

# Odisha to provide a financial package to the covid-hit tourism sector

Odisha government is soon going to announce a financial package for the covid-hit tourism sector of the state, Jyoti Prakash Panigrahi, tourism minister of the state said on Saturday.

"The Chief Minister (Naveen Patnaik) is expected to soon announce a financial package for the tourism sector. The need is to work towards sustainable tourism, and we cannot have a situation where risk management is not taken care of," Panigrahi said while speaking at a virtual



roundtable on 'COVID-19: Impact on the State Tourism Sector', organized by industry lobby FICCI.

Akshita M. Bhanj Deo, director of Belgravia Palace in Mayurbhanj district of Odisha on

Friday rued on Twitter about the lack of support from the state government to the tourism sector that has been devastated by the coronavirus pandemic and consecutive cyclones.

"What is the future of tourism in Odisha and do we have a space that is sustainable and can be scaled," she asked.

Vishal Kumar Dev, principal secretary in charge of tourism said that the government is aware of the concerns faced by the tourism and hospitality sector. "We are working on a detailed support package to be offered to the industry, which would include hotels, restaurants, tour operators, and self-employed people including photographers,

guides, etc," he added.

Highlighting the measures to promote Odisha tourism, Dev said that the state is looking at roadshows, road trips from the neighboring states, and scaling up eco-retreats to cover more destinations. "We have selected a partner that will help us in curating various itineraries and immersive experience packages to promote these packages," he added.

Dev said the state is now looking at tourism destinations holistically and is preparing a master plan for each destination.

"A priority destination list has been identified consisting of 70 circuits and the government will invest in a big way. Our infrastructure development budget for this year has been doubled," he added.

Odisha will also be investing in new tourism products especially cruises and houseboats. "We have selected India's largest river cruise operator to start catamarans. By early next year we will have Odisha on the luxury river cruise map of the country," Dev added.

## Odisha Again Demands For Hike In Paddy MSP To Rs 2,930

Bhubaneswar: Odisha Government once again demanded the Centre for hike in Minimum Support Price (MSP) of paddy to Rs 2,930 to benefit the small and nominal farmers of the State. Briefing a presser today, State Agriculture Minister Arun Sahoo said that the State has been demanding the Centre for hike in paddy MSP to Rs 2,930 per quintal. "Recently, the Centre has increased MSP for all mandated kharif crops including paddy for marketing season 2021-22. The MSP of paddy (common) has been hiked to Rs 1,940 from Rs 1,868 per quintal. Similarly, the MSP of paddy (Grade A) has been increased to Rs 1,960 from Rs 1,888, an increase by Rs 72 per quintal, which will not benefit the farmers of the State," Sahoo told media. He said that the State had braced for 7 cyclonic storms in past two decades. Despite series of cyclones, floods, droughts and massive pest attacks, Odisha has emerged as one of the largest paddy producers in the country. Giving data about paddy procurement from farmers in last two years, the Minister said, "the income of farmers (Page-15)

## SAIL 'dissolves' RMD HQ at Kolkata, to shift to Rourkela and Bokaro

**SAIL mines located in Odisha would come under the administrative control of the RSP the ones in Jharkhand would come under the jurisdiction of BSP**



ROURKELA, June 12: In a major development, the Steel Authority of India (SAIL) has decided to dissolve the Raw Materials Division (RMD) and shift its

headquarter from Kolkata to Rourkela and Bokaro with distribution of captive mines.

Informing this at the Steel Executives' Federation of India (SEFI), general secretary

and RSP executives' association president Bimal Bisi said in its board meeting on Friday, SAIL took the decision as the RMD headquarters at Kolkata was far away from its captive mines and had turned out to be a white elephant.

SAIL mines located in Odisha would come under the administrative control of the Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP) the ones in Jharkhand would come under the jurisdiction of Bokaro Steel Plant (BSP). The employees at RMD headquarters, Kolkata would

be shifted to Rourkela and Bokaro.

