

## Ranian Ganguly | Pioneer



HOME THEATRE

Big disappointment



**COMING TO AMERICA 2**  
**Amazon**  
**\*ing: Eddie Murphy, Arsenio Hall, Jermaine Fowler, Wesley Snipes, James Earl Jones**  
**Rated: 3/10**

It is not only strange but bizarre that a movie's sequel would be released 33 years after the prequel. However, what is even worse is that while *Coming To America* (the original) directed by John Landis and based on a story originally created by Eddie Murphy was a rom-com that managed to keep one engrossed in the film — at the end it was a love story, part two is anything but funny or even remotely romantic in

nature. Unless one considers a few scenes spent on two young people talking alone with one of them aspiring to open a salon of her own.

Here she befriends a prince no less and supposedly in love and her dream is to open a salon of her own!

One does manage to get over this rather strange dream but what one can't get over is the unfunny dialogues. Not only are the risqué, the hand gestures are even worse. And what the hell was Wesley Snipes thinking when he agreed to this boggles the mind. It does oblige his better work — *Blade* series comes to mind.

Directed by Craig Brewer and produced by Kevin Misher

and Eddie Murphy, this sequel may have started off on a good note but unfortunately all it manages to do in the 110 minutes is make you cringe.

May be Murphy thought that revisiting the original that had a cult following would be a great idea but all he manages to do is makes one wonder why he needed to do this in this horrible manner that take away from its prequel.

*Coming To America*, the must awaited film ends up disappointing and is a huge bore.

Watch only if you have nothing else to do and want to catch up on the stars of the original movie.

— Shalini Saksena

Riveting true story told well

**MURDER AMONG THE MORMONS**  
**Netflix**  
**\*ing: A true-Crime**  
**Rated: 5/10**

Off late Netflix has been releasing true-crime sagas. Take for example *The Night Stalker* or *The Cecil Hotel* that recently found their way on the OTT platform. However bizarre or strange such docu-movies may be, one can't shy away from the truth that they are absolutely riveting and unfold rather brilliantly. It could stem from the fact that if there is a murder and then another coupled with a Church in the middle of it all, facts and and how the investigation proceeds are bound to be filled with intrigue and throw up a few suspects.

*Murder Among The Mormons* relate to a true investigation into twin blasts that killed two people in Salt Lake City, Utah, US. These murders were unlike anything that came to light in the October of 1985. May be because it relates to religion, murder and deception — a lethal combination.

The three-part mini-series — each of approximately 46 minutes — is paced out well with part one giving the history of the town where the blasts occurred, the people who live here and the Mormon Church and the history of the Mormons — a religious group that embrace concepts of Christianity and revelations made by their founder, Joseph

Smith. They primarily belong to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

Of course, the intrigue is already there and the next two part are all about the build up up to the murders and who and why they were killed in the first place.

Though the entire mini-series manages to keep one's interest — anything related to the Church is more so if it involves debunking the faith of the people and making them question the very basis on which the Church stands. It is the second half of part three that makes one sit up straight and watch as the master criminal emerges — a criminal who has perfected his craft since he was a only a teenager.

How he not only managed to dupe the Church but his friends and wife without remorse or guilt for his own gain; a power hungry Mark Hofmann — regarded as one of the most accomplished forger in history. He is infamous for forging documents related to the history of the Latter Day Saint movement. What is more interesting to know is that one doesn't know how many of his forged yet authenticated documents are still in circulation.

Hofmann was given life sentence with no parole since it was found that he felt no guilt or remorse for what he had done. He is now in Central Utah Correctional Facility in Gunnison, Colorado, US.

— Shalini Saksena



Plan Your Day

Treat for all women

**Venue:** All MOD Outlets  
**When:** March 8, 2021  
**Time:** 1 pm onwards

Age is just a number! Well, the greater the number, the sweeter your treat at Mad Over Donuts. Mad Over Donuts has consistently managed to delight its customers with its new launches and festive offers. They are at it again and this time, the surprise is bigger and better!

Mad Over Donuts is celebrating women's day in order to thank the contribution of women to the society by running a “celebrate your age” campaign. Simply walk into any Mad Over Donuts store on Women's Day to get a treat of their fresh, handmade donuts and get a discount that is equal to your age. That's a sweet treat that's hard to beat, is it not?

Mark your calendar right away and set up a date with your girl gang. After a rollicking day out and about, end it on a delectable note with some of the scrumptious donuts offered by Mad Over Donuts.



Celebrate womanhood

**Venue:** Horizon Plaza- Artisanal Market, Sec-43, Golf Course road, DLF Phase-5  
**When:** March 7, 2021  
**Time:** 3:30 PM-8:30 pm

This Women's Day, let's celebrate the #Womanhood by appreciating the efforts of our all inspiring women, who empower the Artisanal Market. Join us on Sunday browsing especially curated Artisanal products and produce by our Women Founders, Chefs, Bakers at one of its kind Artisanal Market, handpicked by PC.

Well! your weekend mornings just got healthy with a dose of refreshing handpicked homegrown products at Artisanal Market Handpicked by PC.

Shop and mingle with passionate home bakers, food curators and urban farmers who grow, produce and hand-craft breads, jams, honeys, turmeric, cakes and other eclectic cuisines from different parts of the world with natural ingredients and a whole lot of love.

Get a freshly brewed coffee

or a smoothie, select your fruits and veggies to cook your favorite dish. Stock up natural honey, masala and pickles from different regions of India. Bring your friends and family and to enjoy artisanals flavours.

Flower lovers take home some fresh flowers from our special lady “Phuloon Ki Rani” by Rani Chadha, the 80 year-old entrepreneur. Home chefs get ready to shop your favorite food stuff from our different stalls.

Look no forward, spend this weekend with your family and friends at Artisanal Market and make your day.



TELLY TALE

MANISH DONS EUNUCH LOOK

Zee TV's second season of its immensely successful weekend thriller *Brahmarakshas* has been keeping the audience hooked with the gripping account of the *rakshas* who has returned with twice as much power and is on a mission for immortality. Having enthralled the viewers with unpredictable twists and turns in Kalindi's life, the show recently took a two-year leap, bringing in a package of surprises for its viewers. While a grieving Angad (Pearl V Puri) is seen mourning the loss of his beloved Kalindi (Nikki Sharma) who he believes has died as a result of his own actions, Kalindi's look alike — Chandni enters as the modern *chorni* and is set to bring much chaos in his life. Amidst all of this, actor Manish Khanna who earlier played a pivotal role in the show is all set to return, this time in the character of a eunuch.

Having previously portrayed the character of Jwala, the *tantric*, Khanna will now be seen playing the role of his transgender brother, Irawat who bears a connection with the Brahmarakshas and enters as the new villain in Angad's life and unknowingly in Chandni's life too. The actor couldn't be more thrilled to have returned with yet another interesting character and in fact will be seen donning a look similar to Bollywood actor Ashutosh Rana's character in Sangharsh.

Sharing his thoughts, Khanna said: “From the numerous roles that I have essayed on television, this character is one of the most unique and challenging ones I have had to play until now. I was required to bring a considerable change in my body language and even practise a bit of voice modulation to bring out the perfect essence of this role. Ashutosh Rana, who has been a dear friend became my immediate source of reference when it came to styling this character. He played the role of a eunuch in the film Sangharsh and I absolutely loved his performance including the way his character was showcased. We have tried to bring out a similar look in my character while bringing in a few unique and creative elements to the appearance as well. I just hope the viewers love this comeback of mine.”

YASH TURNS RUDE TO PRANALI

An actor has to look 100 per cent natural on screen, even if he has to act angry, drunk, insane or even a *yogi*. Yash Tonk has been a method actor and has been known to give his takes naturally for every scene in just two takes maximum! While he is known to play comic characters in the past, it was easy for him to deliver in comedy scenes, but what happened when he had to deliver his part in a serious role like Brij Kishore in Sony TV's *Kyun Utthe Dil Chhod Aaye*.

To look natural and to not scare off Pranali with his harsh tone and loud pitch, Yash Tonk rehearses his harsh fighting

scenes with Pranali prior to the final take. Those are the scenes where he has to act in a negative zone or even raise his voice on his on screen wife, Tonk could not do that in just the final take without rehearsing it because he considers Pranali as his dear friend. While rehearsing their quarrel scenes, Pranali eases out Tonk saying it's okay to raise his voice on her or even take a rude tone with her for a particular scene to look flawless.

Talking about these quarrel sequences, Tonk says: “I might be a method actor, but I'm a soft hearted person too when it comes to my friends and family. Pranali has become a dear friend ever since we started shooting for *Kyun Utthe Dil Chhod Aaye*. I don't feel like raising my voice at her even for a scene. So for the final take to be flawless, I rehearse my harsh fighting scenes prior to the final take. She eases me out and asks me to yell at her even if that's what the scene demands.”

SHAAN'S VIRTUAL ANTAKSHARI

In a clutter-breaking format innovation, Zee TV launched the world's first-ever music league championship Indian Pro Music League (IPML) on February 26, 2021. While the world of sports has seen several league competitions, this unique music league has six teams representing different regions of India, battling it out against each other in a musical championship. Each of these six teams supported by leading Bollywood and sports celebrities has top playback singers as their captains, one reality show star, and one fresh voice. Celebrated singers — Mika Singh, Kailash Kher, Sajid Khan, Shaan, Ankit Tiwari, Javed Ali, Asees Kaur, Bhoomi Trivedi, AkritiKakar, Payal Dev, Neha Bhasin, Shilpa Rao are captains of these six zonal teams.

After the epic opening ceremony, the six teams are ready to battle it out and the first set of league matches have kicked off. The upcoming episode has a Kishore Kumar theme and during the shoot, Bengal Tigers captains Shaan and Akriti Kakkar gave a spectacular performance to the song *Mere Saamne Wali Khidki Mein*. Right after the act, Shaan shared an emotional memory of his father while speaking to host Karan Wahi about Kishore Kumar. The Bengal Tigers captain mentioned how he lost his father — music composer Manas Mukherjee, in October 1986, but just before that, the legendary composer had written his last song *Ei Jiboner path soja noy jeno* that was sung by Kishore Kumar. The song came out later, but it was a big deal for the whole family, as Shaan revealed: “I felt that if Kishore Kumar is singing a song written by my father, I am sure my father was a well-known man. I have this one last image of them together, where I am walking behind my father and Kishore da. It was raining and they were discussing this song. It's a sweet memory I have of both of them.”

After this sweet revelation, Shaan also kicked off a virtual *antakshari* with ace musicians like Lisa Mishra, Amit Trivedi, Babul Supriyo and others joining in to sing a few Kishore Kumar classics. But wait till you see the mega battle between UP Dabbangs and Bengal Tigers. Shaan, Akriti's and their team will come out all guns blazing as they face off Ankit Tiwari, Payal Dev and their team.

MEHER & SIDDHI'S MAHASANGAM

Colors' latest show *Bawara Dil* has won the audience's heart with its captivating drama and powerful storytelling. The show is about two strong personalities Siddhi (played by Kinjal Dhamecha) and Shiva (played by Aditya Redij) who hate each other yet are brought together by destiny. While fate brings them together, the two vow to destroy each other.

In the current track of the show, Shiva and Siddhi are at loggerheads as Siddhi throws a stone inside Shiva's house and breaks his TV after being upset with his behaviour. She seeks help from Meher from *Choti Sarraaarni* (played by Nimrit Kaur Ahluwalia), who help her with some useful advice and motivates her. Meher gives her the much-needed courage to do the right thing.

Commenting on the Mahasangam episode, Dhamecha said, “As a viewer, I have enjoyed watching *Choti Sarraaarni* and I truly admire Nimrit. When I heard that we are going to shoot the *Mahasangam* episode together, I was excited as I knew it will be a great learning experience for me. We are very excited for the episode and I hope that our viewers are too.”

SPOTIFY PRESENTS SUPERHEROES

When it comes to Indian epics such as the Mahabharat or Ramayan, the familiar faces of Krishna, Ram or Hanuman hold dear to many of us. The fascinating characters of these books have come to excite, captivate and inspire generations of readers. However, these mythological tales record thousands of heroes and heroines, with many either overlooked or whose feats simply remain unheard. Spotify's newest podcast *Superheroes of Indian Mythology* spotlights the gamut of these larger-than-life characters — both big and small.

What popular culture refers to as “supporting roles”, often turn out to have the most interesting stories to tell. Let's look at unique names who played a pivotal role in history.

Bheeshma, revered as the eighth son of Goddess Ganga, was a learned scholar and one of the greatest examples of an honorable, loyal, duty-bound commander.

Karna, famously referred to as Suryaputra or Sun's son, is one of the more complex characters of the Mahabharat. There's much more in the list.



‘Crime stories don’t bother but astonish me’

MUSBA HASHMI speaks with MANOJ TIWARI about why he chose to come on board &TV's latest offering *Mauka-E-Vardaat*, a lesson that he learnt while hosting these shows and how such stories leave him astonished

■ What made you come on board &TV's Mauka-E-Vardaat?

I was on look out for a show that creates awareness among people and this show fits best in the criteria. Also, I was missing my screen appearances and with this show I got to do both. Hence, I decided to take it up.

■ How is this show different from all the other crime-based shows?

I don't know what other shows are doing, but with this show our aim is to show the audience real stories and bring out the truth. However, our bigger aim is to teach people to stay alert and create awareness. This is what I think is the USP of this show.

■ What kinds of stories will be shown?

We will be showcasing shocking stories wherein the culprit has taken to such impossible ways of committing crimes that it becomes hard to understand it. Once the audience will see the show, they will get to know how strangely crimes have been committed.

■ You haven't been a part of many crime-based shows. Is there a particular reason?

Yes, I don't want to take up a show for the sake of it. I want to resonate with it. It should have something interesting to offer. For this particular show, I have two other people with me — Ravi Kishan and Sapna Choudhary — I believe all three of us can make this show a huge success and do good to people by creating awareness.

■ Is there a lesson that you learnt while being a part of such shows?

Definitely. When I was doing my previous shows, I realised that I would have not been able to understand the different facets of life and gather so many different thoughts by reading a 100 books that I have learnt during these shows. There is one line that I always remember: *Abhi samaaj mein log apni twarit safaltaon ke liye vyakti aur vastu mein farq karna bhulte jaa rahe hain* (people have forgotten to differentiate between people and things for their own benefits). This holds true and I hope people start

One such story left me shocked. It is about a group which would take fingerprints of dead bodies at the crematorium and used them for getting fake IDs. When they were caught committing a crime, it was revealed that the identities they were using were of people who died years ago

realising what is more important and learn to differentiate between good and bad.

■ Did getting to know so many crimes so closely bother you in any way?

We are narrating the stories that have already happened with the aim of informing people about ways to safeguard themselves and their families. I don't get bothered by it. But yes, I do get astonished with such stories.

■ What makes crime-based shows so popular?

People love to see a story that can shock them up. This is not imaginary, hence the interest level goes even up. The interest factor also depends on how a show has been shot and who is narrating these stories. If the person telling these stories holds a value in the minds of the people, the audience automatically wants to see more such stories.

■ Was there a case that left you shattered?

There is one such story that left me shocked. It is about a group which would take fingerprints of dead bodies at the crematorium and used them for getting fake IDs. When they were caught committing a crime, it was revealed that the identities they were using were of people who died years ago I told my team that it is important to put across such stories. The team too agreed and told me it has to be done in a way where people take lessons from it and stay alert. This story will be shown in *Mauka-E-Vardaat*.



# MOUNTING ROAD MISHAPS 23 black spots identified in Khordha district

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

In a bid to curb the mounting road accidents and fatalities, the State Transport Authority (STA) has identified 23 black spots and vulnerable stretches on different roads coming under NH-16 and NH-57 in Khordha district.

As many as 20 black spots have been identified on NH-16 from Nakhara to Barakul covering 114 km approximately.

The black spots are Pahala to Rudrapur Cut, Acharya Vihar to Satsang Vihar, Gangapada Chhak, Pitapali Chhak, Khandagiri Chhak to Kolathia Chhak, Aiginia to Patrapada, Gohira Chhak, Kalinga Vihar Chhak, Tamando overbridge, Palasuni Chhak, Hanspal Chhak, Lingipur Cut to NH, KKMB College Square to Khordha



Sadar police station, Rameswar Chhak to Jankia police station, Chandeswar to Kuhudi Petrol Pump, Near Nachuni petrol pump, Solari railway station to Naval Outpost, AG Square to Raj Bhawan, Ram Mandir Chhak to Master Canteen and Bomikhal

Besides, three black spots have been identified on various roads under NH-57 from

Khordha to Bolgarh covering 37.7 km. They are Tartua (near ITBP), Tikatala and Bolagarh.

At a meeting, Khordha district's Parliamentary Constituency Committee for Road Safety on Saturday revealed that 504 people were killed and 855 suffered critical injuries in road accidents in Khordha district from January 2019 to December 2020.

