



DREAM ROLE

British-Indian actor Indira Varma lands a role in *Obi Wan Kenobi*, a spin-off of the Star Wars film *Franchise*

LEISURE

P2



THE FETTERED GIRL

A 15-year-old girl of Talakampadiha village in Keonjhar district has been in chains for years

STATE

P5



H-1B VISA: BIDEN 'UNDECIDED'

Biden admin has indicated that it is still undecided on ending the Trump-era ban on issuing new H-1B visas

INTERNATIONAL

P10

Flip-flop: VSSUT students test neg

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 2: The 25 students of the Veer Surendra Sai University of Technology (VSSUT), Burla, who had reportedly tested positive for Covid-19 three days ago, were declared negative Tuesday after a fresh round of tests.

Health Secretary Pradipta Kumar Mohapatra termed the earlier tests carried out on the students 'false'.

"None of the students of the university have been infected by the Covid-19 virus. The antigen kits used in testing were faulty. When the students' RT-PCR tests were done, the reports came out to be negative."

Sources said the test kits will be withdrawn and the health department will take necessary steps to prevent recurrence of such events.

Sources said the precautionary measures adopted after the first round of tests will now be withdrawn. The district administration had declared 11 hostels on the varsity premises as 'Containment Zones'.

These hostels are Pulaha, Pulastya, Atri, Kratu, Vasistha, Marich, Anuradha, Arundhati, Rohini, Visakha and Vasundhara. The adjacent area of Pulaha hostel was also



None of the students were infected by the Covid-19 virus. The antigen kits used in testing were faulty

PRADIPTA KUMAR MOHAPATRA | HEALTH SECRETARY

declared as a buffer zone. This apart, the varsity authorities had also postponed the exams scheduled to begin from March 1 till further orders.

This revelation has shocked the local people. "What about the mental

stress the 25 students and their parents must have undergone during these days," they asked.

The developments have raised serious questions on the efficacy of rapid antigen tests and the manufacturers from whom the government procured the kits in bulk. In the current case, the kits were provided by some New Delhi-based suppliers. According to government documents, the faulty antigen testing kits were supplied to VIMSAR Medical College. The same kits were used to screen the students of VSSUT which showed the misleading results.

Notice slapped on testing kit supplier

BHUBANESWAR: The Odisha State Medical Corporation Limited (OSMCL) Tuesday issued a show cause notice to the New Delhi-based firm for supplying faulty Covid-19 antigen testing kits. The state government said the kits were inaccurate and it was asked why action should not be initiated against them. It has asked the firm to reply within three days. The notice was issued by the General Manager (operations-equipment) of the OSMCL seeking response from the erring firm which has its registered office at Okhla Industrial Estate.

"I am to state that it has been brought to the notice that the batch of Rapid Antigen Detection kits for SARS CoV-2 (Covid19) having batch no CAF-0008 supplied to VIMSAR, Burla is showing false positive results of Covid19 suspects, which is a matter of serious concern," the notice said. "You are hereby called upon to showcase as to

why OSMCL shall not take action against your firm for supply of defective/non-standard Rapid Antigen Detection kits for SARS CoV2 (Covid19) within three days from the issue of the notice," the department said.

OSMCL has been entrusted with the task of procurement, storage and distribution of medical equipment needed for Covid19 testing and kits for healthcare workers during the pandemic. The department had procured several diagnostic kit and other materials from different manufacturers from across the country to cater to the needs of Covid19 management. The department was earlier under radar in the wake of allegations of PPE kit scam. The department was also red-faced when several trucks loaded with essential Covid 19 items like PPE kits, masks and others from manufacturers from other states were not accepted by them.

Food testing: State lags way behind

MANISH KUMAR, OP

Bhubaneswar, March 2: The state seems to be faltering on food testing exercise meant to detect adulteration, contamination and misbranding in consumable food and beverages used by the public.

Latest available data from the Food Safety Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), New Delhi claim that Odisha is among the worst performers in the country when it comes to testing food samples.

FSSAI records of all India food testing statistics claim that while several states were able to test more than 10,000 food samples in a year, Odisha was not able to test even 1000 samples in a year, hinting at the apathy of the government on food safety.

The central food safety monitoring agency, formed after the Food Safety Standards Act 2006, claims that Odisha was also one of the states with the least number of penal cases against adulterators. This comes at a time when states like Madhya Pradesh has made food adulteration a crime eligible for punishment like life imprisonment.



ments like life imprisonment.

The last published FSSAI data of 2018-19 claimed that Uttar Pradesh proved to be the best performing state in terms of testing. It examined 13,567 samples in a year and found 5663 samples adulterated. The state also filed 5101 civil cases and 375 cases against erring units. It also saw convictions in 1273 such cases.

Gujarat analysed 11,329 samples and found 839 cases of adulteration/misbranding and filed cases against 559 persons. Similarly Maharashtra was able to test 10,003 samples and found 2529 samples adulterated/misbranded and it filed cases against 1256 persons.

Several other states like Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir, Karnataka, Kerala, Chhattisgarh, Haryana and others tested samples between 5000 and 1300.

FOOD TESTING RECORDS		
STATES	SAMPLES TESTED	ADULTERATED/MISBRANDED
Uttar Pradesh	13,567	5663
Gujarat	11,329	839
Maharashtra	10,003	2529
Rajasthan	4923	1276
Andhra Pradesh	4687	552
Punjab	4054	2240
Odisha	508	75

Source: FSSAI

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



I told them I am only 25 but look 60 because of unemployment. But they didn't listen to me and gave me a job

Malkangiri: Tenant sedates landlord; flees with cash, gold

The accused, Jagdish, and his wife were staying on rent in the house of jeweler Subash Patil for last three months

POST NEWS NETWORK

Malkangiri, March 2: A tenant fled with gold ornaments worth ₹23 lakh and ₹2 lakh cash after intoxicating the landlord and the latter's wife at BB Guda in Sadar area of Malkangiri district, police said, Tuesday.

According to reports, the accused Jagdish and his wife had been staying on rent in the house of a jewellery shop owner Subash Patil for the last three months.

During dinner Monday, Jagdish gave Subash and his family some sweets which were laced with some intoxicant. After having their dinner and closing the doors, the intoxicant started to take effect on Subash's family.

Subsequently, Jagdish broke into the house through the window. As Subash had to open his store Tuesday morning, he had not kept the jewellery and cash in the locker. Seizing the opportunity, Jagdish and his wife decamped with it.



PLUCKING VOTES!



All India Congress Committee (AICC) General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra joins tea workers at Sadhuru tea garden in Biswanath, Assam (Report P7)

PTI PHOTO

Classes X, XII timings change again

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 2: Yielding to public demand for wrapping up classes before noon, the school and mass education department Tuesday rescheduled the timing of Classes X and XII as a precautionary measure to tackle the heatwave situation in the state.

As per the new timings, Classes X and XII timings were rescheduled to a bracket of 8 am to 12 noon. Earlier, it was from 9am to 1pm. Timings of Classes IX and XI have not been changed and they will continue as scheduled from 7am to 9am.

On February 26, as a precautionary measure to tackle the heatwave situation, the school and mass education department Friday rescheduled school timings for Class IX, X, XI and XII with effect from March 1. As per the guidelines, Class IX and XI timings were rescheduled to 7am to 9am while Class X and XII timings were rescheduled to 9am to 1pm.

But the Congress party Sunday had opposed the state government's plan to continue classes in schools post noon in the wake of the rising mercury level in the state. Congress leader Santosh Singh Saluja Sunday

said classes should start by 6:30 am and end before noon.

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

"The state government has announced rescheduling of the classes but that is not good enough. Classes must start from 6am or 6:30am everyday and end by 11am or 11:30am. The mercury level is rising day-by-day. If any kid falls ill due to sunstroke, the school and mass education minister should be held liable for the same," Saluja said.

Anjana Mishra case: TI parade of Biban today



FILE PHOTO

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 2: The special CBI court Tuesday allowed the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to take prime accused in Anjana Mishra gangrape case on a two-day remand for further investigation into the issue. The court also permitted the central agency to conduct a Test Identification (TI) parade of Bibekananda Biswal alias Biban to be held in Jharpada Jail Wednesday.

Sources revealed that the victim, Anjana Mishra, will be asked to identify the accused Biban among several others in the presence of JMFC Srulain Mohanty Wednesday. The CBI sleuths from Kolkata office will take Biban on remand Thursday for interrogation. Legal experts have opined that the fate of the case hinges mostly on the outcome of the TI parade. As

there is a lapse of 22 years since the incident happened and there are substantial changes in Biban's looks, it may prove to be a difficult task for the victim to identify Biban. More so because the accused will be shown as part of a group of people.

Earlier, the CBI sleuths had met Police Commissioner Sudhanshu Sarangi at his office here to discuss the issue immediately after the arrest of Biban last month.

Sarangi had announced the arrest of Biban from Aamby Valley in Lonavala of Maharashtra at a presser in Cuttack February 22. A joint team of commissionerate police of the twin city, Lonavala and Navi Mumbai in Maharashtra nabbed the accused who had been staying at Aamby Valley with a false name. Mishra was gangraped by Biban and two others near Baranga in 1999.

MARKET WATCH	
INDEX	VARIATION
SENSEX	50296.89 ↑ 447.05
NIFTY	14919.10 ↑ 157.60
DOLLAR	74.02 ↓ ₹0.14
EURO	88.53 ↓ ₹0.35
GOLD	₹44,760 ↓ ₹669
SILVER	₹67,150 ↓ ₹272

WEATHER	
	BHUB CTK
MAX	38.6°C 38.2°C
MIN	23.6°C 22.0°C
Humidity	83% 84%
Rainfall	Nil Nil
Forecast	
Fog or mist in the morning	

Govt pension to terrorists in Pak: India

AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 2: India Tuesday exposed Pakistan for hosting the largest number of terrorists proscribed by the United Nations and providing them pensions out of state funds. The first secretary of Permanent Mission of India to the UN, Pawan Kumar Badhe said this in India's right of reply to statements made by Pakistan and the OIC under oral update by the high commissioner of human rights at UNHRC.

Pakistan's deliberate misuse of this august forum for its malicious propaganda against India, aimed at diverting the attention of the Council from its own serious violations of



human rights, has remained a constant, Badhe said.

Pointing out that Islamabad has provided pensions to dreaded and listed terrorists out of state funds,

the Indian representative said that Pakistan has the dubious distinction of hosting the largest number of terrorists proscribed by the United Nations.

FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES

If you get a chance to display your presentation skills, don't lose it, says Ganesha. Your eloquence may receive wide acclaim. Your children too may give you reason to be proud. Do remember to take time out for the elderly in your family.

TAURUS

You may have a tendency to feel frustrated when the results are not the way you expected, feels Ganesha. You must still work hard and finish whatever you undertake today. You will discuss some vital issues with a close friend and relive cherished secrets with your life partner.

GEMINI

Today, your enthusiasm for sports and outdoor activities is palpable. According to you, variety is the spice of life. You will keep on jumping from one venture to another. You will establish a good rapport with your bosses and colleagues. It's time to taste success in your immediate and interim objectives.

CANCER

Those around you have always thought that there is something different about you, but could never put their finger on what exactly it was. You always knew. You are better than them, and today is the day to make them realise that. How? The best course of action is to do your job in the best possible manner.

LEO

Forget the weather. Today, the only thing shining bright are your chances of spending some quality time with your near and dear ones. Going along these lines, Ganesha wonders how long has it been since you last did the same.

VIRGO

Sense and sensibilities will prevail today as you address relationships. On the emotional front, you may be unclear and oscillate between what you feel and what you really expected of you. But in the end, you may well end up following your inner voice than depend on others.

LIBRA

The theatrical you comes to the fore. Ganesha expects you to put up a show in all that you do today, be it a display of devotion to your work, or dedication to your family.

SCORPIO

Today, you must spend most of the time in meditation and introspection. If you do not meditate, you will be surrounded by negative thoughts and bitterness for others. According to Ganesha, this may hinder your progress and growth in career. Simple living and high thinking may make things easier for you.

SAGITTARIUS

Your stars are mighty today and plan a pleasant day for you, says Ganesha. You are a thorough professional and garner compliments for this attitude. You also have a knack to sail through all the troubles at work.

CAPRICORN

It's time to party, whether or not you have no reason for it. Friends and even acquaintances will be invited to take part in the celebrations; you will be all charged up to have a blast of a day, says Ganesha. For those engaged in business, profits may come but it won't be the result of the efforts you put in.

AQUARIUS

You may be sorely disappointed today. With no support from family, and the kids driving you up the wall, you need to keep your cool. Family feuds are highly likely, and neighbours may attempt to interfere. For now, all you need is to remain unruffled, says Ganesha.

PISCES

Your expenses are likely to soar and you will need to draw a line between your needs and your desires if you are to keep them in check. There is a strong possibility that you will undergo a spiritual experience today. You may also pursue meditative techniques for your peace of mind, says Ganesha.



'2020 HAS BEEN SUCH A BAD YEAR FOR MOMS'

Last year's quarantine and lockdown stretch wasn't easy, especially for mothers, asserts Oscar-winning actress Jennifer Garner, who is a mother to three kids. "We have had to say 'No, no, no.' We've had to watch our kids be home, miss out on things," she said in an interview.

SMITH WILL 'CONSIDER' RUNNING FOR US PRESIDENT IN FUTURE

Hollywood star Will Smith sees himself running for American President some day. Speaking to filmmaker Jon Favreau for a podcast, the actor spoke about many things including his dream of running for POTUS in the future.



2021 to be year of big masala movies

Mumbai: Hindi film industry has seen a surge in slice-of-life entertainers in recent years. However, this year, many top filmmakers seem bullish about re-loading the vintage larger-than-life formula that was a rage in the eighties and the nineties.

Some of the big films that revisit vintage masala with new-age swag were scheduled to hit the screens last year but got postponed owing to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Here's a look at the masala in store this year:

Radhe Salman Khan returns on Eid in what is being touted as his most heavy-duty action avatar yet. The macho superstar is directed by Prabhu Deva. Co-starring Disha Patani, the film is slated to hit the theatres in May.

Bell Bottom

Bell-Bottom boasts of Akshay Kumar, industry's most bankable superstar right now. The espionage thriller, expected to have jaw-dropping stunts, sees Akshay in a spy avatar and has a big cast comprising Vaani Kapoor, Huma Qureshi and Lara Dutta. It is scheduled to hit the screen in May.

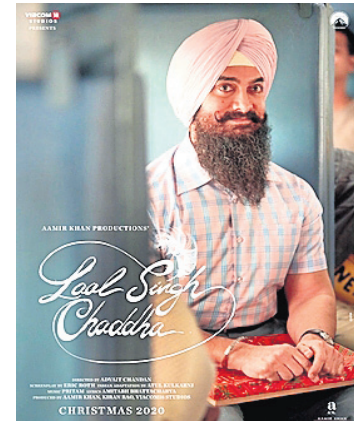
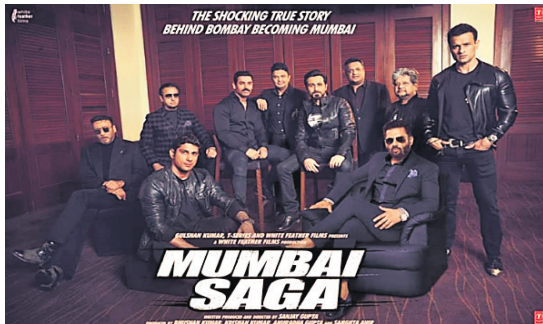
Laal Singh Chadha The film sees superstar Aamir Khan stepping into the shoes of Hollywood veteran Tom Hanks as it is a Hindi remake of 1994 film Forrest Gump. It features Kareena Kapoor Khan and is directed by Advait Chandan.

Prithviraj The Akshay Kumar starrer again is an ambitious period drama, promising extravagant sets, lavish costumes, massive war scenes and highlight

music. It would also be interesting to watch Akshay as Prithviraj Chauhan in the Dr Chandraprakash Dwivedi directorial, which marks the debut of Miss World 2017 Manushi Chhillar. The film slated to release November 5.

Mumbai Saga

Directed by Sanjay Gupta, the film stars John Abraham, Emraan Hashmi, Suniel Shetty, Mahesh Manjrekar, Kajal Aggarwal, Rohit Roy, Gulshan Grover, and Prateik Babbar. The film is slated to release on March 19. It takes us back to the world cops, gangsters, deceit, betrayal, and violence, against the backdrop of the eighties and the nineties.



INDIRA IN STAR WARS SPIN-OFF SHOW

Los Angeles: British-Indian actress Indira Varma has been cast in the upcoming show, Obi Wan Kenobi, a spin-off of the Star Wars film Franchise. The 47-year-old actress joins Ewan McGregor and Hayden Christensen who are set to reprise their Star Wars roles of Obi-Wan Kenobi and Darth Vader respectively.

While the information regarding the highly anticipated show on Disney+ is under wraps, several reports suggest that show will showcase events between Episode III (Revenge Of The Sith) and Episode IV (A New Hope).

The show will be directed by Deborah Chow who also directed the first two episodes of The Mandalorian. The show will start filming later this year, according to a report by Deadline. Indira Varma is known for her role of Ellaria Sand in the popular TV show, Game Of Thrones until its seventh season, and also for her role in the film Kama Sutra: A Tale of Love.

Fauji Calling declared tax free in Delhi

New Delhi: The Sharman Joshi-starrer upcoming film Fauji Calling has been declared tax free by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in Delhi.

The film chronicles the life of a soldier and what his family goes through when he is away in the battlefield. Along with Sharman, the film also features Bidita Bag, Mughda Godse, Mahi Soni, Zarina

Wahab, Shishir Sharma and Ranjha Vikram Singh.

Thanking the government of Delhi, director Aaryan Saxena said: "I thank Chief Minister of Delhi, Shri Arvind Kejriwal ji, and Deputy Chief Minister Shri Manish Sisodia Ji from the bottom of my heart. This is just the beginning and we are looking at a couple of other states to declare

the movie tax-free as well. It's an unseen side of 'fauji' families and relates to the emotions of all age groups."

Fauji Calling is written and directed by Aaryaan Saxena and produced by Naida Shaikh, Ovez Shaikh, Vikram Kumar, Anil Jain, and Vijeta Verma, and co-produced by Vishnu S Upadhyay.



Romeo Juliet In... represents dark side of Smart Cities

POST NEWS NETWORK

BHUBANESWAR: Vihaan Drama Works, a theatre troupe from Bhopal Tuesday evening presented a Hindi play Romeo Juliet In Smart City Of Contemporary India on the second day of National Theatre Festival Purba Ranga here at Rabindra Mandap.

Written by Swapnil Jain, the play was designed and directed by Sourabh Anant. In the play, Sourabh wanted to send a message that

many cities in India are turning into smart cities but the same can't be said about the mindset of the city dwellers.