"The decision would see the relocation of around 2,500 RMD employees including 500 executives in addition to 20,000 contract workers," Bisi said adding, SEFI has been demanding the need of shifting the RMD headquarters from Kolkata for the last 15 years and had made numerous representations in this regard citing financial disadvantages.

To maintain the Kolkata headquarters of RMD, the SAIL was forced to incur about Rs 50 (Page-15)



# Former Minister BijayshreeRoutray Passes Away Due To Post-COVID Complications



Bhubaneswar, June 2: Senior BJD leader and former Odisha minister BijayshreeRoutray passed away while undergoing treatment at a private hospital in Bhubaneswar on Wednesday.

A six-time MLA, Routray served as the Health, Forest &

Environment Minister in Naveen Patnaik's cabinet.

Routray, 67, had in May tested positive for COVID-19. He was reportedly undergoing treatment for post-Covid complications.

A six-time MLA, Routray had served as the Health, Forest &

Environment Minister in Naveen Patnaik's cabinet.

"Routray's demise has deeply saddened us. Bijayshree and I had been with Biju babu since 1990. He was one of my close friends. I had last met him 20-25 days ago and we had a long discussion," said Odisha Assembly Speaker Surjya Narayan Patro.

"I pray before God that may his soul rest in peace," said Patro condoling his death.

BJP national vice-president Baijayant Panda expressed grief over the demise of Routray and tweeted, "Shocked & deeply saddened by the passing of former Odisha minister Shri

BijayshreeRoutray. Son of late CM NilamaniRoutray Ji, he was a brilliant student before dedicating himself to public life. We knew & liked each other well. Condolences to his family & followers."

BJD MLA Amar Satapathy said Routray was a leader with great self-respect and one who had immense love for flora and fauna. He had carried out great works during his stint as the Forest & Environment minister.

"I am deeply saddened by the demise of Routray. His death has created a void in Odisha politics," said Andhra Pradesh Governor Biswa Bhusan Harichandan.

## 'Green Corridor' To Be Created To Transfer Patient From Bhubaneswar To Chennai



Bhubaneswar, June 3: A special 'Green Corridor' shall be created to facilitate the shifting of a very critically ill patient from AIIMS Bhubaneswar to the Biju Patnaik International Airport. The Commissionerate Police will help in the creation of the corridor. The Green Corridor will facilitate hassle-free transportation of the patient. The patient will then be transferred (airlifted) for further treatment to Apollo Hospital, Chennai.

The patient who has been identified as Amrit Pradhan is a 24-year-old after he tested positive for coronavirus and was put on a ventilator. Apollo Hospital, Chennai will accept this patient for his next level of treatment and continue the best possible treatment required. Special 'Green Corridors' were created earlier in the state Capital to facilitate the shifting of critically ill patients. A green corridor refers to a special route that is cleared of the traffic for some time to help the harvested organs or patients to travel to a destination in a very short time.

## Chai walla sends Rs 100 to PM Modi to get his beard shaved

Anil More, owner of a small tea stall in Maharashtra's Baramati, also wrote to PM Modi urging him to increase job opportunities for those hit hard by the last two covid-induced lockdowns.



Baramati, June 9: A tea vendor has sent a money order of Rs 100 to Prime Minister Narendra Modi asking the latter to get his beard shaved, reported local media. In the last one and a half years, the unorganized sector has been hit hard because of the covid-induced lockdown.

Upset over this, Anil More, owner of a small tea stall opposite to a private hospital on Indapur Road, says, "PM Modi has grown his beard. If he should increase something, it must be employment opportunities for the

people of this country. Attempts must be made to accelerate vaccination for the population and there must be efforts to step up the existing medical facilities. The PM must make sure people are rid of their miseries that are caused by the last two lockdowns."