## BSF jawan shoots self dead

PNS ■ KORAPUT

A Border Security Force (BSF) jawan shot himself dead over unknown reasons in Koraput district on Saturday morning.

The jawan, identified as Indrajit Singh, had been posted at 15th Battalion of BSF at Jalaput in Koraput district.

According to reports, he attempted to end life by shooting self on his head with his service rifle.

He was admitted in a critical condition to a hospital at Lamataput, where doctors declared him dead. Source said that the jawan had joined the camp at Jalaput on Thursday after a week-long vacation at his village in Rajasthan.

The reason behind his taking the extreme step was yet obscure.

## Guv unveils book on mineral resources



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

A book highlighting the rich mineral potentials of the State and development prospects compiled by the Society of Geoscientists and Allied Technologists (SGAT) was released on Friday at the Raj Bhavan by Governor Prof Ganeshi Lal.

The first edition of the book was published in the year 1995; the second and third editions were released in 1998 and 2006, respectively.

Now, the revised edition contains 31 chapters dealing with all mineral resources in the State and its chapters have been authored by eminent scientists of Geological Survey of India, Directorate of Mining and Geology, IMMT, Central Ground Water Board and CMPDI.

The Governor commended the effort of SGAT in promoting minerals development in the State. The SGAT team was led by president Dr ON Mohanty.

## Devotee dies in Shreemandir

PNS ■ PURI

A devotee collapsed in the premises of the Jagannath Temple here and died after offering prayer to the deities on Saturday.

The deceased was identified as Manohar Lal, aged about 72 years, from Cuttack district.

According to reports, the septuagenarian fell unconscious while he was on his way back through the Ghanthi Dwar of the temple after paying obeisance to the deities in the shrine. He was rushed to the Puri District Headquarters Hospital, where doctors declared him brought dead.

## Sarpanch disqualified for not knowing Odia

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

Sarpanch of Agastinuagam Sgram panchayat under Chhatrapur block in Ganjam district P Simadri was disqualified from his post on the Panchayati Raj Divas on Friday for not knowing Odia and also for having more than two children. The action was taken on the basis of a petition filed by Simadri's nearest rival Niwasi Gouda, whom the former had defeated in the 2017 panchayat polls.

The petitioner had claimed that Simadri had submitted false a poll affidavit as he cannot read and write in Odia language. Moreover, he has two wives and six children as against the 'two-child' norm for contesting elections to Panchayati Raj institutions



(PRI)s. After hearing the case, Civil Judge (Junior Division) Sushant Kumar Panigrahy ordered disqualification of the Sarpanch and directed the Ganjam Collector to take action in this regard instantly.

"On the Panchayati Raj Divas, the court pronounced a significant order. We are extremely happy to have won the legal battle after three and a half years," said advocate Srikant Mishra representing Niwasi Gouda.

## BPMT celebrates Biju birthday at Paradip

PNS ■ PARADIP

The Biju Patnaik Memorial Trust (BPMT) celebrated the 105th birthday of legendary leader late Biju Patnaik with various activities here on Friday. Early morning, lamps were lighted in temples and gods and goddesses were worshipped, after which tree were planted and foods distributed to the poor.

A memorial meeting held here at the BPMT's Nuabazar premises. The meeting was presided over by senior BJD leader and BPMT working president Sumanta Biswal. Jagatsinghpur MP Dr Rajashree Mallick was chief guest and former MLA Pravat Tripathy was chief speaker on the occasion.



BJD Paradip president Basant Kumar Biswal, BJD State secretary and prominent trade union leaderi Santosh Kumar Pattnaik, Pramod Kishore Jena, Ranjan Kumar Das, BJD labour cell vice-president Jugal Kishore Nayak and BJD women cell joint secretary Sabita Mohapatra paid tributes to Biju Patnaik and recalled his life, thoughts and dedication for Odisha and Odias. A vote of thanks was given by Ranjan Kumar Das.

## ‘All Odisha farmers will benefit from PM Kisan’

**Says Tomar in response to Dharmendra's letter**

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Union Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Saturday thanked Union Minister of Agriculture Narendra Singh Tomar for taking prompt cognisance on matters relating to payment of PM Kisan instalments to all eligible farmers in Odisha on his request. Earlier, Pradhan in a letter to Tomar had requested the latter to call a meeting of the Agriculture Ministry and the Odisha Government and resolve all the payment related issues and ensuring disbursement of PM Kisan benefits to all eligible farmers. Besides, he requested the Agriculture Minister for his personal intervention for facilitating additional bulk window clearance to the State Government to enable them to expeditiously rectify details of all beneficiaries whose records were put in 'stop payment mode'. Later, Tomar said he has directed concerned officials to take necessary steps so that all farmers of Odisha can avail benefits of PM Kisan scheme. Pradhan said the Government under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi is working round the clock for the welfare of farmers in Odisha and in the country.

## Marine Biotech Centre opened at FM Varsity

PNS ■ BALESWAR

A Centre for Marine Bioresources and Biotechnology was inaugurated at the Fakir Mohan University here on Saturday in the presence of Union Minister of State for Micro, Small, Medium Enterprises (MSME) & Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying Pratap Chandra Sarangi, State Minister of Higher Education and Agriculture Arun Kumar Sahoo and university Vice-Chancellor Prof Dinabandhu Sahu.

Sarangi said the Central Government is promoting a lot of activities in the marine and

fisheries sector. India has great potentials in the field of marine bio-resources and can exploit marine fisheries, seaweeds, horseshoe crabs and other living resources.

Sahoo urged the students to go beyond the textbooks and venture into new knowledge which would benefit the society and make the students self-sufficient to face the world in the future. He promised that all necessary help would be provided to the FM University to build it as a world-class institution.



Vice-Chancellor Prof Sahoo said Odisha has a long coastline of 480 kilometers and it is rich in various types of marine bio-resources which are not fully exploited due to lack of scientific exploration, trained manpower and high-end equipment facilities.

## Lingaraj Mahadeep to be raised at 10 pm

**BHUBANESWAR:** The administration of Lord Lingaraj Temple has decided to raise the Mahadeep at the temple at 10 pm on the Mahashivaratri day scheduled on March 11. The other rituals at the shrine are to be observed according to the tradition.

A meeting was called to finalise the preparation for a smooth conduct of rituals with strict adherence to the Covid-19 guidelines. The emphasis was laid on making arrangement for lakhs of devotees who might turn to offer puja and have darshan of Lord



Lingaraj in the evening.

The devotees would not be allowed to sit together on the temple complex for lighting diyas (lamps).

Arrangement would be made for smooth exit of the devotees from the temple in the evening.

PNS

# Prompt action needed to douse Similipal fire



SUNDARA NARAYANA PATRO

In Odisha, most of the forests are deciduous and during the season starting from late autumn through winter up to early spring, trees experience leaf fall. In this season the air remains dry, the soil loses moisture and the atmospheric temperature is high. The fall-en litterers including dry leaves are very vulnerable to catching fire and facilitate its spreading. Most of the forest fire incidents occur during this season.

Such incidents in Similipal forest is not new, but the recent spurt of week-long forest fire during end of February and early March is enormous in proportion and devastating, may be due to preceding scanty monsoon rain and prevailing high atmospheric temperature. In 2018 and some previous years also forest fire razed Similipal miserably. It is disturbing that Odisha tops the list of forest fire affected States, according to the recent report by the Forest Survey of India.

It is stated that the fire spread areas cover villages even in the core and peripheral zones where the density of wildlife is supposed to be more and cause insurmountable loss and damage to the wild fauna and flora.

The Similipal forest and the adjoining areas with good forest coverage as an ecological niche play a pivotal role in maintaining the water cycle, thermal and ecological balance. The average mean elevation of Similipal plateau is 900 meters.

The highest peaks are Khairiburu (1,178 meters), and Meghasani (1,158 meters). It is the biggest watershed of northern Odisha, giving origin to major rivers like Budhabalanga, Khairi, Salandi, Palpala, Bandhan, Deo and innumerable perennial rivulets and streams meandering through the forest. Amongst several waterfalls Barehipani (217 meters) and Joranda (181 meters) are enchanting.

Interestingly there is a degree of resemblance of floral and faunal composition of Similipal on the Eastern Ghats with those of the Western Ghats and North-East India, while being a representative eco-system within the Mahanadian bio-geographic region. About 55 species of mammals, 29 species of reptiles, 231 species are birds and 1,076 plant species are listed in this plateau. Among the fauna tiger, leopard, elephant, gaur,

sloth bear, hyena, ratel, sambar, mouse deer, chital, chousingha, deer, hill myna, peacock, giant squirrel, flying squirrels, Indian tree shrew, reptiles like king cobra and other snakes, etc are appealing. Similipal is also the abode of the rare black and melanistic tiger.

In its river and stream waters it has marsh crocodile, mahaseer fish, and numerous other aquatic species. Among the flora Sal is the climax tree species. Champa, Arjuna, Asana are some of its associated species. The rich orchid flora with about 90 species out of more than 120 in Odisha is the indicator of Similipal's eco-health and naturalness.

Similipal forest enjoyed the status of a sanctuary from 1979 with an area of 2,200 sq km. A national park was created in 1980 with an area of 303 sq km only within the sanctuary area, which was later enhanced to 845.70 sq km in 1986.

The Similipal Tiger Reserve created in 1956 was included in the first list of nine Project Tiger areas launched in India in 1973. The Mayurbhanj Elephant Reserve, notified in 2001, is one of the three elephant reserves created in Odisha.

The Mugger Crocodile scheme was started in 1979 at Ramatirtha near Jashipur. The eighth biosphere reserve of the country was declared in Similipal forest on 22.06.1994

## AS UNESCO SITE OF RICH FLORA AND FAUNA UNDER THREAT

taking a vast stretch of forest land measuring 5,569 sq km. Now there are 18 biosphere reserves in India. The UNESCO included Similipal in the World Network of Biosphere Reserves in 2009.

The densely forested Similipal Biosphere Reserve (BR) area constitutes the core, the buffer and the transition zones. There are four villages in the core and 65 villages in the buffer.

The transition zone covers 1,200 villages with a population of about 5 lakhs. The core (1194.75 sq km), buffer (1555.25 sq km), and transition (2819 sq km) together compose a vast area of 5,569 sq km. The Core zone allows management and research activities that do not affect natural processes and wildlife.

This zone is to be kept free from all human pressures external to the system.

The Buffer zone adjoins the core zone. Only those activities which protect and promote the core zone are allowed here. It includes research, education, limited recreation, tourism, controlled grazing, fishing, etc. The Transition

zone is the outer most part of the biosphere reserve. Here conservation knowledge and management skills are applied primarily to foster alternate livelihood and reduce dependence on consumptive use of the forest. Eco-development activities are permitted in this zone to meet local people's need only but not for commercial purpose. The national park is established in the core zone. As per the provisions of national park, no human habitation is allowed inside it in order to facilitate movement of wild animals freely.

The State Government has successfully relocated villagers from Jenabil, Baghagahan, Upper Barhakamara, Kabatghai and Jamunagarh inside the Similipal Tiger Reserve area between 2010 and 2016. From Bakua 61 families have volunteered to move out.

The threats to the Similipal forest are loss of diversity due to forest fire, collection of timber and fire-wood, indiscriminate vegetation clearance and tree felling, invading of exotic species, Akhanda shikar (annual mass hunting ritual) and animal hunting, natural calamities, etc. Due to loss of density and fragmentation of the forest and increased human pressure the man-animal conflict is increasing.

The causes of forest fire may be natural such as lightning, friction of trees and even soaring temperature or

man-made. Poachers set fire to scare and divert the wild animals in order to make them easy for poaching and hunting and do not douse the fire later. Akhanda Shikar, though the scale is reduced now, is the traditional annual ritual of animal hunting; the tribes set fire for making their operation easier. Partially burnt bidi or hukka is thrown on the forest floor unmindfully.

The local villagers set fire to clear the dry litter on the floor for easy collection of mohua flowers, sal seeds, plucking of kendu leaves, etc. Such fires are generally brought under control by natural rains. The tribes also collect honey and other such products in the forest using fire.

Forecasting fire-prone days, creating fire lines, clearing sites of dried biomass and crackdown on poachers and hunters are some of the methods to prevent fire.

The forest fire lines which are strips kept clear of vegetation help break the forest floor into compartments to prevent fires from spreading. Manual control of fire by branches and twigs, water spray, blowers are the traditional practices. Now with advanced technologies the fire points are identified from satellite data making it easy to locate the spots. The crown fire and to some extent ground fire could be controlled by aero-foam and water spray. Whatever may be the efficient-

## INBRIEF

### STAFF OPPOSE PRIVATISATION OF PUBLIC SECTOR BANKS

**Balangir:** Leaders of SBI Staff Association AGS Sambalpur Module Rohit Kumar Satapathy and zonal secretary Rupes Kumar Dalai, along with others, submitted a memorandum to Balangir MLA Narasingha Mishra against the process to privatise public sector banks. According to reports, there would be a two-day strike in banks on March 15 and 16 against the proposed privatisation of public sector banks.



### BIJU JAYANTI CELEBRATED IN JHARSUGUDA

**Jharsuguda:** The 105th birth anniversary of legendary leader Biju Patnaik was observed here on Friday. Rich tributes were paid by people of the town by garlanding his statue at Badmal Square. Health and Family Welfare Minister Naba Kishore Das and Brajrajnagar MLA Kishore Kumar Mohanty led the celebrations. A public meeting was held in the evening where Das and Mohanty were chief guest and chief speaker, respectively. They reminded people of the great contributions made by Biju Babu to build a modern Odisha and especially the carving out Jharsuguda from undivided Sambalpur and recognising it as a district.



### WOMAN, DAUGHTER'S BODIES FOUND IN WELL IN M'GIRI

**Malkangiri:** Police on Saturday recovered bodies of a woman and her four-year-old daughter from a well at Kaudiguda village under the Mathili police station in Malkangiri district. It was suspected to be a case of suicide. Police said the two were missing from their house since previous night. It was suspected that the woman tied her daughter with her waist before jumping into the well. Police along with fire personnel reached the spot and recovered the bodies from the well with the help of a rope.

### MUSIC VIDEO 'RASIA TOKA' RELEASED

**Bhubaneswar:** NGR Mix's very first music video 'Rasia Toka' was released here on Friday. Sung by popular singers Mantu Churiya and Aseema Panda, the song features Suryamayee and Raj Rajesh. The music was composed by Ollywood music director Premanand, lyric by Narmada Sahu. The music video has been choreographed and directed by Girish Mohanty. "When the album industry disappeared, people had to wait for film songs to release. Now, they have more options with YouTube and other social media channels," said NGR Mix's Bimal Kumar Panda.



## Aditya death: Family moves SC for CBI probe

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The family of social activist Aditya Dash has filed a petition in the Supreme Court seeking a CBI probe into his mysterious death last year.

The petition was filed on March 4, said Aditya's family members at a Press conference here on Saturday.

"We had to move the Orissa High Court as we did not have faith in the Crime Branch investigation. But we only got dates after dates. Therefore, we filed the petition in the Supreme Court demanding a CBI probe," said Aditya's parents.

"Eight months have passed since the death of our son, but we have not got justice. We do not have more patience," said the parents.

They criticised the probe into the case by the Government Railway police as well the State Crime Branch. "On this day, eight months ago, our son had died. The GRP messed up with the probe. We were happy when the Crime



Branch took over the probe hoping that they would bring out the truth. But their approach has forced us to move the HC," they added.

Earlier on August 28, 2020, Bidyashree, wife of Aditya, had moved the Orissa High Court seeking a CBI investigation into the case.

A little less than four months after filing the petition, Bidyashree had tried to commit suicide by consuming sleeping pills while going live on Facebook.

Notably, Aditya's body was found along the railway tracks near the Lingaraj railway station in Bhubaneswar on July 7. The DGP had handed over the case to the Crime Branch on July 30.



cy, the rapid action teams, the handful trained staff of forest department alone cannot give justice to the job of fire control in the vast stretches of forests. Participation of the local community, Van Surakhya Samitis, eco-development committees, non-Government organisations, women's organisations, incentives to village committees for exemplary work, mass awareness are essential in forest fire control and management.

Similipal has a separate identity as the place of domestication of tigress Khairi under the patronage of the then Forest Conservator Padmashree Saroj Raj Choudhury. The tiger population that increased after the Project Tiger was launched has started decreasing and for the last few years the number remains confined to mere 20 plus or minus. This is only one example to cite here. More

studies to update the biodiversity status and the carrying capacity of the Similipal forest to sustain the wildlife, more particularly the key-stone species, livelihood support of local tribal and non-tribal communities, and the anthropogenic pressure including seasonal and man-made forest fire incidents are warranted. Based on the studies, appropriate conservation and management strategies have to be worked out. As Similipal BR is considered one of the rich natural habitats to support tiger along with other key-stone species, a bold and robust decision has to be taken to declare the entire area inviolable for wildlife. This will also help protect the livelihood of the tribes who are used to live with wildlife from time immemorial.

