Professor, Department of Contemporary and Tribal Customary Law, Central University of Jharkhand. Views are personal.

IN JEST THIS

Ripped jeans: A battle I’ve already lost



Melvin Durai

I’VE NEVER BOUGHT RIPPED JEANS MYSELF, BUT I’VE CERTAINLY WORN THEM. ALMOST EVERY PAIR OF JEANS I BUY WILL EVENTUALLY GET TORN AT THE KNEES

Tirath Singh Rawat, the Chief Minister of Uttarakhand, has drawn a lot of criticism on social media for his recent comments on ripped jeans. While taking a flight, he apparently met a woman traveling with two children and did not appreciate her attire, which included boots, several bracelets, and jeans that were not fully intact.

“You run an NGO, wear jeans ripped at the knees, move about in society, children are with you, what values you will teach?” Rawat said, speaking at a workshop organised by the State Commission for Protection of Child Rights.

An avalanche of criticism followed, seemingly from every Indian woman who has a Twitter account. Just because you wear ripped jeans does not give anyone the right to rip your character, does it? Of course not. And wearing perfect jeans—jeans with no holes or blemishes—does not mean that your character is perfect, does it? Nope, not at all.

Rawat later apologised for his comment, saying that people are free to wear whatever they want, but continuing to insist that wearing ripped jeans “is not right.”



I understand his discomfort. I fought that battle several years ago and I lost. My teenage daughter Divya got her way and wears torn jeans whenever she wants, but thankfully not every day.

Ripped jeans have been around since the 1980s and steadily growing in popularity. They can be quite expensive, which is why Divya did not buy her first pair of torn jeans from a store—she made them. She used a pair of scissors, but it didn’t quite look authentic.

To make an authentic pair of ripped jeans yourself, you have to wear the jeans on a motorcycle and get thrown off at high speed. Just try not to get any blood stains on them. That would ruin the look. And another thing: please wear a helmet. There is no point in wear-

ing a pair of stylish jeans while you’re lying in the morgue.

I’ve never bought ripped jeans myself, but I’ve certainly worn them. Almost every pair of jeans I buy will eventually get torn at the knees. A scrape here and a scrape there, and before you know it, I’m making a fashion statement.

This sums up my relationship with fashion: If I am ever found to be stylish, it is always by accident.

Divya, on the other hand, is quite deliberate in her clothing choices. She won’t buy just any pair of ripped jeans she finds in a store. She has to examine the pair carefully, make sure the rips are just right. Quantity matters, but so does quality.

All the rips must be in the front and preferably spaced apart, so

they do not join together and cause your jeans to suddenly become shorts. That might cause some discomfort to you, as well as a certain chief minister.

It’s also important that the rips do not all look the same. One or two of them can be holes, giving people a view of your legs through your jeans. These holes should not be large enough that you can accidentally put a leg through them, nor should they give easy passage to any rodent looking for temporary shelter.

One or two of the rips can also be shreds—spots where the material has been torn, but where threads remain, permitting no view of the skin. Other blemishes can be scrapes, mere abrasions on the fabric that do not permit any ventilation.

Over the years, I’ve grown accustomed to seeing my daughter in ripped jeans. It doesn’t bother me anymore. I have too many other battles to fight. For example, Divya wants to get her nose pierced. Not until you’re an adult, I say.

As far as I’m concerned, any new holes are better located in her jeans than in her face.

Train judges

Sir, Some high court judges are in the news for their preconceived notions on crimes against women. Indian courts, and their presiding officers, are expected to strike a balance when they conduct trials. Deeply disturbing is the fact that judges, even of higher courts, are displaying an insensitive approach towards women in sexual harassment cases. A judge of the Nagpur bench of the Bombay High Court made headlines a couple of months ago for her unusual, and uncalled for, interpretations on molestation, in two cases, while acquitting the accused. Strange and despicable reasoning by high courts make for a sorry reading. They reflect a chronic lack of application of mind with regard to cases that require high levels of understanding and empathy. Fortunately, the Supreme Court has stepped in to take stock of the situation. While setting aside the Madhya Pradesh High Court order on bail to an accused of sexual misconduct, the top court has rightly rued the acute paucity of gender sensitisation training in judges. How a woman looked and how she behaved are immaterial for a judge to come to a conclusion on a case at hand. Over the years, reports have it that the some men accused of rape had proposed to marry their victims. It would be a travesty of justice if such ‘proposals’ become a rule and the courts entertain them. The criminal justice system would be reduced to a laughing stock in such a scenario. Therefore, courts and the judges being their torchbearers are expected to adopt an empathetic attitude toward women. Marriage or mediation, as the SC has said, are beyond the courts’ jurisdiction. Each case needs an unbiased adjudication without preconceived notions, and strictly on merit. Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA (MAHARASHTRA)

Water’s value

Sir, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has launched the ‘Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch the Rain’ campaign to conserve rainwater and create awareness among people. The government has made water governance a priority in its policies, decisions, and programmes like Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojna, water campaign to every farm - Har Khet Ko Paani, Per Drop More Crop campaign and Namami Gange Mission, Jal Jeevan Mission or Atal Bhujal Yojana. People need to recognise the true value of water and adopt all techniques to save water. To ensure the appropriate use of water at every stage is the need of the hour. Amit Singh Kushwaha, SATNA (MP)

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

Bengali sub-nationalism visible like never before

The rise of the BJP in Bengal's political map made the TMC realise that its socialist slogan was not enough to offset the saffron party's Hindutva card



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, March 23: With the ‘insider-outsider’ debate in West Bengal gaining strength before the elections, Bengali sub-nationalism appears to have become visible like never before.

The ruling TMC has embraced it as its main poll plank to counter the rise of the BJP's Hindutva narrative in the state. It has branded BJP as a ‘party of outsiders’ and has fanned the ‘Bengali pride’ by coming up with a poll slogan ‘Bangla Nijer Meyekei Chai’ (Bengal wants its own daughter) creating a poll narrative of sub-nationalism to counter the saffron party's identity politics.

The electoral discourse in Bengal, where poll battles are fought on ideological lines, had in the past mostly steered clear of sub-nationalism and identity politics.

“This is for the first time we have made Bengali pride our main poll plank. Bengali pride is not just about Bengalis; it appeals to all sons of the soil,” senior TMC leader

and MP Sougata Roy told PTI.

Another senior TMC leader said “divisive politics and religious polarisation can be countered with sub-nationalism and regionalism.”

BJP has blamed Trinamool Congress for bringing up the issue of Bengali pride saying it is harping on nationalism, development and identity politics as it senses defeat in its citadel.

“BJP is in power in so many states, but we have never tried to impose any language or culture. This is a baseless allegation as TMC has nothing to showcase to seek votes,” BJP state president Dilip Ghosh said.

BJP national president JP Nadda claimed at various poll ral-

lies that only BJP can restore the Bengali pride and that “TMC represents everything that is opposite to it.”

To counter the narrative and project itself as a party in sync with Bengali culture and ethos, BJP has propped up Bharatiya Jana Sangh founder Syama Prasad Mookerjee as its icon.

It has also been observing the anniversaries of Bengali icons Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda and Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay.

Parties cutting across political lines feel that the issue has its pitfalls and will have a cascading effect on the federal structure in the days to come.

They agree that sub-nationalism can no longer be ignored in Bengal as it is reflective of the state's socio-political history which has always preferred opposing or challenging the party at the Centre or a bigger political force and refused submission.

Born out of the Congress, January 1, 1996, TMC had adopted the evocative slogan ‘Maa Mati Manush’ (Mother, Land and People) carefully blending socialism and secularism that countered the then communists and their doctrines.

“This is for the first time we have made Bengali pride our main poll plank. Bengali pride is not just about Bengalis; it appeals to all sons of the soil”

SOUGATA ROY | TMC LEADER AND MP

BJP is in power in so many states, but we have never tried to impose any language or culture. This is a baseless allegation as TMC has nothing to showcase to seek votes

DILIP GHOSH | BJP STATE PRESIDENT

Kejriwal sets stage for Punjab poll battle

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 23: Setting stage for his party's campaign in the Punjab Assembly elections due next year, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener Arvind Kejriwal Sunday addressed a “Kisan Maha Panchayat” in the state's Moga district.

In his address, he hit out the Amarinder Singh-led Congress government, accusing it of not keeping its poll promises and deceiving the people of the state.

He said that ‘Captain Sahib’ (Amarinder Singh) had made several promises to the people of Punjab



in the run-up to the elections but forgot about them about his victory.