Romeo Juliet In Smart City Of Contemporary India is about the love story of two small-townners Mradul and Vaibhavi. They fell for each other after starting their work in the same office in Jaipur, Rajasthan. They want to meet as often as possible. But where to

meet? Though they live in a Smart City, people don't accept their relationship. Moreover, they frequently interfere in the young couple's private life. Frustrated, the love birds decide to end their lives. The play represents the face of a society which only wears a mask of smartness, said Sourabh.

Subham Katiyar, Shweta Ketkar, Ankit Paroche, Akash Ikhare and Shubham Parashar played key roles in the play, added the director who is also a painter and Bachelor of Fine



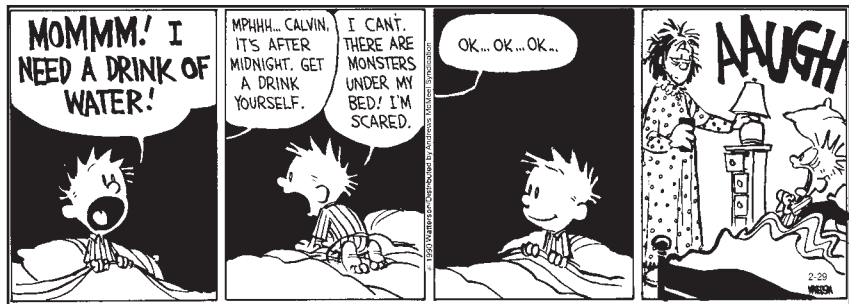
Arts. The guests who graced the evening included Principal Commissioner of Income Tax Manoranjan Panigrahi, OTDC Chairperson Srimayee Mishra, playwright and litterateur Sanghamitra Mishra and Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi Secretary Prabodh Kumar Rath. Natya Chetana founder Subodh Pattnaik conducted the meeting.

Three more Hindi plays will be staged over the next three days of the festival, said Odisha Natya Sangh vice-president Prakash Maharana.

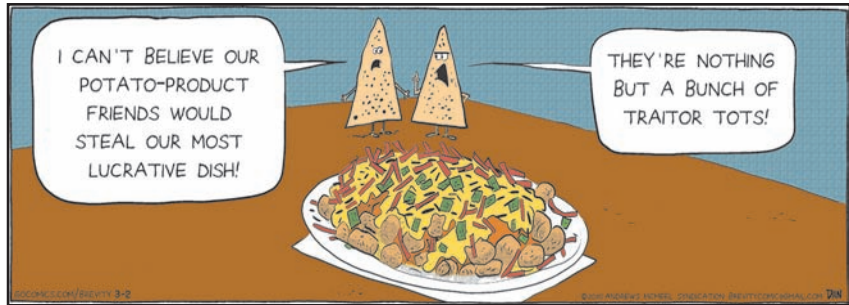
PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

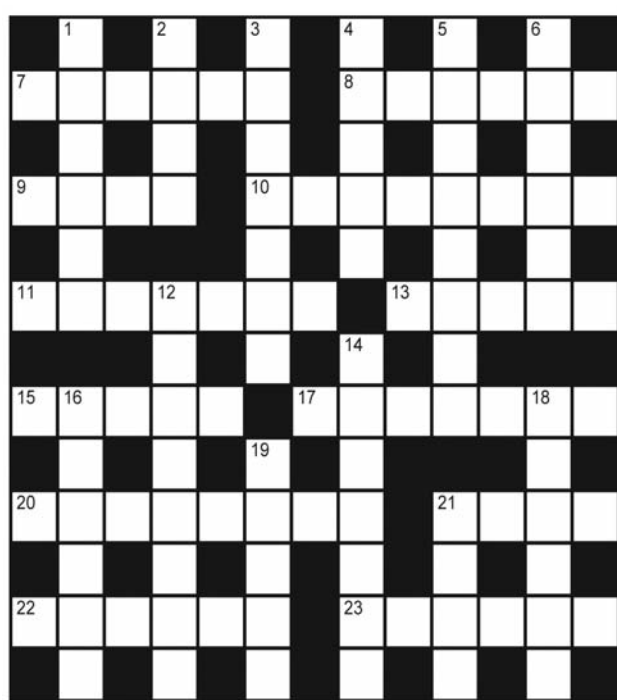


BREVITY



FUN post

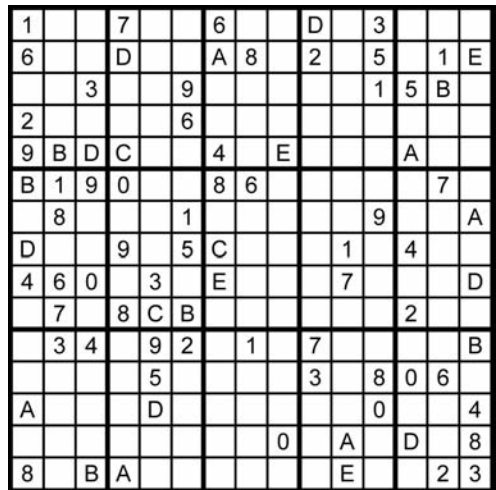
CROSSWORD



- Across
- 7 Scarce material
 - 8 Irish accent
 - 9 Stomach woe
 - 10 Snake's bane
 - 11 Time off
 - 13 Op-ed piece
 - 15 Bout of indulgence
 - 17 Imposing house
 - 20 Sweater
 - 21 Harassed
 - 22 Decanted
 - 23 Bread units
- Down
- 1 Save
 - 2 Monster
 - 3 Scandinavian kingdom
 - 4 Hard wood
 - 5 Goliath, for one
 - 6 Volga River locale
 - 12 Flock watcher
 - 14 Springbok
 - 16 Keyboard instruments
 - 18 Lots and lots
 - 19 Exploits
 - 21 Knock about

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

SUDOKU

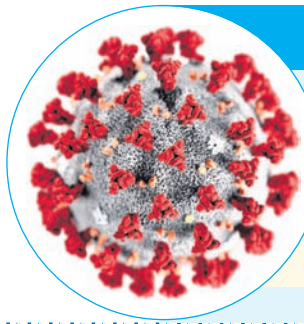


CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



TROPICAL FRUIT

Green mangoes adding to the beauty of a tree at the PMG road in Bhubaneswar, Tuesday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	11,51,50,334	9,08,29,849	25,53,741
India	1,11,24,527	1,07,98,921	1,57,248
Odisha	3,37,351	3,34,647	1,917

HOLDING TAX HIKE

WHY BMC, WHY?

The BMC launched a month-long holding tax mela at its various ward offices, Saturday, with a view to collect the revised holding tax from the citizens. As a result, wary citizens, instead of spending their time with the family, had to spend their weekends crunching numbers and figures with ward officers. Reason – exorbitant rise in the holding tax rates. Complex calculations, scorching heat and inexplicable causes for the increase in taxes miffed the residents of Bhubaneswar to no end. Some of them poured out their woes to **Orissa POST**

Rise in Benchmark Value (Residential)

Location	Old Rate	New Rate	% Hike
Nayapalli	₹15,00,000	₹19,50,00,000	12,900%
Satya Nagar	₹15,00,000	₹13,50,00,000	8,900%
Saheed Nagar	₹2,00,00,000	₹16,00,00,000	700%
Surya Nagar	₹16,00,000	₹12,00,00,000	7,400%

SOURCE: G.A. DEPARTMENT



SUSHIL MISHRA | RETIRED PROFESSOR
My annual tax calculation shows that I will now have to pay ₹12,000 per annum. Earlier I used to pay only ₹1,750. As if the inflation wasn't hard enough on the common man's pocket that the BMC thought of increasing the rates to fill their coffers.



PRAFULLA PANDA | A SENIOR CITIZEN AT BOMIKHAL
The officers inform me that there's a jump of about 12 times in my holding taxes. How am I supposed to pay such large sums suddenly? While the world is still dealing with the pandemic, the new rates could have been put in force later or waived off completely. It will be really tough for people like us who barely survive on our pensions.



SHANTI LATA RATH | RESIDENT OF RASULGARH
I am the only learning member in my house. I have three children who are presently studying. We had outstanding dues with the BMC which we were clearing off gradually. However, this sudden jump in rates has made our problems worse. My company has held my salary for three months and the bills are mounting.



KK MOHAPATRA | RESIDENT OF SATYA NAGAR
The calculations have been made very complex. We neither have the time or wits to grasp the thought process behind this hike. I am still not satisfied with the explanations offered by ward officers that why there's a 25-fold hike in my taxes. Unless I get all information, I have decided not to pay the taxes.



MADHUSUDHAN MOHANTY | RESIDENT OF VSS NAGAR
I am a law-labiding citizen and I understand that the authorities need revenue for their functioning. But what we, as citizens, are getting in return? I have been complaining of a broken drainage and excessive mosquitoes in our locality but no one gives two hoots about it. All their work is unsatisfactory and demands re-work every 2-3 years.



BINAYAK MOHAPATRA | JEWELLER AT BJB NAGAR
The calculation of holding tax is coming out much higher for commercial properties than the residential ones. This is the death knell for small-time traders like us. I have loans up to ₹7 lakh and overhead expenses amounting ₹50,000. Now the BMC is asking me to cough up ₹20,000 as taxes which were less than ₹1,000 earlier. This will be extremely tough to manage.



DEEP BHUIYAN | RESIDENT OF SHAHEED NAGAR
There are still pot-holes on the road. Parks are not maintained. The city is called smart city but there is nothing smart about it. The development works move at snail pace. Yet, the BMC is still brave enough to increase revenue on the pretext of betterment of the city.



Following state government's order, the rates have increased as per revised benchmark value of a particular land. Usually the benchmark is revised once in every two years, but no revaluation has been done since 1998. The new rates had come into effect in October 2019. People don't have to pay retrospective taxes, but pay only from the month when order took effect. Moreover, 50% of the amount can be paid now and rest in quarterly or half-yearly instalments.

SRIMANTA MISHRA | DEPUTY COMMISSIONER, REVENUE

State of civic amenities in Capital



Frequent waterlogging on Bomikhal-Rasulgarh road inconveniences commuters



Waterlogging near Iskcon Temple in Nayapali area is a major issue



Garbage often litter city roads



Poor waste management a cause of concern

OP PHOTOS

SILVER LINING FOR CITIZENS

Sources informed that the increase in holding tax rates was earlier challenged in the Orissa High Court by resident welfare associations and trade unions of the state capital. As a result, the court had asked the BMC to collect only 50 per cent of the

amount and the remaining amount on a later date. However, the order also mentioned that while the case is pending in the court, citizens are bound to pay the revised rates.

Meanwhile, if the court decides to put hold on the revised rates, citizens will be adjusted

with the inflated amount with their outstanding or future dues. It may be mentioned here that the BMC had earlier increased the Benchmark Value in 2015, but had to refrain after the Orissa High Court issued a stay order against the same.

are waiting for instruction from the Election Commission of India. Returning officer has been appointed and we have identified the polling personnel to be engaged for the by-poll," CEO Sushil Kumar Lohani told reporters here, Tuesday.

In view of Covid-19 pandemic, a maximum of 1,000 voters can be allowed to exercise their franchise

in a booth. Therefore, auxiliary polling booths have been identified, he said.

Besides, the process for procurement of materials to be used in the election has been started. The first level check of EVMs has also been done, he added. Neither the ruling BJD nor the Opposition parties have announced their candidate for the by-poll.

BRAHMANANDA MEHER

ENGINEER TURNED JEWELLER



Indian engineers have definitely come a long way from following the old trend of getting a degree from a reputed college to bag a lucrative job in a foreign-based company. In present days, techies are turning out to be the real game-changers with their innovative business ideas. Brahmananda Meher is among them. He was just 26-year-old when he opted to pursue his heart by becoming an entrepreneur. It was 1999 when he decided to introduce the state's own jewellery brand 'Arundhati'. Since its inception, the home-grown brand has been patronised by many. Here, in a tete-a-tete, **Brahmananda Meher**, owner of **Arundhati Jewellers**, shares his incredible journey with **Orissa POST**

■ **Despite being an engineering student, why did you decide to become an entrepreneur?**

■ I studied engineering at the Odisha Engineering College. But I was always driven by creative thoughts that add service and value to products. I also wanted to become an entrepreneur and serve Odisha. I was 26-year-old when I came into this business. I still remember when we used to research about 22 or 24 karat for proper understanding. In 2000, we set up Arundhati Jewellers and now it is a large business. It is our first generation business. Now, we are present in all major cities of the state.

■ **The main focus of Arundhati Jewellers**

■ It has been 20-21 years since we started the business. Many customers have been added to our family. We always focused on providing assured happiness service. We care for our customers and respect their investment in gold. Considering this, we offer lifetime free service on every jewellery item, a one of its kind service in Odisha. We also provide insurance coverage on every jewellery item. Our design and craftsmanship are unique. Also, we give loyalty points to our customers. We ensure appropriate value for old jewellery during exchange.

■ **The impact of pandemic**

■ Sadly, the pandemic was a disaster for us. The government declared lockdown to contain the

virus from the beginning of the financial year 2020-21. But we realised that every crisis has an opportunity. We prepared a plan to reconnect with our customers. We created different groups and reached almost 3 lakh people to create awareness about the pandemic. Every team member was actively engaged in reaching out to customers. Even during the pandemic we recruited 100 employees.

■ **What was the buying trend during festive seasons?**

■ There was no sale during the lockdown. But post lockdown, the buying increased. Also, the Union Budget opened the doors for good sale as it reduced import duty. We hope that last year's target will be achieved this year.

■ **Your initiative to promote online buying**

■ Well, it's good news for online buyers as we have developed a mobile app for this purpose. It is likely to be launched next month. As I said earlier, we worked on technology improvement during the lockdown. I believe that this app will create sensation all over India. We hope that online buying will

increase eventually.

■ **What are your future plans?**

■ Through the mobile app we aim to reach every household in the state. In addition, we will also inaugurate a store in Berhampur this year. It might be the biggest showroom in the state, built on around 1,500 square feet area. Also, we plan to open stores in Cuttack and Rourkela.



SC relief for DGP, Commissioner

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, March 2: The Supreme Court has stayed an order of the Calcutta High Court that directed the state DGP, Commissioner of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack and Jaipur SP to personally appear before it in connection with a cheque bounce case wherein the police failed to arrest the accused.

A two-judge bench of the apex court comprising Justices AM Khanwilkar and Dinesh Maheshwari stayed the order with certain condition and also issued notice to the West Bengal govern-

ment returnable in four weeks.

"There shall be stay of operation of the impugned order on condition that the petitioners will approach the High Court on their own through counsel and produce relevant information/document for the perusal of the High Court in reference to the issue noted in order dated 10.02.2021," the bench said.

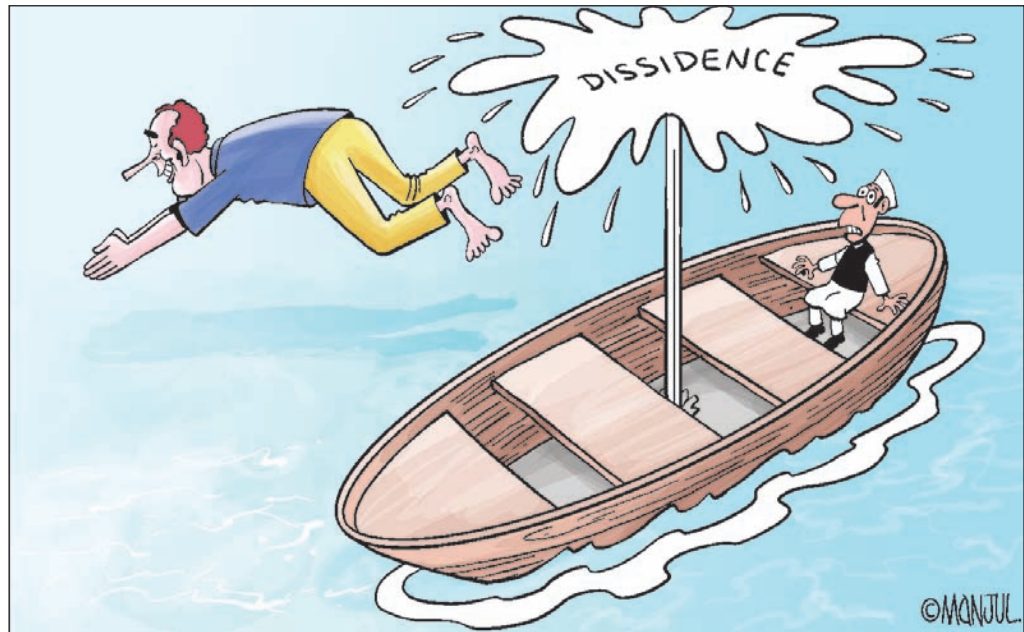
The apex court observed that the larger question is whether the High Court can exercise the jurisdiction beyond its territorial jurisdiction.

In a special leave petition filed through advocate Shovan Mishra,

the DGP contended that the Calcutta HC erroneously assumed jurisdiction in this case whereas it has chosen to ignore that no part of the cause of action arose within the jurisdiction of Calcutta High Court.

"A plain reading of Article 226 makes it abundantly clear that the high court can issue directions in a writ petition only when the person or the authority against whom the writ is issued is located outside its territorial jurisdiction, only if the cause of action wholly or partially arises within the court's territorial jurisdiction," the petition reads.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



We are ready to conduct Pipli by-poll: CEO

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 2: The office of the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) has made necessary arrangements to conduct the by-election to the Pipli Assembly seat, which fell vacant following the death of ex-MLA Pradeep Maharathy. The seven-time MLA and former minister died October 4 last year.



"All preparedness has been made for conducting Pipli by-election. We

Bihar to set up port in Odisha 10 officers to monitor development work

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 2: Impressed with the infrastructures developed by state government to attract industries, Bihar government has proposed to set up a port facility in Odisha.

A team of senior officers from Bihar led by their Additional Chief Secretary Brijesh Mehrotra Tuesday held discussions with state government officers led by Chief Secretary Suresh Chandra Mohapatra.

Mehrotra said, “We express our thankfulness to Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik to have accepted the proposal of our Chief Minister Nitish Kumar for setting up a port facility in Odisha. I am impressed with the kind of infrastructure created by Odisha government in the industrial estates and the facilitating support provided by the state to investors.”

After hearing the proposals put forth by the officers from Bihar, Mahapatra said, “A port facility needs to be managed professionally on commercial models for making it sustainable.” The Chief Secretary assured of all possible help from Government of Odisha as per the existing policies.

Development Commissioner Pradeep Kumar Jena advised Mehrotra to assess the requirement of Bihar so that the port facility could be planned accordingly.

The potential for development of port facilities in Odisha were discussed in the meeting. Commerce and Transport secretary Madhusudan Padhi said 14 locations along Odisha’s coastline have been identified for development of ports through a detail study.