(Dr Patro is president, Orissa Environmental Society, email: snpatro11@gmail.com)

BJP STATE OFFICE-BEARERS' MEETING

Work hard, win people's trust: Purendeswari



STATE CHIEF

URGES WORKERS TO SPREAD MODI GOVT SCHEMES IN ALL BOOTHS

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

A day before the State Executive Committee meeting of the party, the BJP took stock of the political and social developments in the State in its State office-bearers' meeting on Saturday.

Party leaders expressed concern over the growing law and order situation, controversy over paddy procurement, increasing violence against women and children, corruption in DMF and CAMPA funds, corruption and mismanagement of Covid-19, uncontrolled sand lifting, border dispute, defective education policy, acute shortage of drinking water and cattle protection issues.

The meeting chaired by State president Samir Mohanty unanimously hailed the achievement of the Union Government under the leadership of Prime Minister

Narendra Modi for the exemplary work on Covid management and vaccination drive and thanked Modi for his commitment to the people of Odisha in providing more PMAY houses, sanctioning toilets and including farmers in the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana. Party State observer D Purendheswari said, "Through our hard work, we should win confidence of people."

Mohanty underlined the need to spread the good and pro-poor schemes of the Modi Government and asked party workers to go to all 37,000 booths and spread awareness about these schemes.

ITI Brahmapur

students create 3D graphics art



**B R A H M A P U R :** I T I Berhampur students under the guidance of Principal Dr Rajat Kumar Panigrahy have developed an innovative computer technology added with skill to develop the 3D graphic sculpture fabrication art.

With this, innovation sculptures up to 100 ft with sky colour background can be manufactured and installed. The most important point is that the sculptures can be easily portable where and when required. This would consume only scrap metal sheets with low cost and light weight.

"This shows a new era of skill development on computer graphics, welding, grinding, cutting, painting skills are integrated to develop the skill; and this will be a new model of attraction in the public rallies of political leaders," said Dr Panigrahy. He added this idea would pave way for creating employment in this sector.

IN BOUDH

Youth dies while returning from father's funeral



PNS ■ BOUDH

A youth was killed in a road mishap in Boudh district on Saturday when he was returning from Puri after the cremation of his father at the Swargdwar. The deceased Arun Meher hailed from the Tarbha area of Subarnapur district.

Besides, four of Arun's relatives suffered grievous injuries after the car by which they were travelling rammed into a stationary truck on National H-57 near Karadakotha under the

Purunakatak police in Boudh district today.

The injured, who hail from from Balangir district, were identified as Chhabi Meher (from Rugudipali), Bidubhusana Meher, Ashok Meher and Ram Meher (all from Belapadar).

On receiving information, police reached the spot and sent the injured to the Boudh District Headquarters Hospital (DHH). The police also initiated an inquiry in this connection.

Blood donation camp held by B'pur DHC



PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

The Divine Health Care (DHC), a unit of DNGH Health and Research Private Limited, organised a blood donation camp at the premises of its unit here at Gajapati Nagar on Thursday.

Brahmapur MLA Bikram Panda inaugurated the blood camp and also the newly opened "Sai Gemms SI and Occupational Therapy Center."

MLA Panda appreciated the selfless efforts and devotion of Director of DHC and renowned Physiotherapist Dr

Dhireswar Panda in providing quality and timely healthcare services to the needy people by organising blood donation and free healthcare camps in different parts of the district.

He said that currently patients of diverse deceases are attracted towards medication and physiotherapy which is provided by the DHC. He assured all help for development of the centre.

Senior scribe Jagan Mohan Mahapatra, senior scribe and social worker Prof KC Panda, BJD State secretary Tumbanath Panda were guests of honour.

10 G'pati centres for orphan kids' rehab

PNS ■ PARALAKHEMUNDI

The Gajapati district administration has taken a strong initiative for rehabilitation of orphan children from all over district. As per Adolescent Act 2015, by the instruction of district Collector Anupam Saha, 10 centres were opened to detect the orphan children.

The Anganwadi workers were given responsibility to conduct a survey in the first place. Accordingly, 525 were children identified from the district. The child protection unit staff were also assigned to identify the parentless children. On Tuesday a meeting was held at Kashinagar NAC premises where BDO Kashinagar Simanchal Mahanty, Chairman CWC Pramod Kumar Roul, Member of CWC Alaka Sahu, CDPO Kashinagar Kanaklata Pujari, staff of child protection unit Dambarudhar Balwant were present.

'Odisha women empowerment best model'

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

While announcing the launching of the first FICCI Ladies Organisation (FLO) Odisha Women's Awards instituted to acknowledge and award the women achievers of Odisha on Saturday, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik reposed faith on women to run Panchayati Raj Institutions saying Odisha is ahead in women empowerment and the State's empowerment model for women is one amongst the best in the country.

"My Government has always been a champion of the cause of women empowerment, Mission Shakti is one of the key initiatives of our empowerment model, has successfully brought over eight million women from the four walls of family to socio-economic vibrancy," Patnaik said.

He said the rural women in Odisha are now increasingly becoming a major contributor to the State's growing economy. Through the Government's ini-

- **CM launches FICCI FLO Women Achievers Award**
- **Patnaik said, the rural women in Odisha are now increasingly becoming a major contributor to the State's growing economy**
- **The CM observed that Odia women have also been achieving great feats in national and international sports**

tiatives like Make-in-Odisha, Start-Up Odisha and Skilled-in-Odisha, more and more women in Odisha are coming to entrepreneurship.

The CM observed that Odia women have also been achieving great feats in national and international sports. Odisha has become the first State in the country to walk the talk and it has been resolved in the State Assembly to allocate 33 per cent of seats in Parliament and State Legislative Assembly. He pointed out that since 2011, Panchayat and Urban Local Bodies in the

State are represented by over 50 per cent women.

The CM released a 'Policy Brief on Women Entrepreneurship in Odisha' and thanked the efforts of FICCI-FLO for its endeavour to encourage and facilitate women to showcase their talents, skills and energy at the grassroots, middle and senior levels for an inclusive economic growth trajectory. National president FICCI FLO Janhavi Phookan and State president Dharitri Patnaik also spoke on the occasion.

France Ambassador lauds Kalinga Stadium



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Ambassador of France to India Emmanuel Lenain was happy to see the world-class sports infrastructure at the Kalinga Stadium here on Friday.

After unveiling the country's first Indo-French dual degree Master's programme in Sports Industry Management of the Xavier Emylon Business School (XEBS) at XIMB, Lenain visited the Kalinga Stadium. He was accompanied by Consul General of France in Kolkata Virgine Corteval.

Odisha Special Secretary,

Sports and Youth Services R Vineel Krishna shared the unique initiatives in the State in the sports sector.

At the Hockey HPC, the Ambassador interacted with trainee cadets and took to the stick to play a few shots of hockey with them. HPC Project Director Rajiv Seth, gave an over view of the thriving Hockey ecosystem in Odisha. At the ABTP Sports Science Centre, he had a virtual interaction with Olympian gold medalist Abhinav Bindra and was demonstrated the bio mechanical assessment and rehabilitation facilities by the centre's head Pradeep Pillay

6-day nat'l theatre fest CANFEST begins

PNS ■ PARADIP

The 18th National Theatre Festival CANFEST-2021 was inaugurated at the Jayadev Sadan here on Friday.

The festival will run for six days from March 5 to 10 in collaboration with the Union Ministry of Culture, Department of Culture, Government of Odisha, National Eastern Zonal Cultural Centre, Kolkata, Paradip Port Trust (PPT), IOCL Paradip Refinery, IFFCO Paradip unit. English daily PBD is the media partner of the fest.

The event is being held adhering to social distancing and Covid-19 guidelines.

The festival was declared open by Deputy Chairman, Paradip Port Trust (PPT) Asish Kumar Bose in the presence of senior GM (Finance), IFFCO Suresh Goyal and president, CANMASS Atulya Kumar Mohapatra.



Several troupes from different parts of the State and country are participating in the festival.

On the opening day, Actor's Repertory Theater (Art) group of New Delhi presented the inaugural Hindi play 'Nagin Tera Vansh Badhe'. The play was directed by Avtar Sahni. Hindi play 'Charulata' was played by Prangan group of Patna, directed by Abhaya Sinha on the second day evening.

Similarly, the Odia play 'Abhinetri', 'Swayambar', Hindi

play 'Nepathya Mein Shakuntala', Bengali play 'Tithineer' will be performed by Dynamic Platform, Bhubaneswar. Sri Sri Jagannath Lalit Kala Mandap, Paradip, Shadow Theatre, Bhopal and Sudrak group of Kolkata on the day of 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th evenings.

The festival is being organised by CANMASS president Capt Atulya Kumar Mohapatra, secretary Sriman Narayan Mishra and coordinated by all members of CANMASS group.

Man, son held for abetting daughter-in-law suicide

PNS ■ SUNDARGARH

A man and his son were arrested and forwarded to court by Tikayatpalli police in Sundargarh district on Friday allegedly for abetment of suicide of his daughter-in-law who was newly married.

The deceased Chandeswari Behera (30), a resident of Talamunda village of Jharsuguda district, had married one Bibhuti Behera, a resident of Sarsara village under Tikayatpalli police station under Bonei sub division, five months ago. As per the FIR lodged in Tikayatpalli police station by family member of Chandeswari, Chandeswari's father-in-law Laxman Behera and husband Bibhuti Behera, used to torture Chandeswari regularly for dowry.

Chandeswari's sister-in-law who is married also used to torture her. When the torture became unbearable, Chandeswari reportedly had told his parents to take her to their house. On March 3 at around 10 pm, the family

members of Chandeswari came to know from on their relative that Chandeswari is critical and they went to the house of in-laws of Chandeswari and found the door of the house was locked from outside and saw through the window that Chandeswari was hanging from roof.

Laxman and Bibhuti had absconded. So they suspected that both Laxman and Bibhuti killed Chandeswari and later hanged her and after locking the door from outside, fled.

After getting information on Thursday morning, a police team along with scientific team, reached the spot and retrieved the body. Later, the police started searching both father and son. On Friday, police arrested both Laxman and Bibhuti and forwarded them to court for abetment to suicide of Chandeswari.

Significantly, accused Laxman and Bibhuti had been arrested and sent to jail in a murder case, five years ago and later had come out of jail on bail.

Union Budget to usher in massive growth: Kharavela

PNS ■ PHULBANI

In a Press meet here former BJP MP Aira Kharavela Swain said the Union Budget of India for 2021-22 is development-oriented.

The Government focuses on infrastructure so that many manufacturing units will be set up and employment can be generated. Our main motto is to eradicate poverty, he said.

Economic growth means to increase in national property and comfortable living of people and India can overcome poverty like East Asia countries Japan, Korea, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia by pumping more funds into infrastructural growth and job creation, Swain told.

In the current Union Budget, Rs 5.63 lakh crore has been allocated for infrastructure development which is 15.5 per cent of the GDP. This is a record allocation since independence, told the former MP.



This would help develop road, aerodrome, railways, port, electricity and irrigation in a massive way. The Government introduced three Bills for the betterment of farmers. Health insurance, social security for the farmers and repeal of old laws will foster development by ending poverty, Swain said. The Government gives priority to the private sector so that they can develop the country strongly. The Government will

invest Rs 35,000 crore for Corona vaccine, he said praising the efforts.

The Government will create 15,000 new Navodaya schools for better education and to iradicate dangerous diseases 15 new national health centres will be opened, Swain told. In the Press meet Kandhamal BJP district president Jagannath Sahu and leaders Bhagaban Mohanty, Tapan Padhi among others were present.

Mohana BDO axed for dereliction of duty

PNS ■ PARALAKHEMUNDI

The State Government suspended Mohana BDO Bansidhar Khosla on charge of dereliction of duty.

Without approval of leave, the BDO remained out of headquarters for which the action was taken against him on March 3.

On August 21 at Mandimera, a ganja loaded truck with cashew of 18 quin-

tal was seized.

Under the instruction of a court, the BDO got power to sell the cashew.

Those skinless cashew worth Rs 1.42 crore but the BDO sold the cashew at Rs 14 lakh only.

An inquiry was instituted against 8 others in the deal including Supply Inspector Sankar Beher, IIC Adava Tapan Kumar Pati apart from the BDO.

IN BARIPADA

Youth dies stealing rly electrification cables

PNS ■ BARIPADA

A youth died while stealing electrification cables passed over the railway track near a temple at Baghra Road in Baripada town early on Saturday morning.

The deceased, identified as Chandan Sarkar (23), a resident of Baripada town, and his friend had climbed up an electric pole installed near the track for a railway electrifica-

tion project.

While he was cutting the electric wires, he slipped from the pole and died on the spot, GRP official said.

Recently, the electrification project had started between Bangiriposhi and Rupsa railway lines via Baripada. However, the trains passing through the track in the railway line are being run without electricity. The wires were not charged at the time of

mishap.

As the wires were lying on the track, the alert loco pilot of Bangiriposhi-Bhubaneswar Superfast that had left the Baripada railway station in the morning suddenly stopped the train sensing any possible mishap.

The loco pilot informed the railway officials for necessary action to clear the track. After a two-hour of halt, the train services resumed.

❑ **The deceased, identified as Chandan Sarkar (23), a resident of Baripada town**

❑ **The loco pilot informed the railway officials for necessary action to clear the track**

Care Hosp staff axed for misbehaviour

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Care Hospitals here on Thursday suspended an employee following allegations against him levelled by woman housekeeping employee of misbehaviour.

An internal committee of the hospital promptly took the decision keeping in line the hospitals' zero-tolerance policy on any such complaints of misbehaviour. The said indi-

THE HOUSEKEEPING STAFFS AT THE CARE HOSPITALS ARE PROVIDED BY AN EXTERNAL AGENCY

vidual would remain suspended till further investigations are completed.

Notably, the housekeeping staffs at the Care Hospitals are provided by an external agency, said a hospital release.



# Lookout notice against TMC leader’s brother

## CATTLE SMUGGLING CASE



**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

The CBI has issued a lookout notice against Bijay Mishra, brother of Trinamool Congress (TMC) leader Binay Mishra who is a close confidant of party MP Abhishek Banerjee, in a cattle-smuggling case.

The agency is mulling over approaching Interpol to get a Red Corner Notice (RCN) issued against Binay Mishra, who has not joined the probe till now, officials said.

“A lookout notice has been issued against Bijay Mishra, the brother of TMC leader Binay Mishra,” the official said, without divulging any other details.

The agency has also summoned two senior officers of the West Bengal police -- an Inspector General and a Superintendent of Police -- on Monday for questioning in connection with the case, they said.

The agency had named Binay Mishra as a co-accused in its supplementary

chargesheet filed in the cattle-smuggling case last month.

Binay Mishra is suspected to be close to West Bengal Chief Minister and TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee’s nephew Abhishek Banerjee, they further said.

In its chargesheet filed before a designated CBI court in Asansol (West Bengal), the agency has already mentioned Binay Mishra as absconding.

The CBI had filed a chargesheet on February 18 in the case against Border Security Force (BSF) Commandant Satish Kumar and six others for their alleged involvement in a cattle-smuggling racket operating at the India-Bangladesh border.

Recently, the CBI had also questioned Abhishek Banerjee’s wife Rujira and sister-in-law Menaka Gambhir in a separate case pertaining to illegal coal mining and pilferage from the mines of the Eastern Coalfields Limited (ECL).

# ED arrests 2 directors of TN-based firm over ₹325 cr laundering

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Saturday said it has arrested two directors of a Tamil Nadu-based firm in a money laundering case worth ₹325 crore, linked to a bank fraud case.

Hittesh Patel and Suresh N Patel, directors of Shinago Plantations Pvt Ltd, were sent to 10 days’ ED custody by a special court on Saturday after they were placed under arrest under sections of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), the agency said in a statement.

The two allegedly laundered funds to the tune of ₹325 crore by using a network of nearly 20 group entities located across Tamil Nadu.

The PMLA investigation revealed that “the accused in collusion with the valuers



availed loans from erstwhile Corporation Bank (now Union Bank of India) on the basis of inflated value of the properties offered as collateral and indulged in wilful diversion of funds through various group accounts.”

It said investigation further revealed that “the funds so availed by various individuals/group concerns in the form of Letter of Credit (LC) and Cash Credit (CC) limits/Agriculture term loans, were transferred within the group entities through circular rotation of money to avail more funds from the Bank without any actual business.”

# Donations for Ram Mandir cross more than ₹2,500 cr

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

Donations for the construction of Ram Mandir in Ayodhya are estimated to have crossed ₹2,500 crore and construction is likely to be completed in three years.

Addressing the media, Ramjanmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust chairman Champat Rai on Saturday said that the construction will commence from April and as per banks’ estimations till February 4, the donations have crossed ₹2,500 crore and house-to-house visits for donations have been stopped.

