

OPINION 6
ELECTIONS IN THE
TIME OF COVID**WORLD 8**
IRAN PREZ CALLS 60% ENRICHMENT
AN ANSWER TO 'EVILNESS'**SPORT 12**
PSG, CHELSEA
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BHUBANESWAR, THURSDAY APRIL 15, 2021; PAGES 12 ₹4

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*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

CBSE Class X board exams cancelled

Govt defers Class XII examinations amid rising Covid concerns

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Wednesday announced the cancellation of CBSE Board examinations for Class 10 and postponed Class 12 exams in the wake of the coronavirus crisis. Both board examinations were scheduled for May-June.

The revised dates will be announced after June 1. The decision was taken at a high-level meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the wake of rising cases of Covid-19 cases and concerns raised from various quarters, including a few Opposition parties.

The meeting was attended by Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank', education secretary and other officials. The meeting also discussed a uniform policy or guidelines on board exams across States as was being demanded by several State Ministers.

The CICSE, which is the other prominent national board for school examinations, said it is reviewing the situation and will come up with a decision soon in this regard.

According to the official



sources, Modi said the Government would keep in mind the best interests of the students and ensure that their health is taken care of at the same time their academic interests are not harmed.

After the announcement, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi tweeted that a decision must be taken for Class 12 too. "Glad the Government has finally cancelled the 10th standard exams, however a final decision MUST be taken for the 12th grade also."

Keeping students under undue pressure until June makes no sense. It's unfair. I urge the Government to decide now," she tweeted.

The decision by Centre on CBSE will affect over 21 lakh students across the country. This is the first time that the Central Board of Secondary Education has altogether cancelled the board examinations

conducted by it. Last year, the exams were partially cancelled in Delhi in the wake of riots in northeast Delhi and Covid-19 cases.

The CBSE will review the situation on June 1 to decide on the Class 12 exam schedule while objective criteria will be decided for Class 10 results.

In a statement issued after the meeting, the Union Education Ministry said, "Looking to the present situation of the pandemic and school closures, and also taking in account the safety and well-being of the students, it is decided as follows."

India's daily Covid count nears 2L

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's daily Covid-19 count neared the 2-lakh mark on Wednesday as the situation turned alarming in several States and reports of unavailability of hospital beds, ventilators, and oxygen cylinders poured in from all over the country.

India recorded 1,94,108 cases and 972 deaths late on Wednesday. The country case-load spiked despite a certain degree of containment achieved in Maharashtra where the daily surge has remained confined in the range of 55,000 to 60,000. During the last 24 hours,

Maharashtra recorded 58,952 fresh cases and 278 new deaths. On a day when the Maharashtra Government began to enforce stringent restrictions, including a ban on the movement of people in public places without a valid reason, prohibitory orders under Section 144 of CrPC and night curfew for 15 days, the number of infections dropped from Tuesday's tally of 60,212 to 58,952, while deaths came down from 281 to 278 in various parts of the State. With 58,952 fresh cases,

the total infections climbed from 35,19,208 to 35,78,160. Similarly, with 258 new deaths, the total Covid-19 toll rose from 58,526 to 58,804.

However, Covid-19 cases continued to hit new peaks on daily basis in States such as Uttar Pradesh (20, 510 new cases), Delhi (17,282), Karnataka (11,265), Chhattisgarh (12,603) and

Madhya Pradesh (9,720), Gujarat (7,410) among others. In terms of death, Maharashtra accounted for 278, Delhi 104, Chhattisgarh (90), UP 67, Karnataka 38, and Gujarat 73.

In Uttar Pradesh, panic set in after Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, former Chief Minister and Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav and a couple of Ministers and top

bureaucrats tested positive for novel coronavirus infection as the State recorded 20,510 cases in the last 24 hours. Officials claim that 68 people died of Covid-19 during this period.

Additional Chief Secretary (Health) Amit Mohan Prasad said 20,510 new cases of Covid were reported in the State during the past 24 hours.

Health workers conducts Covid-19 testing of passengers at Anand Vihar Bus Terminal in New Delhi on Wednesday
Ranjan Dimri / Pioneer

6 pm to 6 am night curfew in all cities in Rajasthan

Jaipur: Rajasthan on Wednesday night announced a 12-hour daily curfew — from 6 pm to 6 am — starting Friday, across all cities, as part of a series of measures to combat a worrying spike in Covid cases. The curfew will be in effect till the end of the month.

Covid-19 IN INDIA

TOTAL CASES:
1,40,65,622 (+1,94,108)

DEATHS: 1,73,087 (+972)

RECOVERED:
1,24,23,992

ACTIVE: 14,62,828

MAHARASHTRA: 35,78,160

KERALA: 11,89,176

KARNATAKA: 10,94,912

ANDHRA PRADESH: 9,37,049

DELHI: 7,67,438 (+17,282)

Govt fast-tracks nod for 7 firms to make Remdesivir

Approval to double capacity to 78 lakh vials per month

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As the demand for Remdesivir surges in view of increasing Covid-19 cases from across the country, the Modi Government has fast-tracked seven companies' applications to manufacture the critical anti-viral drug, allowing them to more than double their combined capacity to around 78 lakh vials per month.

The move aims to ensure smooth availability of the drug which is being sold in black markets in some States.

Union Minister of State for Chemicals and Fertilisers Mansukh Mandaviya on Tuesday gave fast-track approval to six manufacturers to set up seven additional sites that could scale up the production capacity of Remdesivir by 1 million vials per month.

Another 30 lakh vials/month production is lined up. This would ramp up the production capacity for manufacturing to around 78 lakh vials/month from the current 38.80 lakh vials per month.

Yogi, Akhilesh, test corona +ve

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Panic has set in after Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Samajwadi Party president and former Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav and a couple of Ministers and top bureaucrats tested positive for coronavirus.

Yogi had isolated himself on Tuesday after some officials in his contact tested positive for the infection. "After initial symptoms, I got myself tested. My report is positive. I am in self-isolation and following doctors' advice. I am doing all works virtually," he tweeted, advising those who came in his contact to get themselves tested and take precautions.

There was a panic in the air after the CM tested positive. "When will the Government announce a lockdown? Is it waiting for Lucknow to perish before it goes for strict measures," a section officer in the Labour Department told this reporter on Wednesday.

Meanwhile a team of Health Department officials air-dashed to Ahmedabad and returned with 25,000 shots of Remdesivir injection, considered a key antiviral drug in the fight against Covid-19.

Cong candidate dies; Pipili poll countermanded

Fresh by-election date soon: CEO

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Congress candidate for the by-election to the Pipili Assembly constituency in Puri district Ajit Mangaraj died of Covid-19 on Wednesday, as a result of which the by-poll scheduled on April 17 was countermanded.

State Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Sushil Lohani said a new date for the by-election necessitated by the death of incumbent BJD MLA Pradeep Maharathy would be scheduled by the Election Commission of India (ECI).

Lohani said a report has been sought from the Puri district Returning Officer and the report would be then sent to the ECI.

A fresh notification for the by-poll would be issued soon. Meanwhile, the high-pitch campaigning for the by-poll came to an abrupt end with the death of Managaraj, who had tested positive for Covid last week.

The BJD had fielded Late Maharathy's son Rudra Pratap Maharathy while the BJP had repeated its candidate for the 2019 general elections in Pipili, Ashrit Patttnayak. Mangaraj had also unsuccessfully con-



tested on a Congress ticket in 2019. Mangaraj, who was 52, died at the Apollo Hospital in Bhubaneswar on Wednesday afternoon. He was under treatment of a multidisciplinary team of doctors.

Leaders cutting across the party lines expressed their grief over Mangaraj's death. "I am saddened to hear about death of Congress candidate Ajit Magaraj," said Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik.

Governor Prof Ganeshi Lal also condoled the death. Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, who visited the hospital where the Congress leader died, said, "Ajit Mangaraj was a close aide to me and a man of positive thinking."

Union Minister Pratap Chandra Sarangi also expressed his grief over Mangaraj's demise. Pradesh Congress Committee president Niranjan Patnaik said, "Ajit Mangaraj was a strong organiser and was popular among masses in Pipili."

UK strain, double mutant cases found in J'khand

SAURAV ROY ■ RANCHI

The UK mutant strain and double mutant strain of coronavirus have been found among Covid patients in Ranchi and East Singhbhum districts, the Regional Genome Sequencing Laboratory (RGSL) at Bhubaneswar-based Institute of Life Sciences (ILS) confirmed on Wednesday.

The Health Department had sent as many as 52 Covid positive samples to Bhubaneswar last week for genome sequencing, and the test reports confirmed that at least nine of these samples were of UK mutant strain while four were double mutant, a press communique from the Government stated, asking residents to be cautious.

Over 13.51 lakh take holy dip in third Shahi Snan

Covid norms flouted despite Govt efforts; Random tests indicate 4% positivity

PNS ■ HARIDWAR

The third Shahi Snan of the Kumbh Mela held on the occasion of Mesh Sankranti here on Wednesday saw more than 13.51 lakh people taking the holy dip in the Ganga till late evening. However, despite efforts by the authorities, it was difficult to ensure social distancing and wearing of masks by all the devotees throughout the occasion.

Random tests among the sadhus at the akhadas indicate a coronavirus positivity rate of nearly 4 per cent. So far, 19 of the 500 samples from the mela site have come back positive.

The Shahi Snan began early in the morning with the Sadhus of the Panchayati Akhada Sri Niranjani, Niranjani Akhada and Anand Akhada reaching Har Ki Paudi.

The Sadhus first worshipped their tutelary deities and then took the holy dip in the Ganga. These Akhadas were followed by Sadhus of the

A devotee unfurls the national flag as others gather to offer prayers during the third 'Shahi Snan' of the Kumbh at Har Ki Paudi Ghat in Haridwar on Wednesday
PTI

Sri Panchdashnam Juna Bhairav Akhada, Sri Agni Akhada and the Ahwahan Akhada. Members of the

Kinnar Akhada accompanied the Sadhus of these Akhadas. Third in the sequence were Sadhus of the Sri Panchayat

BBSR reports a high of 307 positive

Max 24 cases from K'giri

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The daily Covid-19 cases in State capital city Bhubaneswar crossed the 300-mark with 307 persons testing positive for the virus on Wednesday. With this, the city's total positives' tally rose to 34,200. Out of the new cases, 238 were local contacts and 69 were from quarantine, according to the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC).

Of the local contacts, 24 were from Khandagiri, 19 from Nayapalli, 17 from Patia, eight each from Chandrasekharpur and Old Town, seven each from Dumduma, Badagada and Jagamara and five each from Acharya Vihar, Hanspal and Baramunda.

Russia swears by India friendship to allay Pak-ties fear

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Days after promising military equipment to Pakistan, Russia on Wednesday tried to pacify India by assuring that Moscow's ties with New Delhi and Islamabad are independent. Moreover, India is a "trusted partner" of Russia, its envoy said here.

His statement came after Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's recent visit to New Delhi and then to Islamabad. In Pakistan, Lavrov said Russia was ready to supply special military equipment to Pakistan to boost its counter-terror capabilities.

Allaying apprehension, Deputy Chief of Russian Embassy Roman Babushkin said India is a "trusted partner", and there were no divergences or misunderstandings between the two countries and that it has "limited cooperation" with Pakistan based on "independent" relations. He also welcomed the recent commitment by India and Pakistan to follow the 2003 ceasefire on the Line of Control (LoC) and said these are "very important steps" for regional stability.

However, at a joint media briefing with Babushkin, Russian Ambassador Nikolay Kudashev criticised the Indo-Pacific strategy by western countries describing it as "dangerous" and an effort to revive the cold war mentality. Babushkin said India must be part of the process of shaping regional consensus on Afghanistan and that New

Delhi and Moscow have similar approaches for the Afghan peace process.

Asked about reports of bad optics during Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's recent visit to India, as he travelled to Islamabad from Delhi, Babushkin said, "Russia has independent ties with Pakistan and that it does not target any relations against anyone."

"We believe that there is absolutely no reason to see that there are divergences or any misunderstandings between us. It is not the case in Russia-India ties," he said.

Nikolay Kudashev said India is a trusted partner of Russia and ties between the two countries were "equal, solid, comprehensive, coherent and forward-looking."

He also mentioned that the visit by Lavrov to India on April 6 contributed a lot to the ties. "It was a very important and remarkable event, which contributed a lot to the special and privileged strategic partnership between our two friendly nations. Our ties remain equal, solid, comprehensive, coherent and forward-looking despite any global turbulence," he added.

The Ambassador said the visit was aimed at preparations for the India-Russia summit which is expected to take place in the second half of the year.

Babushkin said Russia has independent relations with India, Pakistan and other countries and the relations are based on their own merits.



Beat corona with 30-minute brisk walk daily!

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Regular exercise or a 30-minute brisk walk in your neighbourhood park five days a week while following the social distancing norms can go a long way in beating Covid-19. Physical inactivity may land you in ICU or also prove fatal for you in case the pathogen catches you, according to a study that analysed nearly 50,000 Covid positive adults.

Even patients who were inconsistently active had lower chances for a severe Covid-19 infection, suggesting any amount of physical activity has benefit, said the findings published in the British Journal of Sports Medicine. "This is a wake-up call for the importance of healthy lifestyles and



especially physical activity" said Robert E Sallis, a physician at the Kaiser Permanente Fontana Medical Centre in the US. Researchers said the potential for regular physical activity to lower the severity of Covid-19 illness should be promoted by public health agencies and that pandemic control recommendations should include regular physical activity across all population groups. "People who regularly exercise had the best chance of beating Covid-19, while people

who were inactive did much worse," Sallis added. For the study, the team identified 48,440 adults with a Covid-19 diagnosis from January 1, 2020, to October 21, 2020.

They found 6.4 per cent were consistently active and 14.4 per cent were consistently inactive, with the remainder falling in the inconsistently active category. Among all Covid-19 patients, 8.6 per cent were hospitalised, 2.4 per cent were admitted to the ICU, and 1.6 per cent died.

"What surprised me the most from this study was the strength of the association between inactivity and poor outcomes from Covid-19," said Deborah Rohm Young from the Kaiser Permanente Southern California.

ALSO REPORTS THIS YEAR'S HIGHEST DAILY SPIKE OF 2,267 +VE

MAX 458 CASES IN SUNDARGARH; 610 MORE RECOVER

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Three more persons succumbed to Covid-19 in the State on Wednesday, with which total death toll rose to 1,933. The deceased were a 43-year-old man of Balangir district, a 72-year-old man of Ganjam and a 32-year-old man of Jajpur. Health and Family Welfare Department said. Besides, the State reported a high of 2,267 new positive cases on day from 29 districts and State pool, with which total positives' tally surged to 3,55,353. Out of new cases,

1,314 were detected from quarantine and 953 were local contact cases. This is the highest single-day spurt in State this year.

Sundargarh district reported day's highest 458 cases followed by Khordha with 348, Bargarh and Sambalpur 120 each, Cuttack 117, Nabarangpur and Nuapada 104 each, Balangir 93, Ganjam and Puri 70 each, Baleswar 67, Mayurbhanj 60, Jharsuguda and Keonjhar 55 each, Jajpur 52 and Angul 48.

Besides, 81 cases were reported from State pool. Currently, active cases in State stood at 12,244 and cumulative samples tested were 94,61,720. However, 610 patients recovered on day, taking total recoveries to 34,1,733 in State.

Aditya Ashwini Covid Hospital reopens

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

In view of the rising Covid-19 cases in the capital city, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) on Wednesday decided to reopen the Aditya Ashwini Covid-19 hospital to treat the increasing number of patients. The 150-bed hospital, equipped with Intensive Care Units (ICU) facilities, started functioning from the day. Besides, the number of beds at the SUM Covid Hospital was increased from 250 to

500. Three quarantine centres have also been set up at Ghatikia, Gajapati Nagar and KIIT, respectively. As many as 40 beds in OYO hotels have been identified to be used as paid quarantine and isolation facilities. The move came in the backdrop of the second wave of Covid-19 which is raging in the State and the capital city. Under such circumstances, it is estimated that there would be a need for large numbers of quarantine and isolation facilities.

Why CM silent over Haider, asks BJP

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

In another major instance of the State's crumbling law and order situation, even after five days of the escape of gangster Haider, police has failed to nab him, said former State DGP and BJP leader Prakash Mishra here on Wednesday. Top officials are involved in the gangster's escape, but only six low-level police personnel have been suspended. Why is the Chief Minister, who holds the Home portfolio, still silent over the matter, Mishra asked and posed 10 questions including why a dan-

gerous criminal like Haider was frequently escorted to the SCB Hospital in Cuttack from Sambalpur. Who suggested his treatment at Cuttack? While a general patient is unable to get a bed, who approved allotment of a cabin to such a criminal? How was the local police unaware of Haider's escape even three hours after the incident? Such an escape plan could not have been possible without the collusion of police, prison and health officials. Who was the influential power behind conspiracy, questioned Mishra.

R'gada reports 1st Covid death in 2nd wave

Migrant returnees still a big worry

BADAL TAH ■ RAYAGADA

Forest Range Officer of K Singhpur block Prafulla Kumar Nayak (56) succumbed to Covid-19 infection while under treatment at the MKCG Hospital, Brahmapur. This is the first ever death in the second wave of Covid 19. Nayak was celebrating Holi at the DFO's resi-



dence. A senior officer, who belongs to Nabarangapur, acted as super spreader in the celebration. Unofficial sources said that 23 forest officials got affected with Corona virus and were quarantined. Nayak got admit-

SUM Hospital beds hiked to 500

3 Rama Devi students +ve

2 OUAT students, 2 staff also test +ve
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Coronavirus cases continued to emerge from educational institutes in capital city. On Wednesday, more students of Odisha University of Agriculture and Technology (OUAT) and Rama Devi Women's University tested Covid-19 positive. On Tuesday, a girl student of the Rama Devi Women's University tested pos-

itive for deadly virus. A day after, 3 more students were infected with virus. Earlier, a Lecturer of university tested positive for virus. Similarly, four more including two students of OUAT contracted infection. Also, an employee and a professor of were found positive. Following detection of cases, universities were sanitised as part of precautionary measures to prevent further spread of infections.

Enforcement of Covid rule ₹29L penalty collected in 24hrs

PNS ■ CUTTACK

Police have intensified their crackdown against the violation of Covid-19 guidelines like using mask and social distancing in public spaces across the State. On the seventh day of the special Covid enforcement drive on Tuesday, police acted against 9,031 violators of mask usage and social distancing rules and collected a total fine of Rs 29,04,050. Cumulatively in seven days, action was taken against 75,077 violators of Covid protocols in the State

and fines amounting to Rs 2,17,49,200 have been collected. Police have urged everybody to adhere to the safety norms.



CM launches 47 new ALS ambulances

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Wednesday dedicated 47 new Advanced Life Support (ALS) ambulances to the people of the State. Patnaik hoped that these ambulances would fulfil the increasing demand for transportation of patients with advanced life support system. He expressed confidence that with the cooperation of people, the second Covid wave can be battled successfully like the first one in 2020. Out of the 47 ALS ambulances, 28 would be managed under 108 emergency ambulance service and

19 would be engaged at the medical colleges hospitals to facilitate emergency patient transportation. Notably, in wake of the second Covid-19 wave, the CM had directed for provision of more ALS Ambulances to further boost the reach and scale of the emergency patient transportation. The current emergency medical ambulance fleet comprises 596 vehicles, out of which 540 have Basic Life Support system and 56 have ALS system. With the addition of the new ambulances, the total number of ALS ambulances increased to 103.

PM, CM extend Odia NY wish

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and several other leaders greeted the people of Odisha on the occasion of Odia New Year on Wednesday. "My heartfelt wishes to the people of Odisha on

Odia New Year and Maha Bishuba Pana Sankranti. I pray that all your aspirations are fulfilled in the coming year. May everyone be blessed with health and happiness," tweeted Modi. Similarly, Patnaik sought the blessings of Lord Jagannath for happiness and prosperity of everyone.