Transport department Special



The meeting between senior Bihar and Odisha officials in progress in Bhubaneswar

A team of senior officers from Bihar held discussions with state govt officials, visits industrial estates

A technical team of Bihar would soon visit Odisha to see all the identified locations and assess the feasibilities of developing the port facility

Secretary Manoj kumar Mishra presented visuals details of the identified locations and outlined the comparative advantages and challenges associated with the locations. Brief details about seven locations to north and seven locations to the south of Paradeep port were discussed in the meeting.

It was deliberated that some location in north of Paradeep may be more useful for Bihar to develop the proposed port facility. A technical team of Bihar would soon visit Odisha to see all the identified locations and assess the feasibilities of developing the port facility as per requirements of Bihar.

Industries secretary Hemant Kumar Sharma informed the Bihar team about the different commer-

cial models for successful running of a port in Odisha coast.

IDCO chairman and managing director Sanjay Kumar Singh informed about the different models adopted in development of textile park, seafood park, aluminum park, plastic part, electronic park and IT park in Odisha.

Principal Secretaries, Secretaries and senior officers of concerned departments from Odisha and Bihar participated in the deliberations. Sri Santosh Kumar Sinha, Executive Director of Bihar Industrial Area Development Authority highly appreciated the facilities created in the industrial estates of Odisha.

After the meeting, the Bihar team leader Mehrotra said, “I visited employment intensive apparel factories in Mancheswar Industrial Estate today. I am quite impressed with the infrastructural facilities created in the industrial estates and the facilitating support being provided by Odisha government to the investors.”

He further added that they will visit the sea food park, electronic and IT park tomorrow to see the models applied there.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 2: The state government has nominated 10 senior officers as secretaries-in-charge of backward districts to oversee development works there, an official said Tuesday.

The Planning and Convergence department issued a notification Monday and nominated the officers to supervise welfare programmes in 10 aspirational districts of the state for three months starting from April 1, he said.

They will monitor 49 key performance indicators in five sectors – health and nutrition, education, agriculture and water resource, basic infrastructure, financial inclusion and skill development – in the backward areas under the Centre’s ‘Transformation of Aspirational Districts’ programme, the official said.

The officers were asked to visit the 10 districts – Kandhamal, Kalahandi, Rayagada, Bolangir,

Javadekar takes cognisance of Simlipal forest fire

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, March 2: Union Environment and Forest Minister Prakash Javadekar Tuesday ordered officials to take immediate action to douse the forest fire in Simlipal Tiger Reserve in Mayurbhanj district.

The Union minister’s directive came on social media after Union Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Dharmendra Pradhan went on Twitter seeking urgent intervention of the Union Environment minister and the CM to douse the forest fire.

Significantly, for the last few days, the Simlipal forest in Mayurbhanj struggled as forest fires engulfed the area. On Sunday, five persons suffered serious burns on Jualikata-Talpada road under Thakurmunda police limits. As per sources, the fire broke out near Jualikata-Talpada road for reasons still unknown.

Man gets life term for raping daughter

CUTTACK: A special POCSCO court Tuesday sentenced a man to rigorous life imprisonment for raping and impregnating his minor daughter in 2018. The court also imposed a penalty of ₹20,000 on the convict. Non-payment of the penalty would invite additional imprisonment for two years. The court has asked the District Legal Services Authority to pay a compensation of ₹3 lakh to the victim. As per the court proceedings, the convict, a resident of Nayagarh, along with his family was staying in Cuttack. Due to some domestic dispute, the convict’s wife along with their two sons had moved to her parents’ house. She, however, left their minor daughter, a Class X student, with her husband. The convict, a habitual drunkard, had raped his daughter several times which resulted in her pregnancy. A complaint in this regard was filed in Market Nagar police station.

ASPIRATIONAL DISTRICTS



The Centre’s programme aims at raising the living standards of people in the aspirational districts

The officers will visit Kandhamal, Kalahandi, Rayagada, Bolangir, Koraput, Dhenkanal, Nuapada, Gajapati, Malkangiri and Nabarangpur and submit their reports to a state-level committee for monitoring of action plan under the scheme

They will monitor 49 key performance indicators in five sectors – health and nutrition, education, agriculture and water resource, basic infrastructure, financial inclusion and skill development – in the backward areas under the Centre’s ‘Transformation of Aspirational Districts’ programme

Koraput, Dhenkanal, Nuapada, Gajapati, Malkangiri and Nabarangpur – and submit their reports to a state-level committee for monitoring of action plan under the scheme.

Commerce and Transport secretary Madhu Sudan Padhi has been given the charge of Kandhamal

district, while MSME Secretary Satyabrata Sahu to look after Kalahandi, Energy Secretary Nikunja Bihari Dhal for Rayagada and Steel and Mines Secretary Surendra Kumar for Bolangir.

Similarly, Science & Technology secretary Santosh Kumar Sarangi has been assigned Koraput district

DENOUNCING NEW FARM LAWS



Members of several farmer outfits take out a bike rally near PMG Square in Bhubaneswar, Tuesday, condemning the new farm laws

OP PHOTO

CM inaugurates 71 hostels for SC/ST students

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 2: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Tuesday inaugurated 71 hostels including three Akanksha hostels at various places through videoconferencing.

The Akanksha hostels have been opened at Berhampur, Sambalpur and Rourkela. Another 68 hostels established with an expenditure of ₹150 crore were also inaugurated Tuesday. Mo Chhatrabas cards would be distributed to 5.7 lakh SC/ST students staying in 6,700 hostels in order to bring in transparency and accountability in hostel management.

Patnaik also launched disbursement of post-matric scholarship to 50,000 ST/SC students through Odisha State Scholarship

Akanksha hostels have been opened at Berhampur, Sambalpur and Rourkela

₹101Crore post-matric scholarship to be distributed to 50,000 SC/ST students

Mo Chhatrabas cards would be distributed to 5.7 lakh SC/ST students staying in 6,700 hostels

portal. A total of ₹101 crore has been directly transferred to the bank accounts of the students.

Samhati—an initiative for up-scaling multi-lingual education to address language issues of 1.5 lakh tribal students in early grades – has been launched across 1,450 schools run by the SC/ST Development department.

Another new initiative Prayas has been launched to provide skill

development training and placement linkage to 7,560 SC, ST, OBC and minorities youths through Odisha Skill Development Authority (OSDA).

Stating that education is the basis of reformation, Naveen said that literacy is crucial for the development of SCs and STs in Odisha. “The state government has always given importance to education for which our SC/ST brothers and sisters have been able to excel in different fields,” he said.

Secretary to CM (ST) VK Pandian moderated the programme while SC/ST Development Secretary Ranjana Chopra gave the inaugural speech. Chief Secretary Suresh Chandra Mahapatra, Development Commissioner PK Jena and senior officials attended the event.

Atal Incubation Centre launched at NITF

BHUBANESWAR: In yet another step towards strengthening startup ecosystem in the state, Nalanda Institute of Technology Foundation (NITF) in collaboration with Niti Ayog Tuesday opened Atal Incubation Centre at Chandaka on the outskirts of city. Union Minister of State for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Pratap Chandra Sarangi inaugurated the startup in the presence of Director of BALCO and DG of AIC-NITF Tapan Kumar Chand. Sarangi said, “The incubation centre is a big step in this direction. It has all the facilities for startup and budding entrepreneurs to realise their ideas. They will get trained, production and marketing facilities here to reach out wider mass. All types of entrepreneurs in bio-waste or robotics field can avail this facility.”

Man ends life over family dispute

BHUBANESWAR: A man, identified as Pradipta Kumar Patra, committed suicide over family dispute at a slum in Ranganmatia area here. Patra, 50, a resident of Salepur in Cuttack, was staying at Ranganmatia under Mancheswar police limits in city. According to sources, Patra had a heated argument with his wife Manasi over some petty matter late Monday night. Later, Patra reportedly locked himself in a room and hanged from a ceiling fan.

CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

I, Debasish Samal residing at 902, Kapaleswar, P.O./P.S.- Choudwar, Dist.- Cuttack have changed my daughter’s name from Saisweta Samal to Aisha Samal vide affidavit Dt.26.05.2018 sworn before Executive Magistrate, Cuttack Sadar.

By affidavit sworn before Notary Public, Bhubaneswar, I, Debasish Das, S/o. Dillip Kumar Das, At: Flat No. A-401, Tarini Palace, Saheed Nagar, Bhubaneswar, Dist.- Khurda declare that I have changed my name from Debasish Das to Debasish Das for all purposes.

TWO DUPED BY CYBER CROOKS OF ₹65 LAKH

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 2: Cyber criminals duped one person from Puri – Subojit Mukherjee, 52, of over ₹23 lakh promising to provide the former with a loan worth Rs10 crore.

In 2017, Mukherjee came across an advertisement on Facebook regarding a loan offer by one Eduard Private Lending. Subsequently, he contacted the lender via the email address mentioned in the advertisement seeking a loan of ₹10 crore for some business.

On their part, the ‘lenders’ sent various loan related documents to Pradhan through email. They also demanded different amounts under various pretexts like ₹63,850 as insurance fee. Mukherjee deposited ₹23,02,350 in various accounts of the accused between 2017 and 2018.

However, he smelt a rat when the accused continued demanding more money from him. In January 2021, He received a call wherein



the caller asked him to pay ₹75,000 for cancellation of the loan.

Similarly, a 41-year-old government official lost ₹39 lakh to the fraudsters who fooled him on the pretext of helping poor people affected by Covid-19 pandemic. The victim identified as Anil Kumar Pradhan hails from Kandhamal and works as the Panchayat Executive Officer in Nimapara area of Puri.

FOR CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS CONTACT OUR BOOKING STATIONS

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

Border row with WB to end soon

TECHNICAL TEAMS WORKING OUT ON GROUND CONTROL POINTS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Balasore, March 2: A day after Revenue officials and scientists of Odisha and West Bengal carried out land measurements at disputed sites of Subarnarekha river here in Balasore district, they held a meeting Tuesday. They agreed to sort out interstate border dispute on the basis of 35 ground control points (GCPs) in the Odisha side and 53 points in the West Bengal side.

Meanwhile, a technical team visited the disputed sites Tuesday to determine ground control points. Identification of the 12-km-long course of Subarnarekha will be finalised within two days, it was decided.

It may be noted here that the points of contention between the two states are at Jaleswar in Balasore district and in Dantun area of West Midnapore district of neighbouring West Bengal.

The officials while measuring the reference points also identified the places which have been in contention between the two states.



Officials in a meeting, Tuesday



Measurement works underway, Monday

WHAT ARE GROUND CONTROL POINTS?

Ground control points (or GCPs) are points on the ground with known coordinates. In an aerial mapping survey, GCPs are points which the surveyor can precisely pinpoint. GCPs are defined as points on the surface of the earth of known location used to geo-reference Landsat Level-1 imagery. Ground coordinates can come from a variety of sources such as the Global Positioning System (GPS), ground surveys, geo-coded images, vectors, geographic information systems (GIS), topographic maps, chip databases, or by using photogrammetric processes to extend the number of GCPs in your images.

The development comes after the National Green Tribunal directed the authorities of the two states to resolve the dispute relating to border. Notably, one of the cases

has been filed by social activist Sudarshan Das before the NGT with regard to sand mining and environmental pollution.

Reports said that the dispute began on the jurisdiction of the Subarnarekha river which is flow-

ing for about 12 km on the borders of the two states. Earlier, the officials of two states met at the Circuit House of West Midnapore to resolve the border dispute, February 15. The officials of two states had visited the spot after the meeting and conducted a measurement of South Praharajpur village in the state and Sunakania and other places in West Bengal.

Odisha Space Application Centre (ORSAC) has pinpointed 35 reference points in Odisha border and 53 reference points in West Bengal border with the use of GPS and DGPS systems.

"A technical team reached today. By Wednesday, ground control points will be determined and the dispute will be sorted out," said ADM Sambit Kumar Nayak.

Lifer for murder of woman on court premises

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, March 2: A local court Tuesday sentenced a man to life imprisonment and slapped a penalty of Rs 10,000 after convicting him for the 2018-murder of a woman Sangita Choudhury in the family court premises in this town.

The district and sessions judge Bibhuti Narayan Mohanty pronounced the order in the presence of the lawyers of the plaintiff and defendant in the court premises, cadre public prosecutor Dipti Ranjan Sandha said. The convict Ramesh Kumbhar, 25, of Sindurapanka village lodged in the Sambalpur Circle Jail was informed of the order through video conference.

In case of default, Ramesh has to undergo an additional two years of imprisonment. The money collected from penalty will be given as compensation to the deceased Sangita's mother Lalita Choudhury.

According to the case diary, Sangita and Ramesh were in love and eloped in 2017. Later, they came back after three months and stayed at Sindurapanka. The girl's family members managed to convince her and bring her back to their house and her father lodged a complaint of kidnapping against Ramesh. Police arrested Ramesh for which he had to stay for three months in jail.

Meanwhile, the girl's family members fixed her marriage elsewhere for which Ramesh approached the family court. The court had called both the groups for counseling when Ramesh attacked Sangita with a sword and rendered her critical April 23, 2018. She died during treatment at VIMSAR, Burla.

Angul launches 'low-achiever classes' ahead of HSC exams

POST NEWS NETWORK

Angul, March 2: Amid relaxation in Covid-19 norms, the district administration has launched low-achiever classes in the high schools to help the mediocre and weak students improve in their studies and come out with flying colours in the HSC examination scheduled for May 3, a report said.

Over 6,985 students studying in 248 schools are being imparted special coaching in these classes—being held in over 95 per cent of the schools. The low achiever classes starting from February 15 will continue till April 15.

The aim is to better the HSC (High School Certificate) examination results in the district this year and create a new record by surpassing the past year's result. The response has been very well while



the teachers are catering to the weak students in a healthy atmosphere and clearing their doubts.

The students are being imparted step by step instructions in their subjects to improve their learning skills and extra help in the lessons when required. They are also being motivated all the time to better their performance.

The pass percentage of the district was 73 per cent last year which

the district administration aims to beat this year.

Reports said that over 18,996 students studying in 248 schools in the district will sit for the matriculation/HSC examination this year. However, the students have failed to attend regular classes due to closure of their schools following Covid-19 induced lockdown and shutdown in the state. The students were having online classes during the lockdown period but started attending regular classes after lifting of the restrictions.

As a result their studies have suffered immensely which has become a cause of concern for the district administration and the district education department. The authorities apprehend that this might impact their result which forced the district administration to launch the low achiever classes.

The sorry tale of fettered 15-yr-old girl

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, March 2: A 15-year-old girl has been in chains for some years now at Talakampadiha under Sadar block of Keonjhar district. As the girl is alleged to be mentally unstable, her parents lock her legs with a chain to prevent her from wandering away, a report said.

The girl was identified as Aparajita Majhi, a Class-IX student of Baradapal High school.

Her father Jamadar Majhi is a daily wage. "She was good and studying well. She used to stay in a hostel, but often wandered away.



As the girl is alleged to be mentally challenged, her parents lock her legs with a chain to prevent her from wandering away

Teachers advised us to take her home for safety," her father said.

After lockdown, she was brought back home. "She used to go missing for hours. We used to search for her and take back home. Once, she

wandered off very far. Members of child protection committee had rescued her," he added.

She was going somewhere Monday when villagers found her and took back home. She has been

Timber mafia 'active' in Patana forest range

POST NEWS NETWORK

Patana, March 2: Timber mafia has been on a looting spree in some reserve forests under Patana range of Keonjhar district while wildfire has been raging in some other forests, reports said.

According to the reports, 16 Sal trees were found cut down in Gadheibhola reserve forest. Each log was measured about 12 ft in length. Such incident has taken place just two kilometres away from the Saharapada forest office.



Contacted, Ranger Pabitra Mohan Nayak said that the logs have been handed over to a local Vana Surakhya Samiti. Locals questioned how the Forest department has failed to catch such illegal activities under their nose.

They added that if mafia was allowed to operate at their will, the valuable trees in the reserve forest will vanish soon.

On the other hand, wildfire is spreading in some forests under this range. Scores of Sal and other valuable trees have burnt to ashes in Saradharpur forest, Suam reserve forest and Barigan Khesera forest.

Forest officials brought the fire under control. Locals said that due to wildfire, wild fauna has been at risk in summer.

WA(TE)R CRY



With water crisis worsening in some parts of Ganjam, women along with buckets and pitchers stage protests at Purusottampur block office, Tuesday

OP PHOTO

30 passengers hurt in mishap

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kendrapara, March 2: More than 30 passengers were injured, 10 of them serious, after the bus they were travelling in overturned near Hanuman Chowk at Kumbharuni village under Mahakalpada block in Kendrapara district Tuesday.

Carrying over 50 persons, 'Prince' the ill-fated bus was on its way from Kendrapara to Bhubaneswar when the accident happened. While negotiating the curve at Hanuman Chowk, the driver due to some reasons lost his control over the wheels, leading to the mishap. The bus overturned into a roadside paddy field.

On getting information, Mahakalpada police reached the spot and with the help of locals started rescue operations. The injured persons were rushed to the Kendrapara district headquarters hospital (DHH).



Sports Authority of India (Personnel Division)

Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium Complex (East Gate)

Lodhi Road, New Delhi-110003

ADVERTISEMENT NO- SAI/Pers/2282/2019 (Vol-II)

SPORTS AUTHORITY OF INDIA INVITES APPLICATION FOR CHEF & NUTRITIONIST ON CONTRACT BASIS

Sports Authority of India an autonomous organization under the administrative control of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports with its head office at Jawaharlal Nehru Sports Complex, Lodhi Road, New Delhi-110003, invites applications from the eligible candidates for engagement as Chef and Nutritionist staff on contract basis for SAI HO (including SAI Stadia's) and Regional Centers as under:

S.N.	Position	Monthly Remuneration (Rs.)	No. of Vacancy
1	Chef	75,000 to 1,00,000	03
2	Nutritionist	75,000 to 1,00,000	12

(Table-I)

The requirement can be increased/decreased at the discretion of the SAI.

The details of recruitment and application form is available on the website of SAI & MYA&S i.e. <http://sportsauthorityofindia.nic.in/> and <http://yas.nic.in>. The last date of online submission is **13.03.2021**.

SAI reserves the right to withdraw this advertisement at any time without assigning any reason.

Director (Personnel & Coaching)
Sports Authority of India

davp 47103/11/0009/2021

Office of the Executive Engineer, Chikiti Irrigation Division, Berhampur, Ganjam

e-mail address: eechidbam@gmail.com; Ph: 0680-2281909

e-Procurement Notice No.- EE-CHID-03/2020-21

No. A-633:-

1. Name of the work	: River Embankment Work
2. No. of Works	: 01 No. (One) only
3. Estimated Cost	: Rs.33.72 lakh
4. Period of Completion	: 04 Calendar Months
5. Date and time of availability of bid documents in the portal	: From 06.03.2021, 10.00 A.M. to 15.03.2021, 05.30 P.M.
6. Last date / time of receipt of bid documents in Portal	: 15.03.2021, upto 05.30 P.M.
7. Date and Place of Opening	: On 16.03.2021 at 11.00 AM in the Office of the Executive Engineer, Chikiti Irrigation Division, Berhampur
8. Name and Address of the officer inviting tender	: The Executive Engineer, Chikiti Irrigation Division, Berhampur

Bidders are to participate in Online bidding only. Further details can be seen from the Govt. Website www.tendersodissa.gov.in. Any addendum/ corrigendum/ cancellation of the tender can be seen in the said website only.