Now only online donations will be received, Rai said adding that 10 crore households in 4 lakh villages had been approached by 9 lakh volunteers in the past 45 days during the fund collection drive.

“Four lakh cubic stones will be used to complete construction within 3 years. While construction has not



begun, the improvement of land for the foundation will start in April.

Around ₹2,500 cr have been received till 4th of March, but can’t confirm the figures. We have reached 10 crore households with 9 lakh workers. The campaign is over doesn’t mean that dedication towards God is over. Visit our website which has all the details of bank accounts and one can contribute accordingly.”

He also said that a lot of

responses were received from North East States and Southern States.

To a query, Rai said that donations from Rajasthan are expected to be bigger than Uttar Pradesh.

From Arunachal Pradesh donations are estimated to have crossed ₹4.5 crore, followed by ₹2 crore from Manipur. As per the press release issued by VHP, Rs.85 crore has been received from Tamil Nadu and ₹13 crore from Kerala.

# Hybrid physical hearings in SC from March 15

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

The Supreme Court, which is hearing cases through video-conferencing since March last year due to the Covid-19 pandemic, will commence hybrid physical hearings from March 15.

The apex court has issued the standard operating procedure (SOP) for the hybrid physical hearings.

The top court has been hearing cases through video-conferencing since March last year due to the pandemic and several bar bodies and lawyers have been demanding that physical hearings should resume immediately.

“On an experimental basis, and as a pilot scheme, the final hearings/regular matters listed on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays may be heard in the hybrid mode, as may be



decided by the bench, considering the number of parties in a matter as well as the limited capacity of the courtrooms; all other matters, including those listed on Mondays and Fridays, shall continue to be heard through video/tele-conferencing mode,” said the SOP issued by the apex court.

“The hybrid physical

hearings are to commence with effect from March 15, 2021,” it added.

It said unless otherwise directed by a bench, the final hearings or regular matters where the number of lawyers for the parties is higher than the average working capacity of the courtrooms according to COVID-19 norms, that is

20 per courtroom at any given time, shall invariably be listed for hearing through the video or tele-conferencing mode.

“...However, in case the bench directs hearing of such matters to be held through the hybrid mode, the appearance of the parties, whether by physical presence or through video/tele-conferencing, will be facilitated as per the directions of the bench,” the SOP said.

It said if the number of parties is higher than the specified number in a matter listed for hybrid hearing, then one advocate-on-record (AOR) and one arguing counsel per party would be allowed entry.

It said one registered clerk per party, as may be chosen by the AOR, shall be allowed entry to carry paper-books or journals of lawyers up to the courtrooms.

# Cong: Kisan stir period black chapter in India’s democracy

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

As the farmers’ protest against the Centre’s new farm laws completed 100 days, the Congress on Saturday said the period was a “black chapter” in India’s democracy for the treatment meted out to the protesters and also marked 100 days of the ruling BJP’s “arrogance”.

Former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi hit out at the Centre over the farmers’ protest and said nails were laid at Delhi’s borders for those, whose sons risk their lives at the country’s borders.

His attack came after the farmers’ agitation completed 100 days with the protesting union leaders asserting that



their movement is far from over and they are “going strong”. “Whose sons risk their lives at the country’s borders, for them nails have been laid at the borders of Delhi. ‘Annadaatas’ demand their rights, government commits atrocities,”

Rahul said in his tweet, Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra also hit out at the Centre saying, “100 days of farmers’ struggle, of fight for rights, of respect for ‘annadaatas’, of the path shown by Gandhiji, Sardar

(Vallabhbhai) Patel, Nehruji, (Lal Bahadur) Shastriji, Shaheed Bhagat Singh.” With the hashtag ‘100Days OFBJParrogance’, she said, “100 days of BJP Government’s arrogance, of assault on farmers, of lies and scorn for farmers.”

Congress spokesperson Pawan Khera said the protesting farmers have been braving all odds — of nature and the might of the State — for the last 100 days.

“Each one of us, whichever category we may belong to, have our own struggles and that is the awareness on which the Government depends,” Khera said.

There is one section of the society that has found time to come out and protest — farmers — against these “black laws” and they are “our voice”, he added.

The Congress demands that the three new farm laws should immediately be repealed, Khera said.

## Kerala gold smuggling case

# CPM accuses Centre of misusing Central agencies against CM, Mins

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI/KOCHI**

The CPI(M) Polit Bureau on Saturday accused the BJP-led Government at the Centre of playing dirty tricks by misusing Central agencies like Customs Department to target Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and Ministers during the poll season with tutored affidavits of accused persons in the gold smuggling case.

For his part, Vijayan said: “After declaration of Assembly polls, central investigation agencies’ attacks have intensified. The Customs Commissioner, who isn’t party to gold smuggling case, included portions of confidential statement by accused (Swapna Suresh) in his statement in High Court. He has also leveled allegations against Kerala Speaker and Ministers to defame the LDF government.”

The Customs Department in Kochi earlier alleged that a political party was trying to intimidate the investigation agency but made it clear that it will not work. “A political party trying intimidation, will not work,” Customs (Preventive) Commissioner Sumit Kumar wrote on his Facebook page.

“She has stated with clarity about smuggling of foreign currency at the instance of the



Hon’ble chief minister and the Hon’ble Speaker with the help of the Consulate,” the Customs has said in a statement filed in the Kerala high court.

The CPI (M) Polit Bureau alleged that the tutored statements of the jailed accused was recorded months ago and leaked to malign the party during the election time.

“The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) strongly condemns the Customs Authority’s attempt to falsely implicate Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, three other ministers and the Speaker of the Assembly of Kerala in an alleged dollar smuggling case. The customs have cited an affidavit by one of the accused, who is in judicial custody in the gold smuggling case, for this purpose. The fact that this tutored statement was recorded some months ago and pre-

sented after the elections were announced shows the political game behind this move.

“The BJP Central government is systematically misusing the Central agencies for maligning the Chief Minister and the LDF government. The people of Kerala will see through this political chicanery and give a fitting rebuff to the dirty tactics adopted by the BJP and the UDF,” said CPI(M).

In Kerala, the CPI(M) has staged protest marches at Customs offices. Recently, the Customs Department has filed an affidavit before the Court stating that the main accused Swapna Suresh has given statement before the investigators on the knowledge of the Chief Minister and three Ministers and Speaker of the Kerala Assembly about the illegal dollar trade and gold smuggling involving UAE consulate.

# Frontier Gandhi’s autobiography released in English

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

First published in Pashto in 1983, the autobiography of freedom fighter Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, fondly known as Bacha Khan or Badshah Khan, is now out in English, announced publishing house Roli Books.

The book, titled “The Frontier Gandhi: My Life and Struggle”, is translated by former Pakistani civil servant and author Imitiaz Ahmad Sahibzada. This is the “first time” that Khan’s autobiography is available in English. An earlier account of his life, published in English in 1969, and with the same title, was based on the interviews conducted with him and was not “his written autobiography”.

“... Bacha Khan felt that the 1969 account of his life and struggle was not complete and began to write his own autobiography thereafter, with the help of numerous associates. Bacha Khan’s autobiography was thus first published in Pukhto in 1983, in Kabul.. This book is a translation of Bacha Khan’s only written, Pukhto autobiography,” writes Sahibzada in the book.

Khan (1890–1988), popularly called the ‘Frontier Gandhi’, was born in Uthmanzai in the North-West Frontier Province of British India. His life was dedicated to

the social reform of the Pukhtuns and he continues to be revered across the world by them. In India, he is known for his close association with Mahatma Gandhi and his leadership of the Khudai Khidmatgar (Servants of God) movement from 1930 – 47 – one of the most successful and sustained Gandhian non-violent campaigns anywhere in the world.

The book, whose foreword is written by historian and Mahatma Gandhi’s grandson Rajmohan Gandhi, brings to life events and personalities of the independence movement as Khan records the untiring energy and sacrifices that went into winning freedom.

“If our world wants to picture non-violent defiance, or inter-faith partnership, .. Or a commitment to the rights of the vulnerable, it cannot do much better than study these two men together: Ghaffar Khan and, older by 21 years, Mohandas Gandhi, brothers in spirit, each armed with the swords of conscience and courage,” writes Rajmohan, who is also the author of Khan’s biography, “Ghaffar Khan: Nonviolent Badshah of the Pakhtuns”.

“The Frontier Gandhi: My Life and Struggle”, priced at ₹695, is available for sale in offline and online stores.

## Scientists develop platform to detect effect of alcohol exposure on red blood cells

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

Scientists have developed a platform to detect the effect of prolonged exposure to alcohol on red blood cells (RBC) through high-resolution measurements of their size, according to a statement on Saturday.

The high-resolution platform that shows the reduction in size of RBCs due to alcohol exposure can be tuned for a point-of-care screening of multiple conditions that alter the size and count of red cells in blood.

Although it is known that alcohol affects RBCs, the exact physiological changes are very subtle and difficult to measure.

In order to overcome this challenge, scientists led by Professor Gautam Soni from Raman Research Institute (RRI), an institution funded by the Department of Science & Technology (DST), have developed a custom-made electro-fluidic platform that can detect the change by measuring the cell size in enhanced resolution.

The device made in RRI relies on the resistive pulse sensing principle.

The team first developed techniques for making tiny micron (1/1000th of a millimetre) sized holes or micro-pores at the tip of a glass capillary with careful fabrication, flame polishing, and image verification.

# Pon Radhakrishnan BJP candidate for bypoll to Kanyakumari LS seat

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

The BJP on Saturday nominated senior party leader and former Union Minister Pon Radhakrishnan as its candidate for the April 6 bypoll to the Kanyakumari Lok Sabha constituency in Tamil Nadu.

As the campaign for the Assembly polls heats up, union Home Minister and former BJP president Amit Shah will be on a one-day visit to Tamil Nadu and Kerala on Sunday to attend various important programmes.

According to a party statement here, Shah will first visit Suchindram Temple in Kanyakumari, Tamil Nadu, and offer prayers. He will then launch “Vetri Kodi Eandhi” (Vijay Sankalp Mahasamprk Abhiyaan - a door to door campaign) in Suchindram Town, Kanyakumari.

The BJP said Shah will hold a massive roadshow “Vetri Kodi Eandhi” from Hindu college to Veppamoodu Kamaraj statue in Kanyakumari. After the roadshow, the Union Home Minister will address a Karyakarta Sabha of the party at Uduppi Hotel in Kanyakumari .

Shah will then proceed to Kerala where he will visit Shri Belur Math at Thiruvananthapuram in Kerala and offer prayers. After that, he will address the Valedictory function of BJP’s Kerala Vijay Yatra at Shanghumukham in Thiruvananthapuram.

parliamentary and inducted in then Modi-led NDA dispensation as Minister of State.

He lost the subsequent 2019 Lok Sabha elections to Kumar from the same constituency. He was then MoS Finance and Shipping.

Union Home Minister and former BJP president Amit Shah will be on a one-day visit to Tamil Nadu and Kerala on Sunday to attend various important programmes.

According to a party statement here, Shah will first visit Suchindram Temple in Kanyakumari, Tamil Nadu, and offer prayers. He will then launch “Vetri Kodi Eandhi” (Vijay Sankalp Mahasamprk Abhiyaan - a door to door campaign) in Suchindram Town, Kanyakumari.

The BJP said Shah will hold a massive roadshow “Vetri Kodi Eandhi” from Hindu college to Veppamoodu Kamaraj statue in Kanyakumari. After the roadshow, the Union Home Minister will address a Karyakarta Sabha of the party at Uduppi Hotel in Kanyakumari .

Shah will then proceed to Kerala where he will visit Shri Belur Math at Thiruvananthapuram in Kerala and offer prayers. After that, he will address the Valedictory function of BJP’s Kerala Vijay Yatra at Shanghumukham in Thiruvananthapuram.

# Medha Patkar defamation: Delhi court asks HC clerk to bring original case file

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

Delhi Court has ordered to summon the court clerk of the record room of Delhi High Court to bring original case file of the petition filed by Medha Patkar for quashing of the defamation case filed by VK Saxena, presently the chairman of Khadi and Village Industries Commission. The original case file will help settle the dispute about the existence of the so called “defamatory” press

release issued by Patkar, something she has persistently denied in the court.

Saxena has filed two defamation cases against Patkar which are pending in the court of Metropolitan Magistrate, Saket, New Delhi. The one defamation case was related to a press note issued by Patkar on 24.11.2000, in which she claimed that Saxena visited Malegaon, praised Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA), and donated a cheque of ₹40,000 to

Lok Samiti, a support group of NBA. The news was published by a news portal rediff.com.

Saxena denied that he ever visited Malegaon or made any such donation to the NBA and said that the press note was full of false allegations and was defamatory. He subsequently issued a legal notice to Patkar. After receiving no response from the NBA leader, Saxena filed a defamation case in January 2001.

During the last 20 years on

various occasions, Patkar denied that she ever issued any such press note and even claimed that it was fabricated by Saxena himself.

Interestingly, Patkar filed a criminal miscellaneous application No 6026 on 26.11.2018, U/S 482 of CrPC in the High Court of Delhi for quashing the proceedings in another defamation case filed by Saxena against her. An advance copy of the petition was also sent to Saxena by her advocate. In the said

criminal petition, Patkar in the list of “dates and events”, mentioned that on 24.11.2000, a press note was released by her which was subsequently published in the news portal rediff.com.

Incidentally, this was precisely the case made out by Saxena. Patkar later withdrew the petition.

Saxena on February 17, 2020 filed an application in the MM Court along with certified copies of the criminal miscel-

laneous application no. 6026 of 2018 filed by Patkar in the Delhi High Court with the request for calling upon additional witness in the case, i.e. the concerned court clerk of the Delhi High Court with original case file of the above case where she has admitted to have issued the press note in question. Counsel for Saxena pleaded that judicial admission cannot be withdrawn.

Metropolitan Magistrate Animesh Kumar after hearing

both the sides said, “it is a case of the complainant (VK Saxena) that on 26.11.2018, accused (Medha Patkar) filed a petition bearing number Crl MC 6026 of 2018 before the Hon’ble Delhi High Court U/S 482 CrPC for quashing the proceedings of CC No. 2866/1/03 pending before this court. Ld Counsel for the complainant submits that the accused has made certain judicial admissions under oath in the said petition filed before the DHC

where she has categorically admitted that she made averments against the complainant.”

The Magistrate further said that relevant record related to Crl MC No. 6026 of 2018 titled “Medha Patkar Vs State of Delhi & Others” should be summoned in the present case.

“Hence, let summon be issued to the concerned clerk of the record room of Hon’ble Delhi High Court to bring the original case file on 19.03.2021,” he ordered.



SHARE OF TAX DEVOLUTION TO STATES

# 15th Fin Comm opted for continuity: Singh

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The 15th Finance Commission opted for continuity and predictability and hence retained the share of tax devolution to States at 41 per cent of the total pool, its chairman NK Singh said on Saturday.

Speaking at a webinar organised by the Centre for Policy Research (CPR), Singh said each Finance Commission in the past has somewhat increased the total amount of devolution to states, but the 15th Finance Commission weighed all the options considering that the fiscal space of both states and the Centre has shrunk on account of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Rajya Sabha member Sushil Kumar Modi highlighted that the share of divisible pool is slowly shrinking as the “cess and surcharge” component in Gross Tax revenue is

increasing.

The 15th Finance Commission has recommended that states be given 41 per cent of the divisible tax pool of the Centre during the period 2021-22 to 2025-26, which is at the same level as was recommended by the 14th Finance Commission.

Finance Commission is a constitutional body that gives suggestions on Centre-state financial relations.

As per the Commission, the gross tax revenue (GTR) for the 5-year period is expected to be Rs 135.2 lakh crore. Out of that, divisible pool (after deducting cesses and surcharges and cost of collection) is estimated to be Rs 103 lakh crore. States’ share at 41 per cent of divisible pool comes to Rs 42.2 lakh crore for 2021-26 period.

The report of the 15th Finance Commission was tabled in Parliament on

February 2.

Singh said each Finance Commission has somewhat increased the total amount of devolution as percentage of divisible pool.

“We had an option of continuing this trajectory, we had an option of enhancing this devolution to somewhat higher figure. We had the option of somewhat recalibrating downwards looking at the constraints on the fiscal space of the Central Government. Finance Commission is not an encounter with shock and awe, Finance Commission has a legacy which believes in stability, continuity and predictability. We opted for continuity and predictability,” he said.

Modi, in his speech, said cess and surcharge which was 10.4 per cent of GTR in 2011-12, has increased to 20.2 per cent. Even after deducting GST compensation cess, it is 15 per cent.

# Govt open to evaluate, explore cryptocurrencies, says Thakur

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Union minister Anurag Thakur on Saturday said the government is open to evaluate and explore new technologies, including cryptocurren- cies, for improving govern- ance.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself is a strong advocate of embracing technology in various aspects of govern- ance, the Minister of State for Finance said while addressing an event organised by Entrepreneurs’ Organisation - EO Punjab.