With farmers of Punjab in relentless protest against the Centre's three farm laws, Kejriwal attacked the BJP too, accusing the Modi government at the Centre of bringing the measures without consulting the farmers and passing them in an unconstitutional manner.

“I have come here to express my

gratitude for raising your voice against Centre's three draconian laws. They (BJP) say only a few states' farmers are opposing the farm Bills, but it is not the truth. Your struggle from Punjab to Delhi's borders has become a revolution across the nation and people of this country are not ready to accept these farm laws which are framed for giving benefit to some selected corporate,” he said.

Slamming the BJP, he claimed when farmers from Punjab reached Delhi's borders, the Centre tried to develop pressure on his government to send them to stadiums, so that they ‘remain inside like in jails’.

Money no constraint for Bengal’s ‘zero asset’ candidates

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, March 23: Meet Manas Sardar, Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) candidate for Purulia Assembly constituency, who has borrowed Rs 30,000 from his friends to contest the election as he believes his constituency has been neglected for too long and needs an MLA who can deliver.

Sardar's assets according to the affidavit submitted to the Election Commission shows the 30-year-old has an unbelievable ‘zero’ value in moveable and immovable assets. “I have nothing. I am a devoted party activist and a social worker. My sole aim is to develop our area. I am fighting the election for the first time and for this I have bor-

rowed Rs 30,000 from my friends. I will return the money in instalments,” Sardar told PTI when contacted.

Stating that he had to convince seniors in the party to give him a ticket to fight the election in Purulia constituency, Sardar said he was confident of winning despite “feeling the pinch in pocket.”

“Purulia has been neglected by all political parties and there has been no development. Drinking water, proper sanitation have long been a problem here. I will work for overall development ... I am getting a good response from the people,” he said.

His party colleague Anadi Tudu, who also has reported “zero assets”, is contesting the election from Balarampur also in



Purulia district. Talking to PTI from her constituency, the 52-year-old Tudu said “Money cannot stop you from achieving dreams to do good for the people.”

“I want to work for my people in

Balarampur. Nobody has done anything for us. I will work with the people to develop the area,” she said.

SUCI(C) candidates Dipak Kumar and Bhagirathi Mahato - contesting in Balarampur and Joypur assembly constituencies - also declared zero assets in their affidavit. Kumar, who fought the 2016 assembly elections but lost, said that the strength of his party has “increased massively” and people are eager to vote the two to power.

“There is no employment. The ruling Trinamool Congress is only talking big. People have understood what they need. There is good response from them,” Kumar said. Among candidates with assets worth

just Rs 500 are Rajib Mudi and Swapan Kumar Murmu from SUCI(C). They will be fighting for Binpur(ST) in Jhargram district and Manzbazar(ST) assembly seat in Purulia respectively. Another candidate with low asset base is CPI's Saikat Giri. He has declared assets of just Rs 2000 and is contesting the election from Purba Medinipur's Patashpur assembly constituency.

“I can feel the difference because I hardly have money. Both BJP and the TMC are spending huge amounts in this election compared to which we are spending almost nothing. But we have deep rooted connections with common people. They know what is our motto. People in Patashpur are tired of corruption,” Giri said.

14 yrs on, justice eludes Nandigram rape survivors

Residents of the discrete village, where at least 30 women had to endure sexual abuse during the unrest, are sceptical that this could just be another election

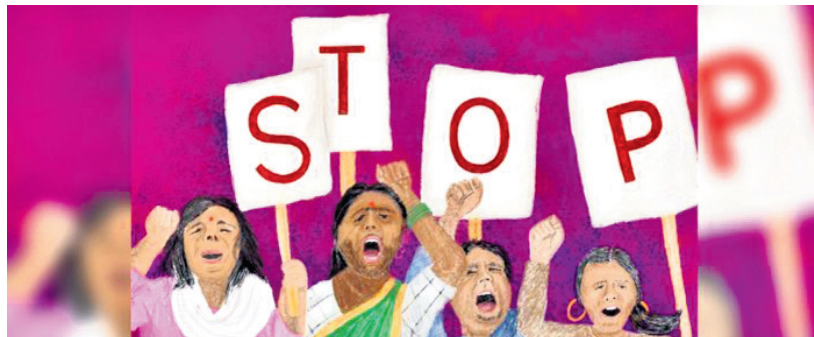
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Nandigram, March 23: Rukmini Mondal and Sikha (names of both changed), neighbours at a tiny hamlet here, have stopped seeing eye to eye ever since they joined rival political parties.

What had bound the two all these years was the grief that befell on them following the sexual abuse they faced during the anti-land acquisition movement in Nandigram, and the never-ending wait for justice thereafter.

Political colours have changed in this part of Bengal in the past 14 years, but justice continues to elude the women, who are at the crossroads this time, having repaid faith on two opposing camps, with a hope that their demands would be met.

This obscure Nandigram village that had shaken the base of the mighty Left regime and propelled the TMC to power now stands divided between its ‘Didi and Dada’,



as Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has locked horns with her protégé-turned-adversary and the face of farmers’ protest, Suwendu Adhikari, in the constituency - set to go to polls April 1.

More than 42 people were killed, including 14 who died in the police firing March 14, 2007, and over 40 women raped during the ten-month-long bloody battle

in then-little-known agrarian town.

With battle lines having been redrawn in Nandigram, which stands polarised along political and communal lines, the survivors, despite all differences, are keenly waiting for justice to be served.

“Didi has given us everything - compensation, jobs and other benefits. But we have one regret that we didn’t get justice.

We want to see perpetrators languishing behind bars,” Sikha told PTI.

Standing in front of a large cut-out of Banerjee, 42-year-old Sikha, during a street-corner meeting in Sonachura market, asked people to vote for the TMC and defeat the BJP and ‘Mir Jafar’ (traitor) Adhikari.

“Suwendu has not just betrayed the TMC but also the people of Nandigram. Some of the perpetrators of violence, who were then with the CPI(M), have now joined the BJP. But Suwendu has turned a blind eye to this, just for political reasons,” she said.

Echoing her demand for justice, Mondal, however, wondered why the TMC, despite being in power for 10 years, could not do anything to ensure that the culprits get punished. “Can jobs, money or doles compensate me for the honour I have lost? I want justice. I want to see them (perpetrators) in jail. I am hoping that if the BJP is voted to power, there will be fair play,” she said.

Showering praise on Adhikari, she said

that it was the 50-year-old leader who stood by her; and many more like her through thick and thin. The residents of the discrete village, where at least 30 women had to endure sexual abuse during the unrest, are, nonetheless, sceptical that this could just be another election, before which the parties make tall promises only to end up delivering nothing.

With the TMC supremo and her former lieutenant at each other's throats, Nandigram, often referred to as the cradle of change in Bengal, is once again on the edge. Many rape survivors, disenchanted with the TMC, are yearning for yet another change. “People of Nandigram are not very happy with the TMC. They also have grievances against Mamata, as she hardly visited the constituency, which once catapulted her to power. But there is also a section, which has a soft corner for Didi,” another survivor Rama Das (name changed) said.

REMINISCING MARTYRS



Farmers take out a march to commemorate the martyrdom day of freedom fighters Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev, during their ongoing agitation against the new farm laws, in Amritsar, Tuesday,

PTI PHOTO

Alarm in Punjab: 81 per cent of Covid samples have UK variant

AGENCIES

Chandigarh, March 23: Eighty-one per cent of the 401 samples sent by the government for genome sequencing have tested positive for the UK variant of COVID-19, Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh said Tuesday, asking the Centre to widen the vaccination net to cover those younger than 60.

Expressing concern over the COVID-19 situation, the chief minister also appealed to people to get themselves vaccinated and stressed the need for the Union government to urgently open up vaccination for a larger section of the population.

He urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to widen the vaccination ambit to cover those younger than 60 as the mutant has been found to be infecting young people more, an official statement quoting him said.

“The process needs to be expedited,” he said, pointing to the fact that experts had found the Covishield vaccine to be equally effective against the UK variant-B.1.1.7.

It is essential to vaccinate more and more people to break the chain of transmission, he said.



The state government, which has already announced fresh restrictions, would be forced to impose more curbs if people don't follow COVID appropriate behaviour, Amarinder Singh warned.

A large number of people from Punjab live in the United Kingdom.

Punjab Health Minister Balbir Singh Sidhu said the samples that tested positive for the UK variant were taken from a cross section of population.

“This means, this strain has spread in a bigger measure, which is a serious concern for us as transmission rate of this strain is quite

high,” Sidhu told PTI.