Sd./- Executive Engineer
Chikiti Irrigation Division, Berhampur

OIPR-32115/11/0006/2021

No roads to 523 hamlets of Kalahandi dist

AS AMBULANCES CAN'T COMMUTE TO AND FRO HERE, PATIENTS ARE SOMETIMES CARRIED ON COTS FOR KILOMETERS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhawanipatna, March 2: The state government has been pushing rural development on a priority basis, but its efforts seem to have faltered in Kalahandi district. There are hundreds of villages in this district which are still inaccessible by ambulance in emergency cases, a report said.

According to the report, the state government has given push to the agriculture sector in the district by executing the Indravati irrigation project. Hundreds of hectares of farmlands are being provided irrigation facility under it. But communication has been a hurdle for development in 523 villages where healthcare has been a dream for people. Official report said these tribal-dominated villages are extremely remote and inaccessible.

As ambulances do not get access to these villages, patients are carried on cots for kilometers. It is said that crores of rupees are being spent for road connectivity, healthcare, education and livelihood, but these facilities are almost missing in 14 remote villages under Kalahandi block.

Kesinga block has 11 inaccessible villages while number of inaccessible village



REPRESENTATIVE PHOTO

Kesinga block has 11 inaccessible villages while number of inaccessible village is five in Karlamunda block

There are 22 remote villages suffering from backwardness in all sectors in Narla block

Redevelopment has taken a backseat in nine remote villages under Dharmagarh block where people have to suffer sans basic facilities

is five in Karlamunda block.

There are 22 remote villages suffering from backwardness in all sectors in Narla block.

Redevelopment has taken a backseat in

nine remote villages under Dharmagarh block where people have to suffer sans basic facilities.

Similarly, ambulance and fire tenders cannot get access to 10 villages under

Junagarh block; 17 villages under Kalampur block; 15 villages under Koksara block and 22 villages under Jaypatana block.

It is alleged that there are scores of villages under Lanjigarh and Thualmularampur blocks where people have not seen ambulance till date. Most of these areas are located in hilly terrains.

In these areas, many government schemes are dreams for the people.

All they get is old age pension, Rs1/ kg rice and other subsidized food stuff. However, after launching of boat ambulance in Indravati reservoir, people living in reservoir's cut-off areas have been relieved in case of commuting facility.

No. O-1187:-

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER

RURAL WORKS DIVISION, GUNUPUR

Email: eerwgunupur@gmail.com

E-Procurement Notice Bid Identification No.: EERWGNP - Online - 10/2020-21

No.: 808

1. Name of the Work : Construction of Buildings

2. Total No. of Works : 09 Nos. (Percentage rate tender)

3. Estimated Cost : Varies from Rs.14.93 lakhs to Rs.20.67 lakhs

4. Class of Contractor : As mentioned in Co.5 of Annexure

5. Time of Completion : Specified in DTGN.

6. Other details:

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	No. of Works	Availability of Tender online for bidding	Date & Time of opening of tender
1	2	3	4	5
Executive Engineer, Rural Works Division, Gunupur	EERWGNP Online- 10/2020-21	09 (Nine) Nos.	06.03.2021 at 10.00 A.M. to 20.03.2021 up to 5.00 P.M.	22.03.2021 at 12.00 hrs.


7. The amount put to tender is exclusive of 12% GST. The intending bidder should offer their rates which shall be exclusive of GST applicable as per norms. GST as applicable on works contract shall be paid over the bill amount at the time of payment of bill.

Further details can be seen from the website: www.tendersorissa.gov.in

Sd./- Executive Engineer, Rural Works Division, Gunupur

OIPR-25170/11/0008/2021

The fly that touches honey cannot use its wings; so too the soul that clings to spiritual sweetness ruins its freedom and hinders contemplation.



SRI AUROBINDO

Spying Dragon

Disturbing reports have surfaced about suspected Chinese hackers doing cyber espionage to ferret out information about Covid-19 vaccines being produced in India and also the supply and distribution chains of vaccines in the US. Now Chinese hackers are also credited to have wreaked havoc on the Mumbai power grid in October, 2020 causing a severe power failure in decades in the country’s finance capital through a malware at the height of the border standoff in Ladakh between India and China.

The reports emanated from cyber intelligence firms based in Singapore, Tokyo and the US. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has also alerted the world against such attacks by hackers in China, North Korea and Russia on researchers of Covid vaccines. Goldman Sachs-backed Cyfirma, based in Singapore and Tokyo said in a report Chinese hacking group APT10, also known as Stone Panda, had identified gaps and vulnerabilities in the IT infrastructure and supply chain software of Bharat Biotech and the Serum Institute of India (SII). The main motive is to get competitive advantage over the Indian companies producing Covid vaccines. This report carries weight as the Chief Executive of Cyfirma has an impeccable record in counter-intelligence having been a top cyber official with British foreign intelligence agency MI6. In the case of SII, the hackers have found a number of their public servers running weak web servers and weak content-management system.

Cyfirma told news agency Reuters the Chinese state-backed hacking group had, in recent weeks, targeted the IT systems of two Indian vaccine makers whose shots are being used in the country’s immunisation campaign. China and India are trying to capture the global Covid vaccine market. Both have already sold or donated vaccine shots to many countries. Incidentally, India produces more than 60 per cent of all vaccines sold in the world.

This is no longer in the realm of speculation and conjecture. India’s state-run Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT) has acknowledged the threat mentioned by Cyfirma. Its technical analysis and evaluation verified the threats and attacks. US drug-maker Pfizer and its German partner BioNTech SE have also stated documents on the development of their Covid vaccines were unlawfully accessed.

Director of the US National Counterintelligence and Security Centre, William Evanina, revealed on March 1 that US adversaries were trying to interfere with the US government operation distributing the vaccines. He pointed the accusing finger at China and Russia.

China’s response has, so far, been on predictable lines. Its Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian is smart enough to claim China itself has been investing enormous time, energy and money on research on Covid treatment and vaccine. As such, it would be immoral to target his country with rumours and slanders in the absence of any tangible evidence. This is typical Chinese obfuscation as is being done regarding the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic from Wuhan. A World Health Organisation (WHO) experts’ team is, probably, still trying to find out whether China played a nefarious role in the pandemic. China deliberately delayed the investigation on one pretext or the other apparently destroying, in the process, much evidence of the origin of the virus from Wuhan.

Another US company, Massachusetts-based Recorded Future, has claimed in its latest study that a Chinese government-linked group of hackers targeted Mumbai’s critical power grid system through malware causing massive power outage that threw the city’s train and hospital services and academic activities out of gear during two hours’ power shutdown in October, last year. China’s aim appears to warn India not to rub it the wrong way or else it would make its vital sectors fall like nine pins.

All these point to a sordid and alarming state of affairs. If China has been able to infiltrate India’s cyber space at will, Indian counter-intelligence and foreign service establishment, as usual, are always caught with their pants down. This has become a set pattern. So long China has been sneaking in and out of Indian territory as is evident in Doklam and Ladakh. All this while an Union minister who was earlier the Chief of the Indian Army has publicly said in Tamil Nadu that India has transgressed more number of times into Chinese territory than China has into Indian territory. This kind of brave talk without any basis may help create a false sense of nationalism that could help the BJP but it makes India the aggressor and China becomes the affected nation.

The Indian government, on the other hand, persistently remained in a denial mode about the Chinese incursions. In the same breath it engaged in protracted negotiations on disengagement in Ladakh which is an admission that encroachment had taken place.

Now, it turns out Chinese hackers can invade Indian cyber space as well to cause incalculable harm to its vital infrastructure and steal intellectual property as the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) has entered into Indian territory without much resistance. Chest-thumping policy by the government is not the answer to the grave threat from Chinese cyberspace and land invasions. The government needs to get rid of its false bravado displayed in the slogan of building “atmanirvar” (self-reliant) India adding to empty verbiage of “make in India” and “start-ups.” Coining catchy terms, acronyms and slogans is not the weapon to fight a shrewd, crafty and powerful adversary such as China.

The government ought now to find out what China has done in Indian territory during the showdown in Ladakh. It’s not in keeping with China’s character to agree to disengagement in Ladakh so easily after remaining inside Indian borders for months. Seeds of big mischief like cyber attack may have been sown during the occupation of Indian territory by China’s PLA. This seems to be a distinct possibility now that the hackers’ designs are no longer a secret.

WISDOM CORNER

- If you don't know where you are going, any road will get you there.

LEWIS CARROLL
- In the landscape of extinction, precision is next to godliness.

SAMUEL BECKETT
- It's so simple to be wise. Just think of something stupid to say and say the opposite.

SAM LEVENSON

WORDSWORTH

Maundy

On the Thursday before Easter each year, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II distributes the Royal Maundy in a cathedral somewhere in England. Men and women to the number of her age each receive that number of pence in specially minted Maundy coins (pennies, twopences, threepences and fourpences), plus a sum in ordinary money. The Queen spent her 85th birthday honouring pensioners at the Royal Maundy Service in Westminster Abbey yesterday. Each of the 85 men and 85 women who received the Maundy Money from the Queen ... was given a purse containing 85p in commemorative coins, a £5 coin celebrating the Duke of Edinburgh’s 90th birthday in June, and a 50p coin marking the London 2012 Olympics (Daily Telegraph, 22 Apr. 2011). These days, the monarch no longer ceremonially washes the feet of the poor – the last one to do so was James II – but this, and not the giving of money, is the origin of the strange word Maundy, which never appears anywhere except in reference to the Thursday before Easter. This day commemorates the Last Supper, in which, after the ceremony of washing their feet, Jesus gave a new commandment to his disciples that they should love one another. In Latin “new commandment” is mandatum novum (the first word is also the origin of mandate); on Maundy Thursday in Roman Catholic churches the anthem Mandatum novum do vobis (“a new commandment I give to you”, the start of verse 13:34 in St John’s gospel) would be sung, in particular following the royal ceremony of washing feet and giving alms. As a result, the ceremony became known as mandatum. The Old French version of that word is mandé and over time it became corrupted into maundy.

FOCUS ODISHA

IMPEDED BY CENTRE’S APATHY



All states are deprived of their due share from the divisible pool as the Centre is collecting around ₹3 to ₹4 lakh crore through cesses and surcharges which doesn’t go to the divisible pool



Santosh Kumar Mohapatra

THE CENTRE'S APATHY IS REFLECTED FROM THE FACT THAT STATE'S SHARE IN UNION TAX IS EBBING

Odisha Finance Minister Niranjan Pujari, presented the State Budget for fiscal 2021-22 at a critical juncture when the economy is being ravaged by the pandemic-induced recession and central assistance is dwindling. The Budget has evoked mixed reactions. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik described it as pro-people, pro-growth, and transformative, while the Opposition dubbed it disappointing. The finance minister said that the State Budget aimed to create an aspiration for “New Odisha Empowered Odisha” with an agenda to transform health, agriculture, education, livelihoods, infrastructure as well as industries to the next level with adequate safeguard for vulnerable sections of society.

Normally, the budgetary outlay is decided in tandem with an expected rise of nominal GDP growth. Due to pandemic-induced recession, in 2020-21, nominal GSDP would shrink to negative 2.24 per cent against the projected rise of 11.7 per cent, while real GSDP at constant prices (2011 12) is likely to shrink to negative 4.92 per cent against the projected rise of 7 per cent.

However, according to the State Economic Survey, the pandemic’s blow has been cushioned by the state government’s effective financial management and governance and the contraction in Odisha’s real GSDP growth is much lower than the 7.7 per cent decline projected for the national economy.

While estimating the total outlay for 2021-22, the finance minister has assumed that nominal GSDP will grow at 10.5 per cent to reach ₹5.86 lakh crore, still behind the estimated value of ₹5.96 lakh crore in the previous fiscal. However, the nominal GSDP estimated to be ₹5.96 lakh crore in 2020-21 has collapsed to ₹5.095 lakh crore in a revised estimate due to the pandemic. This shows how one year’s GSDP has been lost due to the pandemic.

The total budgetary outlay has been pegged at ₹170,000 crore in 2021-22 up from estimated outlay of ₹150,000 crore in the previous

fiscal, which was also revised downward to ₹135,000 crore. It means the outlay has been increased by 13.33 per cent in 2021-22 against the budgeted outlay and 25.92 per cent against the revised outlay of the previous fiscal. This is much higher than projected nominal GSDP growth. The total size of the State Budget has increased from 16 per cent to 26 per cent of GSDP between 1999-2000 and 2020-21 and is likely to rise around 29 per cent in 2021-22. This is a welcome feature.

Hence, in terms of outlay, the Budget seems to be too expansionary. But if loan repayments of ₹23,581 crore are considered, then outlay is as usual. But the rise in outlay is far better than that of Uttar Pradesh which saw only a 7.3 per cent rise in its recent Budget.

The administrative expenditure (earlier non-planned) is estimated at ₹85,000 crore up from the budgeted estimate of ₹65,655 crore in 2020-21, which was reduced to ₹63,150 crore in revised estimate. The programme expenditure (planned) is estimated at ₹75,000 crore, higher than the budgeted estimate of ₹74,000 crore and revised estimate of ₹62,000 crore of previous fiscal. The administrative expenditure does not normally create assets directly. But as proportionate of total outlay, it is estimated to increase to 50 per cent in 2021-22 from 44.12 per

cent in previous fiscal. This does not augur well.

The total State Sector Schemes is estimated to be ₹42874.92 crore in 2021-22 lower than the budgeted outlay and revised outlay of previous fiscal. It was pegged at ₹4988.10 crore but was revised downward to ₹3600 crore in 2021-22. This decline is due to a plunge in Centre’s assistance. Similarly, Central Sector Schemes is estimated to be ₹357.58 crore, down from the budgeted estimate of ₹456.20 which was revised upward to ₹480.90 crore.

A total sum of ₹9,164 crore is allocated for public healthcare with an increase of about 19 per cent over previous year. There was a massive investment of ₹12,000 crore for piped drinking water. What is shocker is that the agricultural outlay has been reduced in the last few years. From an outlay of ₹20,717 crore in 2019-20, it was reduced to ₹19,408 crore in 2020-21. The allocation for the year 2021-22 has been slashed by over 9 per cent to be estimated at ₹17,468 crore in 2021-22 despite the agriculture sector witnessing negative growth of 6.54 per cent in 2020-21.

The tax/GSDP ratio is estimated at 6.40 per cent in 2021-22 as against 6.43 per cent estimated in previous fiscal. Similarly the non-tax/GSDP ratio is estimated at 3.41 per cent in 2021-22 against 3 per cent estimated in previous fiscal. This in-

cludes the withdrawal of ₹2,000 crore (0.34 per cent of GSDP) from Consolidated Sinking Fund (CSF) for repayment of OMB, which is shown as interest receipt in accounting terms.

Thus, the total own revenue (both tax-non tax) as a percentage of GSDP is estimated at 9.80 per cent in 2021-22 as against 9.4 per cent estimated in previous fiscal. So, no attempt is made to augment additional revenue which is a great impediment to development. What is disconcerting is that tax revenue pegged at ₹67636.68 core in 2021-22 is lower than the budgeted estimate of the previous fiscal (i.e., ₹74649.74 crore).

The Centre’s apathy is reflected from the fact that State’s share in Union tax is ebbing. It has been pegged at ₹30136.68 crore, lower than the budgeted estimate of previous fiscal (Rs 36299.74 crore) which was further reduced to ₹24549.63 crore in the revised estimate. Further, all states including Odisha are deprived of their due share from the divisible pool as the Centre is collecting around ₹3 to ₹4 lakh crore through cesses and surcharges which doesn’t go to the divisible pool.

But what is disconcerting is that the percentage share of Odisha from net proceeds of the central taxes and duties has declined from 5.16 per cent (12th FC) to 4.77 per cent (13th FC) and further to 4.64 per cent in the 14th FC. It has further declined to 4.528 per cent as per 15th FC.

While the Union finance minister presented a Budget having unfettered fiscal profligacy and mounting debt burden despite having the capacity to raise resources, Niranjan Pujari remained within the ‘Lakshman Rekha’ and fiscal prudence is being adhered to. However, revenue surplus and huge amount spent towards debt repayment are unwarranted in the present crisis. Money should have been spent more on creating jobs, providing financial assistance to those who have lost livelihood.

The author is an Odisha-based economist and columnist.

IN JEST THIS

Tiny homes can be quite appealing



Melvin Durai

BY MOVING INTO TINY HOMES, PEOPLE CAN WORK FEWER HOURS A DAY AND HAVE MORE TIME TO TWEET ABOUT THEIR NEW LIFESTYLES

I live in a medium-sized home, but some people might consider it a large home, and Mukesh Ambani might consider it a broom closet. A billionaire like him would probably find my home small, but it certainly isn’t tiny, especially compared to all the mini-homes that creative people such as Arun Prabhu are designing.

The Tamil Nadu architect built a home that’s so small, it sits atop an auto-rickshaw. The portable, detachable home has two levels, as well as a terrace, each side measuring just six feet in length. The house was designed for just one occupant, preferably a small person. If you’re a sumo wrestler, this house is not meant for you, unless you’re looking for something to bounce on your stomach.

Like most tiny houses, Prabhu’s house combines rooms to save space. The bedroom, bathroom and kitchen share the first level, which can be quite convenient. If you need to use the toilet while you’re cooking lunch, you can do so without taking your eyes off the stove. If that makes you lose your appetite, it might also ensure that you don’t get too big for your house.

Anand Mahindra, chair of the Mahindra Group, recently tweeted



Like most tiny houses, Arun Prabhu’s house combines rooms to save space. The bedroom, bathroom and kitchen share the first level, which can be quite convenient

about Prabhu’s design, sharing a few photos and saying, “Apparently Arun did this to demonstrate the power of small spaces. But he was also on to a larger trend: a potential post-pandemic wanderlust & desire to be ‘always mobile.’ I’d like to ask

if he’ll design an even more ambitious space atop a Bolero pickup.”

Mahindra is thinking big—he’d like to see if Prabhu can design a home in which Principal Singh would be able to stretch his legs. If the 6-foot-10 basketball center can fit comfortably into a home above a Bolero pickup, it might be perfect for a family of four.

Prabhu’s house, which he has named Solo 0.1, cost him ₹1 lakh to build and includes a 600-watt solar panel and a 250-litre water tank, as well as workspace on the second level.

“The idea of Solo 0.1 roots from the condition of slums in our country and from the nomadic tribes and gypsies,” he told Times Now. “I wanted to make something that would take the least amount of space, is habitable, and can be traveled in.”

Mobile homes are nothing new, of course, but while most of the mobile homes in the United States and other countries can be moved around, people usually park such homes permanently in a mobile home park. The only time these homes move, unfortunately, is when a tornado strikes.