“Let me say that we wel- come innovation and new technology...Blockchain is a new emerging technology. Cryptocurrency is a form of virtual currency. I firmly believe that we must always evaluate, explore and encour- age new ideas with an open mind,” he said.

A High-Level Inter- Ministerial Committee (IMC) was constituted under the Chairmanship of Economic Affairs Secretary on digital currencies and it has submitted its report.

The government would



**The Govt would take a decision on the recommendations of the IMC and the legislative proposal, if any, would be introduced in Parliament following the due proces**

take a decision on the recom- mendations of the IMC and the legislative proposal, if any, would be introduced in Parliament following the due process, he said while inviting suggestions and views on this issue.

Cryptocurrencies are digi- tal or virtual currencies in which encryption techniques are used to regulate the gener- ation of their units and verify the transfer of funds, operating independently of a central bank.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday said the government is still formulating its opinion on cryptocurrencies and will take a calibrated position.

Reserve Bank of India Governor Shaktikanta Das had last week said the apex bank has certain “major concerns”

over the impact cryptocurren- cies may have on the financial stability in the economy and has conveyed the same to the government.

The RBI had virtually banned cryptocurrency trading in 2018

and had directed all entities regulated by the central bank to cease dealing in virtual cur- rencies. The Supreme Court had also asked the Centre in 2019 to frame policies for cryp- to, and in 2020, struck down the curbs imposed by the RBI.

The Reserve Bank had through various public notices on December 24, 2013, February 1, 2017 and December 5, 2017, cautioned users, holders and traders of virtual currencies, including bitcoins, regarding various risks associated in dealing with such virtual currencies.

# Goyal stresses on manufacturing high quality containers in India

**New Delhi:**Union Railway Minister Piyush Goyal on Friday emphasised on the man- ufacturing on the indigenous high quality containers in India saying that India has excellent steel making capabilities.

Addressing a webinar here at the Container Corporation of India Ltd (CONCOR) on ‘Indigenous Manufacturing of Containers’, Goyal said, “We should be aspiring for a much bigger play in container man- ufacturing. We have absolute- ly excellent steel making capa- bilities, we have an MSME sector with good skills and the frame making capabilities are also good.”

The minister stressed that India’s exports are going to increase significantly, as against the imports. “Government has made a conscious decision to support our shipping sector so more and more of the Indian companies start owning Indian flag vessels,” he said.

Goyal said, there is a lot of buzz and excitement in our manufacturing sector, to meet domestic and international requirements. “We are part of the resilient global supply

chain, which are looking at alternate supplies,” he said.

“If India starts manufac- turing at scale, we will become cost-competitive to sell to all parts of the world. Scale pre- sents huge cost-benefit oppor- tunities,” he said.Goyal empha- sised that if you produce a high-quality product, our neighbours will never be able to match it. And that can be sold in Europe and US.

“If India manufacturers a million containers in a year, we will become cost-competitive,” he said.Goyal said container manufacturing business need- ed a LIFT, which CONCOR has been able to provide. Elaborating the meaning of LIFT, he said L - efficient logistics, I - depending on indige- nous sources, F - futuristic and T - becoming a trendset- ter.“We should all collectively take a concrete decision to buy only Indian and support Indian industry, to meet not only India’s needs but the world’s needs. Container short- age and imported container should be dumped into the flames of history,” the minister said.

IAN5

# Tech bids open for Mum-Ahm Bullet train bridge project

IAN5 ■ NEW DELHI

The National High Speed Rail Corporation Limited (NHSRCL) on Saturday said that it has opened two techni- cal bids for construction or building of bridges for the 508 km Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail (MAHSR) corridor in the state of Gujarat and Dadra and Nagar Haveli in which nine companies have participated.

NHSRCL spokesperson Sushma Gaur said that the technical bids for contract packages of P-1(B) and P-1(C) for construction or building of

bridges for the MAHSR corri- dor in the state of Gujarat as well union territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli.

She said that of now, 5 bidders for P-1 (C) whereas four bidders for P-1 (B) have submitted their bids for the package.She said that the P-1 (C) package includes con- struction of bridges for double line High Speed railway for four PSC Bridges and seven steel truss bridges between Zaroli Village at Maharashtra - Gujarat Border and Vadodara, in Gujarat and the union ter- ritory of Dadar and Nagar Haveli for the project.

# Tesla, Ford only carmakers not gone bankrupt: Elon Musk

IAN5 ■ NEW DELHI

As several carmakers bleed in the US and beyond, Tesla is profitable and accord- ing to Elon Musk, his electric car company and Ford are the only two carmakers in the US which have not gone bankrupt.

Tesla reported another profitable quarter as revenue hit \$10.74 billion in the fourth quarter of 2020. In last year, Tesla achieved free cash flow of nearly \$2.8 billion after spend- ing more than \$3 billion on building new factories and other expenditures.

US automaker Ford last month announced to more than double its investment in electric and autonomous vehi- cles to \$29 billion. The

automaker had previously committed to spend \$11.5 bil- lion on electrifying its vehicle lineup through 2022.

“Tesla & Ford are the only American carmakers not to have gone bankrupt out of 1000’s of car startups. Prototypes are easy, production is hard & being cash flow posi- tive is excruciating,” Musk said in a tweet on Friday.

Ford CEO Jim Farley responded to his tweet, saying: “Respect”.

In 2020, Tesla produced and delivered half a million vehicles. In addition, Model Y production in Shanghai has begun.

Tesla this year also regis- tered its Indian subsidiary with the Registrar of Companies

(RoC) in Bengaluru, on January 8.

“2020 was a defining year for us on many levels. Despite a challenging environment, we’ve reached an important milestone of producing and delivering 0.5 million cars,” Musk had said.

On the other hand, Ford’s increased investment is aimed at catching up with the EV market leader Tesla and keep pace with other automakers like GM and Volkswagen.

“We are accelerating our plans right now, breaking con- straints, increasing battery capacity, improving our costs and getting more battery electrics into our cycle plan,” Ford CEO Farley said last month.

# ‘Privatisation will lead to increase in service charges’

IAN5 ■ NEW DELHI

All India Nationalised Banks Officers Federation (AIN- BOF) has opposed privatisation of public sector banks as it will lead to increase in service charges and will take banking beyond the reach of common man.

In a statement, the AIN- BOF said privatization will primarily impact the general public only as the social objec- tives will be lost in the name of profitability.

“Service Charges will be increased and customers who are able to bear those charges only will be serviced. This will take banking beyond the reach of the common man which was the primary objective of

nationalization,” it said.

It said though the Government’s agenda of pri- vatization started way back in 1991 immediately after the lib- eralization the trade unions were successful in thwarting the ill-conceived moves of the successive governments over the past three decades and maintaining the public sector status.

“Of the many private sec- tor banks that came into exis- tence, today only a handful which were promoted by the financial houses like ICICI, UTI, IDBI, HDFC are surviv- ing and many of the private sector entities that commenced their banking operations after 1990 were either closed or merged”, it added.

# Petrol, diesel prices steady even as crude boils

IAN5 ■ NEW DELHI

Oil marketing companies have spared consumers of yet another petrol and diesel price hike even though the global oil market is on the boil with crude reaching within touching distance of year-high- level of \$70 a barrel.

Petrol continues to be priced at ₹91.17 a litre and diesel ₹81.47 a litre in the cap- ital on Saturday. Across the country too, the petrol and diesel price remained unchanged.

This is seventh consecutive day when pump prices of auto fuels have remained unchanged.

After a spike in global oil prices seen over last two weeks with crude price jumping close to \$67 a barrel, prices had fallen to around \$63 a barrel but it rose again to cross \$69 a bar- rel mark now after the OPEC+ decision to continue with crude production cut in April.

Petrol and diesel prices have been rising continuously since February 9.

**Public Notice**

This is to inform general public that Mrs. Sunita Gujral is the owner of Entire First Floor, Entire Second Floor, Entire Third Floor, with roof rights "said floors", built on Property bearing No. J-13/63, on Plot No. 63, area measuring 200 sq. yds., in Block J-13, Situated at Rajouri Garden, New Delhi vide Sale Deed dated 11.12.2020 and the same was duly registered with the Sub-Registrar-IIB Delhi, as Document No. 19218, Book No. I, Volume No. 5819, Page No. 110-128, on 17.12.2020. Now, Mrs. Sunita Gujral is mortgaging the above property with Shri Ram Housing Finance Ltd. & in case anyone has any objection, the same may be raised within 15 days of this publication to Mr. Muneesh Dhawan/ Mr. Sudhir Jain (Advocates), Law Ventas, Unit no 405, 4th Floor, GD-ITL Northex Tower, (A-09), Netaji Subhash Place, Delhi-110034 or contact at 9066707172/ 9818228636 (M).

**LOST AND FOUND**

ORIGINAL SALE DEED OF RESIDENTIAL PLOT NO. 54-2 & 54-3, GREEN PARK, NEW DELHI VIDE REGISTRATION NO. 8970 AND 8971, EXECUTED ON 20.11.1992 ARE MISSING IF ANY PERSON, BANK, FINANCIAL INSTITUTION HAVING ANY CLAIM, RIGHT, TITLE OR INTEREST OF ANY NATURE WHATSOEVER IN OR UPON THE ABOVE PROPERTY, IS HEREBY CALLED UPON TO MAKE THE SAME KNOWN, IN WRITING WITH DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE BY REGISTERED AD POST TO THE UNDERSIGNED AT THE ADDRESS MENTIONED HEREIN BELOW WITHIN 7 (SEVEN) DAYS OF PUBLICATION OF THIS NOTICE TO THE UNDERSIGNED ON TELEPHONE NO.-8860074071 ADDRESS: PNB HOUSING FINANCE LTD., 5-8 GREEN PARK EXTENSION, NEW DELHI - 110016

**SOUTH EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY**

**TENDER NOTICE FOR ENGINEERING WORK**

Srl. No. (1) E-Tender No. DRM-ENGG-BSP-T-176-20-21, Date: 03.03.2021.

Work : Renewal of existing Channel Sleepers with H-Beam Sleepers under the jurisdiction of DEN/ Central-II/BSP.

Tender Value : ₹ 2,88,36,781.56/-.

Completion Period : 09 Months.

Start Date of Submission of Tender: From 11:00 hrs. on 11.03.2021. Last Date of Submission of Tender : Upto 11:00 hrs. on 25.03.2021.

The Complete information of above e-Tender Notices is available over website <https://www.ireps.gov.in>. Bids other than e-bids shall not be accepted against above Tenders.

Divl. Railway Manager (Engg.) CPR/10/468 S.E.C. Railway, Bilsapur

South East Central Railway @secrail

**AXIS BANK**

**SME Centre, Delhi:** 4th Floor, Ashoka Estate, 24 Barakhamba Road New Delhi-110001. **Also at** III Floor, Red Fort Capital Park/Anand Tower, Bhai Veer Singh Marg, Near Gole Market, New 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) Mortgagor(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) Mortgagor(s) having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrower(s) Guarantor(s) Mortgagor(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/ her 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)/ Mortgagor(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)/ Mortgagor(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. Date of Possession 3. Amount in Demand Notice (Rs.)
<b>1.MNG International,</b> Registered Office At 185-186 , 2nd Floor, D-14, Sector 7 Rohini, Delhi - 110085	1. Equitable Mortgage over ground floor of freehold residential property bearing No. 128, in PKT 14, Sector 24, Rohini, Delhi – 110042, situated in the layout plan Residential, Residential Scheme, Rohini, Delhi, admeasuring 60sq. mts., along with the proportionate free hold rights of the and under the said property owned by Mr. Anshuman Mohanty & Mrs. Pranti Mohanty built on a phot admeasuring 60 sqm.	1. 26-11-2020 2. 04-03-2021 3. Rs. 1,00,04,592/- (Rupees One Crore Four Thousand Five Hundred Ninety Two Only)
<b>2.Mr. Anshuman Mohanty,</b> Proprietor of M/S MNG International 185-186 , 2nd Floor, D-14 Sector 7 , Rohini, Delhi -110085		
<b>Also At :</b> House No. 63 , Second Floor, With Roof Rights Pocket 21, Sector-24, Rohini, Delhi-110085		
<b>Also At - :</b> Property No. 128 in Pkt-14, Sector-24, Rohini, Delhi -110042		
<b>3.Ms. Pranti Mohanty</b> 185-186, 2nd Floor, D-14, Sector 7, Rohini, Delhi-110085		
<b>Also At -</b> Ms. Pranti Mohanty House No. 63, Second Floor Pocket 21, Sector 24 Rohini, Delhi-110085		
<b>Also At:</b> Ms. Pranti Mohanty Property No -128.In Pkt-14, Sector-24, Rohini, Delhi -110042		

The above-mentioned Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s)/ Mortgagor(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.

Sd/-  
Authorized Officer,  
Axis Bank Ltd.,

**NORTHERN RAILWAY**

**TENDER NOTICE**

Re-Invitation of Tender through E-Tendering (E-Procurement System)

1	Name of work with its location	Strengthening of rail and cross girder, providing screen over web of cross girder on Br. No.-176A UP DLI-UMB section under AXEN/Br/Spl/TK/1.
2	Approx. Cost of work	Rs. 26,14,403.75
3	Completion period of Work	(02) Two Months
4	Date & time for submission of tender and opening of tender	Upto 14.00 hrs. on 30.03.2021 Opening of tender after 14.00 hrs. on same day
5	Website particulars where complete details of Tender can be seen & downloaded	Above tender available on IREPS site i.e. <a href="http://www.ireps.gov.in">www.ireps.gov.in</a>

Tender Notice No. 32-W-BR-176A-DLI-2021 Date: 06.03.2021 517/2021

**SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE**

**SOUTHERN STAR CO-OPERATIVE (URBAN) THRIFT & CREDIT SOCIETY LTD.**  
Corp. Off:- E-2&3, DDA Market, MOR Land, New Rajendra Nagar, New Delhi-60  
Phone :- 011-26741801-02, 26741821-22, E-mail :- sstarsociety@yahoo.com, website :- southernstar.org

**NOTICE**

Notice is being published for general information of the members of the **SOUTHERN STAR CO-OP. (U) THRIFT & CREDIT SOCIETY LTD.** (hereafter referred to as the Society') that the 31st Annual General Body Meeting (AGM) of the Society will be held on **Friday, 19th March, 2021 at 02.00 P.M. at the MCD Community Center, New Rajendra Nagar, New Delhi-60**, to consider the Agenda already circulated and also available at the website of the Society.

S/d

**NEW DELHI -60**  
**Date : 01.03.2021**

**(VENKIDESWARAN POTTY P.N.)**  
**HONY. SECRETARY**

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

**ICICI Bank**

Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd, 3rd Floor, Plot No- 23, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi- 110005

The following borrower/s have defaulted in the repayment of principal and interest of the loans facility obtained by them from the Bank and the loans have been classified as Non-Performing Assets (NPA). A notice was issued to them under Section 13 (2) of Securitisation and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act-2002 on their last known addresses, however it was not served and hence they are hereby notified by way of this public notice.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Co-Borrower/ Guarantor/ (Loan Account Number) & Address	Property Address of Secured Asset / Asset to be Enforced	Date of Notice Sent/ Outstanding as on Date of Notice	NPA Date
1.	Kanchan Kumari, Raghunath Sharma, 276, Sector B2 Pocket C, Narela, Delhi A/c No:- LBDEL00002866980	LIG Flat No-276, Third Floor Block-B2 Pocket-C, Narela, Delhi	03-Feb-2021, Rs. 12,93,262/-	17-02-2020
2.	Pankaj Bakshi, Meena Bakshi, 641 New Ashiana Apartment Plot No-10, Sec 6, Dwarka South West Delhi, Delhi A/c No:- LBDEL00002967064	Flat No-641 4th Floor, Plot No 10, Block Ph-1, New Ashiana CGHS Ltd Cat-B, Sector-6, Delhi	03-Feb-2021, Rs. 24,47,256/-	29-02-2020
3.	Sanjeeta Thakur, Sanjeev Kumar Thakur, Flat No.990 Jay Ambey Apartment, New LIG Dda Flats, Kondli Gharoli, Mayur Vihar-3, Delhi A/c No:-LBGHZ00004865169	DDA LIG Flat No-137F, 2nd Floor Pocket-A-2, Kondli Gharoli, Mayur Vihar, Phase 3, Delhi	03-Feb-2021, Rs. 37,60,624/-	29-02-2020
4.	Rana Singh, Aarti Bhagwan Singh Thakur, 402 AI Ikrema Building, Near Grand Cafe, Al Jurf Ajman, UAE A/c No:-LBNOD00002008679	Flat No-g-3/19, Diamond-4, 19th Floor, Ganga Apartment, Sidhharth Vihar, Sector-7, ghaziabad,	03-Feb-2021, Rs. 1,04,25,664/-	31-05-2018
5.	Anil Singh, Sudha Anil Singh, Flat No. 1003, Al Smaif BLDG., Jamal Ab, Sharjah, UAE A/c No:-LBDEL00001462326	Apartment No.ICD011, First Floor, Along With Parking Spaces PBD 103 And PBD 104, Revenue Estate, Wazirabad, Gurgaon	03-Feb-2021, Rs. 46,05,237/-	30-11-2018
6.	Baljeet Garg, Mamta Garg, H No-73, Ft, Sec-12A Dwarka, Delhi A/c No:-LBDEL00001866197	Plot No-73,first Floor Sector-12 A, Dwarka Delhi	03-Feb-2021, Rs. 20,23,764/-	31-07-2018
7.	Utkarsh Jhingran, Niti Jhingran, Block 24 Unit Number 02-13 Simet Street Melville Park, Singapore, Singapore A/c No:-LBDEL00001879850	Flat No- Ptt- 09-0001, Palm Terraces, Sector- 66, Gurgaon, Haryana, Gurgaon	03-Feb-2021, Rs. 2,47,782/-	31/08/2018
8.	Sukhvinder Singh, Gurpreet Singh Arora, A- 4/424, Paschim Vihar, Delhi A/c No:-LBDEL00001977268	Unit No 0047, Ground Floor, Block E, Anthea Floors, Wild Flower Country, Gurgaon	03-Feb-2021, Rs. 38,13,100/-	30/11/2018

The steps are being taken for substituted service of notice. The above borrower/s and/or their guarantors (as applicable) are advised to make the payments of outstanding within period of 60 days from the date of publication of this notice else further steps will be taken as per the provisions of Securitisation and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002.