Ancient well rediscovered in Dalijoda Forest Range

INTACH team reports finding to ASI

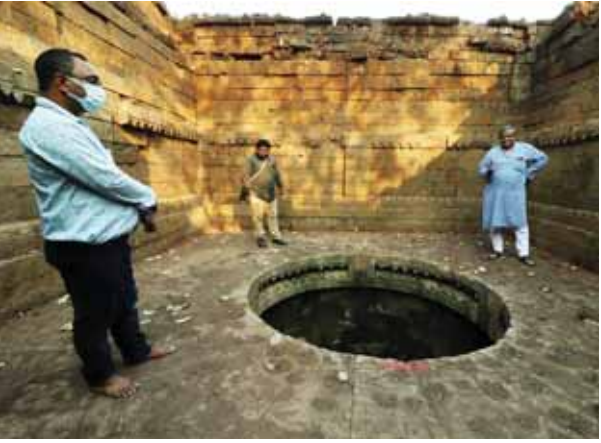
PNS ■ CHoudwar

An ancient well which may date back to the 12th or 13th Century AD has resurfaced in Ambilijhari village in the Dalijoda Forest Range of Cuttack district. The well had been in local folklore since ages but had been totally engulfed in thick vegetation and its exact location was lost. Debjit Singh Deo of the erstwhile Panchakote Royalty, who resides in nearby Kila Dalijoda Palace, had the wild vegetation and thick shrubs cleared up with the help of local tribals and the well was

exposed for the first time since decades. He had informed the find to the Indian National Trust for Art & Cultural Heritage (INTACH). A four-member INTACH team comprising Anil Dhir, Dr Biswajit Mohanty, Deepak Nayak and Suman Prakash Swain visited the spot and carried out a survey of this ancient monument. Assisted by tribals of Ambilijhari village, the team made a detailed study of the well and its environs. The well is built in a square plan with steps leading to a sunken shaft. The entire structure has immaculate geometry with neatly chiseled sandstone blocks on the lower level with laterite stone blocks on the

upper levels. The remnants of at least two Pidha temples are seen strewn all around the well complex. Some of the laterite stone blocks used in the stairway are from the earlier period temple. The Amalka of the Mastaka portion can be seen in three pieces. Locals know the place as the 'Bhai Bohu Dedhasura Kuo' and legends about the curative properties of the well water abound. Dalijoda was a part of Pancha Kataka of ancient times and was the gateway between Amravati Katak and Choudwar Katak. According to Anil Dhir, the well has got unique decorative features, seldom seen in ancient Kalingan temples. It is neither a step well nor a temple tank. The sunken shaft is 35 feet in depth and has a water level till 25 feet. The old stone blocks of earlier temples including potsherds and complete pottery indicate the presence of an ancient settlement and religious place. The only damage that has been done is due to the thick vegetation that grew all around, which has since been cleared by Debjit Singh Deo. Dr Biswajit Mohanty has opined that the ASI or the State Archaeology Department should immediately make a proper survey and take mea-

sures for protection of the place. It is a rich archaeological site; and proper excavations will reveal many more aspects. The well can be easily restored with little efforts. Deepak Kumar Nayak, who is involved in INTACH's project of "Documentation of the Monuments of the Mahanadi Valley", says this find too will be included in the listing as it has not been reported or documented. Reiterating the need of proper listing and documentation of the monuments of the State, the INTACH team has emphasised that proper surveys should be made to list and record all the ancient structures and proper guidelines issued for their protection and conservation. For this, involvement of local stakeholders is vital. There are rampant thefts of idols and temple artifacts with hardly any recoveries being made. A register of all the ancient archaeological artifacts should be made by a State-constituted registry, which should be mandatory. Many ancient idols are being sent out along with new sculpted pieces by exporters. The Government should ensure that every container shipment is checked and cleared by experts.



Demolition of DRDA building Legal action against TITE College demanded

PNS ■ KHorDHA

The New Thinking Forum has submitted a memorandum to the Khordha district Collector to take legal action against the TITE College authorities for illegally demolishing the old DRDA building near Barunei and occupying 1.832 acre of land. The Orissa High Court had in 2012 direct that there shall be a stay of the order and status quo in the DRDA building and land, but the TITE College authorities in alleged contempt the court order demolished the building. New Thinking Forum president



Narendra Prusty, former Khordha MLA Dr Dillip

Srichandan, Khordha District Bar Association president Ajit

Pattnaik, senior advocate Bichitra Kumar Badjena, former Khordha District Bar Association president Sisir Kumar Parida, Bijaya Chhotray, Bijaya Samantasinghar, Bikram Champati, Hara Mohapatra, Swagatika Pattnaik, Pramod Pattnaik, Padma Charan Ray, Harihara Palei, Baikuntha Nath Rajguru, Itishree Sahoo, Subhra Ranjan Samantaray, Krushna Chandra Dash, Subash Samantaray, Gopal Krushna Das, Abani Jena, Dillip Dora, Madhu Sudan Das, among others, submitted the memorandum to the Collector demanding legal action against the TITE College authorities.

Pana Sankranti marks advent of Odia NY

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Pana Sankranti or Maha Bishuba Sankranti, which was celebrated on Wednesday this year, marks the Odia New Year with the introduction of new Panjika, which is an almanac of Hindu religious festivals, timings and predictions for the year. The Panjika is prepared as per the solar calendar and incorporates the auspicious dates, times, sunrise and sunset times, stars and their movements, etc., from Mesha Sankranti till Mina Sankranti. People mark the advent of the New Year by drinking pana, a sweet-sour drink made with bael (wood apple), fruits and sugar. Devotees also perform

special puja on the occasion, which is also celebrated as the birth anniversary of Lord Hanuman. In Puri, traditional wrestlers come out of the Jaga Ghara, Akhadas (training

homes) and gymnasiums to showcase their wrestling skills after a worship of Lord Hanuman. Devotees through temples on the occasion and take baths in rivers or major pilgrimage centres.



Three tiger cubs born in N'kanan

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Nandankanan Zoological Park near here welcomed three new guests as tigress 'Megha' gave birth to three cubs late on Tuesday night. With the birth of the cubs, which are born to tiger 'Nandan' and tigress 'Megha', the number of big cats in the zoo rose to 30. The newborns were being observed by the zoo authorities through CCTV camera. The conditions of the tigress and the cubs were stable, the zoo officials said. Earlier on March 28, tigress 'Bijaya' had delivered three cubs in Nandankanan.

HITTING THE BULL'S EYE Covid-appropriate behaviour alone can save lives



BISWARJA PATNAIK

Ever since lockdowns and shutdowns were lifted across the country, people started going berserk. The infection had dwindled down to virtually nil at the beginning of the current year. Extreme steps taken at the cost of livelihood of the poorest people did yield impressive results. But lately, people began to imagine that coronavirus has fled with bag and baggage with

As 'herd immunity' through vaccination will take long

vaccine candidates showing up around the place. Congested cities like Mumbai and Delhi with horrific population density have welcomed back the virulent pathogen yet again at a time when it has mutated severely and turned difficult to study and figure out effective antidotes. As on date, we are back to the peak pandemic times of the fateful year 2020. Dr VK Paul, the health official of the NITI Aayog, has already declared that the Covid-19 situation in India has worsened like never before. It is now spreading at a faster pace than 2020 and the next few weeks are very critical. Prevention can never happen unless people themselves participate seriously in the battle against the unseen enemy. Tools to fight Covid-19 remain the same as at the beginning. Covid-appropriate behaviour, containment mea-

sures, efficient mass-testing, well-equipped medical infrastructure, and, above all an intensified vaccination programme. The sacrosanct, non-negotiable Covid-appropriate behaviour includes wearing masks and staying away from crowds. Though vaccines have come up and Indian manufacturers produce the most quantity, the huge population will take time to complete the vaccination process, given the fact that Indian vaccine makers are under contract to supply to several other countries in Asia, Africa and elsewhere. So, Covid vaccination delays increase the risk for the global economy which is experiencing an even bigger slowdown than during the first wave as infection now keeps surging alarmingly everywhere. There is now big panic among government officials including top healthcare professionals

and scientists primarily because the people have gone haywire on the behaviour front. The Centre has dutifully sent the danger signals in no uncertain terms realising, though pretty much late, that reduced testing, tracking and tracing have all lead to disastrous effects, the same way as as non-adherence to Covid-appropriate behaviour, particularly large congregations flouting social distancing norms. Durg in Chhattisgarh is among the top 10 districts with high active Covid cases while seven are in Maharashtra and one in Karnataka. So, all adjoining States are in a panic state. Delhi is one of the worst affected. It is counted as only a district for technical reasons. Pune, Mumbai, Thane, Nagpur, Nashik, Urban Bengaluru, Aurangabad, Ahmednagar, Delhi and Durg are now global hotbeds of corona infection. Maharashtra,

Punjab and Chhattisgarh are the worst hit states only for unruly behaviour of the people encouraged by lax enforcement by authorities who became complacent after December 2020. Deaths in these states too have risen in number to scare any policy or decision maker. Maharashtra is toughest to manage. Its ruling outfit is contemplating to impose lockdown and shutdown methods in utter confusion and helplessness. It is too late already. Authorities may have to slug like mad round the clock, without food and sleep if prevention and control are really intended. But Punjab and Chhattisgarh are a cause of extreme concern because the proportion of deaths is higher than Maharashtra as of this moment. The governments there have lost wits. The Centre has deployed urgently 50 high-level multi-disciplinary public health teams in the reflagged

districts showing big surge in cases and mortality, in Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh and Punjab. Somehow, Maharashtra, Gujarat and West Bengal have been very fast in administering maximum number of vaccine doses. Still, experts say the immunisation drive has to be ramped up even more vigorously to cover a big country like India with its mindboggling population. Odisha has been looked up as a model State for top-grade Covid management with low infection and death rates. But here too, people have turned insensitive after the arrival of vaccines and the temporary diminishing number of incidence and prevalence of infection, death and hospitalisation. Shockingly, the locations hitherto known for lowest cases of all that frightens have suddenly turned Covid hotbeds. Nuapada, and most of the western region districts are

now struggling to contain the virus. In the last two days, the State's count has hit an all-time high; April 14 recoding 2,267 with Sundargarh claiming 458, Nuapada 104, Sambalpur and Bargarh 120 each. Khordha, the proverbial education hub and corona hotbed for long, has 348 single-day infection to climb its infamy graph. The face of Odisha, Puri, which was neither so bad nor so good, has hit a 70 single-day infection. Yet, people's behaviour hasn't changed for good. It has worsened on all counts. The only way to tame unruly citizens is by slapping pocket-punching penal fines. Some people imagine that with the vaccine around, the virus is packing up for an ungraceful departure. That is the stupid message some quarter-baked brains are spreading all over the world. Vaccines are just beginning to pour in; but the quantity at hand shall never be adequate to vaccinate the nation before

one hand half years. Yes, vaccine does ultimately create the much-desired 'herd immunity' status, but as vaccines are less and more and more people are turning vaccine-hesitant, the task of achieving 'herd immunity' is getting tougher and the deadline is getting farther and farther. Fortunately, however, in terms of deaths per million, we remain one among the lowest in the world. India has 120 deaths per million while globally it is 365. Lastly, lockdowns, unless extremely critical situation arises, will be counterproductive. Sporadic lockdowns can be clamped. Livelihood issues can lead to violent rebellion among the poor. People's behaviour has to change and improve in keeping with the laid down norms for Covid prevention. 'Scary fines slapped on unruly' will be best preventive for now. That will certainly keep mankind safe; nothing else will do so easily.

Covid resurgence

Lockdown imposed in S'garh panchayat

College closed in Nuapada

PNS ■ SUNDARGARH/ NUA-PADA



As Sundargarh district has turned into a coronavirus hotspot in the State, a lockdown would be imposed in Badagaon panchayat of the district.

The decision was taken following two persons of the area succumbing to the virus in two days. As per the Badagaon Sarpanch, lockdown would be imposed in the panchayat from April 15 to 17.

All shops, except those selling essential commodities, would remain closed during the period. Besides,

the weekly market in the area scheduled on April 15 and 18 would be closed.

Notably, besides the two deaths, the panchayat has reported more than 50 positive cases within a week.

Meanwhile, in the worst-hit Nuapada district, the National College was shut following three positive cases were detected in the educational institution.

As per a notice issued by the National College Principal, a teaching staff and another non-teaching staff

member of the college have tested positive for the virus following which it was decided to close the college for

three days with effect from April 15 to 17. The college was shut as part of precautionary measures to prevent further

spread of deadly virus on the campus. Nuapada registered 104 Covid-19 positive cases on Wednesday.

VIMSAR to get 22nd Covid Hosp in 10 days

PNS ■ SAMBALPUR

In view of steep spike in Covid-19 cases in western Odisha districts, the State Government has decided to set up a second dedicated Covid hospital at the Veer Surendra Sai Institute of Medical Sciences And Research (VIMSAR) at Burla within 10 days.

Chief Secretary Suresh Chandra Mahapatra informed this after reviewing the Covid

situation in Sambalpur district on Wednesday.

The new VIMSAR Covid Hospital would have 300 beds, of which 250 would have oxygen facility and 50 would be ICU beds, he told reporters. At present, the VIMSAR has one Covid Hospital with 20 ICU beds.

In view of current situation, the Government has decided to add another 30 beds to it. More beds may be

added to the existing 175-bed Covid Hospital. “We are trying to increase the number of beds to 525 at the Covid Hospital at VIMSAR,” Mahapatra said.

He said that amid rise in Covid cases in neighbouring State of Chhattisgarh, the Odisha Government is on alert and fully prepared to face any possible situation here. Medicines, oxygen cylinders, PPE kits are available to treat the patients at the hospitals.

Dr Mahapatra’s journal gets int’l acclaim



PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

With an objective to highlight severity of side effects of drug use, Dr Chinmaya Mahapatra, currently working as Pharmacovigilance Associate of the MKCG Medical College and Hospital under the Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission, Ghaziabad, had launched a journal, “Journal of Pharmacovigilance and Drug Research (JPADR)” last year which has now received international acclaim.

The international peer reviewed quarterly journal provides a platform for Pharmacovigilance professionals, doctors and healthcare professionals to share their research experience with all the researchers, scientists, and physicians across the globe regarding adverse events associated with a particular drug or drug products.

Notably, the JPADR Journal was launched by Dr Mahapatra in association with Global Pharmacovigilance Society in the year 2020. During first nine months, the journal got wide international recognition and received unprecedented response from the research community across globe.

Dr Mahapatra is the Editor-in-chief of the journal and leading a team of 30 editorial board members from countries like Brazil, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, Armenia, Mexico, Dubai, South Africa, Russia, Argentina, France, Uruguay, Colombia, India, Canada and USA.

The journal is notably supported by advisory board members from India, Brazil, Germany, Saudi Arabia, Mexico, Argentina, United Arab Emirates and China.

14 NH projects worth ₹1144 cr sanctioned for Odisha

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has sanctioned as many as 14 NH projects of 314.17 km worth Rs 1144.29 crore and road safety work worth Rs 1.42 crore for Odisha, informed Minister Nitin Gadkari.

Widening, construction of road of NH-26 such as 4-lane and widening & strengthening of double lane with paved shoulder (Barpali to Balangir) has been sanctioned with a budget of Rs 414.24 crore.

Widening to 2-lane with paved shoulder (with 12m carriageway with 15m formation width) of Mundamarai to Ratanpur section of NH-59 has been sanctioned with an estimated Rs 125.94 crore. Construction work from Ch 175/880 to 181/000 km

Bhawanipatna town portion of NH- 26 has been sanctioned with a budget Rs 3.27 crore. Construction work from Ch 0/000 to 35/000 km Mohana to Malwa Ghat section of NH-326A has been sanctioned with Rs 23.21 crore.

Strengthening to NH 153(B) Angabira to Nakteideul has been sanctioned with a budget Rs 14.73 crore. Construction work from Ch Km 314/130 to 321/000 Km of NH 53 has been sanctioned with Rs 6.5 crore.

Strengthening from km 174/570 to km 186/094, 210/570 to 234/751 & 235/748 to 243/648 of NH-20 has been sanctioned with Rs 18.06 crore.

Strengthening from km 277/461 to 280/249, 281/400 to 286/725, 287/883 to 289/454, 304/720 to 341/741 & km 346/00 to 360/391 of NH- 55 has been sanctioned with Rs

22.52 crore. Construction work from Km 75/100 to 84/00Km (except from Km 77/650 to 79/250 Km) of NH 149 has been sanctioned with Rs 5.72 crore.

Construction of 5 Nos. HL Bridge at km 379/000, 439/000, 444/237, 457/075 & 468/150 has been sanctioned with Rs 154.05 crore.

Construction work of Puri ROB and its approaches of Km 3.2 of NH 316 has been sanctioned with Rs 137.61 crore. Construction of truck lay bye and highway nest at km 79/700 to 80/00 has been sanctioned with Rs 11.8 crore.

Construction of HL Bridge over Kantiyalli Nallah at km 47.20 of NH-153 B has been sanctioned with Rs 9.7 crore. Construction of Berhampur bypass on NH 59 has been sanctioned with a budget of Rs 196.94 crore.

JSpur admin gives pension to transgenders



PNS ■ JAGATSINGHPUR

The Jagatsinghpur district administration has provided a monthly pension Rs 500 to nine members of the transgender community and included them under the Madhu Babu Pension Yojana.

In a brief celebration held in the Collector's office on Monday, Additional District Magistrate Satchidananda Sahoo distributed the pension and certificates to the selected transgenders and said as many as 53 members from the transgender community have been identified in the district to get a monthly pension

ranging from Rs 500 to Rs 700 depending on their age shortly. District Social Security Officer Sambhu Nath Rout informed that the State Government has added the transgender community as beneficiaries of all social welfare schemes since 2016. Jagatsinghpur has become the third district successfully launching the pro-transgender measures.

Sub-Divisional Social Security Officer Pabitra Mohan Dash, DIPRO Kaminiranjan Patnaik, ex-Municipality Chairman Madhu Sudan Sahoo and members from the transgender community were present.

NCC event in B'pur Jallianwalabag massacre remembered



PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

The NCC units in Brahmapur remembered the Jallianwalabag massacre by staging street play, webinar, lecture and song here on Tuesday.

A street play was organised by 2 (O) Bn NCC at Mahatma Gandhi Chowk near the Gandhi statue in front of a large gathering of audience. A webinar was also conducted under the aegis of 2 (O) Bn NCC

between the NCC cadets of TSD College, Bijaya Dhanurjapapur and Jamia Millia Islamia Center University, Delhi in virtual mode. The DDG witnessed the event.

Talks and panel discussion on historic importance of Jallianwalabag incident were conducted to mark the event. Hundreds of local youths and common people witnessed the event and appreciated the efforts of the NCC.

CUO holds webinar on online courses

PNS ■ KORAPUT

A webinar on ‘Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) in Higher Education’ was organised at the Central University of Odisha on Tuesday. Dean and Head, School of Education Central University of South Bihar Prof Kausal Kishore delivered a lecture as a resource person.

CUO Vice-Chancellor Prof I Ramabrahmam inaugurated the webinar. He conveyed his best wishes for a successful programme and hoped MOOCs is the right strategy to reach and serve the educational needs of



the students. Prof Kishore highlighted the key features, benefits and use of the MOOCs in a wider prospective particularly to provide education to large mass of students cutting across the geographical boundary. Dean, School of Biodiversity and

Conservation of Natural Resources Prof Sharat Kumar Palita delivered the welcome address.

He described MOOCs as the present need for the alternative education. He advised students to take benefit of the MOOCs

available in SWAYAM platform. Visiting Professor of Sociology Prof P Durgaprasad moderated the webinar and highlighted different platforms of MOOCs like Coursera and Swayam and many more. Controller of Examinations and organiser of the programme Dr Ram Shankar introduced the guests of the webinar.

Assistant Professor of Biodiversity and Conservation of Natural Resources and the Coordinator of MOOCs, CUO Dr Kakoli Banerjee elaborated the steps taken by different departments in producing online courses for MOOCs.

Sexual assault on minor: NHRC summons Baleswar SP

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Expressing serious displeasure over the extremely lethargic attitude of the State administration to deal with sexual assault case of a minor girl in June 2016, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has directed the

Superintendent of Police, Baleswar, for personal appearance before the Commission on May 7. The non-submission of the report would attract an offence U/s 175 / 176 of IPC and the Commission would be constrained to initiate criminal proceedings U/s 175 / 176 IPC, as well as under Rule 10

and 12 of Order XVI of Civil Procedure Code for willful omission to produce documents and to give information, the NHRC in its direction recently stated. Acting on a petition filed by activist-lawyer Radhakanta Tripathy, the apex human rights panel also asked the SP to pursue the application

before the District Legal Service Authority, Baleswar for compensation under victim compensation scheme as it is surprising that application has been moved three years back but till date compensation has not been disbursed. Tripathy alleged that on 28.06.2016, while an 11-year-old girl was

INBRIEF

AMBEDKAR JAYANTI HELD BY PPT



Paradip: The Paradip Port Trust (PPT) on Wednesday celebrated the birth anniversary of Bharat Ratna Dr BR Ambedkar organising meetings and paying floral tributes at his statue in the port township. PPT Deputy Chairman AK Bose, HODs of various departments, senior officers, employees and representatives of PPPT, SC and ST Employees’ Welfare Association offered floral tributes at the Ambedkar statue

HOTELIER DAS DONATES RS 1L TO BISWANATH BIDYAPITH



Athargarh: Social activist and hotelier Ranjan Kumar Das on Tuesday donated Rs 1 lakh for development of the Biswanath Bidyapith under the ‘Mo School Abhiyan’. Das donated the amount to the Headmaster of Government-run High School. Athargarh Press Club president Dinesh Das, Athargarh civil society secretary Sailendra Pattnaik and several other organisations and individuals lauded the gesture of Das, who was a 1984-batch student of the school.