The most common way for people to travel around in a house

is to rent or buy an RV (recreational vehicle), which has a bedroom, kitchen and living room. While Dad drives the RV across the country, Mom can be cooking, the kids can be watching TV, and the dogs can be sleeping on the pull-out beds.

Unlike Prabhu’s house, RVs can be quite expensive, a luxury for the privileged rather than shelter for the poor. I like Prabhu’s idea of building a small mobile house that’s affordable. I’ve seen how tiny homes have grown in popularity in many countries, partly because of population density and land scarcity, and partly because many people want relief from paying high monthly rents or mortgages. By moving into tiny homes, they can work fewer hours a day and have more time to tweet about their new lifestyles.

Tiny homes are so popular that IKEA, the Swedish home furniture and décor retailer, has created a Bolo XL model. Among its many features, it boasts a walk-around queen bed. Yes, the home is spacious enough that you can actually walk around your bed!

The Bolo XL is too big to fit on top of an auto-rickshaw, but you can’t have everything in life, can you?

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

OrissaPOST
B-15, Rasulgari Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

Vaccine impetus

Sir, This is in reference to the news item “Modi takes Covid jab at AIIMS,” Orissa POST, March 2. In kicking off the third phase of vaccination for senior citizens and those above 45 with comorbidities by getting himself inoculated, PM Modi has given a promising impetus to the pace of vaccination. So far, vaccination hasn’t matched up to India’s immense population challenge but the opening of centres at neighbourhood private hospitals and flexible options for registration can give a big boost. CMs, Union and state ministers, and Opposition politicians must also follow suit to trigger a “herd mentality” against vaccine hesitancy. Rope in celebrities too. Since February 13, India’s seven-day rolling average of daily Covid infections has also shown a steady surge, signalling fresh need to ramp up vaccination. India’s vaccination strategy is very closely intertwined to its economic fortunes. A GDP contraction of 8 per cent in 2020-21 requires a big bounce back. To recover lost ground, the services sector accounting for 50 per cent of India’s GDP needs a confident restart. But restrictions on interstate movement in response to February’s Covid surge are symptomatic of persisting jitters. Only rapid vaccination will enable a more confident economy. Industry mavens are proposing an intensive 3-4 month vaccination effort that can cover 70 per cent of the population. All the ingredients that can make this happen – more vaccine approvals, more manufacturing capacity, an open vaccine market and more private vaccination centres – can translate into a big 2021 GDP bump.

N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

Accessible India

Sir, It is welcome to note that the Union Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry has launched the “Sugamya Bharat App” to facilitate the Divyangjan (differently-abled). This Crowdsourcing Mobile Application is a means for sensitising and enhancing accessibility in the three pillars of the Accessible India Campaign like built environment, transportation sector; and ICT ecosystem. The app provides for five main features, four of which are directly related to enhancing accessibility, while the fifth is a special feature meant only for differently-abled for COVID-related issues. The app is made accessible for ease of use for persons with disabilities with different accessibility features. The app has provision for providing notifications to the users at the time of registration and regular status updates. Hope that the app will empower the differently-abled and will prove to be helpful in providing benefits of government schemes to the needy.

Amit Singh Kushwaha, SATNA (MP)

Identity politics gaining ground in WB

Since Independence, polls in the state, which boasts of being the cradle of the Indian renaissance, have always been fought along ideological lines, with matters related to government policies, unemployment and food security taking centre stage

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, March 2: With the stage set for high-octane polls in West Bengal, key stakeholders here asserted that the state, in a departure from the tradition, will be witnessing a communally charged election this time, largely driven by identity politics.

Bengal, where the electoral discourse has mostly steered clear of divisive agenda, has been drawn into the vortex with the TMC and the BJP accusing each other of fanning communal sentiments ahead of elections. The entry of the newly formed Indian Secular Front (ISF) led by Abbas Siddiqui, who became the first religious leader in West Bengal to take the plunge into politics, has, however, upturned several political equations, propelling the campaign of religious identity-based politics in the state. "This time, assembly elections will be different from the ones we have witnessed since independence. The BJP has long been trying to create divisions among the communities. But we will fight against it and work to unite people

The saffron leadership, too, agreed that communal polarisation was on the rise in the state, but blamed appeasement politics by the TMC for its upsurge. "For us, the election plank happens to be development for all. That said, appeasement politics and injustice towards the state's majority community by the TMC government has indeed led to communal polarisation in Bengal," BJP state president Dilip Ghosh said.



This time, Assembly elections will be different from the ones we have witnessed since independence. The BJP has long been trying to create divisions among the communities. But we will fight against it and work to unite people

SOUGATA ROY | TMC MP

For us, the election plank happens to be development for all... Appeasement politics and injustice towards the state's majority community by the TMC government has indeed led to communal polarisation in Bengal

DILIP GHOSH, BJP STATE PRESIDENT

Echoing him, BJP leader Tathagata Roy said Partition scars and the upswing of Muslim identity politics in Bengal have deepened the communal fault-lines.

The opposition Congress, on its part, trained guns on both the TMC and the BJP for fomenting divisive politics – a practice almost alien to the state's political landscape.

CPI (M) politburo member Mohammed Salim, however, stressed that the narrative wouldn't yield any result as masses are "fed up with the misrule" of the TMC and

the BJP at the state and the Centre respectively. "Had communal narrative been at play in the past (during CPI-M rule), people would have seen saffron camp and other fundamentalist forces gaining ground back then. But that was not the case. True, this time parties are playing the communal card, but issues concerning common people such as fuel price hike, corruption and unemployment will negate its influence to a large extent," he said.

Since Independence, polls in the state, which boasts of being the cradle

The entry of the Indian Secular Front led by Abbas Siddiqui, the first religious leader in WB to take the plunge into politics, has upturned political equations, propelling campaign of religious identity-based politics in the state

of the Indian renaissance, have always been fought along ideological lines, with matters related to government policies, unemployment and food security taking centre stage. Sources in the BJP claimed that the TMC government's failure to control communal riots over the last six years has angered not just a section of the minorities, but also those belonging to the majority community. According to data released by the Union home ministry in 2018, communal violence increased sharply since 2015 in West Bengal.

Although opposition parties pinned the blame on the TMC for this surge in religious fervour in the state, which has 30 per cent Muslim electorate, a quick look at Bengal's socio-political history will reflect how communalism has always had an impact on the state's political culture, with hundreds of people having borne the brunt of riots in 1946-47.

Both the Hindu right and fringe Muslim outfits had wielded considerable influence in violence-hit

West Bengal in the aftermath of Partition, before waning considerably over the years. During the first assembly polls in 1952, the Hindu Mahasabha, along with Bharatiya Jana Sangh, had won 13 seats and garnered around eight per cent of the total votes. Later, Jana Sangh's influence ebbed, as it ended up with only one seat in 1967 and 1971.

Similarly, Muslim outfits such as the Progressive Muslim League (PML) and the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) had established their presence in pockets, with the PML winning three seats in 1969 assembly polls, and IUML bagging a single seat during 1972 and 1977 assembly polls. "Although parties like the IUML, PML and the Bharatiya Jana Sangh managed to bag a few seats till the seventies, poll campaigns did not bank on communal narrative. Development issues and anti-state or anti-Centre plank always took precedence," veteran Congress leader Abdul Mannan Said. During the early sixties, however, the rise of Left parties, which fought for rights of refugees from Bangladesh, ended the consolidation of rightwing forces in the state. Noted Historian Sugata Bose contended that refugees from Bangladesh felt cheated both by the Congress and the Hindu Mahasabha when the country endured Partition, and they took solace in the Left's fold.

"Refugees from Bangladesh and Bengali Muslims were more aligned to the Left. Therefore, the communal rhetoric never gained momentum in Bengal," Bose, Gardiner Professor of oceanic history at Harvard University, told PTI.

Cong will bring law to nullify CAA: Priyanka

AGENCIES

Tezpur, March 2: Senior Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra Tuesday asserted that her party, if voted to power in Assam, will bring a new law to "nullify" the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) in the state.

Priyanka, during a public meeting in Tezpur, launched the 'Five Guarantees' campaign, and said her party, if given a chance to form government in the northeastern state, will dole out Rs 2,000 every month to homemakers across the state, and provide free electricity up to 200 units to all households.

The All India Congress Committee (AICC) general secretary, who is in poll-bound Assam on a two-day visit, also claimed that her party will hike daily wages of tea garden workers to Rs 365 from the existing Rs 167, and provide at least 25,000 government jobs to youth.

"People of Assam were cheated by a party (BJP) five years ago that promised them 25 lakh jobs but gave them CAA instead. Our party is not making empty promises but undertaking five guarantees," the Congress leader, who sported a traditional 'gamocha' around her neck with the letters CAA crossed out on it, said. At Bishwanath, Vadra slammed the BJP-led government at the Centre for not paying heed to farmers' concerns over the new agricultural laws, and said its policies are designed to benefit only the rich. Interacting with women workers of the Sadharu Tea Estate near Bishwanath, she said farmers have been protesting in and around the national capital for months, but Prime Minister Narendra Modi is yet to meet them and end the im-



People of Assam were cheated by a party (BJP) five years ago that promised them 25 lakh jobs but gave them CAA instead. Our party is not making empty promises but undertaking five guarantees

PRIYANKA GANDHI VADRA | CONGRESS LEADER

passe. "More than three lakh farmers are sitting on a dharna for the last two months, barely four to five kilometres away from where the PM stays, but he has not gone to meet them. What is the problem if he goes to meet them once, talk and if the farmers have a problem with the laws, then make changes for their benefit... But the policies of this government is for the rich and powerful and not for the common people," the Congress leader said. Priyanka, who is on a two-day visit to poll-bound Assam, sat with the women workers in the tea garden and discussed with them a host of issues. During the interaction, the women reportedly told her that only a few get benefits of the schemes meant for them, but the others have to frequently visit government offices to enquire, which is not feasible during work hours.

Rights body moves HC for legal aid to those excluded by NRC

THE GAUHATI HIGH COURT HAS ISSUED NOTICES TO THE AUTHORITIES CONCERNED AND FIXED APRIL 5 AS THE NEXT DATE OF HEARING

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Guwahati, March 2: A rights body has approached the Gauhati High Court seeking opposite legal aid for those left out in the Assam's National Register of Citizens (NRC) list, released on August 31, 2019.

The Mumbai based Citizens for Justice and Peace (CJP) after conducting a survey of 10 District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) establishments in Assam filed a petition to the court saying that DLSAs were short-staffed with under-trained para legal volunteers and poor infrastructure. The Supreme Court monitored NRC published lists August 31, 2019, excluding the 19.06 lakh people. A total of 3,11,21,004 names were included in the NRC lists



out of 3,30,27,661 applicants.

A majority of those left out from the list are believed to be Bengali Muslims and Hindus besides Gorkhas. CJP secretary Teesta Setalvad said her organisation has been writing letters to the National Legal Services Authority and the Assam State Legal Services Authority (ASLSA) since April last year after the Union Home Ministry's statement August 20, 2019, that legal assistance would be given to those people excluded from the NRC list, if they need legal support.

The ASLSA in November last year said that it has enough machinery to deal with any action taken by the government with regards to NRC and that legal camps would be organised after rejection slips are handed out to the 19.06

lakh people explaining why they were not included in the NRC list.

The CJP conducted a study of the functioning of the DLSAs in the 10 districts of Assam's 34 districts and found they have 273 active advocates appointed for legal aid and 333 para legal volunteers whose educational qualifications varied from district to district.

"No training on citizenship, immigration, NRC, Foreigners' Act and related issues was given to the concerned persons in any of these 10 DLSAs. Seven Foreigners' Tribunal (FT) cases were handled by the counsel of the DLSA in 2019 and three in 2020 in Dhubri district, no FT cases appeared to have been dealt with by the counsel of the other nine DLSAs," the CJP said.

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 2: After Anand Sharma expressed objection to the Congress-Left-ISF alliance in West Bengal, the state chief and the party leader in the Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury and the state in-charge Jitin Prasada have defended the alliance.

Anand Sharma, Monday objected to the Congress-Left-ISF alliance in West Bengal, saying that the core ideology cannot be compromised, adding that the Congress cannot be selective in fighting communalists but must do so in all its manifestations.

"Congress' alliance with parties like ISF and other such forces militates against the core ideology of the party and Gandhian and Nehruvian secularism, which forms the soul of the party. These issues need to be approved by the CWC," Sharma said.

"Congress cannot be selective in fighting communalists but must do so in all its manifestations, irrespective of religion and colour," he added.

The Left and the Indian Secular Front (ISF) are in talks with the Congress over seat sharing arrangements in the poll-bound Bengal.



Congress state President Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury replied to Anand Sharma on Twitter: And the party's West Bengal in-charge Jitin Prasada also took a jibe at Sharma.

Adhir tweeted, "Know ur facts @AnandSharmaINC ji".

He said the CPI(M)-led Left Front is leading the secular alliance in West Bengal of which Congress is an integral part. We are determined to defeat BJP's communal & divisive politics and an autocratic regime, @INCIndia has got its full share of seats. Left Front is allocating seats from its share to the newly formed Indian Secular Front-ISF. Your

choice to call the decision of CPM led front 'communal' is only serving the polarising agenda of 'BJP'." He also urged them to work for the party, "Those who are committed to fight against #BJP parties venomous communalism should support the Congress & campaign for the party in five states rather than attempting to undermine the party by remarks in tune with BJP's agenda. Would urge a select group of distinguished Congressmen to rise above always seeking personal comfort spots and stop wasting time singing praises of PM. They owe a duty to strengthen the Party

Anand Sharma Monday objected to Congress-Left-ISF alliance in West Bengal saying that the core ideology cannot be compromised, adding that the Congress cannot be selective in fighting communalists but must do so in all its manifestations

and not undermine the tree that nurtured them."

Jitin Prasada also wrote on Twitter, "Alliance decisions are taken keeping in mind the best interests of the party and the workers. Now is the time for everyone to join hands and work towards strengthening the prospects of the Congress in the poll bound states."

The Congress and the Left are in alliance with the ISF and want to make the Assembly polls a triangular contest, and not a fight between the Trinamool Congress and the BJP.

'Grand alliance will perform last rites of BJP'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Tezpur, March 2: Bodoland Peoples' Front (BPF) chief Hagrama Mohilary Tuesday asserted that the Grand Alliance led by "old friend" Congress will perform the last rites of the BJP-led government in Assam by winning the upcoming assembly elections.

Mohilary, whose BPF was earlier a part of the BJP-led coalition government in the state, claimed that he was "misled" by senior state minister and NEDA convener Himanta Biswa Sarma to join the saffron party's alliance.

"It is a foregone conclusion that the Congress-led Grand Alliance will form the next government in the state and we will perform the BJP's last rites on May 2 (the day of the counting of votes)," Mohilary said in the presence of AICC general secretary Priyanka Gandhi at a rally here.

He asserted that all the 12 seats in the North Bank of the Brahmaputra that are among the constituencies going to polls in the first phase of the elections will be wrested by the Congress from the



BJP. "Before 2016 (assembly polls), these seats were with the Congress and it was I who ensured that the BJP wins in these constituencies. But this time, I assure that all these seats will be won by the Congress. The BPF was a friend of the Congress but the North East Democratic Alliance (NEDA) convener misled us. But now, we have returned to our old ally and nothing can stop the Grand Alliance under the leadership of the Congress

from forming the next government in the state," Mohilary said.

He quipped that Himanta Biswa Sarma, "who is known for jumping from one party to another; should also leave the BJP as it will surely lose". The three-time former Bodoland Territorial Council chief alleged that the BJP on one hand talks about ending corruption, while on the other, its members "are involved in all kinds of syndicates – cow smuggling, coal and

even betel-nut," he added.

"These illegal businesses take place through the Srirampur gate along the West Bengal border with the blessings of BJP leaders," he said.

"I left the BJP-led alliance and returned to my old friends as these illegal activities will defame me. We must now work towards removing the BJP from power in the state," Mohilary said.

He termed the recent formation of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) by the BJP and United Peoples' Party Liberal (UPPL) as illegal as the elected members were "locked in a Guwahati hotel and taken to Kokrajhar in a bus like prisoners for council formation".

The BPF was a part of the Congress-led alliance for two consecutive terms from 2006 but joined the BJP coalition government in 2016 after Himanta Biswa Sarma quit the grand old party to join the saffron camp.

In the previous assembly election, Mohilary's party had won 12 of the 13 seats it had contested in the 126-member house, which will go to polls in three phases between March 27 and April 6.



An elephant takes a dust bath on a hot summer day at Alipore Zoological Garden in Kolkata, Tuesday.

PTI PHOTO

of the day quote

The TMC has 17 women MPs in Lok Sabha which is a record of sorts if compared to other parties. In Rajya Sabha, 41 per cent of TMC MPs are women



CHANDRIMA BHATTACHARYA | WB STATE MINISTER AND SENIOR TMC LEADER

Ours is a government that is investing in waterways in a way that was never seen before. Domestic waterways are found to be cost effective and environment friendly ways of transporting freight



NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER

Immunisation of the body immediately and vaccination against corruption next month. Get ready



KAMAL HAASAN | MAKKAL NEEDEHI MAIAM (MNM) FOUNDER

SHORT TAKES

54 students test Covid positive

Karnal: Fifty four students of a school near here have tested Covid-19 positive leading to suspension of classes and other academic activities, an official said Tuesday. Karnal Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Yogesh Sharma said three students of Sainik School Kunjpura had tested positive for the virus Monday following which the health department took samples of 390 students and staff members of the school for testing. "The reports revealed that 54 students are COVID-19 positive," Sharma said.

Sikkim CM's FB page hacked

Gangtok: Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang Tuesday said his Facebook page was recently hacked but was restored within a few hours. A few inadvertent posts were written by unidentified persons from Tamang's official Facebook page. "Recently, my official Facebook page was compromised wherein someone tried to impersonate me, intending to cause more harm," he said. The issue was resolved within a few hours and the situation was under control, Tamang said.

Man kills wife, commits suicide

Kota: A man killed his wife and later committed suicide by taking poison following an argument over an issue in Rajasthan's Jhalawar district, police said Tuesday. The deceased have been identified as Bansilal Meena and his wife Dwarkabai, residents of Suwaliya Kunja village under the Panwar police station in Jhalawar district. According to police, Bansilal slashed his wife's neck with a sickle and attacked her with a stone multiple times following an argument over an issue Monday.

CoWIN snag halts Goa vax drive

Panaji: A snag in the Co-WIN portal affected the Covid-19 vaccination process for senior citizens at private hospitals in Goa in initial hours Tuesday, a Health official said. The portal developed a glitch soon after the process for vaccination began after 9 am, forcing many senior citizens who had gathered at the hospitals to take the first dose to leave.