Date : March 06, 2021  
Place: Delhi/NCR

Authorized Officer  
ICICI Bank Limited



# Pakistan PM Imran wins trust vote



Supporters of the ruling Pakistan Tehree-e-Insaf political party gather near the National Assembly to celebrate Prime Minister Imran Khan winning a vote of confidence in Islamabad, Pakistan on Saturday

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan on Saturday comfortably won a trust vote in the National Assembly amid opposition boycott, bolstering his Government's position after an embarrassing defeat in this week's hotly-contested Senate elections.

Prime Minister Khan secured 178 votes in the 342-member lower house of Parliament during a special session convened on the directives of President Arif Alvi. He required 172 votes for a simple majority. The floor test took place without the Opposition as the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) — an

alliance of 11 parties — boycotted the voting, making it easier for Khan to secure the required numbers.

Khan decided to take a vote of confidence in the National Assembly after his finance minister Abdul Hafeez Shaikh was defeated in the Senate election by former prime minister Yusuf Raza

Gilani on Wednesday. The Opposition demanded the Prime Minister's resignation after the debacle.

Addressing the House after securing the trust vote, the 68-year-old cricketer-turned politician thanked all lawmakers from his party and allies for supporting him in Parliament.

Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi earlier tabled a single-point resolution in the House.

"That this House reposes confidence in the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Mr Imran Khan, as required under clause (7) of Article 91 of the Constitution Islamic Republic of Pakistan," the resolution said. Speaker Asad Qaiser announced the result, saying Prime Minister Khan had been elected to the post with 176 votes following the 2018 general elections. "Today, he has secured 178 votes," he said.

The ruling coalition had 181 members but after the resignation of one of its lawmakers, Faisal Vowda, its strength was reduced to 180. The Opposition coalition has 160 members in the House. One seat was vacant. According to the breakdown, 155 PTI lawmakers out of 156 voted in favour of the prime minister, Dawn newspaper reported.

Seven lawmakers from the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), five each from the Pakistan Muslim League-Q and the Balochistan Awami

Party, three from the Grand Democratic Alliance, and one each from the Awami Muslim League and the Jamhoori Watan Party voted in favour of the resolution. Independent candidate Aslam Bhotani also voted in favour of Khan.

Earlier, unruly scenes were witnessed outside Parliament building when supporters of the ruling alliance tried to dis-

rupt a press conference of Opposition leaders belonging to the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N).

PML-N leaders alleged that they had been manhandled by the ruling party members who were holding up banners and chanting slogans in favour of Khan. Security forces managed to separate the political workers of the two sides.

## Pakistan Opp slams PM, terms vote of confidence 'meaningless'

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's leading Opposition leaders on Saturday demanded Prime Minister Imran Khan's resignation and fresh elections, soon after he won a vote of confidence in the National Assembly.

Khan secured 178 votes in the 342-member lower house of Parliament during a special session convened on the directives of President Arif Alvi.

The floor test took place without the Opposition as the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) — an alliance of 11 parties — boycotted the voting.

The first to respond was chief of the PDM Maulana

Fazlur Rehman, who told the media in Sukkur, Sindh that the vote of confidence has no meaning.

"This was not a confidence vote. We know which agencies watched the members of the assembly the entire night. [We know] who knocked on the doors of each member to ensure they were present," he said.

His reference was towards reports stating that the government kept its members inside lodges in Islamabad under strict watch so that all of them are present in Parliament during the floor test.

Rehman alleged that the lawmakers were forced to vote for Prime Minister Khan.



Pope Francis stands with religious leaders during an interreligious meeting near the archaeological area of the Sumerian city-state of Ur, 20 kilometers south-west of Nasiriyah, Iraq on Saturday

## Pope Francis, Iraq's top Shia cleric hold historic meeting

AP ■ PLAINS OF UR (IRAQ)

Pope Francis and Iraq's top Shia cleric delivered a powerful message of peaceful coexistence on Saturday, urging Muslims in the war-weary Arab nation to embrace Iraq's long-beleaguered Christian minority during an historic meeting in the holy city of Najaf.

Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani said religious authorities have a role in protecting Iraq's Christians, and that they should live in peace and enjoy the same rights as other Iraqis.

The Vatican said Francis thanked al-Sistani for having "raised his voice in defense of the weakest and most persecuted" during some of the most violent times in Iraq's recent history.

Al-Sistani, 90, is one of the most senior clerics in Shiite Islam and his rare but powerful political interventions have helped shape present-day Iraq. He is a deeply revered figure in Shia-majority Iraq and his opinions on religious and other matters are sought by Shiites worldwide.

The historic meeting in al-Sistani's humble home was months in the making, with every detail painstakingly discussed and negotiated between the ayatollah's office and the Vatican. Early Saturday, the 84-year-old pontiff's convoy, led by a bullet-proof Mercedes-Benz, pulled up along Najaf's narrow and column-lined Rasool Street, which culminates at the golden-domed Imam Ali Shrine, one of the most revered sites in Shiite Islam. He then walked the few meters (yards) to al-Sistani's modest home, which the cleric has rented for decades.

A group of Iraqis wearing traditional clothes welcomed him outside. As a masked Francis entered the doorway, a few white doves were released in a sign of peace.

He emerged just under an hour later, still limping from an apparent flare-up of sciatica nerve pain that makes walking difficult. The "very positive" meeting lasted a total of 40 minutes, said a religious official in Najaf, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to brief media.

## Imran bats for electoral reforms for fair elections, to introduce EVMs

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan said on Saturday that his government will introduce electoral reforms and electronic voting machines to ensure fair and transparent elections in the country.

Delivering a speech after winning a trust vote in the National Assembly, the cricketer-turned-politician said his government plans to introduce electronic voting, enabling millions of Pakistanis abroad to vote in elections.

"We are bringing modern technology in elections for a transparent election process. We have decided to use Electronic Voting Machines (EVM) in the future. It is important to use them to counter the voter fraud claims made by the candidates who lose the polls. We are also working on putting up a system

so that the overseas Pakistanis can cast their votes," Khan said.

"Just like in the US where former president Donald Trump's repeated allegations of electoral malpractice were debunked by a transparent system, Pakistan will also put in place the same system to ensure fair and transparent elections in the country.

"As captain in Cricket, I brought the concept of neutral umpiring, similarly my government will set in motion a fair electoral system," he said.

Khan's remarks came after Pakistan's election commission on Friday expressed shock and disappointment over the prime minister's allegations against it, asserting that the Senate elections were held as per the Constitution and it has "never come under any sort of pressure and God willing, will not in future as well."

## Protests, tear gas in Myanmar after UN envoy urges action

AP ■ YANGON

Security forces in Myanmar again used force Saturday to disperse anti-coup protesters, a day after a UN special envoy urged the Security Council to take action to quell junta violence that this past week left more than 50 peaceful demonstrators dead and scores injured.

Protests were reported Saturday morning in the country's biggest city, Yangon, where stun grenades and tear gas were used against demonstrators. On Wednesday, 18 people were reported killed there.

Protests also took place in several other cities, including Mandalay, the second-biggest city, Myitkyina, the capital of the northern state of Kachin, Myeik in the far south, where police fired tear gas at students, and Dawei in the southeast, where tear gas was also used. Officials are believed to



Anti-coup protesters prepare water and wet cloths to help extinguish tear gas canisters during a demonstration in Yangon, Myanmar on Saturday

have exhumed the body of a young woman who was killed during Wednesday's suppression of protests in Mandalay. The woman, Kyal Sin, had been photographed taking part in the protests before her death, and images of her on the front lines have made her a high-pro-

file martyr.

Security forces on Friday night sealed off the cemetery where she was buried, and when residents visited in the morning, her grave was freshly plastered over and shovels and other evidence of digging were found at the site.

## Pope to visit Iraq church damaged by ISIS terrorists

Baghdad: The scenes are seared in the memory of the Rev. Ammar Altony Yako: A church that for decades has been the pride of the town of Qaraqosh, a center for Christian life in Iraq, stood badly scarred.

Yako saw it in 2016 when Qaraqosh was liberated from more than two years of Islamic State group rule. Scrawled on a wall was the proclamation, the "Islamic State will remain." Strewn amid the rubble in a courtyard were bullet-riddled mannequins and other telltale signs of a militants' makeshift firing range for target practice.

On Sunday, a new scene will play out for the world to watch at the Church of the Immaculate Conception and new memories will be created. Where the extremists once damaged, Pope Francis will now pray.

"I never could have imagined that his holiness, the pope, would visit this church, not even in my dreams," said Yako, who has been

overseeing reconstruction at the church. "It's a very, very unexpected event and a very happy one."

It is also one rich in symbolism. Coming amid a pandemic and security challenges, the pope's historic trip is taking him to Christian communities, like Yako's, ravaged by the ISIS onslaught in 2014. Christians in the area were forced to escape ancestral towns and villages as the militants swept through northern Iraq. Many have since scattered abroad, their exodus fueling existential anxieties about Iraq's already dwindling Christian population.

Many hope the pope's trip can focus attention on their struggles and send a message of encouragement, but they also point to security, economic and social challenges deterring many Christians from returning. AP

## Senate works through night, virus aid on path to passage

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Beary-eyed lawmakers worked through a mountain of amendments Saturday as the Senate plodded toward passage of a \$1.9 trillion Covid-19 relief bill that President Joe Biden and Democrats say is crucial for hoisting the country out of the pandemic.

The Senate commenced a dreaded "vote-a-thon" — a continuous series of votes on amendments — shortly before midnight Friday, and by midmorn-

ing Saturday had dispensed with over two dozen.

Democrats were hoping for final passage by around midday so the Senate could send the modestly revamped bill back to the House, and then to Biden this coming week for his signature.

The Senate had been in session since 9 a.m. EST Friday. Its work on the bill was proving to be a test of both lawmakers' physical stamina and Democrats' ability to pass legislation backed by every senator in the party.

The chamber is divided 50-50, with Vice President Kamala Harris' tiebreaking vote their only edge, and Republicans are arrayed against the legislation. Overnight, the Senate was like an experiment in the best techniques for staying awake. Several lawmakers appeared to rest their eyes or doze at their desks, often burying their faces in their hands. At one point, Sen. Brian Schatz, D-Hawaii, at 48 one of the younger senators, trotted into the chamber and did a prolonged stretch.

## Biden White House: message discipline, no news conference

Washington: No news conference. No Oval Office address. No primetime speech to a joint session of Congress.

President Joe Biden is the first executive in four decades to reach this point in his term without holding a formal question and answer session.

It reflects a White House media strategy meant both to reserve major media set-pieces for the celebration of a legislative victory and to limit unforced errors from a historically gaffe-prone politician. Biden has opted to take questions about as often

as most of his recent predecessors, but he tends to field just one or two informal inquiries at a time, usually in a hurried setting at the end of an event.

In a sharp contrast with the previous administration, the White House is exerting extreme message discipline, empowering staff to speak but doing so with caution.

Recalling both Biden's largely leak-free campaign and the buttoned-up Obama administration, the new White House team has carefully managed the president's appear-

ances, trying to lower the temperature from Donald Trump's Washington and to save a big media moment to mark what could soon be a signature accomplishment: passage of the Covid-19 bill.

The message control may serve the president's purposes but it denies the media opportunities to directly press Biden on major policy issues and to engage in the kind of back-and-forth that can draw out information and thoughts that go beyond the administration's curated talking points. AP

## NASA's Perseverance rover performs first test drive on Mars

PTI ■ LOS ANGELES

NASA's latest Mars rover, Perseverance, performed its first test drive on the Red Planet, covering a distance of about 6.5 metres across the Martian landscape, a "major milestone" before it begins its science operations.

The drive lasted about 33 minutes, propelling the rover forward by four metres, where it then turned to the left by 150 degrees and backed up 2.5 metres into its new temporary parking space, the American space agency noted in a statement.

According to NASA, the drive served as a mobility test to check out and calibrate every system, subsystem, and instrument on the Perseverance rover, which it said is a major milestone before the science operations get underway.



This photo made available by NASA was taken during the first drive of the Perseverance rover on Mars. Perseverance landed on February 18, 2021

ROVING ON RED PLANET

- The drive lasted about 33 minutes, propelling the rover forward by four metres, where it then turned to the left by 150 degrees and backed up 2.5 metres into its new temporary parking space
- The drive served as a mobility test to check out and calibrate every system, subsystem, and instrument on the Perseverance rover
- All the while, the space agency said the rover continues to send down images from Mars using the most advanced suite of cameras ever to travel to the Red Planet

fident our drive system is good to go, capable of taking us wherever the science leads us over the next two years," Zarifian said.

Regular commutes of over 200 metres are expected once the rover begins pursuing its science goals, including the search for signs of ancient microbial life, NASA said.

As part of its mission, the rover would characterise the Red Planet's geology and past climate, and pave the way for human exploration of Mars.

It is also expected to be the first to collect and cache Martian rock and soil.

Since its landing on Mars on February 18, the rover has undergone several routine checks, including a software update, replacing the computer program that helped land Perseverance with one NASA will rely on to analyse the

planet.

On March 2, NASA said its engineers unstowed the rover's 2-metre-long robotic arm for the first time, flexing each of its five joints over the course of two hours.

All the while, the space agency said the rover continues to send down images from Mars using the most advanced suite of cameras ever to travel to the Red Planet.

"Every picture from Perseverance is relayed by either the European Space Agency's Trace Gas Orbiter, or NASA's MAVEN, Mars Odyssey, or Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter. They are important partners in our explorations and our discoveries," said Justin Maki, chief engineer for imaging and the imaging scientist for the Mars 2020 Perseverance rover mission at JPL.



Rajasthan Skill & Livelihoods Development Corporation

EMI Campus, J-5/A, Jhalana Institutional Area, Jaipur-302004 (Rajasthan)  
Ph: +91-0141-2705917, 9103248, Fax: +91-0141-5103246, www.rajasthanlivelihoods.org

F ( ) NO: RSLDC/SDT/2021-22/30976

Dated: 05-03-2021

Office Order

Subject: - Extension of Bid submission last date and opening date for procurement of Services for providing Self-Defence Training to girls/women through training partner for RSLDC.

Reference: - RFP NO. RSLDC/SDT/20/30473 dated 3rd Feb, 2021

Due to some unavoidable circumstances the last date and Bid opening date of above referred Bid is hereby extended as per the following –

Activity	Old Date & Time	New Date & Time
Last Date/Time for Submitting / uploading of offer/Bid	8th March, 2021 up to 3:00 PM	18th March, 2021 up to 03:00 PM
Last Date / time for submitting original hard copy of Bid Security Demand Draft	8th March, 2021 up to 3:00 PM	18th March, 2021 up to 03:00 PM
Date & Time for opening of Technical Bid	8th March, 2021 up to 05:00 PM	18th March, 2021 at 05:00 PM

The interested bidders may submit the proposal as per the above amendments and all other terms & conditions will remain unchanged.