FIRE SERVICE WEEK COMMENCES AT PPT



Paradip: The National Fire Service Week with the theme ‘Maintenance of fire safety equipment is key to mitigate fire hazards’ kicked off at the PPT’s Main Fire Station premises on Wednesday. The programme commenced by paying homage to the firemen, who sacrificed their lives in the Victoria Dock Yard explosion occurred years back in 1944, by PPT Deputy Chairman AK Bose. The PPT will undertake weeklong programmes to create awareness about fire hazards in the locality.

VAIDIKA SANGHAM CELEBRATES TELUGU NEW YEAR



Brahmapur: The Telugu community here celebrated their New Year on Tuesday with much fanfare under the auspices of the Vaidika Sangham with strict Covid protocols. The main function was held at the Sri Satyanarayan Swamy temple Mandap. While T Satyanarayana Sastry performed the puja rituals, Veda pandits B Balakrishna Sharma, V Varudev Sastry, J Kameswaro Sharma and B Ravi Sharma chanted the Vedic Swasti during the panchanga shravanam. Sangham president Bh Narayana Murty wished the members a Happy Telugu New Year.

ROUT JOINS AS OPGC DIRECTOR (OPERATIONS)

Bhubaneswar: Manasa Ranjan Rout has joined as Director (Operations) of the Odisha Power Generation Corporation (OPGC) Limited. He has an illustrious career over a period of 33 years in power plant operations and maintenance. Earlier, he was Joint President at the Adani Power Maharashtra Ltd.



In freebie culture, voter’s choice is manipulated



ABASH PARIDA

Freebies have a key place in our Indian election manifesto. Recently freebies are pouring on both Tamil Nadu and West Bengal voters. Maa canteen, Kanyashree for girls, Krishak Bandhu for framers, free washing machines, free house, free tab and cash incentive to Brahmin priests are instances of few of the many freebies showered on voters before the polls.

Despite knowing the fact that these freebies will put

State revenue in red zone, political parties are competing with each other to lure the voters. There are some other examples of freebies where States provide phones, laptops, grinders, bicycles and free transportations.

Freebies can be defined as something without charge or cost. It has been rife in Indian politics. It is a very well known and widespread practice during election.

Freebies are the best lucrative methods adopted by political parties to lure voters. In 2019 general election not only Congress party but BJP also joined the race to offer freebies. There is a paradigm shift in the offerings of freebies. Conventional offerings like free water, free electricity and free health services have lost their charm.

New offerings like free gadgets and cash incentives are coming up. In every election political parties are offering innovative, lucrative and materialistic ideas of freebies. Some independent candidates go further in their freebies by offer-

ing helicopter and taking voters to a tour of moon. Yes, we understand that State should provide welfare and insurance to its citizens. The argument which favours freebies says that it is also another form of social welfare. There are limited studies available in India to find out the impact of freebies on welfare of people.

The origin of freebie culture in India can be traced to the Tamilnadu politics. Afterwards political parties across the nation adopted this as one of the doctrines to woo voters.

In welfare politics freebies are also named as hand-outs, doles, sops or incentives. These terms are very encouraging. But in an under-tax country like India it is not feasible to accept such things, as tax-evasion also happens frequently.

Those who enjoy or avail the freebies should be aware of the fact that these freebies are not coming from the pockets of any political parties but from the taxpayers including them who are the beneficiaries. Freebies are not only the reflec-

tion of political promise but also an accepted way of life in India. The freebie culture started with some outlines such as it would help to enhance the capacity of poor people, to reduce the poverty and to empower the target beneficiaries.

Gradually, it is observed that there is very thin connection between labour, work, outcome and nation's economy. Winning election and good governance are two different things. The role of freebies to avail good governance is questionable.

The crucial features of good governance are equality, equity, inclusiveness, social justice and accountability. And these should be in seen from a long term perspective. The social, political and economic consequences of freebies are very short-lived in nature.

There are many freebies and subsidies schemes available in many States including Odisha, Delhi, Rajasthan and many more. Still we find starvation deaths, lack of electricity, poor education and health

service. So are not freebies meant only to attract voters and swing voters by concentrating on a preferential group or community? Providing a basic healthcare, an affordable education and other essential services like water, house and electricity are the functions and responsibility of any elected Government.

If a Government is providing those to people then does it come under freebie culture? Some sociologists argue that these freebies are Elitist –Construct. It means these are the opinion from higher class who are barred from availing those freebies.

Economists opine that as long as any State has the capacity and ability to finance freebies then its fine; if not then freebies are the burden on economy.

Some scholars go further and say that there is little evidence to support the relationship between freebies and economy. So freebies are only a bad political philosophy.

The sorrow of poor people in India cannot be solved by

freebies or by incentives. As far as farmers and their productivities are concerned, free electricity, free water, farm loan waivers, subsidies and minimum support price are not the sustainable solutions.

The Governments both State and Centre have been providing such freebies to them. Ironically Indian agriculture is still marked with low productivity. As per a statistics, China's rice productivity is 7 tonnes per hectare compared to India's 4 tonnes.

China's rice productive land is only two third of India's cultivable land. It means we have a huge cultivable land in India but the production in comparison to this is minimal. Freebies in agricultural sector have also obstructed the use of innovation and acceptance of technology.

KALIA scheme in Odisha is meant to provide financial help to farmers. But the distribution and utilisation of such financial help should be scrutinized in a larger canvas. In Tamilandu , mixer grinders were offered and it was report-

ed that it was not specifically meant to lure voters but it was used as a labour-saving tool. Similarly, laptops, bicycles and free transportations have many positive effects on the beneficiaries.

In a recent judgement, the Madras High Court showed its disapproval to freebies culture in Tamil Nadu. The court said major political parties in the State are competing with each other to accumulate votes by offering freebies. By citing a sarcastic comment, the court said if one political party is willing to cook food for voters, another is ready to cook and feed.

This version compels us to contemplate that where India goes. The freebies in election manifesto are just like open auction. Voters are at the receiving end. They enjoy the political promises.

The democratic process of election and election promises should be clear. It should not control voters thought. Further to this, the Madars High Court said freebies make people lazy and irresponsible in

Tamilnadu. It may be applicable to people of other States. It is observed that there is scarcity of local labourers in market. Local labourers are now replaced by migrant workers from other States.

Freebies culture paves way to corrupt practice. Involvement of middle man to get those freebies cannot be avoided. Many discrepancies are reported also.

The Supreme Court of India gave a ruling in favour of offering of freebies. It said freebies are not corrupt practice as it is mentioned in election manifesto.

See, these freebies are not bad. It is a part of social welfare. Using freebies to lure voters is not good. Voter's greediness may lead to a problem in choosing a good leader. When we don't have a good leader then democracy will be a mockery.

(Dr Parida is Assistant Professor and Columnist, Resides at Shree Mahodadhi Nilaya, Tamando, Bhubaneswar. 8456879522)

Navy Chief calls for better synergy among Quad navies

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Underlining the high level of synergy among the navies of the Quadrilateral countries, Navy Chief Admiral Karambir Singh on Wednesday said these forces can come together in a plug-and-play mechanism in case of a military need in the Indo-Pacific region.

Making this observation here during the ongoing three-day Raisina Dialogue, the Navy chief said there is immense interoperability between the navies of the Quad grouping. His remarks came months after the Quad navies including India, US, Japan and Australia carried out the Malabar series of naval drills off the Indian coast.

Participating in the Dialogue inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday, Admiral Philip Scot Davidson, Commander of the US's Indo-Pacific Command, identified the Quad as a strategic opportunity diplomatically, militarily and economically, as he designated China as "the greatest strategic threat" to rules-based international order.

The two Navy top commanders during the conclave held virtually discussed the potential of the Quad and agreed that there are many new spheres of engagement where



the grouping can come together and also include more like-minded countries.

Asked about the future of Quad military in terms of joint patrolling and others, the Indian Navy chief said the Quad started as a consultative grouping and has evolved and grown organically. "There is no dearth of issues that it can handle and we have a robust engagement with the navies of all Quad members," he said.

The Navy chief said the Quad navies already enjoy high degree of interoperability and highlighted that the Malabar exercise started with the US in 1992.

Similarly, he pointed out that India has been carrying bilateral naval exercises with Japan since 2012 and with the Australian Navy for the last six years. "So if an opportunity

arises, we have the capability and capacity to come together in almost a plug and play mechanism," he said.

The US Navy commander said the Quad has tremendous potential for cooperation, going far beyond the security sphere. "The vaccine approach is a powerful signal to the region that the Quad is working for the common good outside these four countries," he said.

Noting that the Quad has gained momentum, Davidson said, "It's a diamond of democracies in region... We should think about it in broadest possible terms."

He also said China seeks to exploit the current global pandemic with increased military aggression throughout the Indo-Pacific. He added that China's intent is to undermine international law and norms.

Well done, Modi! says Cong after Govt cancels CBSE Class X exams

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Soon after the CBSE Class 12 examinations were postponed and Class 10 exams cancelled, the Congress took to social media and messaged "well done Modi ji". Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and his sister Priyanka Gandhi Vadra had been rallying for putting off the board exams

The decision was taken by the Prime Minister after a meeting with Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' and other top officials amid growing demands for cancelling or postponing the board exams as Coronavirus cases have seen an unprecedented surge across the country in a deadly second wave.

"Well done Modi ji, listening to sound advice from Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi and the Congress will go a long way in mending our nation. It is our democratic duty to work together for the betterment of our people. It's good to see BJP finally put nation over ego," the Congress tweeted.

After the announcement, Priyanka

Gandhi tweeted that a decision must be taken for Class 12 too.

"Glad the Government has finally cancelled the 10th standard exams however a final decision must be taken for the 12th grade too. Keeping students under undue pressure until June makes no sense. It's unfair. I urge the Government to decide now," she tweeted.

She had earlier said it would be "downright irresponsible" of boards like the CBSE to force students to sit for the exams in the circumstances. "Board exams should either be cancelled, rescheduled or arranged in a manner that does not require the physical presence of children at crowded exam centres," she wrote last week to Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank last week.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, who had also urged the government to postpone or cancel the exams, also welcomed the move.

"I am glad that the exams have been cancelled/postponed. This is a great relief for lakhs of students and their parents," he tweeted.

Ambedkar gave a strong base to Independent India: Modi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Paying tribute to the framer of the Indian Constitution Babasaheb Bhim Rao Ambedkar, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said Ambedkar gave a strong foundation to independent India so that the nation could move forward while strengthening its democratic heritage.

President Ram Nath Kovind also paid rich tributes to Ambedkar on his 130th birth celebrations.

Prime Minister also released four books related to Bhim Rao Ambedkar, whose birth anniversary falls on April 14. The books are written by Kishor Makwana.

Addressing the Association of Indian Universities' 95th annual meet and a national seminar of vice-chancellors through video conferencing, Modi said that Babasaheb Ambedkar gave a strong foundation to independent India.

"Babasaheb Ambedkar gave a strong foundation to independent India so that the nation could move forward while strengthening its democratic heritage," he said.

The event was hosted by Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University, Ahmedabad. Paying tributes to Dr Ambedkar, Modi said in a



Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu remembered Ambedkar for bridging the gaps of inequality

tweet, "I bow to the great Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar on his birth anniversary. His struggle to bring the deprived sections of the society into the mainstream will continue to be an example for every generation."

"Today, the country is also working to spread the message of Babasaheb to the people. Places associated with Baba Saheb are being developed as Panch Tirtha," said the Prime Minister.

On account of the Covid-19 surge, the authorities are keeping the celebrations in a low key.

President Ram Nath Kovind urged fellow citizens to "imbibe his ideals in our lives by learning from his life and ideas and contribute towards building a strong and prosperous India".

Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu remembered Ambedkar

for "bridging the gaps of inequality".

Senior BJP leader and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh paid tribute to Ambedkar saying Baba Saheb should not just be seen as a Dalit icon. He was a renowned name among world intellectuals not just in India, but globally as well.

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla paid floral tribute to Ambedkar saying "Owing to Babasaheb's visions, India progressed at a fast pace after independence that benefitted all fractions of society."

The Centre has announced April 14 as a public holiday for all Central Government offices including industrial units.

India will raise its climate ambitions but not under pressure: Javadekar

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India on Tuesday made it clear that it will raise its climate ambitions but not under pressure and that it was suffering because of the mistakes of others and "is not responsible for climate change that is happening".

Union Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar in his speech after a meeting with French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian at the French Embassy also said that India will not allow anybody to forget their historical responsibility.

French minister le Drian said the consequences will be disastrous if the world is not able to limit global warming to 2 degrees Celsius, or even 1.5 degrees Celsius, compared to pre-industrial levels.

That's why it is absolutely indispensable that all countries increase their climate commitments by the time the COP26 takes place in Glasgow, as required by the Paris Agreement, he said.

"This increase in ambition must include setting new nationally determined contributions by 2030 and also long-term strategies to achieve carbon neutrality. We must stop building new coal-based power plants and it is essential that we progressively stop this mode of electricity production at a global level," le Drian said.

Javadekar said, "We will complete our commitments, raise our ambitions but not under pressure. And we will also ask countries to provide finance and technological support and about their (climate)



actions."

He said India is the only G-20 country to walk the talk on the Paris climate agreement and "we have done more than we promised". The Minister said that the frequency of abnormal (weather) events has increased but "let us not forget that this is not a new phenomenon".

"What we are suffering today was caused 100 years ago. European and American countries and China, in the last 30 years, emitted (greenhouse gases) and therefore, the world is suffering... India is suffering because of the actions of others," he said, adding that historical responsibility is a very important aspect in climate debate.

"We cannot just forget it (historical responsibility), and we will not allow anybody to forget it," Javadekar said.

Everyone is facing common threats, but those who have polluted will have to act more, he said adding that they (developed countries) committed in Copenhagen, 100 billion dollars per year... but where is the money. There is no money in sight," he said.

Under the Copenhagen Accord, developed countries committed to a goal of mobilising 100 billion dollar a year by 2020 to help developing countries mitigate climate change.

AYUSH manufacturing unit makes record ₹164-crore turnover

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In view of increasing demand for AYUSH products and services by people amid Covid-19 pandemic, the Indian Medicines Pharmaceutical Corporation Limited (IMPCL), a public sector manufacturing unit of the Union Ministry of AYUSH, has recorded its highest-ever turnover of ₹164 crore in 2020-21.

The company has recorded an all-time high profit of approximately ₹12 crore, the Union AYUSH Ministry said in a statement here on Tuesday.

Its previous highest turnover was ₹97 crore in 2019-20.

Adding another feather in IMPCL's cap, the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation recommended its 18 Ayurvedic products for WHO-GMP/COPP certification subject to certain observations in March 2021.

The WHO provides "World Health Organization, Good Manufacturing Practices / Certificate of Pharmaceutical Product (WHO-GMP/CoPP)" certification to companies after conducting an inspection.

This certification is an endorsement of the quality of IMPCL's products. It will help IMPCL to commence export of quality medicines.

IMPCL is one of the most trusted manufacturers of AYUSH medicines in the country and is known for the authenticity of its formulations.

"During the COVID-19 pandemic, it was able to cater to the needs of the country in the shortest time, probably the first company in the country to provide Immuno boosting medicines as AurakshaImmuno Boosting Kit.

Maldivian Foreign Minister to begin two-day India visit today



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Maldivian foreign minister Abdulla Shahid will begin a two-day India visit on Thursday with a focus on further deepening of ties between the two countries.

Announcing the visit, the Ministry of External Affairs said it is expected to lend further momentum to the close bilateral cooperation.

It said Shahid will hold talks with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Friday covering bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual interest.

"Foreign minister Shahid's visit is expected to lend further momentum to the close bilateral cooperation between the two countries," the MEA said in a statement.

It said Shahid will participate in the Raisina Dialogue in virtual mode.

Maldives is India's key maritime neighbour in the Indian Ocean Region and occupies a central and special place in the prime minister's vision of 'SAGAR' — 'Security and Growth for All in the Region', the MEA said.

Vardhan launches initiative to spread awareness about nutrition



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan has launched an initiative aimed at spreading awareness about nutrition and locally available nutritious food, fruits, and vegetables, a statement said on Wednesday.

Vijnana Bharati (Vibha), 'Global Indian Scientists and Technocrats' (GIST) Forum, Vigyan Prasara, and Pravasi Bharatiya Academic and Scientific Sampark (PRAB-HASS) have come together to launch mission "Aahaar Kranti" with the motto of 'Uttam Aahaar-Uttam Vichaar' (Good Diet-Good Cognition).

Launching the initiative on Tuesday, Vardhan said, "Today, when the country is reeling under the onslaught of

a pandemic like COVID-19, a balanced diet serves as a special tool to reduce the impact of the pandemic. At such a time, the need to create awareness about the importance of a balanced diet has become more vital than ever before."

The statement said the "Aahaar Kranti" movement is designed to address the peculiar problem being faced by India and the world -- hunger and diseases in abundance.

Studies estimate that India produces as much as two times the amount of calories it consumes. However, many in the country are still malnourished. The root cause of this strange phenomenon is the lack of nutritional awareness, it said.

The movement proposes to address the problem by working to rouse the people to the

values and richness of India's traditional diet, to the healing powers of local fruits and vegetables, and to the miracles of a balanced diet, it added.

"Aahaar Kranti" will renew the focus on nutritionally balanced diets replete in locally sourced fruits and vegetables.

While Vijnana Bharati (Vibha) and GIST Forum initiated the programme, several other agencies have also joined hands and agreed to pool in their expertise and resources, the statement said.

Besides various central and state government ministries and agencies, the Department of Science and Technology's autonomous body Vigyan Prasara and PRABHASS are a part of this collaborative effort. More organisations will join the mission as it proceeds, it said.

Global warming making Indian monsoon seasons stronger, more chaotic: Study

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Climate change will make summer monsoon rainfall in India stronger and more erratic, according to a study that predicts extremely wet years in the future, with potentially grave consequences for over a billion people's well-being, economy, food systems and agriculture.

The study, published in the journal Earth System Dynamics, compared more than 30 state-of-the-art climate models from all around the world.

"We have found robust evidence for an exponential dependence: For every degree Celsius of warming, monsoon rainfalls will likely increase by about 5 per cent," said study lead author Anja Katzenberger from the Potsdam-Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK) in Germany.



"Hereby we were also able to confirm previous studies but find that global warming is increasing monsoon rainfall in India even more than previously thought. It is dominating monsoon dynamics in the 21st century," Katzenberger said.

The researchers noted that more rainfall is not necessarily a good thing for the farming sector in India and its neighbouring countries.

"Crops need water espe-

cially in the initial growing period, but too much rainfall during other growing states can harm plants — including rice on which the majority of India's population is depending for sustenance," said study co-author Julia Pongratz from Ludwig-Maximilians-University (LMU) in Germany.

"This makes the Indian economy and food system highly sensitive to volatile monsoon patterns," said

Pongratz.

A look into the past underlines that human behaviour is behind the intensification of rainfall, according to the researchers.

Starting in the 1950s, human-made forcings have begun to overtake slow natural changes occurring over many millennia, they said.

At first, high sun-light blocking aerosol loadings led to subdued warming and thus a decline in rainfall.

However, from 1980 onwards, greenhouse gas-induced warming has become the deciding driver for stronger and more erratic monsoon seasons.

"We see more and more that climate change is about unpredictable weather extremes and their serious consequences," said group leader and co-author Anders Levermann from PIK and Columbia University in the US.

"Because what is really on the line is the socio-economic well-being of the Indian subcontinent," Levermann said.

Access to professional education not Govt largesse, says SC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Access to professional education is not a "Governmental largesse" and state has an affirmative obligation to facilitate its reach at all levels, the Supreme Court has said.

This obligation assumes far greater importance for students whose background imposes formidable obstacles on their path to access quality education, the apex court said.

A bench of Justices D Y Chandrachud and M R Shah made these observations in a verdict on separate pleas filed by two students from Ladakh who were not admitted to MBBS degree course in medical colleges here despite due nomination by the Union Territory and in terms of the

seats notified by the Centre.