India has shown the capacity to be a manufacturer at the global scale and also be an innovator when it came to vaccine development. There is a huge amount of scope to study the impact of vaccines, which needs to be thought-through by a very coordinated approach

SOUMYA SWAMINATHAN | CHIEF SCIENTIST, WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION

Farmer leaders decide to campaign against BJP

Protesting farmers will block the KMP (Western Peripheral) Expressway March 6 as the anti-farm law protest at Delhi borders completes 100 days



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 2: Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM), which is spearheading anti-farm law protests in Delhi, will send its leaders to poll-bound states to appeal to farmers there to defeat the BJP in assembly elections, leaders of the outfit said Tuesday.

The protesting farmers will also block the KMP (Western Peripheral) Expressway March 6 as the anti-farm law protest at Delhi borders completes 100 days. The expressway will be blocked at various points for five hours from 11 am March 6, SKM leader Yogendra Yadav said.

He said SKM leaders will hold a public meeting in Kolkata March 12 to appeal to the farmers of poll-bound states to punish the BJP.

SKM leader Balbir Singh Rajewal said that SKM teams will visit poll-bound states, including West Bengal and Kerala, to appeal to farmers to defeat the BJP. "We will not seek votes for any party. We will appeal to them to vote for those candidates who can defeat the BJP which has

failed to address farmers' issues," Rajewal said at a joint press conference of the SKM at Singhu border. Those who are sitting in power do not understand the language of justice, Constitution or good and bad, Yadav said, adding that they only understand the language of power, elections and votes.

"So, the farmers have decided to hurt them through votes. We are appealing to voters in five poll-bound states to punish this party (BJP) and its allies who enacted anti-farmers laws, repressed farmers and tried to humiliate them," Yadav said.

The morcha leaders will also visit Karnataka where farmers are getting at least ₹1000 less than MSP on various crops, Yadav said. Farmers will also visit mandis, beginning from Gulbarga March 5, to seek minimum support price for their produce. On Womens' Day March 8, women protesters will lead the protest at Delhi borders and other places across the country, Yadav said. The SKM held a general body meeting of its constituents

Ghazipur border opened, then closed again

New Delhi: The Delhi Police Tuesday afternoon closed the Ghazipur border again, hours after it reopened a portion of NH-9 for traffic movement, officials said. The stretch was closed since January 26 when violence broke out during the farmers' tractor parade in the national capital on Republic Day. The one side of the road which goes towards Ghaziabad from Delhi was opened for traffic in the morning. Thousands of farmers, mostly from Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh, have been camping at the Delhi border points - Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur - demanding a repeal of the three farm laws enacted by the Centre in September last year.

at the Singhu border Monday, preparing its action plan for taking forward the movement. The SKM has given a call to the people to install black flags at their houses and wear black armbands as a mark of support to the movement as it completes 100 days March 6.

The SKM has decided to support the central trade unions which are observing March 15 as 'anti-privatisation' day. The SKM will support the call of trade unions by marking it as 'anti-corporatisation' day, and extend solidarity to their protests on that day all over India, a statement by the outfit said.



Deer and Blackbucks (Krishnamruga) at the Bootharamanatii Zoo near about 20 kms from Belagavi city

UNI PHOTO

Can't use language like 'Tom, Dick, Harry': HC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 2: The Delhi High Court has expressed displeasure over usage of sentence like "Tom, Dick and Harry" in a petition raising grievance relating to National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) and said such "slang language" is not permissible in the pleadings before a court of law.

The high court, which declined to entertain the petition, said it was refraining from imposing costs at this stage since the petitioner

was appearing in person.

Justice Prathiba M Singh said the petitioner appeared to have drafted the petition on his own and perusal of a paragraph showed that "there is slang language being used in the petition".

"She said paragraph reads as under: '(f) The AA / NCLT cannot permit any person - Tom, Dick, and Harry to represent and defend the respondent under section of IBC (Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code), as the rules does not permit it.' Such language is not permissible in pleadings



before the court. Accordingly, this petition is liable to be dismissed," Justice Singh said.

The petitioner, in his plea, has raised a grievance against the NCLT and the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) alleging that wrong procedures

are being adopted by the said tribunals.

The high court said if the petitioner was aggrieved by any order of the NCLT or NCLAT, he may draft a proper petition and only then file the same.

"At this stage, the petitioner wishes to withdraw the present petition. The petition is dismissed as withdrawn with liberty to avail of his remedies in accordance with law. Since the petitioner is appearing in person, this court is refraining from imposing costs at this stage," the court said.

LSTV & RSTV MERGE TO FORM SANSAD TV

Lok Sabha TV and Rajya Sabha TV will merge into a single entity, SANSAD TV. Retired IAS officer Ravi Capoor has been appointed the CEO of the new integrated channel for a period of one year



'Emergency' was a mistake, says Rahul

THE EMERGENCY WAS IMPOSED BY INDIRA GANDHI FOR A 21-MONTH PERIOD FROM 1975 TO 1977, WHEN CURBS WERE IMPOSED ON THE FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS OF CITIZENS



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 2: Speaking about the Emergency during a conversation with economist Kaushik Basu from the Cornell University in the US, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said Tuesday that it was a "mistake".

"I think that Emergency was a mistake. Absolutely, that was a mistake. And my grandmother (Indira Gandhi) said as much," Rahul Gandhi told Basu, who had served as the chief economic advisor to India.

While attacking the current dispensation saying that "there is a fundamental difference between what happened during the Emergency, which 'was wrong', and what is happening in the country now", Rahul Gandhi said the Congress, at no point, attempted to capture India's constitutional framework.

"Our design does not allow us that. Even if we want to do it, we can't," he said.

"The RSS is doing something fundamentally different. They are filling institutions with their people. Even if we defeat the BJP in the elections, we are not going to get rid of their people in the institutional structure," Rahul Gandhi said.

The former Congress President went on to say that people sitting in constitutional posts do not perform their duties, as he attacked Kiran Bedi, the former LG of Pondicherry, and Manipur Governor Najma Heptulla.

"MPs from Manipur say their Governor doesn't do her job, thinking that she holds an ideological post, not the constitutional one, while the former Pondicherry Lt Governor openly subverted the democratic process by not allowing bills to pass as she belonged to the RSS," he said.

Haryana to give 75% quota to state people in pvt jobs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, March 2: Haryana Governor Satyadeo Narain Arya has given assent to the Bill providing 75 per cent reservation in the private sector to job seekers from the state, Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar said here Tuesday.

The Haryana Assembly had last year passed the Bill, a key poll promise made by the ruling alliance partner Jannayak Janta Party.

"The Haryana Governor today gave his assent to the Bill entailing 75 per cent reservation in the private sector to job seekers from the state. The government will notify it soon," the CM told reporters at a press conference here. The Haryana State Employment



of Local Candidates Bill, 2020 provides quota for local people in private sector jobs that offer a salary of less than ₹50,000 a month.

The quota will initially apply for 10 years, according to the Bill.

Apart from tackling unemployment among local people, the state government said the law will discourage the influx of migrants seeking low-paid jobs, which has a "significant impact" on local infrastructure and leads to the "pro-

liferation of slums".

The Bill covers private companies, societies, trusts and partnership firms in the state. It provides for training to eligible local candidates when qualified people are not available. It defines local candidates as those domiciled in the state. For the domicile status, a person should be born in Haryana or have lived there for at least 15 years.

Giving 75 per cent reservation in private sector jobs was a key poll promise by Dushyant Chautala's JJP, which is the BJP's coalition partner in the state.

Chautala described the assent given by the Governor as "happiest moment for the youth of Haryana."

"The rules on this new law will be framed soon and published," he said at Faridabad.

Over 50L registered on Co-WIN

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 2: About 50 lakh people have registered themselves on the Co-WIN portal, without any system glitch, since the window opened Monday morning, the Centre said Tuesday, adding that over 2.08 lakh beneficiaries above 60 or those aged 45-60 with comorbidities have received the first dose of Covid-19 vaccine till this afternoon. The vaccination drive for those over 60 years of age and within the age bracket of 45-60 years with specified comorbidities began March 1, and the registration opened at 9 am Monday on the Co-WIN

portal. In the first two phases so far, 1,48,55,073 COVID-19 vaccine doses have been administered in the country till 1 pm Tuesday, out of which 67,04,856 healthcare workers have been given the first dose of the vaccine and 25,98,192 healthcare workers have been administered the second dose, government officials told a press conference here.

Besides, 53,43,219 frontline workers have been administered the first dose of vaccine till now, they said. R S Sharma, the Chairman of the Empowered Group (EG) on Covid-19 Vaccine Administration, said there were no glitches in the system.

Ujjwala 'Beneficiary No 8 crore' unable to buy LPG cylinder

PM Modi handed then 30-year-old Ayesha Shaikh an Ujjwala certificate September 7, 2019, making her the 'Beneficiary No 8 crore' of the country-wide scheme

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Aurangabad, March 2: Ayesha Shaikh, who became the eight croreth beneficiary of the national scheme to provide LPG connections to BPL women and received Ujjwala certificate by Prime Minister Narendra Modi September 2019, is finding it difficult now to pay for a cooking gas cylinder in view of the frequent hike in rates.

Like Shaikh, another beneficiary Mandabai Pable, who hails from Lohgaon in Aurangabad district of Maharashtra, is also struggling to buy the cylinder for cooking gas.

Videos of Shaikh and Pable using firewood for earthen stoves in their respective kitchens are being aired by a Marathi news channel they spoke to.

PM Modi handed then 30-year-old Shaikh an Ujjwala certificate September 7, 2019, making her the 'Beneficiary No 8 crore' of the country-wide scheme to provide LPG connections to women from Below Poverty Line (BPL).

The cost of an LPG cylinder has exceeded my room rent now. I pay ₹600 in rent whereas the price of the cooking gas cylinder has crossed ₹700. What should we do? Should



we pay for the gas cylinder or take care of the household expenses Shaikh asked in anguish while speaking to ABP Maza.

Shaikh, a daily wage and the mother of five, is a resident of Indiranagar in Ajanta village of Aurangabad district.

For Shaikh, the new gas connection had proved to be a boon as it spared her the labour of gathering firewood for her earthen stove. She had also started spending some more time with her children.

However, the frequent hike in the rates of cooking gas seems too much for Shaikh.

Monday, cooking LPG price was hiked by ₹25 per cylinder across all categories, including subsidised fuel and those availed by Ujjwala scheme beneficiaries - the fourth increase in rates in a month's time.

LPG prices have gone up by ₹125 per 14.2-kg cylinder since the beginning of February, as per price data from state-owned oil marketing companies.

A 14.2-kg cooking gas cylinder now costs ₹828 in Aurangabad while the rate of a 19-kg commercial gas cylinder is ₹1,642, a gas agency official said.

We had received the new gas

connection for free. But the gas was free only for the namesake. After using the cylinder for a month, we failed to refill it. After one month, we compromised on our room rent and somehow managed to buy the gas cylinder, Shaikh said. She said her room owner asked her family members to vacate as they failed to pay the monthly rent.

We then stayed at our sister's place, she said.

The BJP-led Central government is facing flak from Opposition over the hike in rates of cooking gas cylinders and fuel.

of the day quote

Today I and my wife took the first dose of Covid-19 vaccine at Delhi Heart and Lung Hospital. I and my wife paid Rs 250 each for our doses



HARSH VARDHAN | UNION HEALTH MINISTER

So far, four lakh people have been vaccinated in the state. No serious side effect has been reported so far



K K SHAILAJA | KERALA HEALTH MINISTER

In the next 'Shahi Snan', we will take the holy dip in the Yamuna only if its water is clean



HEMA MALINI | MATHURA MP

SHORT TAKES

9 get life term for double murder

Kota: A court in Rajasthan sentenced nine people, including three women, Tuesday to life imprisonment for killing two persons over a land dispute a decade ago. Additional District Judge Deepak Parashar acquitted two accused in the case on the ground of insufficient evidence, according to the public prosecutor. All the convicts and those acquitted are family members. In September 2010, the convicts attacked four members of a family in Itawa town with a country-made pistol, iron rods, knife, swords and sticks.

2 policemen held for graft

Lakhimpur Kheri (UP): Two policemen, including a sub inspector, were arrested and booked in a corruption case Tuesday, an official said. A Kumar and head constable A K Verma have been suspended for allegedly demanding Rs 500 from one Neeraj Gupta of Srinagar village in return for verifying his character certificate, Kheri Superintendent of Police, Vijay Dhull told newsmen.

K'taka min caught in sex scandal

Bangalore: A CD allegedly featuring Karnataka water resources minister Ramesh Jarakholi seeking sexual favours was released to news channels Tuesday. In this regard a social activist, Dinesh Kallahalli lodged a complaint with the Bengaluru city police commissioner seeking protection for the victim. After filing the complaint Kallahalli told reporters that this CD contained visuals of the minister allegedly seeking sexual favours from a victim. "Complaint is filed by me and not by the victim as she is fearing for her life," he said.



Kerala has been a lesson to other parts of the country and indeed the world on how to preserve and promote social harmony and amity

SONIA GANDHI | CONGRESS PRESIDENT

FOR A CAUSE

Private buses and lorries did not ply in several places as the 12-hour-long motor vehicle strike, called by a joint committee of trade unions Tuesday to protest the spiralling fuel price in the country, evoked only partial response in many parts of Kerala



ALL PRIVATE HOSPS PERMITTED TO GIVE COVID VAX: CENTRE

The Centre urged the states and the UTs to ensure adequate allocation of COVID vaccines to all hospitals, government as well as private, for the entire duration for which vaccination sessions have been planned

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 2: The Centre Tuesday permitted all private hospitals to give COVID vaccine if they adhere to the laid down norms and also asked the states and union territories to utilise the optimum capacity of private medical facilities empanelled under three categories.

The states and Union territories were also urged not to store, reserve, conserve or create a buffer stock of the COVID-19 vaccines, the Union Health ministry said in a statement, a day after the start of the second phase of India's inoculation drive in which the coverage has been expanded to include everyone above 60 and those over 45 with specified co-morbidities.

At an official review meeting with the states, the Centre reiterated there is no shortage of the vaccines and hence, adequate vaccine doses should be allocated to the COVID Vaccination Centres (CVCs).

"The central government has adequate stock and will provide the required vaccine doses to the states and UTs," it said.

It asked them to utilise the optimum capacity of all private hospitals empanelled under the Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY), the Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS) and the state health insurance schemes to enable them to effectively function as CVCs.

The states and UTs were asked to regularly collaborate with the private hospitals to ensure that their optimum capacity for vaccination is utilised. "Private hospitals not empanelled under the above-men-



tioned three categories have also been permitted to operate as CVCs if they have adequate number of vaccinators, adequate space for observation of the vaccinated, adequate cold chain arrangement and adequate arrangement for management of Adverse Events Following Immunisation (AEFI)," the statement said.

In addition to all the government health facilities, all private hospitals empanelled under the CGHS, the AB-PMJAY and the state health insurance schemes can function as CVCs, subject to them mandatorily adhering to certain norms, the statement said.

All private vaccination centres should have effective crowd management protocols in place, along with facilities for seating, water, proper signage etc.

They should also ensure adherence to a COVID-appropriate behaviour among the beneficiaries. The state and district administrations would proactively facilitate this, the health ministry said.

J&K CONG FACES RIFT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, Mar 2: A few hours after a section of Congress workers burnt an effigy of Ghulam Nabi Azad here Tuesday and accused him of conspiring against the party at the behest of the BJP, another group of their colleagues came out in Azad's support, bringing a rift within the Jammu and Kashmir unit of the party to the fore.

Congress workers, led by former general secretary of the party's Jammu and Kashmir unit and District Development Council (DDC) member Mohammad Shah Nawaz Choudhary, burnt Azad's effigy outside the Press Club in the afternoon and accused him of conspiring against the party at the behest of the BJP to weaken it for "personal gains".

A few hours later, another group of Congress workers, led by JMC councillor Gaurav Chopra, staged

a protest against Choudhary and said "a person who fought the recently held DDC polls against the party mandate is not a Congressman and is working on the directions of the BJP and the RSS to weaken the Congress".

The protest against Azad came days after a rally addressed by some "G-23" leaders, ostensibly to felicitate the former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister on his retirement from the Rajya Sabha. It was seen as a show of strength to convey a message to the Congress leadership.

The group of 23 leaders wrote to interim party president Sonia Gandhi in August last year, urging her to ensure a "full-time" and "visible" leadership. The group has since come to be known as the "G-23". Chief spokesperson of the Jammu and Kashmir Congress Ravinder Sharma said the party had no prior knowledge of the two protests in the city and will do

whatever necessary in its interest. Raising slogans in support of Azad, Chopra said, "Azad is a Congressman by heart and does not need a certificate from anyone. He strongly raised the issue of Jammu and Kashmir in Parliament to disapprove of the August 5, 2019 development (when the Centre revoked the erstwhile state's special status and bifurcated it into Union territories) and his long innings in the service of the nation drew praises even from the prime minister."

Demanding the ouster of all those who took part in the protest against Azad from the party, he said, "It is understood who is pulling his (Choudhary's) strings." Chopra said the G-23 leaders, who spoke at a private function here on Saturday, called for the strengthening of the party.

Earlier, the Choudhary-led group shouted slogans against Azad and demanded his ouster from the party.

AGENCIES

Ahmedabad, March 2: The ruling BJP recorded a massive victory in the local body polls in Gujarat Tuesday by winning clear majority in all 31 district panchayats as well as in 196 out of 231 taluka panchayats and 74 out of 81 municipalities.

The Congress, the main opposition party in the state, won a clear majority in only one municipality and 18 taluka panchayats, while AIMIM and AAP also made their presence felt. In six municipalities and 15 taluka panchayats no party has got clear majority. The BJP's success followed its victory in all six municipal corporations where polls were held in the first phase of local elections February 21. In the second phase where polling was held for district and taluka

panchayats as well as municipalities February 28, the BJP again left the Congress far behind by winning 6,236 out of 8,470 seats for which results were declared. The position was not yet clear on four remaining seats.

The Congress could win 1,805 seats, while the new entrants Aam Aadmi Paty (AAP) and All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) won 42 and 17 seats, respectively. Asaduddin Owaisi's AIMIM won nine seats in Modasa municipality in Aravalli district, one in Bharuch, and seven in Godhra in Panchmahal. The AAP won 31 seats in taluka panchayat, two in district panchayat and nine in municipality bodies.

With the BJP emerging stronger in rural and semi-urban areas, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the results show that Gujarat



An artist makes a painting of the world-famous monument Taj Mahal, as a part of beautification of a road, in Bhopal

BEAUTIFUL ARTWORK

FAMILY HELD HOSTAGE FOR FEEDING STRAY DOGS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Gurugram, March 2: In a bizarre incident, a family from an upscale condominium at Vatika 21, sector-83 in Gurugram, were held hostage in their car by protesting residents of their housing society for feeding stray dogs.