Furthermore, he claimed that the Prime Minister's position is the highest in the country. "I have utmost respect and admiration for our Prime Minister. I am sending Rs 100 for my savings to him so that he shaves his beard. He is the supreme leader and I don't intend to hurt him. But how the problems of the poor are growing by the day due to the pandemic, this is a way to draw his attention," he said. In a letter to the PM, More also urged him to extend financial assistance of Rs 5 lakh to families of those who have had a Covid death and Rs 30000 for families hit by the lockdown.

## Tata Steel celebrates 'World Environment Day' at Joda



Joda, June 5, 2021: In line with the theme declared by the United Nations of Ecosystem Restoration, Tata Steel observed World Environment Day at Joda on Saturday. Keeping in mind, the prevailing situation of COVID-19, the day was marked by symbolical plantation drives at Joda East Iron Mine, Khondbond Iron Mine, Ferro Alloys Plant, and Bichakundi Manganese Mines to avoid

social gathering.

On this occasion, 600 saplings were planted across locations. Apart from this, a poster making competition on ecosystem restoration for students of Khondbond School was organised. Tata Steel Foundation also organised a beeline of activities on the day that started with the plantation of 320 saplings across Joda and peripheral villages including Azad Basti, Bachu Hutting, Uli

Hutting, Bichakundi, Joribar, Khondbond, and Guruda village. To promote sustainability among the youth, Tata Steel Foundation also organised a drawing competition among the youth of Khondbond village in which 25 youths of the village participated.

It may be noted here that the celebrations would continue throughout June, which is being observed as 'Sustainability Month' across Tata Steel. The Company will be launching multiple initiatives, projects, awareness campaigns, webinars, and online quizzes during the sustainability month where a single message namely #Restore Today for Tomorrow will dominate all communication programs.



# Lack of consumer poise, low growth may cause upheaval



**Prof. Shivaji Sarkar**  
Former HOD in English journalism in IIMC, Delhi

Consumer confidence is at an all-time low, says RBI, amid slumping of Indian growth to minus 7.3 percent in 2020-21, highest jobless rate at 18 percent, and improvisation of 97 percent of the population.

The RBI at its monetary policy meeting also lowered the 2021-22 growth forecast by 1 percent to 9.5 percent from earlier assessments of 10.5 percent due to the covid19 virulent second phase. This one percent in real terms downsizes several activities.

The government's budgetary projections are far off the mark and soberly being called conservative. If CAG's provisional deficit estimates are taken into

account at Rs 18.21 lakh crore, the GDP projection may come to 9.3 percent.

The impact is reflected in high joblessness at 17.88 percent, according to CMIE on May 30. It has risen by three percent from 14.71 percent a fortnight earlier. Urban labour force participation also came down to 35.69 percent from 37 percent and rural around 5 percent during the fortnight.

The lockdowns (LD) causing the closure of activities are being stated as prime reasons for the grim situation. The unemployment situation may remain high for about six months amid policy uncertainties and knee-jerk localized LDs and administrative highhandedness. The

employment situation remains critical almost in all industries FMCG, automobile, informal sectors, hospitality, and tourism. In Noida, close to Delhi, eateries and restaurants have shut shops permanently as the owners have lost their reserves.

Thus the RBI outlook on consumer confidence is a mere indicator of the stark reality. In gross terms, it means consumers do not have the cash to buy products even if they are in dire need. The indices touching record lows may indicate a graver situation. Both the Current Situation Index (CSI) and the Future Expectation Index fell to an all-time low of 48.5 and 96.4 in the latest RBI consumer survey. The figures a year ago were CSI 63.7 and FEI 97.9 when the lockdown was more severe. These are the lowest since 2012. The wariness is because of the feeling of uncertainty about the future.