"While the right to pursue higher (professional) education has not been spelt out as a fundamental right in Part III of the Constitution, it bears emphasis that access to professional education is not a governmental largesse. Instead, the state has an affirmative obligation to facilitate access to education, at all levels," the bench said in its judgement delivered on April 9.

"This obligation assumes far greater importance for students whose background (by virtue of such characteristics as caste, class, gender, religion, disability and geographical region) imposes formidable obstacles on their path to accessing quality education," it said.

While allowing the peti-

tions filed by the two students, the top court directed that the admission formalities be completed immediately and, in any event, within a week.

The bench noted that both the petitioners were nominated by the Ladakh administration for admission to MBBS degree course under the 'central pool' seats set apart by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

It noted that one of them has been allocated seat at Lady Harding Medical College while the other has been assigned to Maulana Azad Medical College.

"We have been constrained to take up the issue under Article 32, since the fundamental rights of students from Ladakh to pursue professional education are implicated," it said.

Cong always striving towards achieving Ambedkar's goal: Sonia



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Wednesday said her party is always striving towards achieving the path shown by Bhim Rao Ambedkar of building a strong nation where every citizen progresses without discrimination.

Paying rich tributes to Ambedkar on his 130th birth anniversary, she said the Congress has always emphasised on the establishment of an egalitarian society.

"Today, when the thinking of conservatism and discrimination is trying to weaken the society, the Congress party is always conscious that every section of the country should progress equally and without discrimination, we all together build a strong nation. This is the unshakable path of Babasaheb," she said in her message.

"Congress party is always conscious that every section of the country should progress equally and without discrimination, we all together build a strong nation. This is the unshakable path of Babasaheb," she said.

"In accordance with Baba Saheb's ideals, the Congress party has always emphasised the establishment of an egalitarian society in the country and waged a decisive struggle against centuries of discrimination, untouchability and inequality.

"Today if even the weakest person in the margins of society can reach the highest position of the country in a democratic manner, then this is our biggest achievement in 73 years and is a true tribute to Baba Saheb's dreams and aspirations," the Congress chief said.

Ex-Chief Election Commissioner GVG Krishnamurty dies

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former Chief Election Commissioner Dr GVG Krishnamurty passed away on Wednesday morning due to a prolonged illness. He was 86. He is survived by his wife Padma Murty, son and senior Supreme Court advocate G.V. Rao, and daughter Dr Radha Bodapati.

Mourning the loss of an illustrious former member of ECI family, Chief Election Commissioner Sushil Chandra recalled that Dr GVG Krishnamurty made exemplary contribution during his tenure in the Commission as Election Commissioner from 1st October 1993 to 30th September 1996.

Modi, Didi two sides of same coin: RaGa

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Beginning his election campaign in Bengal for the Left-Congress-ISF alliance in Bengal Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday launched a massive broadside against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee saying each was complementary to the other insofar as the State’s contemporary politics was concerned.

Attacking Modi for trying to defile Bengal’s rich culture by inciting hatred and peddling false dreams of “Sonar Bangla” (golden Bengal) which he called a “mirage” he said the Prime Minister and his party BJP was dividing Bengalis for votes.

“Like in Assam, Tamil Nadu and elsewhere the BJP is trying to spread hatred amongst the people and divide them” in the name of caste and religion... the people of other states have learnt with experience that the BJP have only hatred and divisive politics to offer in the name of lofty dreams like Sonar Bangla that they are peddling now” Gandhi told a rally at Gopakhar in North Dinajpur district of North Bengal.

The so-called Sonar Bangla was a “mirage” which the BJP was selling in every state to hide

its failures at the Centre he said.

Criticising each and every step taken by the Modi Government he said “they promised you unearthing of black money through demonetization but could they do it ... they failed in that ... and ended up bringing hardship to common man.”

Attacking the Modi Government for “its insensitivity when thousands of people were walking back home hundreds and thousands of kms,” the former Congress president said, “those thousands of people from your area know it well how they returned home during the lockdown ... instead of putting money to your pocket to lessen your hardship they were waiving tax burdens on the large corporate houses of Modi’s choice saying they would create jobs ... but did that happen ... No.”

During his first rally in Bengal in this election season, Gandhi took a dig at Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and said his party would never align with the BJP and the RSS, unlike the TMC, which in the past had been an alliance partner of the saffron party-led NDA.

Hitting out at Mamata Banerjee he said that the Bengal Chief Minister’s remote control was in the hands of Narendra Modi adding they were the two

sides of the same coin.

Attacking Banerjee for being part of the BJP’s alliance for many years he said “she was in the BJP’s closet for many years but did the Congress ever made any alliance with the BJP or the RSS ... did the Congress compromise with an ideology that murdered its political Guru (Mahatma Gandhi) ... we will prefer to die than to go with the BJP-RSS.”

Trying to distinguish differentiate between Banerjee’s fight against the BJP and the Congress’ struggle against it he said “for Mamata Banerjee it is merely a political fight ... but for the Congress it is a battle of ideology on which it cannot compromise.”

Reminding the BJP’s slogan of “Congress Mukta Bharat” (Congress-less India) he said, “the slogan was coined because they know that the Congress will never surrender before the ideology of RSS.”

He attacked the TMC for introducing the culture of cut money and extortion in Bengal he said “the people of Bengal gave an opportunity to TMC. But, they failed in every respect... This is the only state where you have to pay cut money to get jobs ... in Bengal there is no industry, no road, no infrastructure ... nothing ... now the people of Bengal have to go to other states for jobs.”

BJP ‘outsiders’ raised corona cases: Mamata

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Apparently putting a new coating to her “outsider” weapon, Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday said that the “BJP’s outsiders” were responsible for the increase in the number of corona cases in Bengal.

Intensifying her tirade against the “BJP’s outsiders” she said “in Bengal we had controlled corona ... the cases had been reduced” to negligible numbers but “as the election campaign it started spreading because the BJP’s outsiders brought it from other States.”

She said “I have been repeatedly talking against bringing people from outside states to Bengal for campaigning but they did not listen to me and brought them to our State ... these people would not come to Bengal when corona was at its peak ... it was only we who were fighting to contain the disease ... and now when we had controlled it they brought outsiders who brought the disease with them, infected the local people and fled.”

Alleging that the State Government had been continuously asking for vaccines from the Centre she said “now they are coming to ask for votes ... but when we asked for vaccines they would not give it to us ... we have deposited the required money for the vaccines but they are still not coming.”

With the daily cases rising by more than 10 percent --- the latest figure reaching to about 4,800 on Tuesday - -- there has been a huge shortage of vaccine in most Bengal hospitals. According to State health department 3 lakh Covishield vaccines reached

Kolkata on Wednesday noon and another badge of 2 lakh Covaxin would reach the State by Wednesday night.

Referring to the Cooch Behar police firing that killed four people in Sitalkuchi constituency of the North Bengal district Banerjee on Wednesday said she would get the matter probed and ensure justice for the kin of the victims.

Banerjee visited Mathabhanga Hospital where the injured were being treated three days after the Election Commission lifted the 72-hour ban on political leaders visiting the district.

“I can assure you that whosoever is guilty will be brought to justice after the elections,” Banerjee said adding her Government would support the victims family with all kind of support. Four persons Manirul, Samilul, Hamidul and Nur Alam were killed in the firing. Banerjee also met a distant relative of BJP supporter Ananda Burman who was shot dead on the same day by alleged TMC goons in the same constituency and assured them justice too.

“The Government will track every-one responsible for the cold-blooded killing and ensure they are punished as per law,” Banerjee said reminding how the wife of a victim was pregnant and that of another had a small child.”

Four persons were killed as central forces opened fire at alleged hooligans who “attempted to snatch their rifles” at booth number 5/126 during polls on April 10. The clash broke out when the quick response team of the central forces were escorting a group of voters who had been stopped from voting by miscreants to the booth.

Keralites celebrate Vishu amid pandemic fears

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Despite the emergency situation prevailing in the State, Keralites celebrated Vishu (the Malayalam New Year Day), a day which marks the annual agricultural operations with gaiety though in a subdued manner.

Family members woke up early in the mrrning to see the Kani(the first sight) made up of a picture of Lord Krishna resplendent with ornaments, grains, seeds, new cloth and a bunch of currency, which assures an year filled with prosperity and happiness.

The eldest member of the family gave away Vishu Kaineettam (a token gift) in the form of a coin and new cloth to members of the family. Nostalgia marked the occasion as 85 year old V B Radha, the patriarch of Perumbavoor’s Vembanattu family gave away Kaineettam to her children, grand children and great grand children.

The cattle herds in agricultural family too were in for a treat in the morning itself as they were worshipped with lighted lamps and pictures of Lord Krishna. Farm workers toiling in the paddy fields assembled in the farm lands in the early hours itself to commence symbolic agricultural operations.

It is an age old tradition for the village astrologers to call on families to provide the annual forecast, popularly known as Vishu Phalam. Village astrologers are gone long back and people call on them in the morning hours to know what is in store for them in the coming year.

“Things will not be as bad as it was in 2021. The Covid-19 pandemic will definitely subside and normalcy would gradually return to the country. There are signs of negativity giving way to opti-



mism,” said Parappanangadi Unnikrishna Panickar, Sanskrit and Vedic scholar about the coming days.

True to the prediction, it rained heavily in the State on Vishu Day and the chief minister, who was undergoing treatment for Covid-19 at the Kozhikode Medical College Hospital for the last three days returned to his palatial home at Pinarayi in Kannur. Speaker P Sreeramakrishnan, who was in the ICU since he was questioned by the Customs Department in connection with hawala transaction, was moved back to the hospital ward after it was found that he too had defeated the pandemic.

“Vishu is always the beginning of a new dawn. It is a harbinger of happiness and peace . That’s why it is being celebrated in unison by all sections of Kerala society,” said Prof P G Haridas, eminent historian.

Bhangipara: Cold horror stalks villages in Sunderbans

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ SANDESHKHALI

Cold horror is a small expression to depict the prevailing tension among the locals in this back-of-beyond village bordering Sunderbans.

Outsiders are clearly not welcome at Bhangipara. Such is the fear that not a single soul here would volunteer to talk.

After much cajoling Rani Mondal (name changed) decides to show some courage but on conditions of anonymity. “Babu you will go today ... but tomorrow after the elections if they win they will bomb our houses, attack our children ... kill our old people,” she says.

Why would she not talk of the young men? “Beche thakle to bolbo (how can I refer to the young men? Are they alive)? ... they have been killed by the men of Shahjahan” (a local TMC tough) she alleges.

Even as she walks up to the Jora Mandir area around where

the incident took place she says, “our fault was that the BJP got a lead of 150 votes from this area (though the TMC won the seat) during the 2019 Lok Sabha elections... violence started only after that as their goons came and attacked our men just because they were doing BJP”

Her father Hari (name changed) says “they came like an Amphan (the cyclone is the latest symbol of horror in the locals’ collective mind), charged bombs ... we along with our women hid on the roof or beneath our beds ... there were gunshots all around. As the men ran towards the Bheris (fish ponds) they were chased... by the evening it was all over ... two bodies were fished out” subsequently.

The two victims were Sukanto Mondal and Pradip Mondal. A third Devdas Mondal is missing still now. His father says “My son was raising a BJP flag at the shop which irked them ... they were already wounded by the lead BJP got here

... in front of my house my son ran away for his life towards the Bheri ... they followed him ... there after we do not know what happened. They later brought two bodies but my son has not returned even today ... almost two years... look at my eyes ... can you find any tears... they have dried up ... he helplessly looks at heavens hurling all his complaints up there.”

And then he shows his two grand children and a young dahguter-in-law. “There is no relief. At this old age I have to go out silently to work and manage some food for these little ones and the daughter-in-law. I cannot look at their eyes ... they have no hope ... no pleasure,” he says relating the worst part of it all.

“And what is worse is the CID that is probing the case does nothing ... often we are told that the police is pressured by the TMC to harass us and even arrest us ... what have we done ... this was not like that in the CPI(M) Government ... they

were not so cruel.” He would not reveal whether the family did CPI(M) earlier or not.

Padma Mondal the wife of a victim and now a BJP leader shows courage saying “we will not let the culprits go unpunished ... the people cannot speak up out of fear ... but tomorrow they will definitely.”

The alleged perpetrator of the crime Shahjehan however would rubbish the allegations as “false and baseless ... they have their land slipping beneath their feet and now they are blaming the TMC.” When told to explain his meteoric rise from rags to riches he says “we have been doing business for so many years.”

Cut to the nearby village where the family of Abdul Kayum Mollah, have a different tale to tell. “It is the BJP men who attacked us and killed the man here ... he was chased and shot dead because he was a TMC,” say the victim’s family members asking in a hushed tone “Dada Brother is ki sotti aschhey (elder brother is

BJP really coming).

When asked about the source of the family’s earning they say “we do odd work like farming, fishing or sometimes construction labourers...”

When reminded that there is no material difference between the earthly condition of the two sides, both being poor Asfaq Sk a relative of the victim says “Dada jani to ... agey to erokom chilo na ... ekhon hoi (we know it ... earlier it was not like that ... today it is like that.)”

When asked about their real problems both the sides have similar things to say: lack of income, lack of education and health facilities, lack of job and corruption. “I went for Asha Karmi ... they asked for Rs one lakh” says Ameena Khatoun adding the job still eludes her as she could not pay the amount.

And what will they do on the polling day April 17. “God knows babu ... will we be allowed to vote?” That is another common refrain on both sides.

₹50cr-worth drugs seized in narco-terror module bust in J&K’s Tangdhar sector

PNS ■ JAMMU

Troops guarding the line of control in North Kashmir’s Tangdhar sector late Tuesday night foiled a major smuggling bid by recovering a drugs consignment worth ₹50 crores. According to defence sources, troops initially foiled an infiltration bid in the forward area and also recovered a 10 kg of narco consignment worth 50 crores (approximately).

According to a Srinagar based Defence Spokesman Lt Col Emron Musavi, “late Tuesday night smugglers were spotted carrying the narcotics along the Line of Control. Indian Army & BSF troops detected a suspicious movement and challenged the smugglers probably accompanied by Pak based terrorists”.

He said, “the contact was near the LoC fence about 500m from the LoC. A brief exchange of fire took place in which one JCO of Indian Army sustained minor injuries. Detailed search in the morning led

to recovery of the narcotics haul. The infiltrators managed to escape”, he added.

Defence Spokesman said, “this is the second consecutive busting of ‘Pak Sponsored Narco Terror Model’ in the past one week in the valley”.

Incidentally, he said, a 10 KG heroin consignment was recovered from the same general area a week ago in a joint operation. However, he said, this time smugglers were spotted carrying the narcotics along the LoC.

Narco and terrorist infiltration are known to be carried out through the Tangdhar bowl. The police are carrying out investigations to identify and arrest the network involved in the smuggling and infiltration attempt.

The Defence spokesman said, “security forces, police and intelligence agencies continue to carry out synergised actions to counter any effort to carry out infiltration or smuggling of weapons and contraband across the LoC”.

Goa to extend ‘Tika Utsav’ by 10-12 days: CM

Panaji: The Goa government will extend the Covid-19 vaccination drive, ‘Tika Utsav’, by 10-12 days, said Chief Minister Pramod Sawant on Wednesday, urging people above the age of 45 years to take advantage of the vaccination outreach programme.

“‘Tika Utsav’ will continue for 10-12 days so that those who are eligible get themselves vaccinated. Lockdown is not the solution for Covid-19 but vaccination, maintaining social distancing, wearing face masks is.

We should avoid public meetings and unnecessary gatherings,” added Sawant while speaking at an event organised by the Directorate of Fire and Emergency Services.

“Get tested immediately if you have COVID-19 signs and symptoms and maintain home isolation. If we need to contain the spread of the infection, then people will have to cooperate. The government will not lag behind when it comes to hospitalisation or providing Covid-19 care kits. Early treatment is the

key,” said the Goa Chief Minister. The ‘Tika Utsav’ programme was announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi as a four-day mass vaccination campaign for inoculation of people above the age of 45 years from April 11 to April 14.

Sawant said that while the neighbouring state of Maharashtra had gone into lockdown, a similar fate should not “befall” Goa, urging people to maintain social distancing and adhere to Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). **IANS**

Gujarat CM to meet religious leaders on Covid situation

Gandhinagar: The Gujarat Chief Minister, Vijay Rupani on Wednesday evening, will hold a virtual meeting with various religious leaders of the state on the prevailing situation of Corona infection in the state.

The CM will hold discussions with them and request cooperation from every community in the fight against the virus.

Vijay Rupani will have a virtual meeting with many religious leaders of the state at 4 p.m. in the evening on Wednesday.

Many dignitaries from various religious communities like Ratnasundarji Maharaj

Saheb, Namramuni Maharaj Saheb, Vraj RajKumar, Dwarkesh Lalji, Brahmavihari Swami, Sant swami of Vadtal Temple, Tyagvallabh swami, Shernath Babu, Avichaldasji Maharaj, Dilipdasji Maharaj, Shambhu Prasad Tundiya, Maulana Lukman Tarapuri and Right Reverend Silvanice Christian will participate in the meet.

The CM will have discussions with them regarding the current Covid situation in the state, and their role in the fight against the pandemic. **IANS**

Andhra logs 4K more Covid cases, active cases cross 28,000 mark

Amaravati: Andhra Pradesh on Wednesday reported 4,157 new Covid-19 cases, taking the tally to over 9.37 lakh, while active cases reached 28,383.

The state, which was logging over 2,000 cases for some days, has now the tally double to over 4,000 cases. There were also 18 more deaths, in the past 24 hours, pushing the toll to 7,339.

Meanwhile, 1,606 more persons have recovered in the last 24 hours, raising the number of recoveries over 9 lakh. **IANS**

East Godavari district reported the highest number of cases at 617, followed by Srikakulam (522), Chittoor (517), Visakhapatnam (417), Kurnool (386), Anantapur (297), Nellore (276), Prakasam (230), Vizianagaram (154), Krishna (135), Kadapa (112) and West Godavari (60). East Godavari’s tally has crossed 1.27 lakh, the highest among all the districts, while the state’s positivity rate rose to 6.03 per cent, against the national average of 5.32 per cent. **IANS**

Renaming Harijans as Dalits sabotaged Gandhi’s dream: Acharya Kunjhol

KOCHI: On the occasion of the 130th birth anniversary of Dr BR Ambedkar, the chief architect of Indian Constitution, a vedic scholar of repute has called for the abolition of the word Dalit once and for ever and to bring back the name Harijan used to denote the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

“Harijan is the most sanguine word which accorded respect, sanctity and beauty to the depressed and oppressed communities. The word was introduced by Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation. He even named the world famous magazine he launched as Harijan. But certain vested interests sabotaged Gandhi’s dream and renamed the communities as Dalit, a term which has no Indianness in it,” said Acharya M K Kunjhol, the chief patron of Kerala State Harijan Samajam, a 64 year old organisation working for the upliftment of



the Harijans.

Kunjhol, Kerala’s living Mahatma, who has been honoured with Padma Sri by the President of India for the selfless and dedicated work he is doing among the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes for the last 70 years, attributed to a deep rooted conspiracy by anti-national elements in getting the name Harijan replaced with Dalit.

When Mahatma Gandho took up the agitation to get the practice of untouchability ameliorated and eradicate caste discrimination, he asked the people to propose a common nomenclature for the scheduled castes and tribes who were being treated as untouchables.

Migrant workers from Bihar relieved after return but worried about work

Patna: After the recent surge in the number of Covid cases in nearly all parts of the country amid the second wave of the pandemic, the people living outside Bihar are now returning to their native State. The Indian Railways have also run special trains to facilitate their return. The migrant workers who have returned to Bihar have now begun to worry about finding work here. Some are thinking about doing farming while many people are thinking about engaging in contractual labour.

Hundreds of people from Mokama, adjoining Bihar’s state capital Patna, earned their livelihood working in other states. Many such people have returned to their native villages. Anand Kumar, a resident of Ghoswari village, says that dozens of people from his village had gone to other states to earn money and have now returned home or are preparing to return to their native place fearing a lockdown.

He said he had also come back to his native place when the lockdown was imposed last year in view of the pandemic. He was left with-

out work after the lockdown was lifted following which he again returned to Bihar. Now once again due to the lockdown people are forced to return to their native places.

Subedar Rai, a resident of a village near Ghoswari, used to work as a security guard in Mumbai. His whole family was infected with coronavirus and his wife died of the infection. Following this, he left Mumbai and returned to his native village. He said nobody cares in big cities. “I have returned to my native village facing a lot of trouble. Now come what may, I will not leave Bihar. I will work in the fields,” he added.