The residents of the society alleged that the dogs had bitten children recently, said the police Tuesday. The neighbours allegedly surrounded the family's car when they returned home Monday evening and did not allow them to come out of their vehicle. "A resident of that residential society is a dog lover and frequently feeds stray dogs in their locality. The other residents of the society alleged that a few days back, one of the dogs bite a resident. The resident along with his wife and their three-year-old daughter were returning home on Monday night when other people from the society surrounded their car and held them hostage," said Preet Pal Sangwan, Assistant Commissioner of Police (Crime).



Representative image

In a video, the complainant Sumit Singla alleged that the "Resident Welfare Association (RWA) and various goons" surrounded his car, tried to "attack" his wife Kirti Gupta and his three-year-old daughter, and tried to enter into the car.

ter were returning home on Monday night when other people from the society surrounded their car and held them hostage," said Preet Pal Sangwan, Assistant Commissioner of Police (Crime).

Cong chief, Oppn leader quit

In view of the Congress' debacle in the elections to local bodies in Gujarat, state unit president Amit Chavda and Leader of Opposition Paresb Dhanani resigned from their posts Tuesday. Chavda said people had raised doubts about EVMs and all these things should be probed. A party spokesperson said it was now up to the top brass of the Congress to decide the future course of action. "Taking the responsibility of the election results as state Congress chief, I have submitted my resignation to party president Sonia Gandhi," Chavda told reporters, adding that he would work as a common party worker from now on.

remains firmly with the saffron party's agenda of development and good governance. "Results of the Nagar Palika, Taluka Panchayat and District Panchayat polls across Gujarat give a crystal clear message- Gujarat is firmly with the BJP's agenda of development and good governance.

"I bow to the people of Gujarat for the unwavering faith and af-

fection towards BJP," Modi said in a tweet.

He congratulated Chief Minister Vijay Rupani, Deputy Chief Minister Nitin Patel and state BJP President C R Paatil as well as party workers for the "grand victory". Chief minister Rupani said the Congress is a sinking ship that is not fit for even being an opposi-

Farmers in 3 UP villages stop milk supply

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Amroha (Uttar Pradesh), March 2: In an unexpected development, dairy farmers in three villages in Amroha district have stopped supply of milk to the cooperative societies to express their solidarity with the farmers' movement.

The dairy farmers have also announced that from March 6, they will sell milk at Rs 100 per litre. At present, their supply is sold at Rs 35 per litre. State president of Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) youth wing, Digambar Singh, said, "We have not invoked the farmers to stop the milk sale. Farmers are doing so of their own to protest against farm law. Agitation is not confined to us, it has reached ground level and is now getting support from other farmers and common man too." According to reports, Monday, dairy farmers of three villages -- Rasulpur Mafi, Chuchaila Khurd, and Shahzadpur in Amroha district -- put their milk vessels upside down refusing to supply milk to cooperative societies. The tankers of the societies returned empty.

According to Dinesh Kumar, a dairy farmer, "We are doing this to show solidarity with our brothers who are sitting on the Ghazipur border protesting against the farm laws. We fully support them and shutting down the milk supply is our way of protesting."

Amazon Prime Video issues apology

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 2: Amazon Prime Video, the OTT platform that aired the controversial series 'Tandav', has issued an apology to anyone who felt insulted with the content of the series.

TANDAV CONTROVERSY

In the statement, they have also specified that the objectionable scenes have either been either removed or edited.

The official statement reads: "Amazon Prime Video again deeply regrets that viewers considered certain scenes to be objectionable in the recently launched fictional series 'Tandav'. This was never our intention, and the scenes that were objected to were removed or edited when they were brought to our attention. We respect our viewers' diverse beliefs and apologize unconditionally to anyone who felt hurt by these scenes. Our teams follow company content evaluation processes, which we acknowledge need to be constantly updated to better serve our audiences. We will continue to develop entertaining content with partners, while complying with the laws of India and respecting the diversity of culture and beliefs of our audiences."

An FIR was filed against Aparna Purohit, the head of India Originals at Amazon Sellers Service Pvt Ltd, and six other co-accused that said the web series has content that hurts religious sentiments of Hindus. Objection was raised by a section of society over a sequence featuring Mohammad Zeeshan Ayyub, for his depiction of Lord Shiva in a play within the show.

About 5K Indians stalking their partners via mobile spyware

STALKERWARE APPS ARE GENERALLY DISGUISED UNDER A FAKE APP NAME WITH SUSPICIOUS ACCESS TO MESSAGES, CALL LOGS, LOCATION, AND OTHER PERSONAL ACTIVITY

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 2: As some people try to digitally control the lives of their intimate partners, nearly 4,627 mobile users in India have been found to be the victim of stalkerware -- a secret surveillance software used in the field of domestic violence, a new report revealed on Tuesday. This figure would have

had been much higher in absence of lockdowns and the pandemic that led millions stay indoors in the country.

Stalkerware apps are generally disguised under a fake app name with suspicious access to messages, call logs, location, and other personal activity.

For example, an app called "Wi-Fi" that has access to your geolocation is a suspicious candidate, according to cyber security firm Kaspersky. "We see the number of users affected by stalkerware has remained high and we detect new samples every day. It's important to remember that there is somebody's real life story behind all these numbers, and sometimes there is a silent call for help," said Victor Chebyshev, Research Development Team Lead, Kaspersky. "It is clear that we all need to share what we are finding so we can further improve detection and protection for



Representative image

the benefit of those affected by cyber-violence," comments Victor Chebyshev, Research Development Team Lead, Kaspersky.

Stalkerware is a form of cyber-violence, and a global phe-

nomenon that affects countries regardless of size, society, or culture.

In 2020, a total of 53,870 mobile users were affected globally by stalkerware. In 2019, Kaspersky discovered 67,500 affected mobile

users. "It is unsurprising that the yearly curve of users affected by stalkerware globally shows a decline in reports from March to June 2020, before numbers began to stabilise thereafter. This coincides with the beginning of worldwide lockdowns, and later when many countries around the world began to ease restrictions," the report mentioned.

Mobile users can check if their mobile device has stalkerware installed. "Delete apps that are no longer being used. If the app has not been opened in a month or more, it is probably safe to assume it is no longer needed; and if this changes in the future, it can always be reinstalled," the report mentioned. Check "unknown sources" settings on Android devices. If "unknown sources" are enabled on your device, it might be a sign that unwanted software was installed from a third-party source.

of the day quote

We have made crystal clear and will continue to do so that the brutal killing of Jamal Khashoggi 28 months ago remains unacceptable conduct



What good does it do when we're playing (by the rules of climate change), but China is not and Russia is not and India is not, so they are pouring fumes... and we're trying to protect everything



The US must stand by our strategic partner and condemn China's dangerous cyber-attack on India's grid, which forced hospitals to go on generators in the midst of a pandemic



SHORT TAKES

US airstrikes in Syria killed one militia

Washington: The Pentagon has announced that US airstrikes in eastern Syria last week killed one militia member and injured two others. "We believe, right now, there was likely one militia member killed, and two militia members wounded," Pentagon spokesman John Kirby told reporters Monday. "We will continue to assess, as you know we do, and if that changes, we'll certainly let you know," Kirby added.

3 new Ebola cases confirmed in DRC

Kinshasa: Three new cases of the Ebola virus have been confirmed in Democratic Republic of the Congo's (DRC) North Kivu province, a senior health official told the media. The three new cases which were reported in Butembo health zone raised the overall tally in the country to 11 since the resurgence of the virus in the region February 7. A total of four patients have already died. On Sunday, the World Health Organization and the provincial authorities in charge of Ebola response announced the first case of recovery of one of the Ebola patients in the treatment centre of Butembo.

Finland declares state of emergency

Helsinki: The Finnish government has declared a state of emergency due to the worsening situation of the Covid-19 pandemic in the country. The state of emergency took effect immediately after it was declared Monday.



Ex-US president Donald Trump had dismantled the country's immigration system and it takes time to "rebuild it from scratch"

ALEJANDRO MAYORKAS |
US HOMELAND SECURITY SECRETARY

FOSSILS OF DINOSAURS THAT LIVED 140 MN YES AGO FOUND

Scientists have unearthed in Argentina's Patagonian wilderness fossils of what may be the oldest-known member of the dinosaur group known as titanosaurs that includes the largest land animals in Earth's history



China's electoral reform set to upend HK politics

REUTERS

Hong Kong, March 2: China's plan to dramatically reform Hong Kong's electoral system, expected to be unveiled in a parliamentary session in Beijing starting this week, will upend the territory's political scene, according to more than a dozen politicians from across the spectrum.

The proposed reform will put further pressure on pro-democracy activists, who are already the subject of a crackdown on dissent, and has ruffled the feathers of some pro-Beijing loyalists, some of whom may find themselves swept aside by a new and ambitious crop of loyalists, the people said. "It will be an earthquake shaking up local political interests," said one person briefed on the impending changes.

The measures will be introduced at the annual meeting of the National People's Congress, China's rubber-stamp parliament, which starts Friday, according to media reports.

The plan was signalled last week by senior Chinese official Xia Baolong, who said Beijing would introduce systemic changes to only allow what he called "patriots" to hold public office in Hong Kong.

In a full transcript of his remarks published this week by the pro-Beijing Bauhinia Magazine, Xia said Hong Kong's electoral system had to be "designed" to fit with the city's situation and shut out what he called non-patriots, some of whom he described as "anti-China agitators" that would bring destruction and terror to the city - a reference to pro-democracy campaigners who took to the streets in sometimes violent demonstrations in 2019.

Xia did not announce any specifics,



DRAGON'S MOVES

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- The plan was signalled last week by senior Chinese official Xia Baolong, who said Beijing would introduce systemic changes to only allow what he called "patriots" to hold public office in Hong Kong

but the plan will likely include changes to how the 70-seat Hong Kong legislature is elected, and the composition of a committee that will select Hong Kong's next leader, according to the person briefed on the plan and local media reports.

Veteran democrats have been quick to condemn the plan.

"It totally destroys any hope for democracy in the future," said Lee Cheuk-yan, a pro-democracy former member of Hong Kong's legislature. "The whole concept of Xia

Biden admin 'undecided' on ending H-1B visa ban

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, March 2: The Biden administration has indicated that it is still undecided on ending the Trump-era ban on issuing new H-1B visas, with the Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas asserting that the US government's top priority is the acute needs of individuals fleeing persecution.



The H-1B visa, the most sought after among Indian IT professionals, is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in specialty occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise.

Technology companies depend

on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China.

In January, then-President Donald Trump had extended the ban on issuing new H-1B visas till March 31, arguing that the country is having a very high unemployment rate and the US cannot afford to have more foreign workers.

"His successor President Joe Biden has revoked dozens of the executive orders of Trump including several of those related to immigration like the lifting the Muslim visa ban or those related to Green Card, the one that imposed ban on issuing H-1B has still not been lifted. It will expire on March 31, if Biden does not issue a fresh proclamation."

"What is the status of the review of the Trump era visa bans for H1B visas and has the White House decided to lift those bans before they expire at the end of the month?" Mayorkas was asked at a White House news conference.

Lawsuit accuses Amazon of 'systemic' racism

REUTERS

New York, March 2: The lawsuit from Charlotte Newman, a business development head at Amazon Web Services who is Black, said the company suffers from a "systemic pattern of insurmountable discrimination," despite its pledge to fight racism and statements of solidarity from Chief Executive Officer Jeff Bezos.

Seattle-based Amazon had no immediate comment. The complaint was filed in Washington, D.C., federal court.

Newman, a Harvard Business School graduate and former adviser to US Senator Cory Booker, said Amazon delayed by 2-1/2 years her rise to senior manager by hiring her in 2017 for a more junior role for which she was overqualified, a "de-leveling" that reduces awards

The lawsuit from Charlotte Newman, a Black business development head at Amazon Web Services, said the company suffers from a "systemic pattern of insurmountable discrimination," despite its pledge to fight racism and statements of solidarity from CEO Jeff Bezos

represented by Douglas Wigdor, who also represented women suing the former movie producer Harvey Weinstein and Fox News over alleged harassment or discrimination.



of company stock.

She also accused a male supervisor of using racial tropes by calling her "aggressive," "too direct" and "just scary," and another male co-worker of sexually harassing her and once pulling on her braids while saying, "You can leave this behind."

Both men were also named as defendants, and according to the lawsuit the co-worker was terminated. His lawyer could not immediately be identified.

Newman is seeking compensatory and punitive damages. She is

Amazon has worked to show support for the Black Lives Matter movement. In September its cloud computing chief Andy Jassy, who will succeed Bezos as Amazon CEO, gave the keynote address at a Black Employee Network entrepreneurship conference.

The news site Recode last week reported allegations of racial disparities in Amazon promotions and performance reviews.

Amazon also faces lawsuits claiming it mistreated workers in its handling of the coronavirus pandemic at its facilities.

SOCIAL DISTANCING



Stuttgart Ballet company dancers Elisa Badenes and Friedemann Vogel take part in performance "Social Distance Stacks" of conceptual artist Florian Mehnert at the John Cranko School in Stuttgart, Germany

REUTERS PHOTO

SUV carrying 27 crashes killing 15

AGENCIES

El Centro (US), March 2: An SUV believed to be carrying 27 people crashed Tuesday into a semitruck in Southern California, killing 15 people and leaving others injured, hospital officials said.

Judy Cruz, director of El Centro Regional Medical Center's emergency department, said 14 people died at the scene and another died after arriving at the hospital.

Officials believe there were 27 people in an SUV that struck a tractor-trailer full of gravel. Multiple patients were flown or transferred to hospitals for their injuries. "The patients are, of course, going through a little bit of a difficult time, as you can imagine," said Dr. Adolphe Edward, the El Centro hospital's chief executive officer.

It was not immediately clear what caused the crash in the agricultural southeastern corner of California on a highway running through fields in the Holtville area.

Greenland finds green power can be a curse

THE WORLD'S BIGGEST ISLAND HAS HUGE RESOURCES OF METALS KNOWN AS 'RARE EARTHS,' USED TO CREATE COMPACT, SUPER-STRONG MAGNETS

REUTERS

Copenhagen, March 2: In the tenth century, Erik the Red, a Viking from Iceland, was so impressed with the vegetation on another Arctic island he had found he called it "the green land." Today, it's Greenland's rocks that are attracting outsiders - superpowers riding a green revolution.

The world's biggest island has huge resources of metals known as 'rare earths,' used to create compact, super-strong magnets which help power equipment such as wind turbines, electric vehicles, combat aircraft and weapons systems.

The metals are abundant globally, but processing them is difficult and dirty - so much so that the United States, which used to dominate production, surrendered that position to China about 20 years ago.



As Greenland's ice sheet and glaciers recede, two Australia-based mining companies - one seeking funding in the United States, the other part-owned by a Chinese state-backed firm - are racing for approval to dig into what the US Geological Survey (USGS) calls the

world's biggest undeveloped deposits of rare earth metals.

The contest underscores the polluting side of clean energy, as well as how hard it is for the West to break free of China in production of a vital resource. Rare earth metals have many uses, and last year

China produced about 90% of them, according to Toronto-based consultancy Adamas Intelligence. As US-China tensions mount, President Joe Biden's administration said last month it will review key US supplies, including rare earths, to ensure other countries cannot weaponise them against the United States.

Each Greenland mine would cost about \$500 million to develop, the companies say. Both plan to send mined material away for final processing, an activity that is heavily concentrated in China. The only rare earth mine now operating in the United States - Mountain Pass in California - is partly owned by a Chinese state-backed company that currently sends material mined in the US to China for processing.

The Greenland sites are less than 16 km from each other at the southern tip of the island.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, March 2: The Biden administration has told the US Congress that India's recent emphasis on import substitution through the "Make in India" campaign has "epitomised" the challenges facing the bilateral trade relationship.

In its 2021 Trade Policy Agenda and 2020 Annual Report, the US Trade Representative (USTR) said that during 2020, the US continued its engagement with India to try to resolve longstanding market access impediments affecting US exporters.

"While India's large market, economic growth, and progress towards development make it an essential market for many US exporters, a general and consistent trend of trade-restrictive poli-



cies has inhibited the potential of the bilateral trade relationship. Recent Indian emphasis on import substitution through a 'Make in India' campaign has epitomised the challenges facing the bilateral trade relationship," USTR said in its report to Congress Monday.

Effective June 5, 2019, the United States terminated India's eligibility under the Generalized System

of Preferences (GSP) programme, following a review of concerns related to India's compliance with the GSP market access criterion.

Subsequent to the suspension of India's GSP benefits, the US and India resumed intensive work in the fall of 2019 aimed at producing a package of meaningful market access outcomes, and this engagement continued throughout 2020.

business

of the day quote

The peak of TV viewing was in March (2020), wherein the launch of older mythological classics like Ramayana and Mahabharata helped break previous records, and added that Ramayana now holds the record for the most-watched TV programme in the world

SUNIL LULLA | CEO, BARC

MYSUN is aiming to invest ₹600 crore to develop a 200 MW solar portfolio of the first phase of its recently launched asset vehicle MYSUN+. The new asset vehicle will provide on-site and off-site solar energy solutions to industrial and commercial clients under the RESCO model

GAGAN VERMANI | CEO & FOUNDER, MYSUN

India aspires at least 50 per cent of global ship recycling business after passing of the Recycling of Ships Act

MANSUKH MANDAVIYA | PORTS, SHIPPING AND WATERWAYS MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Labour strike ends in K'taka

New Delhi: Toyota Kirloskar Motor (TKM) Tuesday said the labour strike at its Bidadi-based manufacturing plant in Karnataka has come to an end. In November last year, the automaker had to declare a lockout at the facility following workers' union members resorting to a sit-in strike at the factory premises to protest against the suspension of a worker. The company said that the Karnataka government and the Department of Labour, played a crucial role in facilitating the reconciliation, between all parties.

Tata Motors delivers 100 units

New Delhi: Tata Motors Tuesday said it has delivered 100 units of the new Safari in Delhi/NCR in a single day. The majority of the customers have chosen the XZA+ trim, the auto major said in a statement. "We are elated to see the response coming in for the all-new Safari. The delivery of 100 Safaris on a single day is a proof of the same," Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles Business Unit Zonal Manager (North) Ritesh Khare said.

BPCL to pay shareholders

New Delhi: Privatisation-bound Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) may use ₹9,876 crore proceed from stake sale in Numaligarh Refinery to pay a special dividend to shareholders, the biggest being Government of India, BPCL dir. (finance) N Vijayagopal said Tuesday. The Board of BPCL Monday approved the sale of the company's 61.65% stake in Numaligarh Refinery Ltd to a consortium of state-owned Oil India, consultancy firm Engineers India Ltd and Government of Assam for ₹9,875.96 crore.

Sensex reclaims 50,000-mark

Mumbai: The key Indian equity indices traded in the positive territory during the mid-afternoon session Tuesday with the S&P BSE Sensex reclaiming the 50,000 points-mark. Accordingly, the two key indices had a gap up opening amid stock specific action. Positive momentum was seen in auto, IT, FMCG and pharma space; whereas financial services and banks traded in the negative.