Whether this would mean a grimmer future or not is not easy to say. The GDP had contracted 24.4 percent and 7.4 percent in the first and second quarters of 2020-21 and grew by 0.5 percent in the third quarter. But the second wave of LD has hampered recovery. The eight-core sector industries in April 2021 slumped to 126.7 (IIP), the lowest since November 2020. It rose

to 149.2 in March 2021 as activities started in construction (14.5 percent) and manufacturing (6.9 percent). Most others like labor-intensive activities like hotels, transport, entertainment, and communication contracted. The Nomura India Business Index fell to 60 on May 23 from 99.3 on February 21.

The RBI report notes that the values of other indices on non-essential items have worsened and are in the negative. In the prevailing situation, RBI has drastically cut quarterly projections. Its revised projections are - 18.5 percent, 7.9 percent, 7.2 percent, and 6.6 percent against those expressed in RBI annual statement - 26.2 percent, 8.3 percent, 5.4 percent, and 6.2 percent. This cuts growth to 9.5 percent. The situation remains fluid, the numbers have come down but the threat of disruption to normal work remains.

Another aspect has been the large unemployment of the tiny daily use goods market reeling under a cash crisis. A large population still is getting food doles though all beneficiaries of the last LD are not included. Large numbers of people who lost jobs, including in the IT sector, in the first phase of LD, are still without jobs. Many revivals owing to dwindling of savings may not be easy

though the government has announced special loan packages of Rs 15000 crore for MSMEs, it is not certain how many would be in a position to avail it.

Another critical aspect has been the repeated displacement of labour. As uncertainties about covid19 may continue, the industry may continue to have labour shortage. It would affect production.

It is also linked to the global situation. Trade minister Piyush Goyal has put a target of \$ 400 billion export target this year against \$ 290 billion last year. But India's trade deficit touched an eight-month low in May at \$ 6.3 billion because of a fall in imports due to lack of domestic demand. The May exports remained at \$ 32.2 billion but imports contracted to \$ 38.5 billion. One reason for the import slump is due to rising global prices. The WTO last month said that merchandise trade would continue to increase by 8 percent - considered a bit more optimistic. The world uncertainty may dent India's trade.

In this situation, the rising forex kitty to \$ 590 billion may not be as rosy as it looks. The RBI does it by various gold and foreign currency management much to the chagrin of the US as it feels that dollar prices are suppressed. It also needs to be assessed against

total external debt, and corporate external commercial borrowings (ECB), and repatriation costs.

The rising figures of FDI, not all, are suspect. The IMF says it is being used for routing black money. According to RBI, a large percentage of the FDI \$ 20110 million came from Mauritius and Singapore and a mere \$ 3401 million from the US. It is to be noted that Singapore comprised a mere 0.42 percent of the world economy and the US 24.42 percent. This is not considered a quality FDI but projects a larger-than-life picture through virtual inbreeding. It calls for proper scrutiny of large net-worth groups.

Globally, phantom FDI investments amount to an astonishing \$15 trillion. India is also a part of it. Such siphoning and rerouting of investments affect the basic economic conditions and increases disparity. Whether this should be linked to increased hunger and poverty in the country or not is a moot question. It is sometimes believed that 80 crore people are on food dole for this kind of inversion.

The lack of consumer confidence and purchasing power emanates from such operations. Ignoring it for long is never desirable. It is a bubble but if it busts there could be social trouble. Cosmetic promises and doles cannot contain it for long.



## Pradhan unveils RSP Covid unit



Rourkela: Union PNG and Steel Minister Dharmendra Pradhan inaugurated IspatNidan Kendra, a 100-bed COVID care facility developed by Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP) through virtual mode on 2nd June.

The Union Minister of PNG & Steel unveiled the e-plaque to mark the dedication of the new facility.

The center has at present 100 oxygenated beds including 50 ventilator-attached beds. The IspatNidaan Kendra will be upgraded to 500 beds in due course. It is equipped with the provision of gaseous oxygen directly from the oxygen unit of the steel plant.

"The facility will help in fighting the second wave of coronavirus in the southern Rourkela region. The possible third wave could also be dealt with effectively," said the steel Minister. He added that the permanent facility could

help treat non-COVID patients afterward.