Ram Surat, a labourer who works in a Pune factory, has also returned to Bihar. He had returned home last year when the situation due to the pandemic had worsened. When the situation improved, the factory owner called him back to work, but now everybody has returned to their homes. He has a family in Bihar. “I will stay in Bihar for a few days and when the situation improves, then I will return to

work.” He is relieved that he has returned to his native state.

However, asked how will he get employment here, he says that he could survive for some days but if the situation due to the pandemic persists for a long time, then it would become difficult.

Ramnandan, who lives in Chanka village of Purnia district, does not want to leave Bihar now. He said he returned home last year and is now doing farming. What is the use in moving out of Bihar. Advising other people, he says that one should search for work in Bihar. He said the state government is also working towards giving work to people.

People from Bihar travel in search of work to most parts of the country. Due to the surge in Covid-19 cases, factories and businesses are being shut down in many states, due to which people are returning to their native states. However, the number of infected cases is also rapidly increasing in Bihar. The people who have returned to their states are relieved that at least they have returned to their villages. **IANS**

Maha logs 58,952 new corona cases, 278 deaths

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Notwithstanding a marginal drop in the number of Covid-19 cases, the pandemic situation continued to be grim in Maharashtra on Wednesday, as the state recorded 58,952 fresh cases and 278 new deaths.

On a day when the Maharashtra government began to enforce stringent restrictions, including a ban on the movement of people in public places without a valid reason, prohibitory orders under section 144 of CR.PC and night curfew for 15 days, the number of infections dropped from Tuesday’s tally of 60,212 to 58,952, while deaths came down from 281 to 278 in various parts of the state.

With 58952 fresh cases, the total infections climbed from 35,19,208 to 35,78,160. Similarly, with 258 new deaths, the total Covid-19 toll rose from 58,526 to 58,804.

As 39,624 patients were discharged from the hospitals across the state after full recovery, the total number of people discharged from the hospitals since the second week of March last year went up to 29,05,721. The recovery rate in the state for the first time in several days

dropped from 81.44 per cent to 81.21 per cent.

The number of “active cases” total cases in the state rose from 5,93,042 to 6,12,070. The fatality rate in the state dropped from 1.66 per cent to 1.64 per cent.

With 54 fresh deaths, the Covid-19 toll in Mumbai rose from 12,023 to 12066, while the infected cases went up by 9931 to trigger a jump in the infections from 5,35,264 to 5,45,195.

While Pune accounted for a maximum 1,12,213 “active cases” in the state, Mumbai stood second with 86,635 active cases, followed by Thane (84,098), Nagpur (65,368), Nashik (44,880), Aurangabad (14,680), Ahmednagar (17,937), Nanded (13,917), Bhandara (12,993), Jalgaon (12,126), Latur (13,622) Buldhana (4849), Parbhani (8847), Beed (8517), Nandurbar (7158), Chandrapur (7898) and Gondia (6536).

Of the 2,28,02,200 samples sent to laboratories, 35,78,160 have tested positive (15.86 per cent) for COVID-19 until Wednesday.

Currently, 34, 55,206 people are in home quarantine while 28,494 people are in institutional quarantine.



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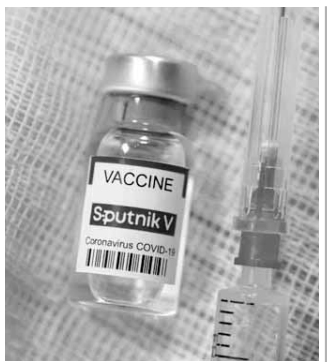
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PAPER WITH PASSION

Going all out

The Govt's decision to procure COVID jabs from abroad should be welcomed for a variety of reasons

The Indian Government's "vaccine *maitri*" may have earned it laurels among the nations that received the approximately 6.45 crore COVID shots, but it has left it clutching at straws and getting the flak in its own backyard. With the Coronavirus cases rising exponentially across India and with more deaths being recorded due to its new strains, the Centre is facing criticism that in its enthusiasm to earn global brownie points it put its own citizens at risk by distributing the shots to other nations instead of ensuring that all its citizens were inoculated first. As the second wave of infections tears across the country, there are calls for opening up the inoculation process for everyone as the new strain is not sparing children and the youth this time around.



Hence, faced with a shortage of the COVID jabs the Centre first gave the nod for the use of Russia-made Sputnik Vaccine for emergency use and moves are now afoot to enlarge the COVID-19 vaccine basket by giving approval to the shots manufactured in the US, the UK and Japan. The National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration for COVID-19 (NEGVA) has recommended that shots being manufactured abroad as well as those which have already received approval for "restricted use by the USFDA, EMA, UK MHRA, PMDA Japan may be granted emergency use approval in India". It is understood that the "vaccines, which

are listed in the World Health Organisation's emergency use listing, may also be granted emergency use approval in India".

The decision has come at the right time as it would encourage imports of bulk drug material and help in optimal utilisation of domestic fill-and-finish capacity which will, in turn, provide a fillip to our vaccine manufacturing capacity and total jab availability for domestic use. The Centre, trying its best to calm the citizens, has assured them that there is no vaccine shortage and over 1.67 crore doses are still available. While there is some strength in the argument that the Government should have catered to its citizens first, the fact remains that the healthcare authorities and the public, too, is to a certain extent responsible for the state we are in today. First of all, given the fact that vaccines are direly needed at this time, how do we explain the criminal average wastage of 6.5 per cent in India? Plus, if people had listened to the Government, got inoculated in massive numbers and observed the Corona protocols diligently, there would not have been such a surge in cases. When the number of infections dipped after the first wave, had we shunned vaccine hesitancy, things would have moved with assembly-line precision and a large part of the population would have had the shots by now. However, it's not too late and the Centre is doing its bit to provide succour to its citizens. We need to calm down, behave like responsible citizens and help the Government in its endeavour in any way we can. After all, this is a situation that none of us had ever faced before.

PICTALK



Nihangs show their horse-riding skills on the last day of Baisakhi Mela in Bathinda district

PTI

Double whammy

Our insouciance is responsible for the alarming rise in pollution and Corona cases in the Capital

Both the pandemic and the pollution have made life miserable for the residents of Delhi. It's a double whammy this year — unlike last year when Delhiites had some relief during the Coronavirus-induced lockdown as the level of pollutants fell drastically, thanks to the restriction on vehicular movement and the ban on industrial activity. However, this relief was short-lived since the Capital's air quality started to deteriorate with the lifting of curbs. As the COVID-19 cases surge towards another peak, Delhi is witnessing the worst air quality since 2018. As the country is fighting the pandemic with indigenous vaccines (now with the imported ones, too), masks, social distancing and the "Test-Track-Treat" methodology, it must also think of cutting down on pollution. We must remember that one's immunity plays a vital role in fighting the virus and pollution certainly doesn't help it. Hence, lowering the pollution level will only aid our fight against the contagion. The Particulate Matter (PM) is the biggest contributor to Delhi's pollution and



the main factors behind the increase in its concentration include vehicular emissions, biomass and garbage burning and industrial smoke effluents.

Recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a meeting with the Chief Ministers stressed that there is no need for another lockdown as the country now has enough infrastructure to control the infection. But unfortunately the Governments have failed to control the pollution in Delhi — which is ranked the world's most polluted Capital and 10th most polluted city across the globe in the *World Air Quality Report 2020* by a Swiss air technology company, IQAir — and the only solution in sight to control the PM levels in the Capital is another lockdown. But it's not right to blame only the Governments as the citizens also are no less responsible for this pathetic situation. Actions like car pooling, switching off the ignition at stop signals, using public transport, use of electric vehicles, and so on, are far from being our habit. Similarly, simple things like wearing masks properly, maintaining social distance, sanitising hands regularly and strictly adhering to the COVID-appropriate behaviour are not followed, which helps the infection spread. Until we mend our ways, we are doomed to lose both battles, against the pandemic and the pollution.

Elections in the time of COVID

With half the phases in the Bengal polls remaining, the virus management measures appear to be missing on the ground



PRIYADARSHI DUTTA

The Congress candidate from the Srivilliputhur Assembly constituency, 63-year-old PSW Madhava Rao, passed away of COVID-19 complications five days after the Tamil Nadu election concluded on April 6. If he wins the election posthumously, the constituency will head for a by-election. Tamil Nadu is one of the 16 States in India experiencing a significant surge in fresh Coronavirus infections. However, the pictures of bulging election rallies/road shows there capture only people's indifference towards the virus. The wearing of masks seems to be a luxury rather than a compulsory practice.

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has laid down strict COVID-19 protocols for the elections in five States. It forms a part of the February 26 announcement of the poll schedule. The guidelines remain virtually unchanged since the Bihar Legislative Assembly election in October-November 2020. However, they seem to be honoured more in the breach than in observance, at least with regard to campaigning.

The instruction is that the District Election Officer (DEO, who is mostly the District Magistrate) should identify dedicated grounds for public gatherings with clearly marked entry and exit points, put markers to ensure social distancing norms by the attendees, and the nodal district health officer should ensure that the COVID-related guidelines are adhered to by everyone in the district. The DEO and the District Superintendent of Police should ensure that the number of attendees does not exceed the limit prescribed by the State Disaster Management Authority for public gatherings. However, the swelling crowds at the rallies/road shows seem to throw these protocols out of the window.

While elections in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Puducherry and Assam were over by April 6, those in the State of West Bengal will continue till April 29. There,



only four of the eight phases have been completed until now. The elections are already scarred by violence, and the media is fully fixated on it. By contrast, the large-scale flouting of the pandemic norms has not engaged the media's attention sufficiently.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi repeatedly exhorts people to wear masks and maintain physical distancing norms in public. He is emphatic that nobody should be lax about the COVID-19 protocols. These are indeed meant for the people's own safety, and tens of millions of ordinary Indians like me follow his advice in letter and spirit. However, does he follow his own advice at the mammoth rallies that he has been addressing frequently in West Bengal? The crowd strength at his rallies is so oppressive that there is hardly any place to stand. There was palpable fear of a stampede at his rally in Kolkata's Brigade Parade Ground on March 7.

As the camera zooms in on different segments in the crowds at the Prime Minister's numerous rallies, it is easy to spot that masks are a rarity. Does Modi demand that those not wearing masks

AHEAD OF THE FOURTH GENERAL ELECTIONS IN 1967, THE CHIEF MINISTERS OF TAMIL NADU AND WEST BENGAL SHOWED THE WAY FOR DEVELOPING A CODE OF CONDUCT THROUGH ALL-PARTY MEETINGS. THE ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA OFFICIALLY ADOPTED IT IN 1968

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

WE ARE NOT PREPARED AT ALL

Sir — This refers to the editorial 'Double mutant strikes' (April 14). Your article is right on the money when it says that this variant multiplies quickly. You rightly raised the point about the lack of data and studies — that is peer-reviewed — it does not give the guarantee that these vaccines would work. One does need to be an Einstein to know that if things keep spiralling downwards, the day is not far when we surge past the US in becoming the worst-hit country.

We are importing vaccines but the recent halt in the rollout of Johnson & Johnson's vaccine in the US is also concerning as blood clots have been reported in patients who took this jab. It is bizarre that a country producing top doctors and scientists cannot figure out how this virus operates. The health briefings are an elephant dart to the public's face as all it does is present a rosy picture. It seems that our pandemic response is absolutely misguided and an absolute disgrace.

Sadly, our people could not refrain from going to events like the Kumbh Mela. Even the politicians are busy holding rallies as their priority is to win elections rather than to control the virus. All this has led to pandemic fatigue as people have been following the rules for long, for something that isn't even their fault. It's too late in the day to wish for this pandemic to have never afflicted humankind. The only thing to do now is to just mask up and stay home!

Sean Colin Young | New Delhi

EXERCISE CAUTION WHILE CAMPAIGNING

Sir — It doesn't behove Prime Minister Narendra Modi to speak insultingly of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and repeatedly call her "Didi o Didi". Such words belittle the dignity of a woman and the Election Commission must take note of it. Mamata was right in saying that the way the PM is cracking jokes on her, it sounds like a young man making a pass at a local woman. This is certainly below standard. "I know many things about you, Modi and Shah. But I have the dignity not to stoop so low," she said. She targeted Modi, saying that

Punish vaccine hoarders



Amid the current surge in the number of Coronavirus cases, several States have reported the shortage of anti-viral drug Remdesivir. It is surprising that Gujarat BJP chief CR Patil has announced that 5,000 doses of Remdesivir would be made available free of cost by the party in Surat. But he didn't explain how he managed to get the stock despite the Government mandating that not more than six doses of medicine will be sold without a doctor's prescription.

The Government must respond and explain that when people are unable to get the

injection despite standing in queues for hours, how did 5,000 injections reach Patil? Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani's innocent response was that he is unaware of Patil's claim. "I don't know. Ask Patil," said Rupani. This response is careless and is not expected from a CM. It is a blatant case of corruption and a CBI inquiry must be initiated to find out how he managed to stockpile the Remdesivir injection. Worse still, this is the situation despite the Gujarat High Court pulling up the State Government over the worsening Coronavirus situation.

The COVID-19 patients are experiencing unimaginable difficulties due to the shortage of beds, oxygen and medicine supply and lack of proper testing and tracing. Though Prime Minister Narendra Modi claims that India has "walked the talk" on helping the world counter the pandemic despite its "limited resources", much is needed to be done to effectively deal with the rising COVID cases at home. Nailing the corrupt politicians who stockpile or hoard the vaccine is one such step.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

only someone who did not give due recognition to the women in his life can crack such jokes. However, Mamata also has crossed her limits several times in past.

Our political leaders must exercise caution while speaking in public. The common people follow the politicians blindly and such statements set a wrong precedent in politics. There are politicians like Uttar Pradesh's former Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav and Samajwadi Party leader Azam Khan who have made insulting remarks against women. The politicians should maintain dignity and decorum in public life.

G David Milton | Tamil Nadu

STOP THE HATE SPEECHES

Sir — The overzealous campaign of the BJP's Suvendu Adhikari, with the choicest of abuses for our Islamic brethren, follows the culture of his new political masters. Sadly, such

electing to govern, they themselves will have to deal with the pandemic upsurge. It is shameful that their behaviour should be COVID-inappropriate in public while seeking votes. The battle against the virus cannot be wholly dependent on vaccinations. Experience has shown that even those vaccinated can contract COVID-19.

The second wave of the pandemic has gripped India even as half the phases in the West Bengal election remain. It devolves upon all political parties to come together and take recognisable measures so that the poll campaign does not aggravate the situation. It might involve curtailing big rallies/road shows featuring star campaigners. One is reminded how ahead of the Fourth General Elections in 1967, the Chief Ministers of Tamil Nadu and West Bengal showed the way for developing a Code of Conduct through all-party meetings. The ECI officially adopted it in 1968. Such all-party meetings on the COVID-19 situation are the need of the hour.

(The writer is an author and independent researcher based in New Delhi. The views expressed are personal.)

SOUNDBITE

The 'Tika Utsav' will continue for 10-12 days. Lockdown is not the solution for COVID-19 but vaccination, social distancing and wearing masks is.

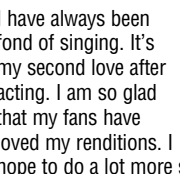


Goa Chief Minister — Pramod Sawant



It is the lockdown that has been overwhelmingly important in bringing down infections and deaths. It has not been achieved by the vaccination programme.

British Prime Minister — Boris Johnson



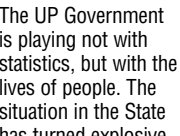
I have always been fond of singing. It's my second love after acting. I am so glad that my fans have loved my renditions. I hope to do a lot more soon.

Actor — Sara Khan



I'm very happy with the progress of the team over the last 18 months. If we continue to build on this, I am sure we can defeat any team.

Indian hockey captain — Manpreet Singh



The UP Government is playing not with statistics, but with the lives of people. The situation in the State has turned explosive.

Congress leader — Priyanka Gandhi-Vadra

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE SOUTH

If we want real integration, North Indians must study the history and literature of South India, too, right from school



MARKANDEY KATJU

All Indians, including those from the South, have read about the great Mauryan Empire, the Gupta Empire, the Empire of Harshavardhan, the Mughal Empire, and so on in their school history books. But, how many North Indians have heard of Krishnadeva Raya of the Vijayanagara Empire (whose statue along with his two queens, still stands in the Tirupati temple), or of the great Chola and Pandya kings? Regrettably, very few North Indians would be aware of these great kings from the South. Most Indians have read the 'Ramayan' and the 'Mahabharata', which are epics about North Indian kings, and most Indians have read the works of Surdas, Tulsidas, Kabir, and the stories of Munshi Premchand. But how many North Indians have read the great Tamil epics 'Silappathikaram', 'Manimekalai', or the great Tamil treatise 'Tirukkural' by Tiruvalluvar, about whom the great Tamil poet Subramania Bharati wrote: "Tamil Nadu is known throughout the world because of Tirukkural." How many have heard the 'Tiruppavai' by the poet saint Andal, which is sung in the month of January all over Tamil Nadu, or the great poetry of Subramania Bharati who wrote powerful verses for women's emancipation around 1910 much before anyone dared to do so in the country? Very few.



North Indians know of Hindustani music but how many know of Carnatic music, and its trinity of Tyagaraj, Muthuswami Dikshitar and Shyama Shastri? Hardly any. How many North Indians have heard of the great Keralite social reformer Narayan Guru, who belonged to the low-caste Ezhava community and fearlessly criticised and campaigned against the inhuman caste system? Practically none. For long, North Indians have regarded South India as a dark land populated by uncivilised people and are blissfully unaware of the South's great achievements in various fields. Indeed in the 'Ramayan', Kishkindha, which is believed to be in the present State of Karnataka, was regarded to be a land populated by monkeys from whom Lord Rama raised a 'vaanar sena (monkey army)' to invade Sri Lanka. Regrettably, even today, many North Indians look down on South Indians due to their ignorance of the culture and achievements of the South. For instance, South Indian temples are massive and unbelievably beautiful. They reveal the high level of knowledge of architecture and geometry of the ancient and medieval South Indians. For example, the Brihadishvara temple of Tanjore is simply astounding and one wonders how the builders could use such huge stones to create it. In fact, it reminds one of the Egyptian pyramids. The gigantic rock relief 'Descent of the Ganges' in the ancient port city of Mahabalipuram, capital of the Pallav Empire, is truly amazing.

The large number of Roman coins found in South India show the extensive trade between it and ancient Rome from the time of Emperor Augustus (who reigned from 27 BC to 14 AD). This indicates how highly developed the economy in ancient and medieval South India was as they, unlike North Indians, were seafaring people, with extensive commercial contacts in Southeast Asia. The Chola king Rajendra Chola is believed to have executed military campaigns in Southeast Asia (Sri Lanka, Sumatra, and so on), which could only have been possible with the aid of a powerful navy. In Ilango's epic 'Silappathikaram' one comes across these lines: "May the Pandya king prosper, who ruled over the South, after conquering the Ganga and the Himalayas in the north." At first I thought this was only poetic exaggeration, however, later I read of credible accounts of a South Indian king (perhaps Rajendra Chola) leading a Napoleonic invasion of north India up to the Ganga and even beyond (apart from invading Sri Lanka, the Malaya peninsula, southern Thailand and so on.) If we want real integration of India, North Indians must study the history, culture and literature of South India, too, right from school and give the South Indians the respect they deserve.

(The writer is a former judge of the Supreme Court of India. The views expressed are personal.)

Irreconcilable differences?

While India insists on de-escalation in Eastern Ladakh, the Chinese prefer the *status quo*. As it appears, both sides are unwilling to relent

The 11th round of India-China military talks to defuse tension in Eastern Ladakh, that was held after a gap of nearly two months, has again ended without any major breakthrough. The marathon talks lasted 13 hours as has been the trend in the past, but the Chinese side this time was rigid and uncompromising. Ever since the successful disengagement of troops from the lake area and the Kailash Range in February this year, a stalemate exists as far as further disengagement is concerned from the areas of Hot Springs, Gogra, Demchok and over stopping of Indian patrols in Depsang.

Immediately after the disengagement was completed, the 10th round of talks was held between the military commanders of the two nations. But it failed to arrive at any consensus as far as further disengagement from the remaining areas was concerned. However, the talks were dubbed as "constructive" and both sides hoped for a fruitful outcome. A joint statement issued by the two countries after the talks positively appraised the disengagement from the lake area, terming it a significant step that would provide a good basis for resolution of other remaining issues along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the Western Sector.