UBN NO. SLD2021RFP0003

Raj.Sanwad/C/20/10627

Managing Director, RSLDC



AXIS BANK

EME Centre, Delhi: 4th Floor, Ashoka Estate, 24 Barakhamba Road New Delhi-110001. Also at All Floor, Red Fort Capital Park/Paraswath Tower, Shah Vihar Singh Marg, Near Cole Market, New 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 Samarthesw 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)/ Mortgagor(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)/ Mortgagor(s) having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s)/ Mortgagor(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/ her 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)/ Mortgagor(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)/ Mortgagor(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. Date of Possession	3. Amount in Demand Notice (Rs.)
1. M/S Lakhmi Chand Om Prakash (Through Its Proprietor) Mr.Ashish Gupta Registered Office At: 2745/9, Sushila Mohan Marg Naya Bazar, Delhi-110006 Also At - 3963/108, 1st Floor Naya Bazar, Delhi-110006	Equitable Mortgage on Property No -5, in Block C – 5 Out of Khassara No - 262/258/217/4/3 with all roof/terrace rights, Built on land area measuring 105.5 Sq. yards, Situated in the area of village Bharoli, colony known as Adash Nagra on Cottage Road Cottage Road Delhi – 110033	1. 25-11-2020	2. 04-03-2021	3. Rs.3,16,99,855/- (Rupees Three Crore Sixteen lakh ninety nine thousand Eight hundred and fifty five only)
2. Mr. Ashish Gupta At 2745/9 , Sushila Mohan Marg Naya Bazar, Delhi-110006 Also At - 3963/108 , 1st Floor Naya Bazar, Delhi-110006				
Also At - : R/O C-5, Cottage Road,Near Azadpur Sabzi Mandi, Adarsh Nagar, Delhi -110033.				
3. Mrs. Shahni Gupta, R/O C-5, Cottage Road,Near Azadpur Sabzi Mandi, Adarsh Nagar, Delhi -110033.				
4. Mr.Om Prakash Gupta, R/O C-5, Cottage Road,Near Azadpur Sabzi Mandi, Adarsh Nagar, Delhi -110033.				

The above-mentioned Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s)/ Mortgagor(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 : 07-03-2021

Place : Delhi

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



# INDIA FIX LORD'S DATE

Virat & Co will face Black Caps in WTC final after Axar, Ashwin take five each to thrash England by innings & 25 runs to seal series

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Axar Patel and Ravichandran Ashwin once again made a mockery of Kane Williamson's New Zealand but Axar (24-6-48-5), in company of Ashwin (22.5-4-47-5), literally blew England away in a session and half for a paltry 135 in 54.5 overs to complete a 3-1 rout, ensuring that the *Anthony De Mello Trophy* will stay at the Cricket Centre in Mumbai.

It was another two and half days finish but even the most partisan England experts like their former skipper Michael Vaughan have admitted that the 22-yard strip had almost nothing to do with their side's abject surrender.

A case in point could be India's first innings score of 365 and a lead of 160 on the same track where England could cumulatively manage only 340 runs across two innings.

This was one Test match where Indians, even before a ball being bowled, created an illusion of a turning track. It was a play of playing with the minds of a team that was already in a negative zone.

There wasn't much turn but enough to ensure that the visitors wilted under pressure as Patel's series tally stood at high-five for a newcomer (27) while man of the series Ashwin was peerless as ever with 32 scalps in his kitty.

A lot of credit for this vic-



India captain Virat Kohli along with teammates Washington Sundar, Axar Patel, Mohammed Siraj and Rishabh Pant pose with winners trophy

tory should go to the indomitable Rishabh Pant, who played the enforcer on the second day with a magnificent hundred, and Washington Sundar, who notched up a chiselled 96.

These two knocks literally made it impossible for England to make a comeback as a total of 365 seemed like 650.

The coming of age of Pant as a real replacement for the iconic Mahendra Singh Dhoni and emergence of Washington as a potent batting all-rounder only augurs well for the team.

So formidable is India's bench strength right now that Hanuma Vihari, who saved an epic Test in Sydney only a couple of months back, may not get

to play a Test in near future.

World's best wicketkeeper Wriddhiman Saha will also find it difficult to add to his 38 Tests unless the *Roorkee Rockstar* gets injured.

Patel, in his debut Test series, was a powerhouse performer but he also knows that once Ravindra Jadeja is fit and available, he will have to wait for his next Test.

The story of the third day was similar to the one that has played out for most of the series.

With shoulders already drooping after the humiliation inflicted by Pant and Washington, England's openers Zak Crawley (5, 16 balls), Dom Sibley (3, 21 balls) and Jonny

"Every team in International cricket is a quality side and we need to work hard to beat them, even at home. Keeping that intensity going is most important and is the hallmark of our team."

—VIRAT KOHLI

"We haven't matched India in the last three, and we need to keep learning and keep getting better for this experience and this series, and we need to keep evolving and move forward."

—JOE ROOT

Bairstow (0, 1 ball) seemed like "walking wickets" at the start of the post-lunch session.

One had expected two of England's best players in Joe Root (30) and Ben Stokes (2 off 9 balls) to put up a fight but the all-rounder failed to gauge the extra bounce as he went for a sweep shot off Patel.

Kohli accepted the dolly at leg slip as England's resistance was blown away at 30 for 4. Ollie Pope (15) hit Ashwin for a six, which was more desperation than finesse, and it was only a matter of time before he yoked himself as Pant fumbled while gathering but managed to effect a stumping to make it 65 for 5.

The England skipper could

## India top WTC table

**Dubai:** India on Saturday finished on top of the league phase of the ICC World Test Championship standings after crushing England by an innings and 25 runs in the fourth Test.

"That victory against England means India finish the league phase of the inaugural ICC World Test Championship with a fine view from the top of the table," the ICC tweeted.

India finished the league phase with 520 points, which includes 12 wins, four losses and one draw.

New Zealand finished in the second spot with 420 points, including seven wins and four losses.

Australia finished third with 332 points ahead of England and Pakistan.

PTI

only helplessly look how his colleagues made a mess of Test match batting and Ashwin finally had his number trapping him leg before on the back-foot with another straight ball.

The remaining wickets in the post tea session were a mere formality which the spinners completed in due course of time.

The morning session belonged to Washington, whose 96 off 174 balls was as important as Pant's second day hundred in the final context of the match.

Washington and Axar Patel (43 off 97 balls) added an invaluable 106 runs for the eighth wicket, which ended even a minuscule chance for England to stage a recovery.



## Our bench strength is extremely strong: Kohli

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

India's supremely talented bench strength has made skipper Virat Kohli quite confident that the team will have a relatively smooth ride when the transition period dawns upon it in the next few years.

With the rise of several young players like Washington Sundar, Mohammed Siraj and the maverick Rishabh Pant, India have been on a roll both at home and abroad.

"Our bench strength is extremely strong and that's a good sign for Indian cricket. When the transition happens, the standards won't fall and Rishabh and *Washy's* partnership showed exactly that in a crucial juncture of the match," Kohli said at the post-match presentation.

After notching up victories in the second and third Tests respectively, India won the fourth match inside three days.

"We had to pick up our body language after the first game in Chennai. Every team in International cricket is a quality side and we need to work hard to beat them, even at home. Keeping that intensity going is most important and is the hallmark of our team," Kohli said.

Star opener Rohit Sharma scored 161 in the first innings of the second Test and the skipper feels the knock changed the complexion of the series alongside seasoned spinner Ravichandran Ashwin's performance of 32 wickets.

"Rohit's knock was the defining moment in Chennai, and Ashwin has been our most bankable player over the years so they have been our best players this series."

"Now we can accept that the World Test Championship final, which was a distraction in New Zealand in 2020, but now it's a reality," Kohli said.

Ashwin, who ended the series with 32 wickets and a century, was named *Man of the series* and the spinner was delighted to qualify for the WTC final, adding that the win was a collective effort.

"The fact that we qualified for the WTC final is very important. The intensity was low after Chennai, despite the high in Australia. Every time there was a challenging time in the series, someone put their hand up, so this series win was right up there," Ashwin said. England skipper Joe Root conceded that his team was outplayed by the hosts in the series.

"The first game was a positive. We haven't matched India in the last three, and we need to keep learning and keep getting better for this experience and this series," Root said.

# Ashwin wants to leave his own legacy

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

To become the best version of himself while learning something new everyday is Ravichandran Ashwin's endeavour as he aims to leave his lasting legacy in the pantheon of Indian cricket greats.

Ashwin has now won eight Man-of-the-Series awards in his 10-year career and is only eight wickets short of equalling Harbhajan Singh's 417 Test wickets.

It could well happen in England this summer but he doesn't want to entertain any such thoughts.

"Honestly, that's not even crossed my mind and if you want me to put my thoughts on it. He is a fantastic bowler. There's a lot that I have learnt from him. I wasn't even an off-spinner when *Bhaji paa* started playing for the Indian team," Ashwin's respect for another practitioner of the same craft was there for all to see.

"He (Harbhajan) was also an inspiration because of the 2001 famous series (32 wickets in 3 Tests). I never imagined in 2001 that I will be an off-spinner, and I mean who would have imagined those things."

"I was fortunate to play alongside *Bhaji paa* when I came into the team and also play under Anil *bhai* but I would now like to leave my own legacy," Ashwin said.

Being a student of the game Ashwin



wants to evolve as a cricketer and a person everyday.

"My growth as a cricketer is a direct synonym to the person I am. I want to keep evolving, keep learning and that's my second nature, directly proportional to the

kind of cricketer I am and whatever I do, the best that I can be."

Ashwin's apathy for all those pitch critics is well documented and he would love to see how the global media reacts when a green top is given to India when they go for a game outside the sub-continent.

"The series win is a testament to the fact that this is a really good Indian cricket team. That's all I would like to say. Other day, I was listening to what Sunny *bhai* (Sunil Gavaskar) was saying, makes sense," Ashwin said referring to Gavaskar's statement about not giving too much credence to the British pundits, whose favourite day job had been criticising the Indian tracks.

"Only because we are giving attention to people who are making a mockery of it, we are encouraging them to do it non-stop," he said.

He then sarcastically said that he would keenly watch how foreign media cover the criticism from Indian commentators about the pitches provided when India is on tour abroad.

"I would like to a pitch covered with grass somewhere else in the world and some of our Indian commentators, taking picture and putting an Instagram post and I will like to see how the global media takes notice and then we will know who's at faulty end."

# We failed to grab opportunities: Root

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

England captain Joe Root on Saturday mourned the opportunities his team squandered in the lost fourth Test, saying they let slip the advantageous position from where they could have been on top of the game.

India at one stage were 121 for five but ended up taking a 160-run lead in the first innings which proved to be match-winning.

Rishabh Pant, Washington Sundar and Axar Patel took the game away from England with their fearless approach.

"There have been times we had a chance to wrestle the game in our favour, to get on top, just didn't manage to do it," Root said at the post-match conference.

"India played those important, key moments better than us in these last three games and credit for being able to do that better than we do."

"So, it has been disap-



pointing, it has been frustrating to finish the series on a note that we have but we are going to keep looking forward as a team," said Root.

The England skipper acknowledged Indian batsman Rishabh Pant's remark-

able ability to take the attack by the scruff of its neck. "The way he bats, he makes it difficult for bowlers to build pressure on him. Sometimes he pulls a reverse sweep to a guy, who has 600 Test wickets."

"So it is quite a skill and a

brave move to do and it came off for him and got themselves (India) to a very good position on that wicket," said Root, referring to the reverse sweep which Pant played off James Anderson.

For India, Ravichandran Ashwin grabbed 32 wickets in the series, while Axar snared 27 wickets to leave England floored.

Root lavished praise on the Gujarat left-arm spinner saying he was relentless in his lengths.

"In this series, Axar in particular, has been very accurate and has asked very good questions. He has been relentless with his length and some balls have skidded, some have spun quite big and we are going to just find a way to manage it well."

But not all was doom and gloom for Root, who found solace in the fact that his wicket-keeper Ben Foakes and left-arm spinner Jack Leach performed their roles to the best of their abilities.

**Sustaining with the legacy of Academic Excellence for more than 3 Decades**

**DAV PUBLIC SCHOOL, CHANDRASEKHARPUR**  
**BHUBANESWAR, ODISHA**

**INVITES ONLINE APPLICATIONS**  
From Students Appearing Class X Board Exams  
of CBSE / ICSE / BSE or Equivalent Boards

**FOR ADMISSIONS INTO**  
**CLASS XI (SCIENCE, COMMERCE, HUMANITIES) SESSION 2021-22**

**Along with 2 Years Special Programmes**  
**PRIME-40 & SUPER-40 (Exclusively Residential)**  
**SPL. MEDICAL & SPL. ENGG. (Non-Residential)**  
An erudite platform for Medical and IIT Aspirants  
**MENTORING AND MONITORING BY EXPERIENCED AND COMMITTED FACULTY**  
**Special Focus on Humanities & Commerce**

**ONLINE TEST CENTRES**  
■ Bhubaneswar ■ Cuttack ■ Balasore ■ Rourkela ■ Puri  
■ Sambalpur ■ Berhampur ■ Kolkata & Ranchi

**Online Registration : From 22.02.2021 to 21.03.2021**  
For Registration login **www.davcsp.org**

**Date of Exam (Online) : 27.03.2021 (Saturday)**

**STATE TOPPER**  
**CBSE-2020**  
**(98.6%)**

**STITHIPRAGYAN SAHOO**  
STATE RANK - 3rd  
(JEE ADVANCED)

**STATE TOPPER**  
**JEE MAIN-2020**  
**(99.99%)**  
Percentile

**SOURABH S. DAS**  
STATE RANK - 4th  
(JEE ADVANCED)

**HIGHLIGHTS OF 2020**  
Nos. of Qualifiers in Prestigious All India Entrance Examinations


• NTSE : 32	• JEE ADV : 39
• KVPY : 15	• JEE MAIN : 108
• NEET : 92	• NISER : 15

**CBSE STD. XII BOARD EXAM - 2020**  
**SCHOOL AVERAGES**

• Science : 90.5%
• Commerce : 86.32%
• Humanities : 85.88%

**E-mail : davcspur@gmail.com**  
**Phone : 0674-2740651/551**






the pioneer

agenda

I think that an actor is more likely to be forgiven in the public's eye than an actress  
— Mila Kunis

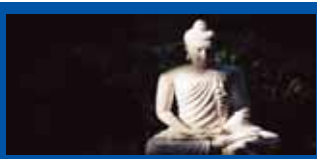


FROM THE INSIDE

The power of attention

The connection to God is not hard to make. It is just a matter of making the choice that this is what we want to do

2



Calm mind for *dhyana*

Train your mind to remain disengaged as a silent witness. Only when you pay attention, you get affected

4

# MAPPING THE SACRED DWELLINGS OF SHAKTI

Renowned writer and historian DR ALKA PANDE narrates that while the Shakti Peethas represent a single philosophical fold, they are a testament to the diverse legends of Shakti. An edited excerpt:

Originating from Sanskrit, the word ‘Peetha’ means ‘seat, altar, shrine or dwelling’. In the case of the Shakti Peethas, it is very specific. It is the sacred space where the Supreme Goddess rakes a strong, well-founded sear on Earth. Each of the Peethas have been turned into shrines for the Goddess by the very people who believe in the absolute power of the feminine. Each site where the 51 body parts of Sati fell, came to be known as a Shakti Peetha.

A teertha is a crossing. As with most Sanskrit words, there are multiple meanings of this too. Teertha is also the passing of the *atman* to the *parmatman* the crossing from the physical world to the metaphysical world. These 51 sacred sites are also linked by theologists and scholars to the 51 alphabets of the Sanskrit language. In each of the Peethas also resides *Kaalbhairava*, which is another name of Shiva. Most of the Shakti Peetha shrines contain a naturally appearing stone which becomes the object of worship around which the temple shrine is built.

Vindhyavasini is an additional Shakti Peetha, which I have deliberately not included in the 51 Peethas. While a powerful dwelling of Shakti, Vindhyavasini is not the abode of Shakti as Sati’s body parts. It is, however, the preferred choice and home of Yogamaya, the sister of Krishna, who escaped from Kamsa’s prison at Mathura.

*Kalika Purana* indicates that there are four Adi Shakti Peethas, which is further affirmed in the commentary and text of *Brihat Samhita*. It lists the names of the location at various places in India such as Vimla temple, Odisha, where her feet fell, Tara Tarini temple in Behrampur, Odisha, where her breasts fell, Kamakhya temple in Guwahati, Assam, where her *yoni* or vagina fell and lastly, the Kalighat temple in West Bengal, where her right toe fell.

THE ICONOGRAPHY OF THE DEVI

Since antiquity, Goddess worship has been part of the Indic tradition of India. In fact, the Goddess is even more popular than Shiva and Vishnu. All the manifestations, avatars or appearances of the many forms of Devi belong to the pantheon of the Shakti cult. The Supreme Goddess can be a gentle life-giver as in the case of Lakshmi, Saraswati or Parvati, or as the mistress of death in the form of Durga, Kali and Chamunda. She is a fascinating juxtaposition, both life-perpetuating and potentially destructive. In her life-giving form, Shakti can be represented as beautiful, benevolent, maternal, knowledgeable, compassionate and even desirable to the best. She invigorates, cheers and brightens the entire universe. She is represented and described as an idealized woman who is imbued with beauty, virtue and righteousness, and adorned with jewels. In fact, her iconography is drawn from the pre-modern depictions of the *salabanjikas*, *apsaras* and *surasundaris*. In this form, Shakti embraces and enlivens all aspects of reality. As the goddess of destruction and disease, she takes on rather unattractive and repulsive forms. As Sitala Devi Manasa, or Kali, the Devi is shown as haggard, ugly, unkempt and emaciated. However, whatever the form, it is always powerful.