The worrying thing is that many youth are also contracting the virus, he said. Touching upon the overall COVID spread in the state, he said urban areas were more affected. However, the death rate is more in the rural belt, the minister said.

Many people, especially the youth, don't follow COVID-related protocols and they are being urged not to be complacent, he said.

Monday, Punjab reported 2,319 fresh COVID-19 cases, taking the tally to 2,15,409, and 58 fatalities, pushing the death toll to 6,382.

Mithun missing from BJP’s final list for WB polls

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kolkata, March 23: The BJP in West Bengal Tuesday released its final list of candidates for the upcoming eight-phase Assembly elections in the state, featuring a total 13 new names.

Surprisingly, superstar Mithun Chakraborty, who recently joined the saffron camp, did not feature in the list of new candidates, eventually ending all speculation of Bengal's beloved ‘Dada’ contesting the high-voltage electoral battle.

Chakraborty had joined the BJP's grand rally at Kolkata's Brigade Parade Ground March 7, when he shared the podium with Prime Minister Narendra Modi along with many other senior BJP leaders.



“I always wanted to do something big in life, but had never dreamt of being a part of such a huge rally which is to be addressed by world's most popular leader Narendra Modi. I wished to work for the poorer sections of our society, and that wish will now be fulfilled,” he had said at the rally.

Amid huge cheers from supporters, Chakraborty, borrowing a dialogue from one of his films, said, “Ami joldhorao noi, bele borao noi... ami ekta cobra, ek chholei chobi (Don't mistake me for a harmless snake, I am a cobra, can kill people in one bite),” he had said.

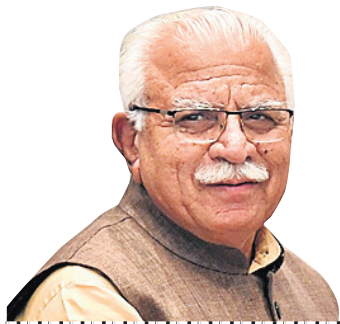
Days after joining the BJP, the actor recently enrolled himself as a voter from Kolkata's Kashipur-Belgachia constituency with an address of his cousin's place. Earlier, Chakraborty was a registered voter in Mumbai.

The BJP has pitted retired Lieutenant General Subrata Saha from Kolkata's Rashbighari constituency, while former Chief Economic Advisor Ashok Lahiri has been fielded from South Dinajpur's Balurghat. Earlier, Lahiri was fielded from Alipurdwar in North Bengal, but was replaced following agitation by a section of party workers.

Chakraborty, who earlier maintained close ties with TMC supremo and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, was nominated to the Rajya Sabha by the TMC in 2014.

He, however, quit the Upper House seat in 2016 citing health reasons, after his name surfaced in the Saradha ponzi scam.

Elections to the 294 assembly seats will be held in eight phases from March 27 to April 29. Votes will be counted on May 2.



Farmers must receive payment of their procured produce within a stipulated time period. Any delay in payment would not be tolerated. Responsibilities should be fixed to ensure that farmers are paid on time
MANOHAR LAL KHATTAR | CHIEF MINISTER OF HARYANA

E-SCOOTER BY IIT DELHI

The Indian Institute Of Technology (IIT) Delhi incubated startup, Geliose Mobility, has launched an electric scooter 'HOPE'. The running cost of this scooter is only 20 paise per kilometre



of the day quote

Youths are our future and if we ourselves are involved in destroying the future of our children then we are taking Arunachal towards darkness

PEMA KHANDU | ARUNACHAL PRADESH CM

They (BJP government) are closing down all central concerns. Only one factory will be there, that of Narendra Modi's lies and the BJP's fraud

MAAMATA BANERJEE | WB CM

The Centre has allowed vaccination for everyone aged above 45 from April 1. We have demanded that vaccines be given to everyone aged above 18. It will set an example for the entire world to defeat coronavirus

SATYENDAR JAIN | DELHI HEALTH MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

A Mohammedjan passes away

Chennai: Former Tamil Nadu Minister and AIADMK Rajya Sabha Member A Mohammedjan died Tuesday. He was 72. After he reported of uneasiness, the MP was taken to Walajpet general hospital in Ranipet district and he was declared brought dead by authorities, his relative said. "He had just returned home (Ranipet) after campaigning for the Assembly polls. After he said he was experiencing chest pain, we rushed him to the hospital and on the way he became unconscious. Doctors, after examination, said he died of heart attack," the relative told.

T'gana shuts down schools

Hyderabad: Concerned over the spike in Covid-19 cases, the Telangana government Tuesday announced that it is temporarily shutting down the schools from Wednesday. Education Minister P. Sabita Indra Reddy made the announcement in the Assembly. She said the government decided to shut down the schools in the interest of the health of students and teachers and also keeping in view the requests from the parents. The minister said the decision was taken as a measure to prevent the spread of Covid.

Three human skeletons found

Chandigarh: Three human skeletons were found underneath the floor of a house in Haryana's Panipat on Tuesday, according to police. According to police, these were recovered from a house in Panipat's Shiv Nagar when its occupant undertook some construction work. "Three human skeletons were found from the house where present occupants, who had been living there for nearly two-and-a-half years, took up some construction work at the ground floor," Deputy Superintendent of Police Satish Vats said.

Miscreants shoot dead three

Kohima: At least three persons were gunned down and two vehicles vandalised by unidentified assailants at Lamhainandi in Nagaland, police said on Tuesday. The three deceased were reportedly engaged in clearing parts of a jungle when they were shot dead on Monday evening in an area near the Dimapur-Peren district boundary, they said.

Vaze 'prime accused' in Hiran case: ATS



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, March 23: Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) on Tuesday said suspended police officer Sachin Vaze was a "prime accused" in the Mansukh Hiran murder case and it will approach the special NIA court here to get his custody.

More arrests were likely in the case, said ATS chief Jaijeet Singh. Vaze, arrested in connection with the recovery of explosives-laden SUV near industrialist Mukesh Ambani's residence in south Mumbai, is currently in the custody of the National Investigation Agency (NIA). The NIA custody will expire March 25.

The ATS had last week arrested suspended policeman Vinayak Shinde and cricket bookie Naresh Gaur in the Hiran murder case. "After the arrest of both these men, ATS found Vaze is a prime accused in the case and played a vital role," the ATS chief told reporters.

"We need his custody and will approach the court March 25," Singh added. Vaze's statement was recorded in the Hiran case on March 8 when he flatly denied any role in the crime, but probe revealed that he was lying, the ATS chief said. It was Vaze who had contacted Shinde when the latter walked out of jail on parole and took his help, he said.

Gaur procured 14 SIM cards and some of them were activated and used in the crime, the ATS chief said. According to ATS, Shinde contacted Hiran, posing as 'Tawde

saab from Mumbai crime branch' on the evening of March 4, the day before Hiran's body was found in a Thane creek.

"Preliminary investigation suggests that Shinde along with others was involved. A Volvo car seized from Daman is suspected to have been used in the crime," the ATS chief said. Forensic Science Laboratory at Kalina in Mumbai examined the car Tuesday, he added.

The ATS has also obtained CCTV footage from various spots even though the accused destroyed some CCTV footage in a bid to destroy evidence of their movement, officials said.

Shinde, convicted in the Lakhna Bhaiyya fake encounter case, was released on parole last May and since then he was in touch with Vaze and helped him in his "illegal activities", the ATS had said earlier.

"Many more people were involved in the crime," said the ATS chief. On Monday, the ATS seized a Volvo car with Maharashtra registration from the Union Territory of Daman in connection with the case.

The probe agency had also claimed to have detained a person from Ahmedabad who had allegedly provided SIM cards to the accused. The SUV with explosives found near industrialist Mukesh Ambani's house February 25 had been allegedly stolen from Hiran's possession. On March 5, Hiran, who ran auto spare parts business in Thane, was found dead in a creek.

Hiran's wife had alleged that Vaze had played a role in his death.

Turmoil inside Bihar Assembly

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Patna, March 23: Virulent opposition to a bill introduced in the Bihar assembly by the Nitish Kumar government, with a view to giving more teeth to the police force, Tuesday led to unprecedented turmoil in the House where police was called in to physically evict legislators who had laid siege to the Speakers chamber.

Members of the opposition Grand Alliance, comprising RJD, Congress and the Left, were agitated over the Bihar Special Armed Police Bill, 2021, and the ruckus created by them caused proceedings of the assembly to be adjourned as many as five times during the day. Leader of the opposition Tejashwi Yadav, who courted arrest while participating in a procession taken out against the "black law", in addition to other issues, gave an inkling of what was in store at an early morning press conference.