Though the much-awaited 11th round has once again ended in a stalemate, there are two noticeable differences. Unlike in the past, no joint statement has been issued by the two nations. In another first, the Chinese side has responded with a statement from the People's Liberation Army (PLA) with the Press statement issued by the spokesperson of its Western Theatre Command instead of its Defence Ministry. The statement issued by the PLA was full of rhetoric and laced with diplomatic niceties, indicating that it may have been drafted at the Ministry level but was issued by the PLA. This indicates some sort of unhappiness or disagreement which may need intervention at the highest level.

The PLA's statement said, "We hope India can treasure the current positive situation of de-escalation in the China-India border regions, abide by related agreements reached by the two countries and the two militaries in previous meetings, meet China halfway and safeguard peace and stability in the border regions together"; once again reiterating the "half-way" offer rejected outrightly by India in the past. What's the point of talking about de-escalation when the Chinese have not even completed the promised disengagement?

A couple of weeks earlier, General Naravane, the Indian Chief of the Army Staff, had observed that the threat in Eastern Ladakh has "not gone away altogether" since the PLA was still maintaining its considerable troop strength in the "rear areas" as before. "De-escalation will take place only when these elements go back to their garrisons," he had said. The much-needed de-escalation still eludes both sides.

While the Indian side insisted on complete disengagement from Hot Springs, Gogra, Kongka La and Demchok, including the lingering issue of Depsang, the Chinese did not concede to troop pullback from these friction sites as earlier agreed to, leave alone discussing Depsang. The disengagement from the Depsang plains is believed to be the bone of contention since it is not directly relat-



TO WARD OFF ANY THREAT IN THE AREA, INDIA HAS ALSO BUILT UP A STRONG FORCE THERE, INCLUDING ARMoured VEHICLES. THE LOGISTICS OF SUSTENANCE OF SUCH A LARGE FORCE AND KEEPING THE ARMoured FLEET FUNCTIONAL IN SUCH EXTREME COLD WEATHER CONDITIONS IS A HERCULEAN TASK

The writer is a political commentator, security and strategic analyst. The views expressed are personal.



ed to last year's aggression. Hectic diplomatic activity had preceded the 11th round of talks for "maintaining peace and tranquillity and providing conditions for the progress of bilateral relations." The Indian Foreign Minister, in a telephonic conversation with his Chinese counterpart, had insisted on "early resolution of remaining issues along the LAC and disengagement at all friction points."

In a virtual meeting of the Working Mechanism of Consultation and Coordination on India China Border Affairs (WMCC), held in the last week of March, it was decided to hold the 11th round of talks between the Corps Commanders as early as possible in order "to further ease the situation on the ground and jointly safeguard the hard-won peace and stability in the border areas."

All eyes were thus set on the 11th round of negotiations, hoping not only for disengagement from the remaining areas but also for the resolution of the Depsang imbroglio. So, the big question is, why are the Chinese so sensitive about this area and unwilling to concede? The Depsang plains are sandwiched between the Aksai Chin and Siachen glacier. Located at the height of 16,000-17,000 feet above sea level, the area provides good mobility to the armoured vehicles. The Karakoram Pass and the Sasser Law Pass, both strategically important to India and located within its territory, are on its flanks.

Much of these plains had been

under Chinese control since the mid-1950s. Daulat Beg Oldie (DBO) is also located adjacent to the plains. In 1962, the Chinese occupied much of the Depsang plains west of the DBO, with India left with a small bulge. The new road built by us to connect the DBO with the Shyok area and beyond is under the observation of the Chinese and remains vulnerable to its artillery fire. The area is strategically important because China and Pakistan can jointly threaten India with a pincer movement in a strategic collusion and cut off the vital area from the rest of Ladakh. Conversely, India can threaten Aksai Chin and the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), though a build-up for any large-scale offensive would pose serious challenges.

Apart from the varying perception of the LAC, another peculiar factor in the area is the Limit of Patrol (LOP). India and China differ on the alignment of the LOP as well. The Chinese perception of the LOP is almost 20 km beyond our perception inside our territory. The tensions in this area are not recent. The Chinese had intruded in the area in 2013 and again in 2015 during the visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping and then during the 2017 Doklam crisis.

The crux of the problem lies in both sides denying each other access to the Patrolling Points (PPs) located on the LOP. Earlier Indian troops had been patrolling up to PP 11, 12, 12A and 13 and had not moved beyond that till the perceived

LAC. But lately, the PLA has been preventing Indian troops from even patrolling till these PPs and the phenomenon has become more pronounced after the Doklam stand-off. Unlike the Chinese incursions in the Fingers Area (between Finger four-eight), the Chinese did not physically move into the area.

The Indian patrols can move in vehicles only up to an area called "Bottleneck" beyond which their movement is on foot. A kilometre or so beyond the bottleneck is "Y-Junction" where the route bifurcates, with one fork leading to PP10 to 12 and the other fork leading to PP13. When Indian patrols approach Y-Junction, the PLA troops come in vehicles from a nearby post and stop them from going further up to the LOP. In a *quid pro quo*, the Indian troops prevent the PLA's men from going ahead of the "Bottleneck" area to their perceived LOP.

To ward off any threat in the area, India has also built up a strong force there, including armoured vehicles. The logistics of sustenance of such a large force and keeping the armoured fleet functional in such extreme cold weather conditions is a Herculean task. While India insists on de-escalation in this area simultaneously with the others, the Chinese prefer the *status quo*. As it appears, both sides are unwilling to relent. Indian troops are still in possession of a feature in the lake area that can prove as a "trump card" for hard bargaining with the Chinese to secure our interests in the Depsang plains.



ANIL GUPTA

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

IN THE ELECTION, THE CONSCIOUS PEOPLE OF BENGAL HIT SO MANY FOURS AND SIXES THAT THE SEATS OF THE BJP HAVE BECOME CENTURIES.
—PRIME MINISTER
NARENDRA MODI



I CAN SAY THAT AFTER THE ELECTIONS ARE OVER, THE BJP WILL NOT EVEN GET 70 OUT OF THE TOTAL 294 SEATS.
—WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER
MAMATA BANERJEE

Time to bridge the healthcare gap and tap indigenous potential

There has to be support from the Government for medical Research and Development activities towards advanced health solutions

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to light the disparity among the haves and have-nots in access to healthcare in the country. However, everyone should have working and living conditions that are conducive to good health. The collaboration of various stakeholders in the health sector, who must work as a team as well as individually, is essential to achieve a fairer and healthier world in which all members of society have access to quality healthcare services irrespective of their socio-economic status.

The first step towards achieving universal access to affordable health services is to have uniform, unbiased and economical healthcare facilities available for all. This will help in early detection and treatment of various diseases and infections. Preventive healthcare measures are of



KM CHERIAN

The writer is a Padma Shri awardee and a cardiothoracic surgeon credited with India's first bypass. He is Chairman and CEO of Frontier Lifeline Hospital. The views expressed are personal.

utmost importance in ensuring the overall health of a community.

While we have a plethora of health schemes in India like the 'Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY)' to cater to the health of our citizens, it's the execution part of such schemes that we lack in. Efforts are required to ensure that people are enrolled, databases are updated regularly and citizens avail the benefits of the scheme.

The Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) model can help in achieving the goal of accessible healthcare and realising the targets in the field. Private and Government entities need to collaborate and work in consonance, supplementing each other's effort. They have to come up with specific strategies for various sections, such as those below

the poverty line.

It is imperative to monitor health inequities and help provide better access to affordable and quality healthcare. Many people in our country struggle to avail primary healthcare services. It is important that the Primary Health Centres (PHCs) in every State cater to the healthcare needs of migrant workers who are from varied backgrounds.

Fostering and nurturing indigenous technology is extremely important in building affordable healthcare infrastructure in India. There has to be support from the Government for medical Research and Development (R&D) activities towards advanced health solutions.

As far as possible, bureaucratic hurdles must be removed so that innovators and scientists are able to avail the benefits of various policy



initiatives. There has to be some provision for financial support and tax benefits so as to encourage these R&D entities. For instance, if a patient needs a heart valve replacement, Transcatheter Aortic Valve Replacement (TAVR) is an alternative to conventional heart surgery but the long-lasting results of it are still in question.

It seems that there is an industry-wide push to make

these procedures popular, without really thinking about the long-term results. Currently, these valves are highly expensive in India (approximately ₹22.5 lakh) owing to which a majority of the people cannot afford it. Even the cost of conventional valve replacement (approximately ₹3 lakh) is also out of reach for many. The solution is indigenisation. The Transcatheter Aortic Valve Implantation (TAVI) using Nitinol stents developed by the National Aeronautical Lab (NAL) and the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) is promising in this respect. Unfortunately, there has been no support from any Central Government agency.

We all know that several organs are received only from human donors and there is a wide gap in the supply and

demand. Today, science has reached a stage where these organs could be manufactured using one's own cells through the 3D printing technology or by using a biological scaffold — like a shark fin — on which it could be grown. Shark skin is another potential tissue substrate to create biological tissue in view of its inherent tensile strength and durability. The Governments, both Central and States, as well as financial institutions mainly banks, should support these initiatives.

Unfortunately, due to ignorance on the part of regulatory bodies and other law enforcing agencies, even the licence for producing or manufacturing these has been poorly formulated and prioritised. Another important area is the realm of stem cell research with its tremendous regenerative potential, but we

face too many hurdles in manufacturing and commercial production.

Further, it's critical to create awareness about various health issues in regional languages that people understand. Plus, there is a pressing need to emphasise upon the importance of nutrition and immunity development in maintaining individual health.

Vaccination can help in keeping vaccine-preventable diseases away but there are new viruses and strains that are being discovered every day. Recently, we have witnessed how the second wave of the COVID-19 virus has taken the country by storm. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that our population has a fairly strong immune system, along with affordable healthcare and indigenous R&D in medical science.

Iran Prez calls 60% enrichment an answer to ‘evilness’

Dubai: Iran's President on Wednesday called his country's decision to dramatically increase its uranium enrichment after saboteurs attacked a nuclear site "an answer to your evilness," saying Israel hoped to derail ongoing talks aimed at reviving Tehran's tattered nuclear deal with world powers.

This weekend's sabotage at the Natanz nuclear facility appears to be part of an escalating shadow war between the two countries. Israeli authorities have not commented on the attack, but are

widely suspected of having carried it out.

Iran announced on Tuesday it would increase uranium enrichment up to 60%, its highest level ever, in response to the attack. That could draw further retaliation as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed never to allow Tehran to obtain a nuclear weapon. While Iran's move keeps enrichment below weapons-grade levels of 90%, it is a short step away.

Speaking to his Cabinet, an impassioned President Hassan Rouhani said the first-genera-

tion IR-1 centrifuges that were damaged in the attack would be replaced by advanced IR-6 centrifuges that enrich uranium much faster.

"You wanted to make our hands empty during the talks but our hands are full," Rouhani said.

He was referring to ongoing talks in Vienna that are aimed at finding a way for the United States to re-enter Tehran's nuclear agreement with world powers and have Iran comply again with its limits. The accord, which former President Donald Trump with-

drew the U.S. From in 2018, prevented Iran from stockpiling enough high-enriched uranium to be able to pursue a nuclear weapon in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions.

Rouhani added: "60% enrichment is an answer to your evilness. ... We cut off both of your hands, one with IR-6 centrifuges and another one with 60%."

Rouhani also accused Israel of being behind the Natanz attack.

"Apparently this is a crime by the Zionists. If the Zionists

take an action against our nation, we will respond," he said, without elaborating.

In Jerusalem at a Memorial Day commemoration, Netanyahu appeared to reference Iran.

"We must never remain apathetic to the threats of war and extermination of those who seek to eliminate us," he said.

Rouhani in his comments Wednesday insisted Iran is still hoping that the Vienna talks lead to a negotiated settlement over its program — and the accompanying lifting of pun-

ishing sanctions.

France, Germany and the United Kingdom, all parties to the nuclear deal, issued a joint statement Wednesday expressing their "grave concern" over Iran's decision to increase enrichment.

"This is a serious development since the production of highly enriched uranium constitutes an important step in the production of a nuclear weapon," the countries said. "Iran has no credible civilian need for enrichment at this level."

Saudi Arabia, a

regional rival to Iran, similarly issued a statement, saying enriching at that level "could not be considered a program intended for peaceful purposes."

"The kingdom calls on Iran to avoid escalation and not to subject the security and stability of the region to more tension, and to engage seriously in the current negotiations," Saudi Arabia said.

Iran insists its nuclear program is peaceful, though the West and the International Atomic Energy Agency says Tehran had an organized mil-

itary nuclear program up until the end of 2003. An annual US intelligence report released Tuesday maintained the American assessment that "Iran is not currently undertaking the key nuclear weapons-development activities that we judge would be necessary to produce a nuclear device."

Iran previously had said it could use uranium enriched up to 60 per cent for nuclear-powered ships. However, the Islamic Republic currently has no such ships in its navy.

AP

GLOBE TROTTER

TERROR RE-EMERGES IN BALUCHISTAN

Quetta : Pakistan's Balochistan continues to keep the country's security forces under constant check as terror elements continue to surface from different parts of the province, carrying out terror attacks, targeted killings, kidnappings and bomb blasts, raising serious questions over the performance of the security forces and sending fear down the spines of the locals.

RISE IN AFGHAN CIVILIAN CASUALTIES: REPORT

Kabul: A UN report on Wednesday showed that at least 573 civilians were killed and 1,210 others wounded in the first three months of 2021, which is a 29 per cent increase as compared to the same period last year.

GLOBAL COVID CASELOAD TOPS 137.2 MILLION

Washington: The overall global Covid-19 caseload has topped 137.2 million, while the deaths have surged to more than 2.95 million, according to the Johns Hopkins University.

Nancy invites Biden to address joint session of US Congress

Washington: US House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi has invited President Joe Biden to address a joint session of Congress on April 28.

This would be President Biden's maiden address to a Joint Session of Congress.

"Nearly 100 days ago, when you took the oath of office, you pledged in a spirit of great hope that 'Help Is On The Way'. Now, because of your historic and transformative leadership, Help Is Here!" Pelosi wrote in a letter to Biden on Tuesday.

"In that spirit, I am writing to invite you to address a Joint Session of Congress on April 28, to share your vision for addressing the challenges and opportunities of this historic moment," she said.

PTI

PUBLIC NOTICE

General public is hereby informed that **Sh. Shehraj Yadav** S/o **Sh. Dudhmat Yadav** is intending to sell Residential Plot No. 23, area measuring 26 Sq. Yds. out of Kharsa No. 1014/2, Situated in the area of Subhash Park Village Makarpur, Khora Colony, Pargana Lon, Tehsil & District Ghazabad, U.P. to **Smt. Sanyu Devi** W/o **Sy. Kumar Krishna Prasad**, to be financed by **M/s. DMH Housing Finance Pvt. Ltd.** The Original GPA dt. 05.03.1999 vide doc. No. 2029 pertaining to the aforesaid property has been lost and IAR NO. 173554/2021 has been registered on 05.02.2021 with UP Police. If any person(s) have any objection(s) or claim in this property, then contact the undersigned within 14 days from date of this notice on below address, failing which it will be assumed that there are no claims or issues in respect of the aforesaid property.

Raghav Tiwari (Advocate)
Ct. 830, Pariatal House Courts, New Delhi - 110001
Mob. - 91-8076186326

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given by our client **Mrs. Rakesh Kumar Paul** that the partnership firm **M/s Aloha Enterprises** subsisting between **Mrs. Rakesh Kumar Paul** and **Mr. Rahul Mamtani** having Franchise of **Geetanjali Salon** at C-364, Upper GF, Vikaspuri, Delhi-110018 is dissolved w.e.f. 16.04.2021 and our client shall not be responsible in any manner with respect to the acts, deeds or things done by **Mr. Rahul Mamtani** for and on behalf of the firm.

Sd/- Yogesh Goel (Advocate)
Enrl. No. D/1956/2010
742/45, Shambhu Nagar, Tri Nagar, Delhi-35

LOST & FOUND

I, **Ashok Wadia** son of Late **Shri Krishan Lal**, authorised signatory of **M/s Dals Overseas Private Limited** having its registered office at A-186, Okhla Industrial Area Phase-1, New Delhi-110020 have lost the original perpetual lease deed of property No. A-186, Okhla Industrial Area Phase-1, New Delhi-110020, in the name of **M/s. Attock Saw Mills**. If any body found it please contact at 08373919137.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Known to all that my client **Nirmal Bafna** is the owner of land measuring 6 bighas, Kharsa nos. 77/55/1, 25/2min, 16/2min, 25/1min, Village Ghehra, Delhi-120081 And he has lost original three sale deeds dt. 28.04.2008 related to above property, i.e. (1)Sale deed executed by **Vijay Krishan Khanna** in favour of **Nirmal Bafna** and (2) Sale deed executed by **Ajay Krishan Khanna** in favour of **Nirmal Bafna** and (3)Sale deed executed by **Kumud Krishan Khanna** in favour of **Nirmal Bafna**. Police complaint dt. 12.04.2021 was lodged with Delhi Police. It is informed that any deal with said lost deeds by any person except my said client regarding said property, shall be deemed as null and void. If any person found said deeds or is having right in said property then he may contact and handover the same and apprise his claim to undersigned and within 8 days of this publication.

AD REM LEGAL SOLUTION
Ch. No. 760, Dwarka Court Sector-10 Dwarka, New Delhi-75
M:- 9899013918

Hong Kong's delayed legislative elections set for December

AP ■ HONG KONG

Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam has said that the semi autonomous Chinese territory's legislative elections will take place in December, more than a year after they were postponed by authorities citing public health risks from the coronavirus pandemic.

Lam also said on Tuesday that laws will be amended so that inciting voters not to vote or to cast blank or invalid votes will be made illegal, although voters themselves are free to boycott voting or cast votes as they wish.

"When a person willfully obstructs or prevents any person from voting at an election, we will consider it corrupt conduct," said Lam.

Lam said that the elections will take place on December 19. The elections were initially slated to be held last September.

Lam was speaking a day ahead of the first reading of draft amendments to various laws in the city's legislature, to accommodate Beijing's planned changes to the city's electoral system.

Beijing in March announced changes to Hong Kong's electoral system, expanding the number of seats in the legislature while reducing the number of directly-elected seats from 35 to 20.

The move is part of a two-phase effort to rein in political protest

and opposition in Hong Kong, which is part of China but has had a

more liberal political system as a former British colony. China imposed

a national security law on Hong Kong last year and is following up

this year with a revamp of the electoral process.

The crackdown comes in the wake of months of pro-democracy protests in 2019 that brought hundreds of thousands to the streets and turned violent as the government resisted the movement's demands.

In the current 70-member legislature, voters elect half the members and the other half are chosen by constituencies representing various professions and interest groups.

Myanmar charges doctors over civil disobedience protests

Yangon: Myanmar's ruling junta has charged at least 19 medical doctors for participating in civil disobedience protests against the military's February 1 coup, a state-run newspaper reported on Wednesday.

Doctors, nurses and medical students have marched and joined strikes to show their opposition to the military takeover that ousted Aung San Suu Kyi's democratically elected government and put a halt to the progress Myanmar had made toward greater democratization after five decades of military rule.

The doctors charged are accused of supporting and participating in the civil disobedience movement "with the aim of deteriorating the state administrative machinery," the

Global New Light of Myanmar newspaper wrote.

The military government has already issued arrest warrants for 100 people active in the fields of literature, film, theater arts, music and journalism on charges of spreading information that undermines the stability of the country and the rule of law.

This isn't the first time doctors have been targeted. Earlier this month in Mandalay, the country's second-biggest city, security forces used stun grenades and fired guns to break up a march by medical workers protesting the army's takeover. The online news site The Irrawaddy reported that four doctors were arrested.

Protests continued Wednesday across Myanmar even as people boycotted the

official celebration of Thingyan, the country's traditional New Year, usually a time for family reunions and merry-making.

In leaflets and social media posts last week, people were asked not to hold any Thingyan celebrations, saying it would be disrespectful to "fallen martyrs" to enjoy the festival.

The government's violent response to anti-coup demonstrations has seen 714 people killed by security officials, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners.

Last week, at least 82 people were killed in one day in a crackdown by security forces on protesters, according to reports from independent local media and AAPP.

AP

US President to present on Wednesday details of plan to withdraw all troops from Afghan

Washington: US President Joe Biden plans to present on Wednesday the details of his plans to have all American troops out of war-torn Afghanistan by September 11 this year, the 20th anniversary of the 2001 terrorist attack on the twin towers in New York.

Ahead of a formal announcement, a senior official said Biden has decided to draw down the remaining US troops from Afghanistan and finally end the US war there after 20 years. There are currently 2,500 US troops in Afghanistan.