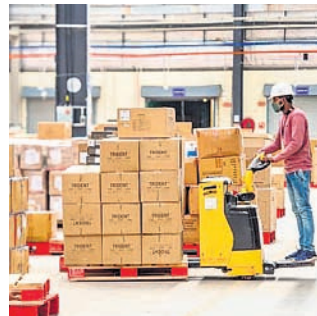


The increase in raw material costs and its acute shortage in market is leading to escalation in project costs and is adversely impacting the cost competitiveness of MSMEs

ARVIND MEHTA | CHAIRMAN, GOVERNING COUNCIL, AIPMA

FLIPKART TO EXPAND SERVICES

Flipkart has said it plans to expand its grocery services to more than 70 cities in next 6 months as the Walmart-owned company looks to cash in on the burgeoning e-grocery segment in India. Flipkart has expanded its grocery services to more than 50 cities across the country



Exports dip marginally in Feb; trade deficit widens to \$12.88bn

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 2: After recording positive growth for two months in a row, India's exports dipped marginally by 0.25% to \$27.67 billion in February and trade deficit widened to \$12.88 billion, according to preliminary data released by the government Tuesday.

Imports grew 6.98% to \$40.55 billion during the month, the data showed. The trade deficit stood at \$10.16 billion in February 2020.

Exports during April-February 2020-21 were \$255.92 billion, compared with \$291.87 billion during the same period of last year, exhibiting a negative growth of 12.32%.

Imports during April-February this fiscal also dipped 23% to \$340.88 billion.

In February, oil imports declined 16.63% to \$8.99 billion. It was down by 40.18% to \$72.08 billion during 11 months period of the current fiscal.

Major commodities of export that have recorded positive growth during February include oil meals, iron ore, rice, meat, poultry products, carpet, spices, pharmaceuticals, and chemicals.

The sectors that recorded negative export growth in February include petroleum products (-27.13%), leather (-21.62%), cashew (-18.6%), gems and jewellery (-11.18%), engineering goods (-2.56%), tea (-2.49%), and coffee (-0.73%), it added.

Key import goods that registered



STEADY GROWTH

Exports dipped marginally by 0.25% to \$27.67 billion in February

Imports grew 6.98% to \$40.55 billion during the month, the data showed, whereas the trade deficit stood at \$10.16 billion in February 2020

healthy growth include gold, dyeing/tanning/colouring materials, chemicals, electronic goods, iron and steel, and textile yarn fabric, made-up articles. Sectors that recorded negative import growth include silver, newsprint, fertiliser, coal, leather, transport equipment, petroleum, pulses, machine tools, cotton raw and waste, pearls, and precious and semi-precious stones. Gold imports in February jumped to about \$3 billion.

Growing for the second consecutive month, the country's exports rose 6.16% y-o-y to \$27.45 billion in January 2021.

Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) President SK Saraf said they continue to see signs of further revival not only in the order booking positions but also in the demand from across the globe, paying way for much better days and months for the sector.

However, he said rising exports from China have led to the shortage of containers in the region, as most of the empty containers are available only for exports from China. The shipping lines and container companies are being paid hefty premiums for bringing empty containers back to China.

'INFRA PROJECTS TO BOOST TOURISM, SUPPORT MSMEs'

AGENCIES

Mumbai, March 2: Infrastructure projects in the pipeline will help in boosting tourism as well as create opportunities for MSMEs, according to Union Minister for MSME and Roads, Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari.

"The infrastructural projects in the pipeline as part of the central government's plans have laid the foundation of 'AtmaNirbhar Bharat' and will also boost domestic tourism in the country. Innovation is key to the revival of the travel and hospitality sector.

"Industry players such as FICCI, OYO Hotels and Homes and IATO should take advantage of the government schemes to come together and support MSMEs," Gadkari was quoted as saying in a statement.



The statement, on the basis of a webinar held on Monday, was issued by Ficci Tuesday.

The minister said the government's initiatives such as collateral-free automatic loans for business, including MSMEs, and ₹50,000 crore-equity infusion through MSME Fund of Funds, which benefits companies with higher credit ratings, will generate tremendous business opportunities.

Spectrum auction ends; Jio becomes top buyer

The telecom secretary said 855.60 MHz of spectrum was bought for ₹77,814.80 cr in the 2-day auction with Jio offering ₹57,123 cr to consolidate its hold

AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 2: Billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Jio cornered more than half of the telecom spectrum auctioned by the government over the past two days, offering about ₹57,123 crore to consolidate its holding of the scarce resource that are used to carry mobile call and data signals.

Telecom giant Bharti Airtel bid ₹18,699 crore to pick up 355.45 megahertz (MHz) out of the 855.60 MHz of radiofrequency, giving it "most formidable" spectrum holding in the country.

Vodafone Idea Ltd, which is facing a huge liability of unpaid statutory dues of past, bought spectrum worth ₹1,993.40 crore, Telecom Secretary Anshu Prakash told reporters here.

In all, some 60 per cent of the spectrum offered was sold, according to Prakash, who said the bids came at the floor price - or minimum price that was acceptable to the government. In the first auction of radio airwaves in five years, the government offered 2,308.80 MHz of spectrum in seven bands, at a reserve price of nearly ₹4 lakh crore. However, airwaves in the premium 700 MHz and 2,500 MHz bands went unsold.

The telecom secretary said 855.60 MHz of spectrum was bought for



₹77,814.80 crore in the two-day auction. Spectrum refers to the radio frequencies allocated to the mobile industry and other sectors for communication over the airwaves. This includes FM or AM radio broadcasts and even other wireless forms of communication like Bluetooth and Wi-Fi.

Mobile phones also use these same radio waves to transmit voice calls and data. These frequencies come in different bands, supporting specific technologies as well as governing speed of transmission. While AM or FM radio channels are all spread around 100MHz - 200MHz, telecom spectrum starts from a higher frequency. The quantum of spectrum in each band too is measured in MHz.

Reliance Jio Infocomm Ltd said it acquired the right to use spectrum in all the 22 circles or zones across India. In all, it won 488.35 MHz of spectrum, taking up its spectrum footprint by 55 per cent to 1,717 MHz (uplink + downlink).

PhonePe, OSRTC join hands to enable contactless ticketing



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 2: PhonePe, India's leading digital payments platform Tuesday announced that it has partnered with Odisha State Road Transport Corporation (OSRTC) to provide frictionless, contactless and safe payment options for the travellers.

People who avail these services, will now be able to pay their fare through a UPI based interoperable QR code without worrying about carrying cash.

VP (Offline Business Development), PhonePe Vivek Lohcheb said "To begin with, interoperable QR codes will be deployed in over 23 depots covering key intercity routes in the state. This solution allows our esteemed partners to accept payments from PhonePe or any UPI app, ensur-

ing both commuters and partners don't have to go through the hassle of dealing with cash."

Chairman-cum-Managing Director, OSRTC Arun Bothra said, "We have partnered with PhonePe to enable cashless mode of ticketing for the travellers using OSRTC for intercity travel. This initiative will ensure the safety of our passengers given the prevailing pandemic conditions. It is a convenient and safe way to pay for tickets in a contactless manner. We strongly believe that it will encourage our citizens to use state transport for their travel needs."

All a commuter has to do is to ask for the fare amount to their destination, scan the QR code using any UPI enabled payment app, and enter the amount and UPI PIN to make the payment directly from their bank accounts.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 2: Odisha recorded highest growth rate of 20% in Gross GST collection in February with a collection of ₹3,340.56 crore, said Sushil Kumar Lohani, Commissioner of CT & GST, Odisha.

Lohani said, "Odisha registered highest growth amongst all major states consistently for the last 3 months with growth rate of 20%, 25% and 20% respectively during the months of December; 2020, January, 2021 and February, 2021."

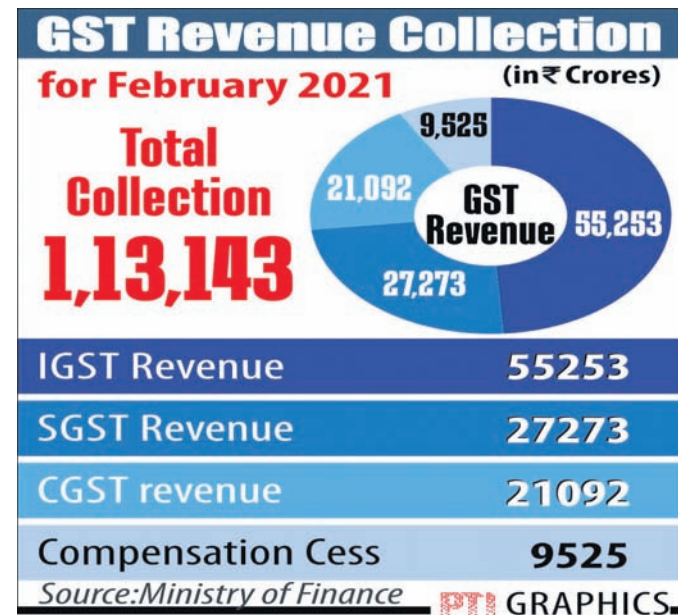
The growth at the rate of 20% during February, 2021 is as a result of sharp growth in IGST of 69.80%. Collection of IGST during February is ₹1,345.79 crore against ₹792.59 crore registered last year.



The commissioner also said that there was also growth of 0.87% in CGST and 2.72% in cess. The collection of OGST during February, 2021 is ₹781.06 crore against ₹777.71 crore collected

during January, 2021 registering a positive growth of 0.5%.

However, owing to unprecedented shutdown during the first quarter of FY 2020-21, the collection of Gross GST which was (-) 35.25% & OGST



STEEL MIN PRADHAN HOLDS MEETING WITH LN MITTAL

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 2: Union Steel and Oil Minister Dharmendra Pradhan Tuesday held an interactive discussion with ArcelorMittal executive chairman LN Mittal and its CEO Aditya Mittal in New Delhi.

They also discussed about boosting the production of steel in the mineral-rich state of Odisha, development of mines and expansion of its plant; especially the role to be played by the company in making Odisha a steel hub, was discussed during the meeting.

A target has been set to produce 300 million tonne of steel in India by 2030. Out of which, 100 million



tonne will be produced in Odisha alone. Pradhan assured to extend necessary support for ArcelorMittal's expansion. "Had good conversations with Shri LN Mittal, Executive Chairman & Shri Aditya Mittal, CEO, @ArcelorMittal, on driving innovation and making our oil, gas, steel, petrochemicals & mining sector more vibrant, efficient & globally competitive to fuel #AatmanirbharBharat's growth story," Pradhan tweeted.

India woos Tesla by offering cheaper production costs

REUTERS

New Delhi, March 2: India is ready to offer incentives to ensure Tesla Inc's cost of production would be less than in China if the carmaker commits to making its electric vehicles in the south Asian country, transport minister Nitin Gadkari told Reuters.

Gadkari's pitch comes weeks after billionaire Elon Musk's Tesla registered a company in India in a step towards entering the country, possibly as soon as mid-2021. Sources familiar with the matter have said Tesla plans to start by importing and selling its Model 3 electric sedan in India.

"Rather than assembling (the cars) in India they should make the entire product in the country by hiring local vendors. Then we can

give higher concessions," Gadkari said in an interview, without giving details of what incentives would be on offer.

"The government will make sure the production cost for Tesla will be the lowest when compared with the world, even China, when they start manufacturing their cars in India. We will assure that," he said.

India wants to boost local manufacturing of electric vehicles (EVs), batteries and other components to cut costly imports and curb pollution in its major cities. This comes amid a global race by carmakers to jump-start EV production as countries work towards cutting carbon emissions.

But India faces a big challenge to win a production commitment from Tesla, which did not immediately respond to an email requesting



comment about its plans in the country.

India's fledgling EV market ac-

counted for just 5,000 out of a total 2.4 million cars sold in the country last year as negligible charging in-

India is drawing up a PLI scheme for auto and auto component makers as well as for setting up advanced battery manufacturing units, but the details are yet to be finalised

Infrastructure and the high cost of EVs deterred buyers.

In contrast, China, where Tesla already makes cars, sold 1.25 million new energy passenger vehicles, including EVs, in 2020 out of total sales of 20 million, and accounted for more than a third of Tesla's global sales.

India also doesn't have a com-

prehensive EV policy like China, the world's biggest auto market, which mandates companies to invest in the sector.

Gadkari said that as well as being a big market, India could be an export hub, especially with about 80% of components for lithium-ion batteries being made locally now.

"I think it's a win-win situation for Tesla," Gadkari said, adding he also wanted to engage with Tesla about building an ultra high-speed hyperloop between Delhi and Mumbai.

India is drawing up a production-linked incentive scheme for auto and auto component makers as well as for setting up advanced battery manufacturing units, but the details are yet to be finalised.

4TH TEST PITCH WILL BE TURNER: RAHANE

Vice-captain slams critics of Indian pitches saying Team India never complain of damp wickets abroad

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, March 2: India's Test vice-captain Ajinkya Rahane on Tuesday said there is no need to take criticism of the spin-friendly pitches in the country 'seriously' as not a word is spoken about the 'damp' tracks elsewhere and England can expect another turner in the fourth Test.

There has been a lot of talk about the spinning tracks in the second Test at Chepauk and the pink ball game at Motera which ended inside two days. The fourth and final Test starts March 4.

"I think the wicket will be similar to the second Test match in Chennai, spinning track. Yes, pink ball made the difference and it came much quicker off the wicket compared to red ball and we had to make adjustments," Rahane said during a virtual media conference here. "Wicket will be a lot similar to last two Test matches," he added.

Rahane, for the first time in many years, shed his reticence when asked to respond to the criticism from former England players that the pitches have not been ideal. Some have even urged the ICC to act against India for preparing a turner. "See, let people speak what they want to. The wickets, when we tour abroad, no one speaks about how seaming they are. They always speak about the technique of the Indian batsmen, I don't feel we need to take seriously what people say," Rahane was sharp in his response.

"You see, when we tour abroad, the first day wicket is damp. When wicket becomes grassy and behaves up and down, then the pitch becomes dangerous but we haven't complained about it or we have



never spoken about it."

On spinning tracks, it's imperative to play the line, Rahane said. "When you play on spinning tracks, you have to play the line. If ball is spinning too much, you don't have to think too much."

While playing the line, the footwork plays a more significant role and how to use that is an individual batsman's choice.

"Everyone's game is different. One player may love to come on front-foot while others like to stay on the back-foot but either way, it is important to use your footwork, trust your defence on a track that offers turn," he explained.

Also another key aspect is communication between a player who has just come in and one who has been batting for some time.

"When a new batsman comes to the crease, the communication between the two batters is important - like how the pitch is behav-

ing, how much turn on offer; which kind of game is suited, all these points are important. Yes, spinning track was a challenge but we overcame it well."

Despite the humiliation that India inflicted on England in the third Test, Rahane was respectful of England's chances on another turner. "Pitch looks similar but I don't know how it's going to play. We have to wait and see," he said.

"We respect the England team. They are a very good team. We played good cricket in last two Tests and England played really well in the first game. We are not taking them lightly, and both teams will go out there and look to give their best to win the Test match," he said.

He also hinted that veteran pacer Umesh Yadav might get a look in. "Umesh is ready to go. Looking good and had a good session at the nets. We are really happy that he is back," Rahane said.

Ashwin, Root, Myers in contention

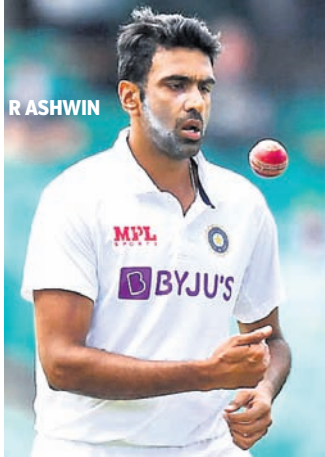
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dubai, March 2: Seasoned India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin along with England captain Joe Root and West Indies' new batting sensation Kyle Mayers were Tuesday nominated for the ICC 'Player of the Month' for their exceptional performances in February.

Ashwin played three Tests against England and scored 106 in the second innings of India's second Test victory at Chennai and took his 400th Test wicket in the third Test victory at Ahmedabad.

"Scoring a total of 176 runs across these games with taking a total of 24 wickets, Ashwin is the deserving candidate to be nominated in the men's category for February," the ICC release stated.

"England Test captain Joe Root makes it to the list of nominations again this month for his outstand-



ing performance with the bat and the ball. He scored a total of 333 runs and took 6 wickets overall in the 3 Tests that he played against India," it further stated.

Root started the series with a su-



perb 218 in the opening Test. From the West Indies, Test debutant Mayers played two matches against Bangladesh and had a match-winning knock of 210 to help his team successfully chase a target of 395 at



Chittagong. In the women's section, Tammy Beaumont and Nat Sciver of England along with Brooke Halliday of New Zealand have been nominated.

Sarojini helps E.Co Railway beat OGP Club

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 2: Sarojini Tirkey had a wonderful time on the field as her impressive performance earned E.Co Railway a 3-1 victory over OGP Club in their football match of the Odisha Women's League (OWL) at the Capital Ground here, Tuesday.

Sarojini, whose on-field brilliance earned her the 'Player of the match' award, broke the deadlock in the 23rd minute with a peach of a finish. However, E.Co Railway couldn't doubled their advantage despite creating quite a few scoring opportunities as the halftime break scoreline remained 1-0.

After the change of ends, E.Co Railway continued with same intent as they doubled their advantage in the 63rd through Pratima Minz. Tara Khatoon buried the match in the added-on time. OGP Club pulled one back through Sonia Ekka in the 90th minute.

Bartomeu provisionally freed after spending a night in jail

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Barcelona, March 2: Former Barcelona president Josep Maria Bartomeu was provisionally freed on Tuesday after appearing before a judge following a night in jail while being investigated for possible irregularities during his administration.

Court officials said Bartomeu and his former adviser at the Spanish club, Jaume Masferrer, used their right not to make any comments.

Bartomeu, Masferrer and two other club officials were arrested Monday after Catalan police raided Barcelona's headquarters in a search and seizure operation related to last year's 'Barcagate'.

In that case, the club was accused of launching a smear campaign against current and former players who were critical of then-president Bartomeu and others.



The arrests came less than a week before the club holds presidential elections, and added to the turmoil surrounding the team recently.

Barcelona, which has also struggled on the field and could lose Lionel Messi after his contract ends this season, has been led by a care-

taker board since Bartomeu and his board of directors resigned in October while facing a no-confidence vote.

The Spanish powerhouse has a debt of more than 1.1 billion euros (USD 1.3 billion), in large part because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Authorities said the arrests were made as they investigate "alleged crimes related to property and socio-economic order."

The club's struggles began to surface after the team's embarrassing 2-8 loss to Bayern Munich in the quarterfinals of the Champions League last season, which was the first without a title for the Spanish club since 2007-08.

Bartomeu was loudly criticized by Messi, especially after the former president denied the player's request to leave the club at the end of last season. Messi's contract ends this season and the Argentine great has yet to say whether he will stay or go.

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