After being let off by the police, which had taken Yadav and other RJD leaders to the Kotwali police station for taking out the unauthorised procession and indulging in stone-pelting which led to use of force and water cannons, Yadav was back in the assembly when it reassembled at 3 pm, after having



been adjourned thrice since morning. No sooner than minister Bijendra Yadav presented the bill for debate, opposition members trooped into the well where marshals rushed to prevent the agitated legislators from getting physical with those in the treasury benches.

Speaker Vijay Kumar Sinha adjourned the House till 1630 hours but ended up being held hostage inside his chamber as Grand Alliance members surrounded it from all sides and squatted shouting slogans.

Chandrashekhar Singh and Upendra Sharma, District Magistrate and Senior Superintendent of Police respectively, rushed to the Vidhan Sabha

premises upon learning that the situation had become too problematic for the marshals to handle. A heavy contingent of police personnel wearing riot gear also reached the premises and they got down to work, physically evicting many an MLA stubbornly refusing to let the Speaker come out. In the meantime, proceedings resumed with senior BJP MLA Prem Kumar in the Chair but the agitation seemed to have rubbed on all members of the legislature.

The bill, which was introduced last week, seeks to rename the Bihar Military Police, give it more teeth and allegedly empowers the force to arrest people without a warrant.

ENJOYING RAIN



People walk under umbrellas on the Ridge during rains, in Shimla

PTI PHOTO

'Constitutional': Centre backs Maratha reservation in SC

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 23: The Centre Tuesday told the Supreme Court that it is of the view that the Maharashtra government can grant reservation to Maratha community in public education and employment.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, representing the Centre, told a five-judge Constitution bench headed by Justice Ashok Bhushan that the Maharashtra government's decision is constitutional as the 102nd Amendment of the Constitution does not deprive a state of the power to declare its list of Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBC).

Emphasising that Maharashtra government's granting reservation to Maratha community is constitutional, he said the Centre adopts the submissions of Attorney General KK Venugopal and it should be taken as Centre's view.

Last week, the AG had submitted before the apex court that 102nd Amendment does not take away the power of the state legislatures



to ratify a law to determine the SEBC and then confer benefits on them.

As the top court asked Mehta why the Centre did not issue any notification of SEBCs under Article 342A so far, he said that the existing SEBC list continues.

At this, the bench queried as to what will be the correct interpretation of Article 342A, and what will be the effect of not having a list? Mehta said that there are petitions challenging the validity of 102nd Constitution Amendment, and once they come up for hearing, then this query would be probably answered.

Senior advocate Manish Singhvi, representing the Rajasthan government, said the determination of

SEBC in each state is the sole prerogative of the government concerned and insisted that 1992 Indra Sawhney verdict capping reservation at 50 per cent requires to be examined by a larger bench.

Advocate Manish Singh, representing the Bihar government, cited two separate SEBC lists: for central service, one is prepared by the Centre and the other by state for state services. These lists have been existing since 1993. Singh added that Indra Sawhney judgment needs to be examined by a larger bench against the backdrop of changed social dynamics of the society.

The arguments on the petitions challenging Maratha reservation will continue on Wednesday.

Karaikal fishermen to boycott Pondicherry polls

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Pondicherry, March 23: Several from a fisher community spread across five constituencies of Pondicherry's Karaikal region have threatened to boycott the April 6 Assembly elections if the demands they have raised were not met with.

Karaikal being a coastal region, has huge presence of fisherman community who has always voted in the elections. The area is an enclave of Pondicherry state which is going to assembly elections along with neighbouring Tamil Nadu.

John Jerry, a fisherman and leader of the United Fishermen Association told IANS: "We will not cast our votes in the upcoming assembly elections. We have raised demands for construction of roads and more facilities for fishing besides provision of drinking water - that must be met."

The women of Karaikal are also adamant that they will not vote in the assembly elections.

Marie Teresa, a fisherman from Nedungandam assembly constituency in Karaikal told IANS: "Every election the politicians come with a broad smile and we get



to meet them only when next elections are announced.

"This time we have decided not to cast our votes until our demands

are met. There is no drinking water, no roads and no infrastructure, so why should we vote."

The United Fishermen Association is spearheading the campaign.

Satyanathan Samuel who is a fisherman at Karaikal told IANS: "This time we will not change our decision and until we get a written commitment that our demands will be met, we will not vote in this assembly elections".

The campaign has got the political parties worried. AIADMK leader KR Ramalingam from Karaikal told IANS: "We are into

discussions with their leaders and we can give written promise as AIADMK has always honoured their commitments to the people."

With election day only a fortnight away, all political parties are heading towards Karaikal to settle the issue.

Former Chief Minister V. Narayanaswamy while speaking to IANS said: "Our local leaders are very much at ground zero and will settle their issue. We need the coastal people as traditionally they are our supporters and this is a communication gap which we will overcome."

of the day quote

Congress had put restrictions on buying land in Assam. But now with revocation of Article 370, anybody from any part of the country, even from Assam, can buy property there

There were certain issues related to the death of former Chief Minister Jayalithaa and there were some doubts against Sasikala. My position has always been that she should clarify on these doubts, if that is cleared I don't have any problem

That's the difference between the RSS/BJP and the CPI-M. We are not worried about the social status or any such things about a person seeking a job. We are for all and want to help all

YOGI ADITYANATH | UP CHIEF MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Sisters found dead in field

Pilibhit (Uttar Pradesh): Two teenage sisters were found dead Tuesday under mysterious circumstances in a Pilibhit village in Uttar Pradesh. The girls, aged 17 and 19, had gone out of their home to attend to nature's call Monday night but did not return. When the family went out to look for them, one of them was found dead in a field in Jasauli village while the other was found hanging from a tree Tuesday morning.

5 killed in AP road mishap

Nellore: A mini truck carrying labourers was hit by a speeding milk van in Andhra Pradesh's Nellore district early Tuesday leading to the death of five people and injuring four others. One of the injured in the Duvvuru area accident is reported to be serious. The mini truck was heading to Vidavaluru from Duvvuru, carrying labourers for fishing and the accident occurred when they were getting onboard.

Man held for raping daughter

Gurugram: In a shocking incident, a father was arrested in Gurugram for allegedly raping his 14-year-old daughter repeatedly, the police said Tuesday. "The accused was arrested on Monday and booked under the charges of Prevention of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and other relevant sections of the IPC at the Manesar women police station. The case is under investigation," Sub-Inspector Munesh, the investigation officer, told IANS. The matter came to the fore when the girl revealed her ordeal to her mother, who reported the matter to the police Monday. A medical test revealed that she was raped.

5 kids drown in pond in J'hkhand

Ranchi: Five children, including four girls, drowned in a pond in Jharkhand's Hazaribagh district Tuesday, the police said. According to the police, the incident took place in Gadokhar village under Katmadag police station in Hazaribagh district when the children went to take bath in the pond. After one child drowned, the four other children tried to save him but they also got drowned in the process. The villagers took them to the nearby hospital where they were declared dead.



The liquor shop owners will have to ensure law and order outside the shops. The new policy will stop bootlegging and illicit liquor sale

MANISH SISODIA | DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER OF DELHI

GLACIAL BURST: 130 STILL MISSING

As many as 130 people continue to be missing following the February 7 glacial burst in Uttarakhand, which claimed 74 lives, the Lok Sabha was informed Tuesday



Maha, Punjab, Guj major cause of worry

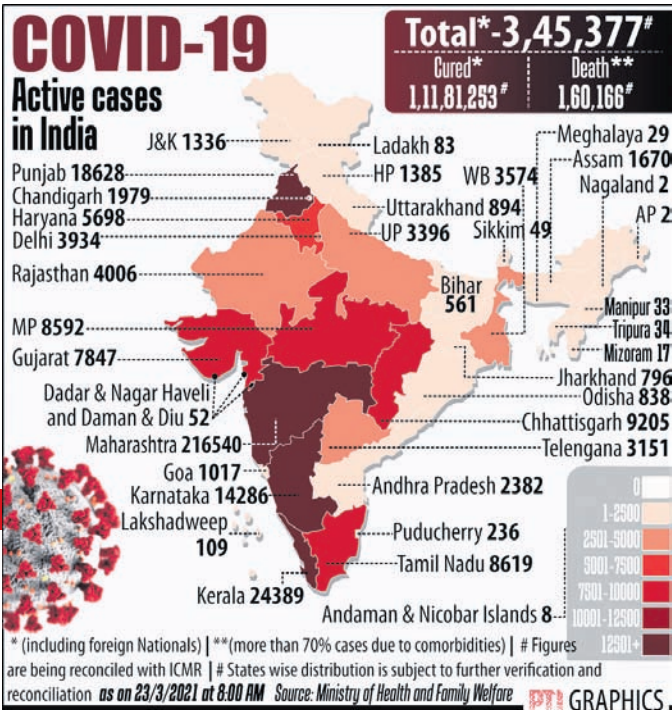
AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 23: Maharashtra, Punjab and Gujarat are turning out to be a major cause of worry as the three states are recording the highest daily new coronavirus cases. India recorded 40,715 infections in the last 24 hours, 13 per cent lower than a day before, taking the total tally to 1,16,86,796 on Tuesday. According to the data of the Health Ministry, six states -- Maharashtra, Punjab, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu together account for 80.90 per cent of the new cases. Maharashtra continues to report the highest daily new cases at 24,645 (60.53 per cent). It is followed by Punjab with 2,299 while Gujarat reported 1,640 new cases.