"The president will deliver remarks tomorrow on the way forward in Afghanistan, including plans and timeline for withdrawing US troops in close coordination with our partners, allies and the Afghan government, also his commitment to focusing on threats and oppor-

tunities we face around the world," White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said on Tuesday.

According to an official, Biden has reached a conclusion that the United States will complete its drawdown and remove its forces from Afghan before September 11.

"We will begin an orderly drawdown of the remaining forces before May 1 and plan to have all US troops out of the country before the 20th anniversary of 9/11," the official said. He said the withdrawal of troops is not conditions-based.

"The president has judged that a conditions-based approach, which has been the case in the past two decades, is a recipe for staying in Afghanistan forever," said the senior official.

AP

EU to negotiate major vaccine contract extension with Pfizer

Brussels: EU Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen announced plans Wednesday for a major contract extension for COVID-19

accines with Pfizer stretch-

ing to 2023.

In a sign of confidence in a company that has been a mainstay of Europe's vaccination drive so far, von der Leyen said the EU will start negotiat-

ing to buy 1.8 billion doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine through 2023.

Von der Leyen expressed full confidence in the technology used for the Pfizer-

BioNTech vaccine, which is different from the one used for the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine.

"We need to focus on the technologies that have proven their worth," von der Leyen

said.

European Commission currently has a portfolio of 2.3 billion doses from a half dozen companies and is negotiating more contracts.

AP

‘China-India border tensions ‘remain high’ despite some force pullbacks’

Washington: China-India border tensions "remain high" despite some force pullbacks this year, the US intelligence community has told Congress, asserting that Beijing seeks to use coordinated, whole-of-government tools to demonstrate its growing strength and compel regional neighbours to acquiesce to its preferences, including its claims over disputed territory.

The Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) said in its latest annual threat assessment report to

the US Congress that Beijing will continue to promote the multi-billion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to expand its economic, political and military presence abroad, while trying to reduce waste and exploitative practices, which have led to international criticism.

The BRI is a multi-billion-dollar initiative launched by Chinese President Xi when he came into power in 2013. It aims to link Southeast Asia, Central Asia, the Gulf region, Africa and Europe with a net-

work of land and sea routes.

"China-India border tensions remain high, despite some force pullbacks this year. China's occupation since May 2020 of contested border areas is the most serious escalation in decades and led to the first lethal border clash between the two countries since 1975," the report said.

"As of mid-February, after multiple rounds of talks, both sides were pulling back forces and equipment from some sites along the disputed border," it said.

PTI

New Zealand bans live cow exports due to welfare concerns

Wellington: New Zealand announced Wednesday it is banning the export of live cows and other farm animals by sea due to welfare concerns.

Agriculture Minister Damien O'Connor said the ban would take up to two years to be fully enforced to give those who had invested in the business a chance to transition out.

The country temporarily suspended such exports last year after a ship carrying 5,800 cattle that was bound for China sank in stormy weather near Japan, killing more than 40 crew members and the animals. Officials had already begun a review of live exports the previous year.

AP

Ex-US officials visit Taiwan amid China tensions

Taipei: A former US senator and two ex-State Department officials arrived in Taiwan on Wednesday for talks with the island's leaders at a time of tense relations with China.

Chris Dodd, a Democratic senator from Connecticut from 1981 to 2011, was accompanied by two former deputy secretaries of state, James Steinberg from the Democratic Obama administration and Richard Armitage, who served under Republican President George W Bush.

The delegation will meet President Tsai Ing-wen on Thursday and exchange views with other government departments during their three-day visit, the Foreign Ministry said.

The US has repeatedly expressed concern about Chinese military activity near Taiwan including frequent military flights.

Taiwan Foreign Ministry

spokesperson Joanne Ou said the government welcomed the delegation from President Joe Biden's administration, whose visit "conveys the US's firm friendship and support for Taiwan."

China proposes unification with Taiwan under the "one country, two systems" model it has enforced in the former British colony of Hong Kong, virtually eliminating political opposition and strongly restricting freedom of speech. A large majority of Taiwanese favor the current system of de facto independence while maintaining close economic ties with China.

The US has no unofficial relations with Taiwan but is bound under American law to ensure the island can defend itself from attacks and to treat all threats against it as a matter of "grave concern."

AP

Lanka bans 11 extremist groups, including ISIS, al-Qaeda

Colombo: Sri Lanka has banned 11 hardline Islamist organisations, including the Islamic State (ISIS) and al-Qaeda, for their links to extremist activities in the country, according to an official announcement.

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa under a special gazette notification issued on Tuesday proscribed the radical groups under the Prevention of Terrorism (temporary) Provisions Act.

The notification specifies that any person who acts in contravention or conspires to act would be sentenced to prison terms between 20 and 10 years.

Among the banned organisations are local Muslim groups, including the Sri Lanka Islamic Students Movement.

In the immediate aftermath of the 2019 Easter Sunday suicide bomb attacks, Sri Lanka had banned the local jihadi group National Thowheeth Jamaath (NTJ) and two other outfits.

The NTJ suicide bomb attacks on churches and luxury hotels here had killed 270 people while injuring 500 others.

A special probe panel appointed in 2019 by former President Maithripala Sirisena had recommended the banning of Muslim extremist organisations who advocate radicalism in the Buddhist-majority country.

The report also asked for the banning of an extremist Buddhist group, BBS or the

Forces of Buddhist Power. The panel said that the BBS' actions had contributed to the radicalisation of Muslims.

The gazette, however, has excluded the Buddhist group. The panel report was rejected by all political parties despite the head of the local Catholic church Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith urging the implementation of its recommendations which he said would give some justice to the victims of the bombings.

PTI

Queen returns to royal duties after husband death

London: Britain's Queen Elizabeth II has returned to royal duties, four days after her husband Prince Philip – the Duke of Edinburgh's death last Friday.

The 94-year-old monarch hosted an audience with Earl Peel for his retirement as he formally stepped down as Lord Chamberlain, in charge of organising royal ceremonies. During a private in-person event held at Windsor Castle on Tuesday, the Queen accept-

ed her former royal aide's wand and office insignia.

"Earl Peel had an audience of The Queen today, delivered up his Wand and Insignia of Office as Lord Chamberlain and the Badge of Chancellor of the Royal Victorian Order and took leave upon relinquishing his appointment as Lord Chamberlain, when Her Majesty invested him with the Royal Victorian Chain," read the details in the Court Circular, a daily list of the

official events attended by the Queen and the royal family.

According to their official website, the royal family carries out more than 2,000 official engagements throughout the UK and overseas every year.

While the UK's national mourning after the passing of Prince Philip on April 9 will run until the morning after his funeral at St George's Chapel in Windsor Castle on Saturday, the royal family is observing two weeks of mourning.

A royal official said members of the family would continue to undertake engagements "appropriate to the circumstances".

Over the weekend, Prince Andrew – the Queen's son, said his father's death had left a "huge void" in his mother's life. Earl Peel would have overseen the funeral arrangements – referred to as Operation Forth Bridge – before handing responsibility to his successor a week before his death.

Former MI5 spy chief Baron Parker has been in place as the new Lord Chamberlain since April 1 and will be in overall charge of Saturday's funeral.

Coronavirus lockdown measures mean only 30 people are able to attend the Royal Ceremonial event, which will include the Queen's close family. Inside the chapel, the royal family will wear face masks and keep to social distancing rules.

PTI

Hiring to grow by 7% in Apr-June: Report

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The intent to hire in the current quarter is likely to rise by 7 per cent over the previous three months if further lockdowns and workplace operating rules are not enforced, mainly driven by demand in healthcare, pharmaceuticals, educational services, e-commerce and technology start-ups and IT, according to a report.

In fact, out of the 21 sectors reviewed, more than 8 sectors will witness a 9-11 per cent rise in their intent to hire in the current quarter, TeamLease Employment Outlook Report has revealed.

“Indian economy has been regaining the lost ground and the same was reflecting in hiring as well. Be it the IMF, OECD or Fitch, all have been positive and this was bolstering the business sentiment and

the intent to hire. However, if we resort to lockdowns it will derail and further delay the recovery.

“In fact, it will impact the scope of growth in employment negatively. If we continue with our efforts and not opt for lockdown, the business optimism will remain intact and so the hiring.

The intent to hire will grow from 27 per cent point in January-March to 34 per cent in the current quarter,” TeamLease Services co-founder and executive vice president Rituparna Chakraborty said.

The report is based on a survey among 712 small, medium and large companies across the 21 sectors pan-India from January to June.

The report further revealed that healthcare, pharmaceuticals, educational services, e-commerce and technology

start-ups and information technology are the key sectors, who are likely to ramp up their talent pool.

In fact, more than 58 per cent of the corporates in healthcare and pharmaceuticals sectors, which is nearly 11 per cent higher than the January-March period, are keen on hiring talent.

Educational services, e-commerce and technology start-ups and IT have also indicated similar enthusiasm with 55 per cent, 51 per cent and 50 per cent the companies, respectively, expressing intent to hire.

According to the report, while there is an overall positivity, power and energy, BPO/ITeS, media and entertainment, consulting, marketing and advertising, travel and hospitality may take more time

to reach the kind of intent to hire enthusiasm that the other sectors are expressing.

Further, from a geography perspective, while metro and tier I cities (32 per cent) take the lead in terms of overall intent to hire, tier-III cities are not far behind.

Delving deep into cities barring for Kochi, Coimbatore, Nagpur and Kolkata most of the towns have expressed a growth in keenness to hire.

Meanwhile, with regard to functional areas similar to the previous quarter, sales (41 per cent) and marketing (34 per cent) continues to be the most sought after functional roles.

However, when it comes to hierarchy the preferences seem to have changed substantially as the intent to hire senior-level talent has dropped by 4 per cent point over January-March, the report added.

70% employers resume hiring for blue collar jobs: Survey

Mumbai:With the vaccination drive in full swing in the country and high optimism on the economic recovery, the hiring of blue collar workers is resurging as 70% of employers polled in a survey said they have resumed recruitment. Of the 70 % employers polled in the second edition of OIX People Survey, nearly 16% said they are hiring 100 per cent of capacity, while 54% are hiring up to 50% of capacity. About 60% of employers stated that they have faced no challenges in availability of talent, despite the fact that a large number of gig workers had preferred to return to their native place at the height of the pandemic.

Recruitment activity logs 2% drop in March over previous month: Report

■ MUMBAI

The recruitment activity saw a drop of 2 per cent in March 2021 over the previous month, mainly dragged by a decline in job postings in sectors including banking/financial services, insurance, production and manufacturing, according to a report.

The overall data indicate that there was a slight decline in job posting activity in March, according to Monster Employment Index, a job analysis report by Monster.Com, a Qness Company.

Markets undeterred by Covid, fundraising increases

■ NEW DELHI

Despite the uncertainty prevailing in FY 2020-21 owing to Covid-19 pandemic, fundraising in FY 2020-21 was better than that in FY 2019-20 for both Public Issues and Rights Issues, the finance ministry said in a statement on Wednesday.

During FY 2020-21, ₹46,029.71 crore and ₹ 64,058.61 crore were raised through Public Issues and Rights Issue respectively, as against ₹21,382.35 crore and ₹55,669.79 crore raised last year. This is an increase of 115 per cent and 15 per cent respectively in FY 2020-21 as compared to last year.In FY21, in all 56 public issues were launched, including 55 initial public offers

(IPO) and only one follow on public offer (FPO). The number of rights issue was also a high of 21.A finance ministry tweet said that last year around 2003 issues of Corporate Bonds for an amount of ₹7,82,427.39 crore also happened, surpassing the amount raised (₹6,89,686.19 crore) through 1,821 issues for the fiscal year 2019-20.Thus, while the number of issues increased by 10 per cent in FY 2020-21, the amount raised increased by 13.5 per cent as compared to the previous financial year.

With regard to mutual funds, the finance ministry said that Indian capital market has shown its resilience to withstand the ripples caused by exogenous shocks like the pandemic.

Tech stocks turn attractive for mutual funds amid pandemic

■ MUMBAI

Technology stocks were among the favoured stocks among mutual funds amid the pandemic.

Technology sector saw a massive rise in weightage in FY21 to 11.9 per cent (up 300 bps YoY). The sector is now the second in terms of sectoral allocation by MFs, said a Motilal Oswal Financial Services Report. A year ago, it was in the third position.

In terms of value increase on a month-on-month increase in March, three of the top five stocks were from technology - Infosys (up Rs 7,000 crore), TCS (up Rs 3,960 crore), and HCL Tech (up Rs 1,690 crore).

Stocks that saw a maximum decline in value MoM were of Reliance Industries, SBI, ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank, Axis Bank, Bharti Airtel, Coal India, HDFC, Vedanta, and Info Edge.

The Fund Folio report also said that the year saw a notable change in the sector and stock allocation of funds. The weightage of domestic cyclical increased by 160 basis points to 58 per cent, led by an increase in the weightage of automo-

biles, NBFCs, cement, real estate, chemicals, and infrastructure.

Weightage of defensive stocks decreased 100 basis points to 32.5 per cent, led by consumer, utilities, and telecom. Global cyclical's weightage, too, fell 60 basis points to 9.5 per cent.

The consumer sector slipped to fourth place from second place a year ago, with a 240 bps decreased in weightage to 7.4 per cent.

Metals improved its position to 14 from 16 a year ago, with the weightage increasing by 80 bps to 2.6 per cent.

Assets under management (AUM) of the mutual fund industry witnessed a growth of 41 per cent in the last financial year to touch a new high of Rs 31.4 lakh crore. The growth was primarily led by an increase in AUM of equity funds (Rs 4.09 lakh crore), income funds (Rs 2.39 trillion) and other ETFs (Rs 1.29 lakh crore), the report said.Equity AUM, including ELSS and index funds, of domestic mutual funds reached new highs of Rs 10.2 lakh crore (up 67 per cent YoY) in FY21, led by a rise in market indices.

Global stocks follow Wall St higher after US inflation rises

■ BEIJING

Global stock markets and Wall Street futures rose Wednesday after traders shrugged off higher US inflation and a decline in Japanese machinery orders.

London and Paris opened higher while Shanghai, Hong Kong and Seoul rose. Tokyo was off less than 0.5%.

On Tuesday, Wall Street's benchmark S&P 500 index climbed 0.3% to a new high, propelled by tech and consumer stocks on optimism the vaccine rollout will allow business activity to return to normal. Johnson & Johnson fell 1.3% after US regulators suspended use of its single-dose vaccine to investigate possibly dangerous blood clots.

The US government reported consumer prices increased by a stronger-than-expected 0.6% in March, the fastest rate since 2012. Higher inflation normally fuels fears interest rates might be raised to keep prices stable, but the Federal Reserve has said the economy will be allowed to “run hot” to ensure a recovery

is in place.

Traders “took the well-telegraphed inflation pick-up” in stride,” Stephen Innes of Axi said in a report. Markets also are “seemingly unfazed” by the J&J suspension.

In early trading, London's FTSE 100 was up less than 0.1% at 6,896.64. Frankfurt's DAX declined less than 0.1% to 15,222.10 while the CAC 40 in Paris gained 0.2% to 6,196.15.

On Wall Street, the future for the S&P 500 index was up less than 0.1% while that for the Dow Jones Industrial Average was unchanged.The Dow, which includes J&J, fell 0.2% on Tuesday. The Nasdaq, with more technology stocks, gained 1.1%.

In Asia, the Shanghai Composite Index advanced 0.6% to 3,416.72 and the Hang Seng in Hong Kong added 1.3% to 28,855.83.The Nikkei 225 in Tokyo shed 0.4% to 29,620.99 after government data showed February machinery orders fell by an unexpectedly wide margin of 8.5% from the previous month, adding to concern about the country's recovery.

Land value within 500 metre of upcoming metro corridors to rise 10-15%

■ MUMBAI

As several cities add metro rail to their public transport facilities or extend their existing networks, a JLL report said that land value within 500 metre of upcoming metro corridors is expected to increase by 10-15 per cent, according to a JLL report.

Noting that India was introduced to the metro rail as an alternative mode of transport three decades, the report said: “Since then, the advantages of the metro rail system have increased many-folds. Primarily it has been the enhanced connectivity to the suburbs of the city, thus enabling distribution of the city population to a larger extent of land resulting to congestion reduction in the city.”

Covering a total of 760.62 km across India with another 578.34 km under construction, the past two decades has seen a tremendous growth of the metro rail.

Cities including Kochi, Chennai, Bengaluru, Nagpur and Nashik have seen significant expansion of new metro lines, which was highlighted by the Finance Minister in the

Union Budget hearing in January 2021.

Further, two new technologies including MetroLite and MetroNeoare are being planned to provide affordable connectivity options in tier II cities and peripheral parts of tier I cities.

“The real estate market has seen a steady growth along the metro corridors, owing to increase in developments alongside the routes. Furthermore, on an average, the land value within 500 metre of metro corridors has increased by 15-20 per cent, especially in residential and commercial areas,” said A. Shankar, Head - Strategic Consulting and Valuation Advisory, India, JLL.

He further said that it has been observed that appreciation in land value has been on a rise after the metro operation and increase by 2-5 per cent annually over other locations, compared to the construction and planning phase.The deployment of metro corridor directly impacts the real estate sector as it increases the land value, land use change and densification alongside the metro corridor.

Bharti Airtel restructures its corporate structure

■ NEW DELHI

Bharti Airtel on Wednesday announced a new corporate structure with focus on four verticals - Digital, India, International and Infrastructure.

The new structure envisages Airtel Digital Ltd folding into listed entity, Bharti Airtel. This will now house all of the digital assets spanning Wynk Music, Airtel X stream, Airtel Thanks, Mitra Payments platform used by a million retailers, Airtel Ads, Airtel IQ, Airtel Secure, Airtel Cloud and all future digital products and services, the company said in a statement. The telecom business of the company will be housed in a newly-created entity, Airtel Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of Bharti Airtel. Bharti Telemedia, the 100 per cent arm operating DTH services, will sit alongside Airtel Ltd for now.

There is need for positive regulatory framework for internet cos: Facebook India head

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Facebook India Head Ajit Mohan said there is a need for a “forward-looking and positive regulatory framework” for internet companies, and that organisations also need to be more transparent about how they use customer data.

The executive noted that India has seen an “explosive shift” in terms of access to the internet and this expanded access gas-driven the emergence of entirely new models, a feat that no other country has managed to do so much in such a short period of time.

“We absolutely do believe that the internet needs new rules, not just in India but around the world. We operated for a very long time with not enough clarity on the traffic lights. And this is the moment when we should think especially in democratic societies, think about how we navigate complex issues where there are competing trade-offs. I'm hoping that we can emerge with a very forward-looking and positive regulatory framework,” he said at the Raisina Dialogue.

Mohan, Vice President and Managing Director, Facebook India, said that there are a few areas that the regulations can focus on.

“One is transparency mandates. Make it the company's to be more transparent about how data is used. Second, there's a lot of concern about algorithms, and how machines are controlling people's lives. I think we would be very keen to lean in and say how do we protect user agency where people have the opportunity to make explicit choices that drive algorithms,” he said.

Mohan added that a lot of the conversation has been about how large tech companies benefit from large sets of data.

“I think we have been very forward in saying we are open to creating frameworks that still protect the interests of privacy and safety when data moves around, but make it easier for users to move data between competing platforms. I do believe that we are a partner in this. But I agree with the framework that we need rules and we hope those will be forward-looking and positive,” he said.

NORTHERN RAILWAY
Principal Chief Materials Manager
Headquarters Office, Baroda House, New Delhi-110001
Mail ID : salenr365@gmail.com

No. 117-S-Sales-Auction Programme- 2021-22

Dated. 12.04.2021

e-AUCTION NOTICE NO. June/2021

E-Auction will be conducted for disposal of Ferrous Scrap, Non Ferrous Scrap, Other Misc Scrap, Condemned Loco, Coaches and Wagons, Scrap Rail and other scrap P Way material. Used lead Acid Batteries/Used oil/Refused oil will be sold only to recyclers registered with State Pollution Control Board. Auction programme is as under.

e-AUCTION DATES FOR 'June, 2021.