I have dipped into both Puranic and Shakta texts to read the many interpretations and mythologies associated with the iconography, rituals of worship, devotion and representation of the Shakti Peetha as sites of immense power and energy. Each devotee enters the site of the Peetha through their own path of worship, through their respective understanding of the Great Goddess. The *wama panthis* or Shakt worshippers, for whom Shakti/Devi is supreme, enter through the tantric path, which is a sectarian movement.

The 51 Peethas have their own singular iconography and their own specific modes of rituals, worship and even prasada, with some standard common offerings like flowers, sweets and vermilion.

RITUALS OF PRAYER AND DARSHAN

While the Shakti Peethas were specific to the body parts of Sati, the rituals of adoration, prayer and worship differed from region to



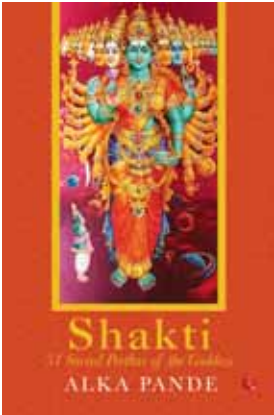
Kottari Devi (Hinglaj Mata) Temple, Pakistan

region, given the culture and history of the place. Over time, the Peethas became linked to their respective regions. The local people took ownership of them and started claiming rights over the teerthas and sites. Naturally, the local food and religious and cultural traditions started getting preference over the stated Puranic or standard Sanatan *dharmashastras*.

In the temples, the daily rituals of worship were similar to the presiding deity, who was normally male, i.e. Vishnu or Shiva, and the feminine was worshipped in the form of their consorts. However, in the Shakti Peethas, the presiding deity was a body part, which while having its own specific service or prayer, was enfolded in the larger narrative of the worship of Shakti in the form of Devi.

The purpose of puja (prayer) is to appease, soothe and mollify the powerful Goddess and embrace the divine energy expressed as life force. The life force itself has many variations, from auspiciousness, health, desire for children, wealth and success, gaining power over intellectual and artistic skill, even victory over enemies. The ritual of puja is heavily invested in darshan. While doing puja, the concept of making eye contact with the deity is the key. Darshan is a two-way concept where the devotee sees the divinity and in turn, the divinity sees the devotee. The concept of darshan crosses all spaces, from intimate puja corners at home in domestic spaces to large public temples including the 51 Shakti Peethas.

The very act of darshan/view is the crucial key that creates the iconic moment where the devotee and the divine are in complete sync. This is the reason why ‘Shakt’ worshippers make long and arduous journeys to the Shakti



SINCE ANTIQUITY, GODDESS WORSHIP HAS BEEN PART OF THE INDIC TRADITION OF INDIA. IN FACT, THE GODDESS IS EVEN MORE POPULAR THAN SHIVA AND VISHNU. ALL THE MANIFESTATIONS, AVATARS OR APPEARANCES OF THE MANY FORMS OF DEVI BELONG TO THE PANTHEON OF THE SHAKTI CULT



Peethas. The idea is to take the energy of the Supreme Goddess while receiving her blessings. The religious rites have three distinct classifications: *Nitya*, which is daily, normally done at home; *Naimittika*, which are important days of the deity, and particular festivals (some special to the *ishta deva* at home or to the presiding deity of the temple); and finally *Kamyas*, which are optional, but a highly desired teertha being one of them.

The ritual of prayer to Shakti is also vested in the *panchbhootas*, where the five *gnanaindriyas*, or senses, are included in the aspect of puja:

Panchbhoota	Jnanindriya	Sense	Puja	
Akash	Space	Ear	Hear	Pushpam
Vayu	Air	Skin	Touch	Dhoopam
Agni	Fire	Eye	Vision	Lamp
Jal	Water	Tongue	Taste	Water/Ghee
Bhoomi	Earth	Nose	Smell	Chandan

PRASADA

Prasada is both an offering and a blessing. It is offered by the devotee when he/she begins the ritual of puja. In domestic spaces, the devotee performs the puja at an individual, intimate level, often making prasada or an offering of fruits, and a rice and milk pudding with saffron strands and sprinkled with mewa/ nuts, particularly almonds and raisins. What I have observed in the offerings by the devotees, is that for Shakti, it is a bali, or animal sacrifice, normally a lamb and sometimes even a buffalo. The very basic prasada for Shakti is meat, alcohol for Bhairava, and a sweet, normally a rice pudding. Since the Shakti Peethas have been appropriated

by the devotees of the region, naturally the prasada of the Peetha also acquires a local flavour. In Eastern India, it is primarily kichdi and kheer with poori and potato curry; in South India, it is a variation of the local rice, i.e. pulihora; in Andhra Pradesh, a jaggery laddoo; and in Western India, at the Amba temple in Banaskantha, a delicious sweet made of chickpea flour, the mohanthal, is offered along with sindoor, and makhanas, or dried lotus seeds. In this way, almost every region brings in its regional flavour and speciality as part of the prasada offered at the Shakti Peethas.

Meat as prasada is served in the temple community kitchens only on special occasions when specific sacrifices are conducted. Holding water in the palm of their hands, or *achaman*, the devotee asks for forgiveness and blessings before beginning their prayer. In the large public temples, it is the priest who becomes the conduit of devotion and reverence. He is the intermediary who while performing the ritual acts, offers food and flowers to the presiding deity of the temple. Worship in a temple begins by circumambulating the temple and the *garbhagriha* where the deity lives.

The myth of Sati and the 51 Peethas is an important myth in the worship of the Supreme Goddess. It lays down the template for all those who believe in the Absolute Power of the Mother Goddess, crossing borders from Tantra to Mantra, from *Devi Bhagwat Purana* to *Yogini Hridaya Tantra*, right down to the popular Grama Devi in a village to the Kula Devi of a Rajput clan.



Bishnoi is a spiritual writer and can be reached at [spiritual@aijtbishnoi.com](mailto:spiritual@aijtbishnoi.com)



# Syrian quagmire: How long and for what?

The Syrian Civil War started as a non-violent uprising in the middle of March 2011. Today it is a full-fledged war which involves several nations and world's prominent jihadi outfits such as Islamic State (ISIS), al-Qaeda and splinter groups of these two mainstream groups. However, the Baathist Syrian Arab Republic headed by President Bashar al-Assad has survived a decade in power despite military challenges from all corners of the country.

Estimates emerging from various human rights agencies and independent media reports say that by end of December last year, the death toll in the war was between 3,87,000 and 5,93,000. The UN reports that more than 5.6 million have already fled the country and over 6 million have been internally displaced so far.

Although many complex events pushed the Syrians into this war, one that stands out is the historic Arab Spring, started in the early months of 2011. This 21st century movement mainly inspired by digital platforms across North Africa through the West Asia finally triggered the uprising in Syria. But then quickly, the Arab Spring had turned into mass gathering in the form of non-violent protests against the authoritarian and family-ruled regimes in all these countries.

In Syria, in the month of March, 15 schoolchildren were arrested and tortured for writing graffiti which was rightly inspired by the Arab Spring. One of the boys was killed as well. The arrest of these schoolchildren sparked outrage across Syria. Soon after, people came out on the road and demanded the release of all the children and raised slogans for basic freedoms for all in the country. The Assad regime responded by killing many protesters and this led to the demand for his resignation by the demonstrators. Subsequently, the clashes broke out between the masses and the supporters of the Government. This gradually spiralled into the full-blown war, what the whole world is witnessing today, involving terror groups of various nations of the world. But at its heart, the conflict highlights the tragic Shia-Sunni divide among the Muslims in the entire region.

The failure of the UN-led efforts to bring the warring parties to the negotiation table last month in Geneva has once



again brought war clouds over this West Asian nation. The United Nations should take the lead and restart the Geneva process. So far, the UN strategies have broadly failed for Syria. If it moves in the same direction, can it be so that the organisation is complicit in the crimes committed by the Assad regime?

Now, what America is doing to bring peace to Syria is that it is back again. The latest American strike in Syria has signalled President Joe Biden's new war game in West Asia.

The so-called messenger of peace and reunion of America badly divided by former President Donald Trump, Biden is now targeting Iran-backed militias in Syria. His administration is justifying the attack as the missile sallies are directed towards rebels that are propping up the Assad regime. The US Air Forces dropped 500-hundred-pound joint direct attack munitions at a crossing used by Iranian backed groups reportedly

killing 17. The particular groups hit by the limited US strike are Kataib Hezbollah and Kataib Syyaed al-Shuhada. Meanwhile, Dennis Ross, a former Senior US official and West Asian expert, says the attack was designed to show that there would be a military response if US forces were targeted, or the militias continued to strike. The Assad administration was quick to remind Biden that the American attacks were a cowardly act and urged Biden not to follow the law of the jungle.

The country's Foreign Ministry condemned the attack on areas in Deir al-Zor, near the Syrian-Iraqi border. The statement released by the Ministry highlighted that Biden Administration is supposed to stick to international legitimacy, not to the law of the jungle as did by the previous administration.

It's really ironic that Biden and Harris, the duo is repeating what once Trump simply did. When Trump ordered a

strike on Iran in 2019, Biden sharply reacted and tried to offer a sermon to him: "Trump's erratic, impulsive actions are the last things we need as Commander-in-Chief. No President should order a military strike without fully understanding the consequences. We do not need another war in the Middle East, but Trump's actions toward Iran only make that likely."

And what Biden is doing now? He knows very well how an American President responds to the crisis zones in the "Middle East". Precisely, nothing has changed in Washington, except the man giving orders. What Obama did, Trump followed and now Biden is taking it forward. America clearly has no strategy for the West Asia and North African (WANA) region. Its policy towards the region is outdated and dangerous. It's meddling carelessly with Iraq, Iran and Syria. Washington has no coherent policy to deal

with Tehran, Damascus and Baghdad. So obviously, finding out a solution for the Syrian war demands a new approach with a purely humanitarian concern.

Only with the collective efforts of the US, Russia, Iran and Turkey, peace can be brought to war-torn Syria. Biden's engagement with Putin, Erdogan, Rouhani and Kadhim (Iraq) would matter the most in bringing a permanent solution to the chaos in Syria. That is why the stability in West Asia demands more than a deal with Iran from Washington. The experts and policy practitioners opine that regional issues in this part of Asia could no way be comprehensively addressed.

They all agree that Iran would no way concede its sustained support for regional proxies and halt its ballistic missile programme in the near future. It is widely felt that isolating Iran was purely counterproductive. So to address, Tehran's troublesome behav-

iour in the region, it is better to handle each regional conflict through separate and parallel platforms at the same time.

Why is Moscow equally concerned about the chaos in Syria? It is not only to save the embattled Assad regime, an old ally of Russia, but also to stave off the growth of the Islamic terror in Russia. Hence, the Syrian conflict is not just a far-away battle for Putin regime. The life-time monarch is longing for stability at any cost. He knows fully well that the jihadists may get enough ground for their subversive models in his vast country. Of course, this might alter Putin's long-term strategies to keep the opposition and western pressure at bay. His regime is not best equipped to counter the ISIS, the way it is raging its ugly head in the WANA region. Russia's relationship with Syria dates back to 1950s and the Cold War. In those days, the USSR used to train the top brass of the Syrian military. What lies ahead in Syria?

By 2020, the Syrian civilians faced another year confronting life-threatening challenges. It is all about their survival as all of them are fighting for basic amenities such as food and medicines.

However, the last year saw the discernible decrease in violent conflicts across the country. But this does not mean that warring groups are retreating. No single rebel group is considering withdrawing from the war zones. The reason behind is that all these groups are backed by strong allies and they want to pursue the war till the fall of the Assad Government.

The Human Rights Watch notes, "With the unprecedented depreciation of national currency, the imposition of further international sanctions and crises in neighboring countries, the Syrian economy went into freefall for much of 2020. For ordinary Syrians, this translated into an inability to procure food, essential drugs, and other basic necessities. As a result, more than 9.3 million Syrians have become food insecure and over 80 per cent of Syrians live below the poverty line."

This correctly reflects the situation on the ground and insurmountable challenges faced by the millions who are caught between warring zones.

Only way to solve the imbroglio in Syria is to establish a UN-backed transitional regime and pressurise Assad to step down. A presidential election is meant to be taking place in Syria this summer. It would be a total disregard to millions of those who are suffering and a sham on global governance platforms such as the UN. The world body is not talking anything about this. And it is abandoning the Geneva peace process.

In fact, the Syria Constitutional Committee that demands a political process would be useless if the UN does not stop the upcoming presidential poll for Assad. This election would offer full immunity and legitimacy to the torturous and autocratic regime in Damascus. It's time to act. Ensure that no more civilians die. There is no need to secure peace when hardly anyone will be there to share the joy of the same. Washington should not employ the old tactics to handle the dictators in WANA.

*(The writer is an expert on international affairs)*



MAKHAN SAIKIA

## PERSPECTIVE

# India's collective responsibility to eradicate TB

**While the prioritisation of TB at the national level has been commendable, States must sustain this momentum by effectively implementing the policies and ensuring optimum fund allocation and utilisation. It is only with the collective approach we will be able to rid the country of this deadly disease**



DIGAMBAR BEHERA

The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the value of awareness on infectious diseases. Tuberculosis (TB) is an infectious disease that needs our attention as much as the SARS-CoV2 because it affects over 26.4 lakh Indians each year. An estimated 4.45 lakh Indians lose the battle to this ancient disease that is both preventable and curable.

It has therefore been extremely encouraging to see the heightened commitment towards TB elimination from the highest levels of Government leadership. Since the announcement by the Prime Minister to eliminate TB by 2025, five years ahead of the UN Sustainable Development Goal target, at the End TB Summit in New Delhi in 2018, comprehensive plans have been developed to achieve this goal.

The launch of the National Strategic Plan (NSP) for TB Elimination introduced pivotal interventions, including a four-fold increase in funding, launch of private sector engagement to improve access to care as well as initiation of social support schemes to support patients in completing their treatment. However, there is still more to be done.

While the prioritisation of TB at the national level has been commendable, States must sustain this momentum by effectively implementing



the policies and NSP interventions and ensuring optimum fund allocation and utilisation.

The funding of the NTEP is divided on a 60:40 ratio, where 60 per cent of the total funding is provided by the Central Government, and State Governments are expected to fund the remaining 40 per

cent. However, in addition to fund allocation, fund utilisation and efficient implementation of the programme at the State level remains a challenge.

The Central TB Division has developed a State TB Index that highlights the performance of States based on targets achieved, funds utilised, among others towards achieving the

goal of TB elimination. While some States have made significant progress towards these goals, with Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Kerala (among the large States) performing well on all indicators, including fund utilisation, many large States such as Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and West Bengal still reflect poor fund

utilisation and thus have challenges in the implementation of the programme. Another critical challenge at the State level remains the paucity of human resources — with vacancies in critical positions required to be filled.

The other challenge that the programme faces is the lack of awareness about the disease

that negatively impacts health seeking behaviour. In the past year, the pandemic has brought about a positive change in people and their appetite for information on health, thereby giving us an opportunity on this positive behaviour to generate awareness about TB.

The launch of the TB Harega Desh Jeetega campaign in 2014, with the country's biggest movie star Amitabh Bachchan as the face of the campaign, was a game changer at the national level. However, there is a need to amplify the campaign at all levels, including States, districts, blocks and villages, to improve access to information and generate the demand for TB care.

Along with improving communications for awareness generation, it is also critical for the programme to directly engage with the community at all levels. Not only do community champions aid in generating awareness to destigmatise the disease, but their voices also serve as an important feedback mechanism for the programme.

Under the NSP, the National TB Elimination Programme established TB forums at the State and district levels to bring to the fore community voices, patient perspectives and understand ground-level challenges faced by patients in accessing care.

Continued and effective functioning of these forums will provide the programme with independent monitors who can help in highlighting localised gaps that need to be addressed. At the district levels, elected representatives can also serve as independent monitors of the programme providing oversight and aid in addressing localised challenges to ensure effective implementation.

The call for a Jan Andolan by Union Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan is timely and aims to engage 1.3 billion people of this country to take ownership of the programme and ensure we achieve the target of a TB free India. It is crucial for the programme to take cue from this call to action and reflect the targets and initiatives through direct and relatable messaging which will generate awareness among the people on where to seek treatments, what incentives they are entitled to, and thereby improve health seeking behaviours. It is only with the collective approach we will be able to rid the country of this deadly disease.

*(The author is chairman, National Taskforce, National TB Elimination Programme, and Professor and former HoD, Department of Pulmonary Medicine, PGIMER, Chandigarh)*