COVID RESURGE

The Ministry also listed out 10 states which are recording an upward trajectory, including Maharashtra, Punjab, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Delhi, Tamil Nadu, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Haryana and Rajasthan.

India's total active caseload is rising after touching its lowest mark in mid-February. It stands at 3.45 lakh (3,45,377) today. A net incline of 10,731 cases recorded from the total active caseload in the last 24 hours. The home ministry said based on the positive cases and tracking of their contacts, containment zones shall be carefully demarcated by the district authorities at the micro level taking into consideration the guidelines prescribed by the Union Health Ministry.



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The states and union territories where the proportion of RT-PCR tests is less should rapidly increase it to reach the prescribed level of 70 per cent or more of total tests. Three states, Maharashtra, Kerala and Punjab, account for 75.15 per cent of total active cases in the country. Maharashtra alone accounts for 62.71 per cent of the total active cases in the country.

The doubling time has decreased from 504.4 on March 1, to 202.3 on March 23. Last year at the time the lockdown was imposed on March 25, the doubling rate of Covid-19 cases was 3.4 days.

India's cumulative recoveries stand at 1,11,81,253 on Monday. The national recovery rate is 95.67 per cent. About 29,785 recoveries were registered in the last 24 hours. One hundred and ninety-nine deaths were reported in the last 24 hours. Six states account for 80.4 per cent of the daily deaths. Maharashtra and Punjab each reported 58 casualties. Kerala and Chhattisgarh follow with 12 deaths each.

Besides this, India recorded the highest single-day vaccination. More than 32.53 lakh doses were given in the last 24 hours.

SAILING HOME



A man rows his shikara amid rains, at Dal Lake, in Srinagar, Tuesday

PTI PHOTO

Time to frame CAA rules extended by Parl

AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 23: The government has been granted time till April 9 by Lok Sabha and July 9 by Rajya Sabha to frame rules under the citizenship law.

Union Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai said in Lok Sabha that the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 (CAA) was notified December 12, 2019 and came into force from January 10, 2020. The Committees on Subordinate Legislation, Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha have granted time up to April 9 and July 9 respectively to frame these rules, he said in a written reply.

Rai said the foreigners covered under this CAA may submit applications for grant of Indian citizenship after appropriate rules are notified by the central government.



Rules are mandatory for the implementation of any new or amended law and normally framed within six months of its enactment. The objective of the CAA is to grant Indian citizenship to persecuted minorities -- Hindu, Sikh, Jain, Buddhist, Parsi and Christian

-- from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. Those from these communities who had come to India till December 31, 2014, facing religious persecution in their respective countries, will not be treated as illegal immigrants but given Indian citizenship.

CAA will be implemented 'in time', says Nadda

GUWAHATI: BJP President J P Nadda on Tuesday asserted that the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) has been passed by the Parliament and will be implemented "in time". Nadda after releasing the party's manifesto for the Assam elections said that the law, (which does not find a mention in the manifesto), is a central legislation and the Congress claim that they will not allow its implementation in the state, if voted to power, may be either "due to their ignorance or they are trying to fool the people of the state". "I do not want to comment on the Congress thinking but their approach is not only problematic but also dangerous for the state", he said.

SOMNATH BHARTI JAILED FOR 2 YEARS

New Delhi: A Delhi Court Tuesday upheld the conviction of Aam Aadmi Party (AP) MLA Somnath Bharti relating to the assault of All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) security staff in 2016. On January 23, Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Ravindra Kumar Pandey had sentenced Bharti to two years of imprisonment and imposed a fine of ₹1 lakh in the case. Five days later, on the appeal filed by Bharti, Special Judge Vikas Dhull had stayed the magistrate court's order. In an order Tuesday, the court upheld the order dated January 23 and sent him to jail for offences such as rioting, unlawful assembly under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) along with mischief causing damage to public property under Prevention of Damage to Public Property (PDPP) Act.

Fake romance, influencer scams thriving on Instagram

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 23: Facebook-owned Instagram has seen a surge in frauds on its platform that were up by 50 per cent since the pandemic began, and scams related to romance, phishing and influencer sponsors top the chart, a new report said Tuesday.

According to Sophos Naked Security, part of the cybersecurity firm Sophos, the scamming on Instagram has worsened over the past year.

"Phishers try to get access to your Instagram account by sending you a suspicious link, either as an Instagram direct message or via email, where you are then tricked into putting in your username and password on a fake login page," the researchers said in a statement.



Representative image

Once the crooks have your login details, they can access your personal information and even change your password to lock you out of your own account. Scammers are also taking advantage of the rise in influencers on social media to exploit the influencers themselves.

"These scammers pretend to be an established brand and offer influencers an advertising deal. If the influencer is unlucky enough to believe that the deal they are receiving is legitimate, they may hand over their personal banking details

in order to be 'paid' by the brand," the report noted. Since its launch in 2010, Instagram has seen more than 1 billion accounts opened, and users on the service share close to 100 million photos every day.

Romance scams are also witnessing a surge on the platform.

Here, fraudsters enter into a fake online relationship, often speaking with their targets for weeks, months or even years to earn and then to abuse their trust. Once the target is ensnared, the scammer starts asking for money for visas, flights, travel expenses and more. But there's always an excuse why the scammer wasn't able to get the visa, or board the flight, or do whatever they said they would.

"Sudden travel restrictions due to Covid-19 regulations have apparently become a popular excuse during the coronavirus pandemic. The scammer will continue asking for money for as long as the person at the other end continues to send it," the researchers noted.

Don't use the same password as you do on any other sites, they urged. "If you think you may have given away your password on a fake site, change it as soon as you can before the crooks do. Consider using a password manager if you don't have one already," the researchers advised.

"As much as it seems to be common to share a lot of your life on Instagram nowadays, you don't have to give away everything about yourself. Also think about who or what is in the background of your photos before you upload them," they added.

of the day quote

The world has witnessed horrific deadly attacks, verbal and physical harassment, bullying in schools, workplace discrimination, incitement to hatred in the media and on social media platforms, and incendiary language by those in positions of power

FARHAN HAQ | UN DEPUTY SPOKESMAN

It's because of every person in this country that lives have been saved, our NHS was protected, and we have started on our cautious road to easing restrictions once and for all

BORIS JOHNSON | PRIME MINISTER OF THE UK

The recovery is far from complete, so, at the Fed, we will continue to provide the economy the support it needs for as long as it takes

JEROME POWELL | US FEDERAL RESERVE CHAIRMAN

SHORT TAKES

3 military pilots killed

Moscow: Three members of a Russian warplane crew died Tuesday when their ejection seats accidentally activated during preflight checks, the military said. The Russian Defense Ministry said that the incident happened Tuesday at a military airbase in the Kaluga region, about 145 kilometers southwest of Moscow. It said the crew of a Tu-22M3 long-range bomber was preparing for a training mission when its ejection system malfunctioned and accidentally bailed the crew out.

Road mishap claims 14

Tehran: A road accident in southeastern Iran Tuesday killed at least 14 people, including eight children, an Iranian semi-official news agency reported. There were no details as to what caused the accident. The crash involved three cars, the report said, and also left 11 people injured. The accident comes as Iran is celebrating the Persian New Year, or Nowruz, which began Saturday. Many Iranians are traveling during the holidays despite warnings by health officials over the pandemic.