S. No	Depot conducting auction	1 st round	2 nd round	3 rd round	4 th round
1	Alambagh/Lucknow 0522-2451257	1	8	15	22
2	Shakurbasti 011-27015387	2	9	16	23
3	Jagadhari 01732-252388	7	14	21	28
4	Sr.DMM/LKO 0522-2234756	7	14	21	28
5	Sr.DMM/FZR 01632-244154	3	10	17	24
6	Sr.DMM/UMB 0171-2611203	2	9	16	23
7	Sr.DMM/MB 0591-2413141	3	10	17	24
8	Sr.DMM/DLI 011-23365311	1	8	15	22

E-Auction will be held from 10:00 AM on wards as per above programme

- The details of item to be sold in auction will be available in catalogue at **www.ireps.gov.in**.
- The intending purchasers may inspect the scrap material before the auction during working hours at nominated locations.
- To participate in e-auction, purchasers need to get themselves registered with The details on last sold rates in auctions are available at **www.railnet.gov.in**.
- ireps. For further details regarding registration and other conditions of e-auction, please visit Railway website '**www.ireps.gov.in**'.

(Amir Chand)
Dy. Chief Material Manager/Sig/C-I

846/2021

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

PUBLIC NOTICE	PUBLIC NOTICE
My client HDFC Ltd. who had disburse a Loan to Mrs. Kusum and Mr. Nitin Arora against the mortgage of Property bearing No. A-1006, 10th Floor, Trident Embassy, Greater Noida, Gautam Budh Nagar, U.P. has come to the notice that the original property documents viz Agreement to sell dated 29.12.2017 executed between M/s. HT Media Ltd and Mrs.Kusum and Mr. Nitin Arora is not traceable. It is hereby appealed to the general public that whosoever finds the document mentioned hereinabove may kindly return the same to the HDFC Ltd., The Capital Court, Munirka, Outer Ring Road, Olof Palme Marg, New Delhi-110067.	It is for information of general public that the original Sale Deed of Upper Ground Floor of Property No. C-40, situated in Shashi Garden, Mayur Vihar-1, Delhi-110091, jointly owned by Sh. Vikrant Vikram Singh and Sh. Uttam Kumar, by virtue of Sale Deed duly registered as document no. 2778, addl. book no. 1, volume no. 5263, pages 125 to 130, dated 15-02-2011, sub-Registrar-VIII, Delhi, has been lost/misplaced. If anybody has any right, title or interest in the said property and/or has any type of objection in the same, may approach to the above noted owners within 10 days from the date of publication of this notice.
Karnail Singh, Advocate Ch. No. 153, Saket Court Complex, Saket, New Delhi	Naqi Asad (Advocate) 214/4, New Lahore, Shastri Nagar, Delhi-110031, Enrl. No. D-761/200



Retail Asset Centre, Delhi: Lower Ground Floor and Upper Ground Floor, Himalaya House, K.G. Marg, Delhi-110001.
Also at: Axis Bank Ltd., Axis House, Tower T-2, 2nd Floor, I-14, Sector-128, Noida Expressway, Jaypee Greens Wishtown, Noida (U.P.)-201301

Corporate Office: 'Axis House', Block-B, Bombay Dyeing Mills Compound, Pandurang Budhkar Marg, Worli, Mumbai-400025, Registered Office: 'Trishul', 3rd floor, opposite Samartheswar Temple, Law garden, Ellisbridge, Ahmedabad-380006

POSSESSION NOTICE UNDER SARFAESI ACT 2002

Whereas

The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of Axis Bank Ltd. under the Securitisation, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with Rule 9 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) rules 2002, issued demand notice upon the Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s)/ Mortgageor(s) mentioned below, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

The Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s)/ Mortgageor(s) having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s)/ Mortgageor(s) and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/ here under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on the below-mentioned dates.

The Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s)/ Mortgageor(s) in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of Axis Bank Ltd.

The Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s)/ Mortgageor(s) attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

Name of Borrower / Co-borrower	Description of Property	1.Date of Demand Notice 2.Amount in Possession 3.Amount in Demand (Rs.)
1.Mr. Hitesh Agarwal S/O Mr. Ramesh Chand Agarwal U-23/35 Ground Floor, Pink Town House, U Block, DLF Phase-III, Gurgaon-122022, Haryana Also At: Mr. Hitesh Agarwal S/O Mr. Ramesh Chand Agarwal U-23/35 together with 28A Deepali Jeevan Jyoti Nagar, Kishangarh, Madanganj, Ajmer, Rajasthan-305801 Also At: Mr. Hitesh Agarwal S/O Mr. Ramesh Chand Agarwal U-23/35 Floor, Pink Town House, U Block, DLF Phase-III, Gurgaon-122022, Haryana	Immovable Asset: Residential Ground Floor Dwelling Unit called 'Town House' having its covered area of 76.50 Sq. Mtrs. (823 Sq. Ft.) bearing No. U-23/35 together with undivided prorate share of land in Plot No. 35, Road No. U-23 measuring 125.07 Sq. Mtrs. in the Residential Colony Known as DLF City Phase-III, (Earlier known as DLF Qutub Enclave Complex), situated in and around Village Nathpaur, Tehsil & Distt. Gurgaon (Haryana) Bounded as under:-	1.23-09-2019 2.12-04-2021 3.Rs.71,16,421/- (PHR005602405672) & Rs.4,95,378/- (HTR005602473530) Plus further Interest, incidental expenses and cost
2. Mrs. Khushboo Garg W/o Mr. Hitesh Agarwal W/o Mr. Hitesh Agarwal U-23/35 Ground Floor, Pink Town House, U Block, DLF Phase-III, Gurgaon-122022, Haryana Also At: Mrs. Khushboo Garg W/o Mr. Hitesh Agarwal Shastri Nagar Colony, Ajmer Road Kerkri, Ajmer, Rajasthan-305404 Mrs. Khushboo Garg W/o Mr. Hitesh Agarwal 28A Deepali Jeevan Jyoti Nagar, Kishangarh, Madanganj, Ajmer, Rajasthan-305801	East: Property No. U-23/36 West: Property No. U-23/34 North: Road South: Property No. U-22/19	

The above-mentioned Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s)/ Mortgageor(s) are hereby given a 30 days' Notice to repay the amount, else the mortgaged properties will be sold on the expiry of 30 days' from the date of publication of this Notice, as per the provisions under the Rules 8 and 9 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.

Date : 15-04-2021
Place : Gurugram

Sd/-,
Authorized Officer,
Axis Bank Ltd.,



Ram Devi

General public is hereby informed that one lady namely **Ram Devi, W/o Sh. Shiv Dayal, R/o H.No. H-2/5 Budh Vihar, Phase-I, Delhi.** Age about 40 yrs., Height 5", Wheatish Complexion, Long face, Medium Built wearing dark blue colour suit-salwar and chappal in feet has been missing since **22.03.2021** from the area of **PS Vijay Vihar, Delhi.**

In this regard a case **DD No. 61-A Dt. 22.03.2021** has been lodged at **PS Vijay Vihar, Delhi.** Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the missing lady but no clue has come to light so far. Any person having any information or clue about this missing lady may kindly inform to the following.

E-mail: cbc@cbi.gov.in
Fax: 011-23011334
Ph.: 011-23014046
011-23015218

S.H.O.,
PS Vijay Vihar, Delhi.
Ph.: 011-27061294, 27061295



YOGENDER KUMAR

General public is hereby informed that one person namely **Yogender Kumar Gupta S/o Sh. Anand Swaroop Gupta R/o H.No.2, Pkt-16, Sec-24, Rohini, Delhi** has been missing/kidnapped from the area of PS: Budh Vihar, Delhi since 24.03.2021. In this regard, a case **DD No. 51A Dated 24.03.2021** has been registered at **P.S. Budh Vihar, Delhi.** The description of the missing person as under.

Age: 47 Years, **Complexion:** Wheatish, **Height:** 6', **Face:** Round, **Built:** Medium, **Wearing:** Blue colour shirt & jeans and black colour shoes in feet. Sincere efforts have been made by the local police to trace out him but no clue has come to light so far. If anyone has any information about the missing/kidnapped person then please inform P.S. Budh Vihar, Delhi at following Tel No./e-mail: cbc@cbi.gov.in and Website: http://cbi.nic.in

Ph: 011-24368638, 24368641
Fax No. 011-24368639

Sd/- S.H.O.
PS: Budh Vihar, Delhi
Ph: 011-27052772/73



RAJESHWARI



SOORAJ

General public is hereby informed that one lady Namely **Rajeshwari W/o Sonpal R/o E-82, Prem Nagar-I, Kirari, Delhi** has been missing/kidnapped from her house since dated 16.03.2021 with her 8 years old son namely Sooraj S/o Sonal, Height 3' 6" Face: Round. In this regard, a case **DD NO. 46A Dt. 18.03.2021** has been registered at **P.S. Prem Nagar, Delhi.** The description of the missing lady is as under.

Age: 35 Years **Complexion:** Shallow, **Height:** 5', **Face:** Round, **Wearing:** White Colour Saaree. Sincere efforts have been made by the local police to trace out her but no clue has come to light so far. If anyone has any information about the missing/kidnapped lady and her son then please inform P.S. Prem Nagar, Delhi at following Tel No./ e-mail: cbc@cbi.gov.in and Website: http://cbi.nic.in providing clue about the person.

Ph: 011-24368638, 24368641
Fax No. 011-24368639

Sd/- SHO
PS: Prem Nagar, Delhi
PH.: 9315164042, 9850870322

STEP TAKEN TO RELIEVE JAIPUR TRAFFIC

A major step has been achieved for solving the traffic congestion in Jaipur by creating the Jaipur Central Region as a traffic light-free city. In a meeting, chaired by the Minister of Urban Development, Shanti Dhariwal, a few important decisions were taken. It was attended by Gaurav Goel, IAS, JDC, VS Sunda, Chief Engineer, JDA and Anoop Bartaria, Consultant Designer and CMD, Sincere Architects along with their team.

The feasibility report of four intersections — B2 Bypass, Laxmi Mandir Tiraha, OTS Crossing and Jawahar Circle — were discussed and approved.

These projects have been designed to create a confluence of art, heritage and technology in pursuit to remove the traffic lights on these junctions. The feasibility report included the construction of heritage structures on all the four crossings conserving the heritage and architectural style of Jaipur. In all the crossings, the salient features of them are as under:

B2 BYPASS

- A grand arch in marble and stone craft will be built on the B2 Bypass, which will be 80 feet high.
- An underpass connecting the Jawahar Circle to the Mansarovar side will be built. The underpass will be six lanes, which will be unique and decorated with traditional murals of art on both the sides. For turning traffic, two clovers are to be built.
- A detailed traffic survey and analysis has already been conducted.
- Smart underpasses and smart cloverleaf bridges will be created, which will be equipped with all IT based systems and IoT platforms.
- Street illumination and heritage lighting has been made a part of this project.
- Beautiful marble sculptures and traditional scenes of Rajputana will be sculptured in marble and metal on the heritage structures.
- First time in Jaipur, you will have pedestrian crossing, which will be totally ramped. It is going to be friendly for physically-challenged and senior citizens.
- A crossing for cyclists along with pedestrian crossovers will be made.
- The project will tantamount to multiple benefits — it will save fuel around 9.5 lakh liters every year, which will, in turn, result in substantial reduction in air pollution and improve its quality; ease of travel will result in ease of living; it will



also result in reduction of stress levels in travellers as there will be no congestion and of course, will save time.

JAWAHAR CIRCLE

- The traffic light on the interface of JLN Road and Jawahar Circle is being removed by creating two major entry transitions, cuts in the median towards Jawahar Circle. The outer ring of Jawahar Circle is going to have a dedicated cycling

track and outer ring will be treated for pedestrian comfort and vehicular travel by stone cobble floorings.

- A welcome monument abutting the road coming from airport on the south end of Jawahar Circle has been planned. The monument will be built in white marble and there will be series of

arches and pillars highlighting the elements of Jaipur architecture. In this entire development of Jawahar Circle, major plantation will also be done to enhance the lanes.

- The parking on the inner road has been designed strictly according to the traffic engineering norms and the entries and exits will be controlled for security and safety of the people.
- Heritage lighting and signages will be also undertaken in the project.
- Pet friendly stations, WiFi zones, cafe huts, senior citizen support services and more has also been planned.

LAXMI MANDIR TIRAHA

- The total amount of cars travelling on Laxmi Mandir Tiraha is 2.0 lakh per day. The signal light of the Laxmi Mandir is being removed by closing the median and for the traffic coming from the Sahakar Bhawan Road on the Tonk Road will be moving on the road between Apex Bank and Nehru Place. An underpass will be constructed which will cross over the Tonk Road and will open towards Sanganer side, thereby eliminating the traffic light at the junction.
- In continuity of the same, the

Gandhi Nagar traffic light is also proposed to be eliminated by creating an underpass and cloverleaf bridge.

- A statue of freedom fighters will be built in the garden court of Laxmi Mandir Tiraha.
- Sufficient parking facilities for the occupants abutting the road is also being planned.
- Around 6.50 lakh litres of fuel will be saved per annum.

OTS CROSSING

- The OTS Chauraha will also be free of traffic light and will result into a smooth movement in all directions.
- After an indepth study of movement of traffic, a design has been prepared, which will take care of the six lane traffic on JLN road. A clover on the Jhalana road will be made, which will take care of the turning traffic.
- A unique gallery of heritage pictures for pedestrian and cyclist traffic connecting all four directions has been planned. This will save 7 lakh litres of fuel per annum. The design has been done by Anoop Bartaria of M/s Sincere Architects Engineers Private Limited.
- All the projects will have unique heritage lighting and night illumination will be built in this. The innovative sculptures will enhance the night life of Jaipur.

CRPF celebrates Valour Day

On the occasion of Valour Day, Kuldip Singh, DG, CRPF paid homage to the bravehearts who sacrificed their lives at the altar of duty. In a solemn ceremony, he paid rich tributes to the martyrs by laying a wreath at the National Police Memorial at Chanakyapuri, New Delhi. Later in the day, an investiture ceremony to facilitate the Gallantry Medal recipients and families of those bravehearts who were awarded Gallantry Medal Posthumously was conducted at Shaurya CRPF Officers institute, New Delhi. Kishan Singh, the surviving veteran of the Sardar Post Battle, was also facilitated in the ceremony.

Extending his best wishes to the personnel and their families, the DG said that the force owes its numerous milestones of success to the martyrs and veterans who scripted several sagas of valour while serving the nation with courage and commitment. He said that the force shall remain indebted to 2,235 martyrs who laid down their lives at the altar of duty.

Valour Day is celebrated each year to commemorate the exceptionally awe-inspiring battle at Sardar Post in Rann of Kutch, Gujarat, where mere two companies of CRPF repulsed the attack of a full fledged Pakistani military brigade on April



9, 1965. Even when faced with sudden onslaught from a numerically superior enemy carrying modern arms and ammunition, the bravehearts of CRPF fought with exceptional courage and bravery. Not only did the CRPF repulse the attack, but it also neutralised 34 Pakistani soldiers and captured four alive. In this battle, seven bravehearts of CRPF made supreme sacrifice.



Powergrid bags ISTD national award

Maharatna entity, Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (POWERGRID) has bagged the third place for Innovative Training Practices (Public Sector category) 2018-19 at the 29th National Award ceremony held

recently at New Delhi by Indian Society for Training & Development (ISTD). The award was received by Anil Saberwal, Executive Director (HRD, RB & CC) at SCOPE Complex, New Delhi.

Fact check

Bharat Bhushan Ashu categorically refutes media reports of Bardana shortage as malicious misinformation



Outrightly rejecting the media reports regarding non-availability of bales with procurement agencies as malicious propaganda, Bharat Bhushan Ashu, Food Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Minister, Government of Punjab, underlined that there is no question of shortage of bardana in the mandies at all.

Tendering for Bardana procurement is a continuous process which starts much before the season as part of planning and goes on as and when the need arises. One cannot be sure of full quantity receipt through one tender only, the Minister pointed out that the last tender floated on April 12 and was necessitated only because permission from GoI to use used bags was received very late.

We have already got jute bales indented through the Jute Commissioner and NAFED, Ashu said that PP bales are also being received from various HDPE/PP bag suppliers. This, in addition to the permission to use good quality used bags already received by the state from Government of India on April 12, he pointed out hitting out at

those trying to create an issue where none exists.

Pointing out that season is already in full swing with farmers bringing their crops to mandies, Ashu said that as on Tuesday, 5,44,334 MTs of wheat has already been procured in the mandies by the procurement agencies out of which 44,728 MT has been procured under DCP for distribution in the state under Smart Ration Card Scheme.

Urging all the farmers to follow all health advisories as a safeguard against COVID, the Minister said due arrangements have been made to ensure that farmers bring their produce in a staggered way as per token issued by Mandi Board Punjab so that COVID-19 protocol can be maintained in order to curb the spread of COVID-19 pandemic.

Reiterating Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh government's commitment to ensure smooth procurement experience for farmers, Ashu said that state is fully geared up to ensure our farmers don't have to face any difficulty whatsoever during the season like last four years.

DOPPW & NCC commemorate Amrut Mahotsav

Department of Pension & Pensioners' Welfare is organising various activities to commemorate 75 years of India's Independence — Bharat Ka Amrut Mahotsav.

The department has started an awareness campaign entitled series of 75 important rules for family pensioners to know on social media, which was started from March, 2021. In this campaign two tweets per week are being disseminated through social media during coming year. These tweets are put in the form of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs). As on April 12, 2021, five tweets have been disseminated by DoPPW on Rules for Family Pensioners to create awareness.

In another initiative, 75 offices across Ministries/Departments have been identified by DoPPW for extensive training on Bhavishya system. All these offices will be imparted training through VC followed by question-answer session to clear any doubt. Training (online pension processing module) will be across the Central Government Organisations. CAPFs offices covering different locations across country will also be covered in this regard as maximum number of cases pertain to them.



DoPPW has also planned to arrange an online workshop on pension awareness rules for senior central govt pensioners/family pensioners aged 75 years and above covering different cities in India. It will be started from May 2021. It will cover maximum number of cities from all parts of India. The workshop will be conducted region wise.

Besides, DoPPW will also publish a digital publication of 75 anubhav write-ups, including those already awarded. It will be starting from June 2021.

As part of the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, National Cadet Corps (NCC) also paid homage to the martyrs of the nation's freedom struggle, who



lost their lives on April 13, 1919 at the Jallianwala Bagh. National Cadet Corps also launched the pan India campaign to educate people against use of 'single use plastics'.

NCC has a strong cadet base of 14 lakh in the country,

who have been quite vocal about environment issues. Cadets throughout the country gathered at 75 places. The

SCOPE organises tika utsav

Partaking in Prime Minister's call for Tika Utsav (National Vaccination Festival) to combat COVID-19, Standing Conference of Public Enterprises (SCOPE) organised a workplace vaccination camp for employees of Public Sector Enterprises.

Gurdeep Singh, CMD, NTPC; Atul Sobti, DG, SCOPE; B V N Prasad, CMD, CCI, Directors and other senior officials were among those who got vaccinated at the camp.

The vaccination drive was held in coordination with Chief District Medical Officer and District Magistrate (South East), New Delhi. Earlier, SCOPE had avidly participated in Government's Public Health Response Campaign for COVID-Appropriate Behaviour.



Jammu Tourism celebrated Vaisakhi

Directorate of Tourism Jammu Organised the Vaisakhi Festival at Dera Baba Bahadur, Reasi, in collaboration with the District Administration, Reasi. The festival was celebrated with great fervour while following the COVID-19 protocol and guidelines.

Hundreds of devotees paid obeisance at the revered shrine at Dera Baba Village of Reasi, which is situated approximately 30 km from the Katra town. The devotees from across the UT and also from neighboring states of Punjab and Haryana visited the Dera Baba Bahadur Shrine.

It is worthwhile to mention here that the shrine is situated at



the village of revered Sikh warrior and leader Baba Banda Bahadur Singh ji who was a close confidant and follower of Guru Gobind Singh Ji. On this occasion, one medical camp was also organised by the District Administration Reasi and RT-PCR tests were conducted randomly. All necessary protocols which are in place were followed during the said festival.

Government of Odisha,
Office of the Executive Engineer, Email : eerw_jharsuguda@yahoo.co.in
Rural Works Division, Jharsuguda Tel. : 06645-271643
Circular No. Online - EEJSG - 02 of 2021-22
OPEN TENDER FOR ROAD WORK IN ODISHA
COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH e-Procurement

1. : ROAD work as per DTCN available in the
www.tendersorissa.gov.in

2. : 01 (One) No.

3. : Rs. 63.98 Lakh

4. : 03 (Three) Calendar Months

5. : Copy of bid document in Dt. **16.04.2021** at 11.00 A.M. to **26.04.2021**
upto 5.00P.M.

6. : Dt. **27.04.2021** at 11.00 A.M.

7. : For inviting Bid : E.E., R.W.Division, Jharsuguda

8. : Detailed notice inviting Tenders, available in website

9. : To be published in the above website.

Executive Engineer
R.W.Division, Jharsuguda