Environmentalist gunned down

Teguchigalpa: An indigenous environmental activist has been killed in Honduras, according to police and media reports. Carlos Ceros, a representative of the indigenous Lenca people, was shot dead in the street near the city of San Antonio in Cortes department in the north-west of the country; dpa news agency quoted the La Prensa news paper as saying. The 41-year-old was reportedly gunned down Monday night in front of his children.

Avalanche claims 2 in Afghanistan

Kabul: Two people were killed and two others injured as an avalanche swept away a house in Afghanistan's Badakhshan province Tuesday, an official has confirmed. The incident took place early morning in the Sangich village of the mountainous Shakai district, killing a father and a son and injuring two others from the same family, the official said. Badakhshan and the neighbouring Takhar, Kunduz and Baghlan provinces have witnessed rains and snow over the past couple of days.

Lanka faces UN scrutiny over civil war crimes

The United Nations believes 80,000-100,000 people died in the 26-year conflict, in which the rebels sought to carve out a separate state for the Tamil minority

REUTERS

Geneva/ New Delhi, March 23: UN human rights boss Michelle Bachelet received a mandate Tuesday to collect evidence of crimes during Sri Lanka's long civil war, which ended 2009 with the defeat of the separatist Tamil Tigers and an upsurge of civilian deaths.

The United Nations believes 80,000-100,000 people died in the 26-year conflict, in which the rebels sought to carve out a separate state for the Tamil minority.

It has accused both sides of war crimes.

In the final months, the army pinned the Tigers into a tiny strip of northeastern coast in a ferocious offensive, where the government says the rebels kept thousands of civilians as human shields, exacerbating the death toll.

"It is hugely significant for victims," said Yasmin Sooka, a rights lawyer involved in a civil prosecution against Sri Lanka's current President Gotabaya Rajapaksa for alleged war crimes, after the UN Human Right Council resolution.



"It really is a recognition that at the domestic level, processes have failed and there is no real hope that victims will access justice," she told Reuters.

The Geneva-based rights council adopted a resolution, spearheaded by Britain, giving Bachelet's office new staff, powers and a \$2.8 million budget to look at Sri Lanka's war, with a view to future prosecutions.

The vote was 22 in favour, with 11 against including China and Pakistan, and 14 abstentions including neighbouring India.

At a press conference in Sri Lanka's capital Colombo, Foreign Minister Dinesh Gunewardena said the resolution lacked authority as more nations voted against or abstained than in favour.

"The resolution was brought by



Your efforts will bring in, of course, value to your companies, money for your shareholders, benefits for your customers, jobs for the people and in a much larger plane, strategic strength to our two nations

TARANJIT SINGH SANDHU | INDIA'S AMBASSADOR TO THE US

UK RESTRICTS FOREIGN TRAVELS

Starting from March 29, the UK will impose a 5,000 pound fine on anyone from England travelling abroad without a valid reason, such as a medical emergency, as part of the government's new Covid-19 laws



EASY EQUINOX



A woman stretches on the Edge at Hudson Yards as the sun rises over Manhattan on spring equinox, in the Manhattan borough of New York City

REUTERS

HASINA ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT

14 ISLAMIC MILITANTS GIVEN DEATH SENTENCE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dhaka, March 23: Fourteen Islamist militants were Tuesday given death sentence by a Bangladeshi court here for attempting to kill Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in 2009.

Judge Abu Zafar Md Kamruzzaman of Dhaka's Speedy Trial tribunal-1 pronounced the verdict as nine of them were brought to the court from jail to face the trial in person.

The rest five convicts are on the run. They were tried in absentia and defended by state-appointed lawyers.

The verdict will be executed by a firing squad to set an example, unless the law barred it, the judge said.

Otherwise, the convicts could be hanged in line with the prevailing practice, following mandatory review of the death sentences by the High Court Division of the Supreme Court under the Bangladesh law, the



judge said.

Under the Bangladesh law, the death sentences would require to be endorsed by the High Court following an automatic death reference hearing. The convicts are allowed to file an appeal as well.

For the five convicts who are at large, the judge ordered the verdict to be executed after their arrest or surrender.

All the convicts are operatives of outlawed Harkatul Jihad

The rest five convicts are on the run. All the convicts are operatives of outlawed Harkatul Jihad Bangladesh

Bangladesh (HuJI-B).

HuJI-B's chief Mufti Abdul Hannan, who was found to be the mastermind of the plot, too was indicted in the case but his name was dropped from the trial as he was executed 2017 in another case involving attempted assassination of the then Bangladeshi-origin British High Commissioner.

The convicts had hatched the plot to kill Hasina by planting a high-powered 76 kilogram bomb near a ground in her constituency in Kotalipara area in southwestern Gopalganj district where she was supposed to address an election rally July 2000.

Reputation of Astra marred by missteps

Hours after the US trial's positive reports, officials issued an unusual statement expressing concerns the company had included "outdated information"

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, March 23: AstraZeneca's release Monday of encouraging data about its coronavirus vaccine from its US trial raised hopes that the drug company could bury doubts about the shot and put a troubled rollout behind it.

But hours later, US officials issued an unusual statement expressing concerns the company had included "outdated information" from its study and that it may have provided "an incomplete view of the efficacy data."

A company spokesman said Tuesday it was "looking into it."

Even before this latest stumble, AstraZeneca had made missteps



in reporting data and faced a blood clot scare. Health officials worried that those past issues could cause lasting harm to the shot that is key to global efforts to stop the pandemic and undermine vaccine confidence more broadly.

"The way they handled their data early on, AstraZeneca basically shot themselves in the foot," Julian Tang, a virologist at the University of Leicester, said even before the latest issue arose.

"Even though the new study confirms what we previously thought about the vaccine's efficacy, people may have lingering doubts," he said. "Unfortunately, that might mean more people will die of COVID." Britain was the first to authorize the vaccine in December, based on partial results from the UK, Brazil and South Africa.

Biden admin bats for Rana's extradition



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, March 23: The Biden administration has urged a federal court in Los Angeles to certify India's request to extradite fugitive Pakistani-origin Canadian businessman Tahawwur Rana, sought for his involvement in the 2008 Mumbai terror attack, saying he meets all the criteria required for the handover.

US District Court Judge in Los Angeles Jacqueline Chooljian has scheduled the extradition hearing for April 22.

Assistant US Attorney John J Lulejian, in his submission before a federal US court in Los Angeles, California, said Rana, 59, meets all the criteria to be extradited to India for his trial in the Mumbai terrorist attack. February 4, Rana's attorney had opposed his extradition.

The United States respectfully requests that following the April 22, 2021, extradition hearing, the Court certify India's request for Rana's extradition for the Secretary of State's surrender decision, Lulejian said in his 61-page court submission Monday.

Rana, a childhood friend of

Fugitive Tahawwur Hussain Rana is wanted in India to stand trial for offences related to his role in the 2008 terrorist attacks in Mumbai

David Coleman Headley, was re-arrested June 10 in Los Angeles on an extradition request by India for his involvement in the Mumbai terror attack in which 166 people, including six Americans, were killed. He has been declared a fugitive by India.

Fugitive Tahawwur Hussain Rana is wanted in India to stand trial for offences related to his role in the 2008 terrorist attacks in Mumbai, India, that resulted in the death of 166 people, injury of 239 people, and the damage to property in excess of USD 1.5 billion, Lulejian said.

As per the India-US Extradition Treaty, the Indian government has requested the formal extradition of Rana, and the United States has initiated the extradition proceeding.

Colorado shooting leaves 10 dead

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Boulder, March 23: A shooting at a crowded Colorado supermarket that killed 10 people, including the first police officer to arrive, sent terrorized shoppers and workers scrambling for safety and stunned a state that has grieved several mass killings. A lone suspect was in custody, authorities said.

Hundreds of police officers from throughout the Denver metropolitan area responded to the Monday afternoon attack, converging on a King Soopers supermarket in a busy shopping plaza in southern Boulder.

SWAT officers carrying ballistic shields slowly approached the store as others quickly escorted frightened people away from the building, some of its windows shattered. Customers and employees fled through a back loading dock to safety. Others took refuge in nearby shops.



One suspect was in custody, a tearful Boulder Police Chief Maris Herold said late Monday. Authorities didn't identify the suspect, though Boulder County District Attorney Michael Dougherty said the suspect was the only person injured and was receiving medical care.

Officers had escorted a shirtless man in handcuffs, blood running down his leg, from the store during the siege.

GAGANYAAN MISSION

Indian cosmonauts complete training in Russia

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Moscow, March 23: The four cosmonauts shortlisted for Gaganyaan, India's first manned space mission, have completed their training in Russia, according to an official Russian statement here Tuesday.

The Rs 10,000 crore ambitious project is expected to be launched 2022, the year of the 75th anniversary of India's Independence.

The Four Indian Air Force fighter pilots are likely to be potential candidates for the Gaganyaan project.

Dmitry Rogozin, General



Director of the State Corporation Roscosmos, Thursday held a meeting with

Indian cosmonaut candidates who successfully completed general space training, the

agency said in a statement.

The meeting was also attended by the Ambassador of India to Russia, D B Venkatesh Varma and representatives of subsidiaries of the State Corporation Roscosmos, who took part in the training of Indian candidates for astronauts.

The contract for the training of Indian candidates for space flight between the Glavkosmos company (part of the Roscosmos State Corporation) and the Manned Space Flight Center of the Indian Space Research Organisation was signed June 27, 2019.

Cosmonaut Training Center named after Yuri Gagarin February 10, 2020 began the planned training of Indian cosmonaut candidates.

The training was paused in the end of March due to the outbreak of COVID-19 infection. It was later resumed May.

The entire process of preparation and training included a number of elements necessary for future cosmonauts, such as medical and physical training, studying the Russian language, studying the design, layout and systems of the Soyuz transport manned spacecraft.

Government spokesman Abdourahmane Zakaria confirmed on Monday the latest killings took place Sunday, the same day Niger's Constitutional Court officially declared Bazoum as the winner of February's election. He is due to take office April 2 amid a rapidly deteriorating situation in Niger, long destabilised by the Islamic insurgency in neighbouring Mali.

In January, at least 100 people were killed in the western villages of Tchombangou and Zaroumdareye, the same day that Niger announced the presidential election would go to a second round February 21. Another wave of attacks less than a week ago killed at least 66 others.

There have been no claims of responsibility for the recent attacks on villages in Niger, although Islamic extremists rarely say they are behind violence when they kill civilians.



of the day uote

Old vehicle will be scrapped and once the customer will buy a new vehicle, both Central government and the state governments will get revenues to the tune of ₹30,000 crore to ₹40,000 crore

NITIN GADKARI | UNION TRANSPORT MINISTER

V-shaped recovery is being seen as the third quarter GDP numbers are positive and trade is getting better

ANURAG THAKUR | MOS FINANCE

So far, loans of ₹1,35,497 crore have been sanctioned and ₹46,321 crore have been released to states/ DISCOMs by REC and PFC

RK SINGH | UNION POWER MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

GST collections top ₹1 lakh cr

New Delhi: Increased economic activities have resulted in higher GST collection which stood above ₹1 lakh crore for five months in a row since October 2020, Minister of State for Finance and Corporate Affairs Anurag Thakur said in the Rajya Sabha Tuesday. Thakur, during Question Hour, said this could be possible on the back of the measures taken by the government to boost economic activities over the last year to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. "GST collection has increased. If you see e-way bill data, numbers... Activities have increased," the minister said.

Sensex shed major gains

Mumbai: The Indian equity indices shed major gains made during the initial trade Tuesday, with the BSE Sensex trading below the 50,000-mark. It rose above the landmark level to touch an intraday high of 50,115.24 points. Around 10.40 a.m., Sensex was trading at 49,934.57, higher by 163.28 points or 0.33 per cent from its previous close of 49,771.29. It opened at 49,876.21 and has touched an intraday low of 49,779.89 points. The Nifty50 on the National Stock Exchange was trading at 14,774.10, higher by 37.70 points or 0.26 per cent from its previous close.

UK jobless rate drops to 5.0%

London: Britain's jobless rate unexpectedly fell to 5.0% in the three months to January, when the country entered a new COVID lockdown, official figures showed Tuesday, below forecasts of a rise to 5.2% in a Reuters poll. Separate official data based on tax records showed an increase of 68,000 in the number of employees on business payrolls in February from January, though the total is 693,000 lower than a year earlier before the start of the pandemic.

Swiggy opens Health Hub

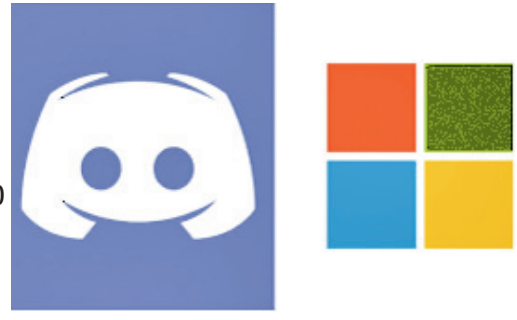
Chennai: Food ordering platform Swiggy has launched Health Hub in the city aimed at making eating of healthy food convenient to the public, the company said Tuesday. The Health Hub in Chennai would offer over 9,000 healthy dishes from 700 restaurants across the city and nutritional information on the macro nutrients like protein, carbohydrates, fats and fibre would be listed for each dish.



This is the time for business leaders to take the opportunity to access to different skills and talent not previously available to them
KARIN KIMBROUGH | CHIEF ECONOMIST, LINKEDIN

MICROSOFT IN TALKS TO ACQUIRE DISCORD

Microsoft Corp is in talks to buy messaging platform Discord Inc for more than \$10 billion, Bloomberg News reported, citing people familiar with the matter



Govt raises PF threshold limit to ₹5L for earning tax-free interest

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 23: The government Tuesday raised the deposit threshold limit to ₹5 lakh per annum in provident fund for which interest would continue to be tax exempt.

This would be applicable to those cases where no contribution is made by employers to the retirement fund.

In her Budget presented to Parliament February 1, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had provided that interest on employee contributions to provident fund over ₹2.5 lakh per annum would be taxed from April 1, 2021.

Replying to the debate on the Finance Bill 2021 in the Lok Sabha, Sitharaman made the announcement regarding raising the limit to ₹5 lakh in cases where employers do not make contributions to the provident fund.

The Finance Bill, which gives effect to tax proposals for 2021-22, was approved by voice vote.

The Bill was passed after acceptance of 127 amendments to the proposed legislation.

The minister also stressed that tax on interest on provident fund



This would be applicable to those cases where no contribution is made by employers to the retirement fund

Sitharaman said she would love to discuss the issue of bringing petrol and diesel under GST in the next GST Council meeting

contribution affects only 1 per cent of the contributors and the remaining are not impacted as their contribution is less than ₹2.5 lakh per annum.

Referring to the issues raised by various members on higher taxes on motor fuel, Sitharaman said she would love to discuss the issue of bringing petrol and diesel under GST in the next GST Council meeting.

She also sought to remind members that it was not just the Centre

which taxes motor fuel and states too impose levies.

The Finance Minister also said rationalisation of customs duty structure will be undertaken to help domestic businesses, especially the MSME segment.

On taxes, she emphasised on the need for widening the tax base. With regards to the equalisation levy, she said this is meant to provide a level playing field to domestic businesses which pay taxes in India.

Curtailed banking services from Mar 27-Apr 4

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 23: Banking consumers may face difficulties in getting services from March 27 to April 4 as all banks in the country will largely stay closed or offer curtailed services as the institutions switch to the new financial year.

All banks will stay closed for three consecutive days from March 27 (4th Saturday), March 28 (Sunday) and March 29 (Holi).

All banks will stay closed for three consecutive days from March 27 (4th Saturday), March 28 (Sunday) and March 29 (Holi)

Further, customer-facing services at bank branches will remain closed March 31 and April 1 as banks close their books for FY21. April 2 would be a holiday on account of Good Friday and being a Sunday, services will be shut on April 4. Thereby, seven out of the nine days till April 4 (Sunday) will witness no customer related activities including withdrawal and deposits at bank branches.

RBI sets up panel for issuing new bank licences

Although the guidelines for on-tap licensing were announced in 2016, the central bank had said that the applications would need to be scrutinised by a standing committee



AGENCIES

Mumbai, March 23: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has set up a standing external advisory committee (SEAC) headed by former deputy governor Shyamala Gopinath to evaluate on-tap applications for universal and small finance banks.

Although the guidelines for on-tap licensing were announced in 2016, the central bank had said that the applications would need to be scrutinised by a standing committee, which has been appointed only now. Changes to the 2016 guidelines were proposed by an internal group that had said that non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) floated by corporates could be given licences. With the SEAC in place, the RBI appears to be sending out a message that it is finally ready to look at new applications.

Besides the chairperson, the other four members are RBI central board director Revathy Iyer, NPCI chairman B Mahapatra, Canara Bank's former chairman TN Manoharan, and SBI's former MD & PFRDA's former chairman Hemant Contractor.

While announcing the guidelines for 'on-tap licensing of uni-

versal banks' in 2016, the RBI had indicated that applications will be initially screened by the central bank to ensure 'prima facie eligibility of the applicants'. It was also stated that an SEAC will evaluate the applications thereafter and that the constitution of this committee will be announced by the RBI. The constitution of an SEAC was also mentioned in the RBI guidelines for 'on-tap licensing of small finance banks'. There has been fresh debate over the issue of new licences after the RBI's internal working group reviewing the corporate structure of private banks said that NBFCs owned by corporates should be allowed to set up banks.

However, former central bankers pointed out that there has been a harmonisation of guidelines for banks and large NBFCs. This meant that large NBFCs are going to be more intensely regulated. Since the on-tap guidelines were announced, only one entity - UAE Exchange - had shown interest in applying for a bank licence.

Since then the group promoted by UAE entrepreneur BR Shetty has fallen in troubled times. Around a decade ago, when the RBI invited applications for bank licences, there were 24 applicants.

Govt to address entrepreneurs' issues: Asit Tripathy

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 23: Asit Tripathy, Principal Advisor to Chief Minister and Chairman WODC, Tuesday interacted with the micro, small, medium and large scale industries of Balasore district under the initiative of Industry Care.

Tripathy visited the industrial estates in Balasore and reviewed the physical infrastructure and associated facilities there. Tripathy along with Principal Secretary Industry Hemant Sharma, Principal Secretary MSME Satyabrata Sahu, MD IPI-COL Nitin Bhanudas Jawale and Balasore Collector K Sudarshan Chakravarty met the industrialists and entrepreneurs from Balasore, Bhadrak, and Mayurbhanj at the Business Park of North Odisha Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NOCCI), Balasore.

Around 150 industries and companies including GAIL, Highland Agro, Falcon Marine exports, Everest Industries, Emami Paper Limited and IOCL among others attended the meeting and participated in the deliberations. The participants raised issues related to land, use of groundwater, license renewal, approach road and water supply. Tripathy said, "The main objective of the Industry Care Initiative is to strengthen industrial growth in each district through close engagement with the entrepreneur community, creating awareness about the facilitating policies, business reforms and support mechanism of government for promotion and facilitation of the industries". He also said that the issues and concerns of the entrepreneurs would be addressed on high priority basis.

Sebi eases valuation norms on bonds

On March 10, Sebi had stated that the maturity of all perpetual bonds shall be treated as 100 years from the date of their issuance for the purposes of valuation

AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 23: The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has amended valuation rule of perpetual bonds. According to a circular issued, Sebi said the deemed residual maturity of Basel III additional tier-1 (AT-1) bonds would be 10 years until March 31, 2022.

The development comes after the market regulator March 10 had stated that the maturity of all perpetual bonds shall be treated as 100 years from the date of their issuance for the purposes of valuation. "Further, if the issuer does not exercise call option for any ISIN then the valuation and calculation of Macaulay Duration shall be done considering maturity of 100 years



from the date of issuance for AT-1 Bonds and Contractual Maturity for Tier 2 bonds, for all ISINs of the issuer," the circular said.

Oil sector PSUs to set up InvITs for asset monetisation

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 23: After power, the country's oil sector PSUs would now float an infrastructure investment trust (InvIT) as part of the asset monetisation exercise announced by the government and mobilise resources for fresh capital investment.

As part of the exercise, gas transportation utility Gail India is expected to set up the first InvIT in the oil sector in the next financial year. The proposed InvIT will house some of the gas pipeline infrastructure created by the company.

Oil ministry officials said that this will help Gail to mobilise over ₹20,000 crore through this route



that could be helpful in developing new pipeline infrastructure that would help the country in developing a gas based economy.

Two other oil public sector undertakings, HPCL and IndianOil, may also set up InvIT at a later stage. While Gail and HPCL will focus on monetising their pipeline infrastructure through the investment trusts, IndianOil proposes to do so in the case of its hydrogen producing units as well as product pipelines.

CEOs don't expect to see a return to 'normal' until 2022

KPMG CEO Outlook Pulse Survey has brought out key insights into how global CEOs are thinking during the continued run of the pandemic

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 23: The CEOs of the world's most influential companies are planning what the 'new reality' will look like post-pandemic. The 2021 KPMG CEO Outlook Pulse Survey finds that almost half (45 per cent) of global executives do not expect to see a return to a 'normal' course of business until sometime in 2022, as opposed to nearly one-third (31 per cent) who anticipate this will happen later this year.

As the changes prompted by the pandemic have resulted in one-quarter (24 per cent) of CEOs saying that their business model has been changed forever by the global pandemic.

The study conducted by KPMG

in February and March of this year asked 500 global CEOs about their response to the pandemic and the outlook over a 3-year horizon. A majority (55 per cent) of CEOs are concerned about employees' access to a COVID-19 vaccine, which is influencing their outlook of when employees will return to the workplace. A significant majority (90 per cent) of CEOs are considering asking employees to report when they have been vaccinated, which may help organisations consider measures to protect their workforce. However, one-third (34 per cent) of global executives are worried about misinformation on COVID-19 vaccine safety and the potential this may have on employees choosing not to have it



administered.

Bill Thomas, Global Chairman & CEO, KPMG, said: "Before any major decisions are made, CEOs want to be confident that their workforce is protected against this virus. The COVID-19 vaccine rollout is providing leaders with a dose of optimism as they prepare for a new

reality. CEOs are scenario planning for difference across certain key markets that could impact their operations, supply chains and people, leading to uneven economic recovery. "Our research shows that some executives have taken strong measures during the crisis to transform their operating model and

ways of working, accelerating the rollout of key transformational projects, some by choice, while some out of necessity. The pandemic has also been a catalyst for CEOs to evaluate the role their companies play in society. Many have given voice to issues they may not have previously commented on publicly - from tackling climate change to supporting the diverse communities they operate in - and we need to keep hearing those voices. There is much more to be done."

The survey has brought out key insights into how global CEOs are thinking during the continued run of the pandemic. Nine out of 10 leaders globally (90 per cent) intend to ask their employees to report when they have been vaccinated

in order to protect the wider workforce. In India, 94 per cent CEOs intend to do so.

Similarly majority of CEOs globally will wait for more than 50 per cent of population to be vaccinated before returning to the office. In India, this number stood at 76 per cent. Also, 66 per cent CEOs in India as opposed to 74 per cent CEOs globally felt the pandemic has accelerated the digitisation of operations and creation of next-generation models.

About three-quarters (76 per cent) of CEOs globally see government encouragement for businesses to return to 'normal' as the prompt for businesses to ask staff to return to the workplace. In India, this number stands at 86 per cent.



E-SUV Jaguar I-PACE launched in India

Mumbai: Jaguar Land Rover India Tuesday announced the launch of the all-electric Jaguar I-PACE in India with a starting price of ₹105.9 lakh (ex-showroom India). The Jaguar I-PACE is powered by a 90 kWh battery that delivers 294 kW power and 696 Nm torque, allowing the I-PACE to accelerate from 0-100 km/h in just 4.8 seconds. Rohit Suri, President & Managing Director, Jaguar Land Rover India Ltd. (JLRIL) said: "Jaguar I-PACE is the first all-electric SUV that we've launched in India and it marks the beginning of our electrification journey. With our electrified products we look forward to playing a significant role in India's electrification drive into the future." Jaguar has ensured that every step of the customer journey in owning an electric car is made as easy as possible. With this in mind, 22 retail outlets across 19 cities are now EV ready with over 35 EV chargers installed and more underway.

Nissan India to increase vehicle prices

New Delhi: Nissan India has announced a price hike across all available models for Nissan and Datsun, effective from April 1. "There has been continuous escalation in auto component prices, and we have tried to absorb this escalation over the last few months. We are now constrained to increase our prices across all Nissan & Datsun models, the increase varies from variant to variant, while still offering the best value proposition to its discerning Indian customers," said Rakesh Srivastava, Managing Director, Nissan Motor India Pvt Ltd. The all-new Nissan Magnite is currently available for bookings across all Nissan India dealerships and on its website, at ₹11,000 with a complete digital experience that awaits each customer to ease their buying process. It is available in 20 grade line-ups and over 36 combinations; each grade walk is carefully curated to meet the aspirations of the discerning Indian customers.