Union Minister of State for Steel Fagga Singh Kulaste, State Minister of Health and Family Welfare Naba Kishore Das, Sundargarh MP JuaOram, Union Steel Secretary PK Tripathi, Chairman, SAIL Soma Mondal, CEO, RSP Dipak Chatteraj and district Collector, Sundargarh Nikhil PawanKalyan attended the function along with many MLAs from Sundargarh district also attended the virtual event.

Sundargarh MP JuaOram expressed his sense of immense gratitude towards the Prime Minister and the SAIL Management for creating much-needed health facilities in the region and making it a pioneer in the state. At the outset, Soma Mondal delivered the welcome address and briefed about the initiatives taken by SAIL in combating the pandemic.

## SEFI Wants PM's Intervention to Settle their Demands

Rourkela: Steel Executives' Federation of India (SEFI) has sought Prime Minister Narendra Modi's intervention to settle their long-pending pay revision at the earliest. Apart from pay revision for executives, SEFI has called PM to take measures to help the family of deceased steel plant employees.

SEFI Chairman N K Banchhor and General Secretary and President of Rourkela Steel Plant Executive Association, Bimal Kumar Bisi wrote a letter to PM Modi and urged him to look into the grievances of steel plant executives. In their letter, SEFI has attracted PM's attention towards the inordinate delay in the implementation of the 3rd PRC Pay Revision since 01.01.17. SEFI general secretary Bisi said, "Our last revision was done 14 years ago on 01.01.07. Now Steel Ministry wants to finalize the Wage Agreement of Non-executives ahead of Executives. But they should remember that Non-Executives Wage revision

was done last in 2014 hence effective from 01.01.12 and became much higher than our bottom officer's basic pay which creates a pay anomaly among them. Their Wage revision is done through NJCS agreement (Trade Union-Management), whereas, the Executives' pay revision is already due from 01.01.17 to vide OM No.W-08/0003/2017-DPE(WC) dt.14/16th Aug 2017 as per approval by the Union Cabinet chaired by PM himself. Hence, these two types should not be interlinked and be dealt with separately. More than 10 meetings of NJCS for pay revision of Non-Executives of SAIL have been conducted which remained nonconclusive. More than 10 meetings of NJCS for pay revision of Non-Executives of SAIL have been conducted which remained nonconclusive.

He further said, "After a sluggish global steel market, SAIL has been performing well since 2018, and accordingly SAIL have achieved PBTs of Rs. 3,337.89 Crore, Rs. 3170.66



Crore in the financial years 2018-19, 2019-20, respectively, and also expected PBT of Rs. 6000 (approx.) Crore in FY 2020-21."

SEFI in their letter also highlighted how SAIL employees during the current crisis time rose to become one of the largest suppliers of medical-grade liquid oxygen, across the country, for the use of Covid patients. Officers worked day and night with utmost dedication for the cause of the nation which resulted in remarkable production. Unfortunately, such hard-working executives are suffering due to delays in

Pay revision.

They appealed to PM tokindly intervene in the matter and finalize the wages of Nonexecutives and Pay revision of Executives on a priority basis.

SEFI also drew attention to the fact that around 250 employees of SAIL have lost their lives from COVID-19 for keeping the nation's wheel running. The dependents of those lives are now at the crossroads and it is also the time to keep those families alive too. Therefore SEFI urges PM to provide at least one job and compensation to each family member in SAIL like other Maharatna so that they can survive.

## NIT Rourkela 26th In Overall Category Among Indian Varsities, No. 1 Among NITs



Rourkela: The National Institute of Technology (NIT), Rourkela has been ranked 26th in the overall category among Indian universities by the Times Higher Education Asia University Rankings 2021.

In the overall list of Asian universities, NIT Rourkela has been placed in the 201-250 bracket rank, while the institute is No. 12 in India in the general engineering category. The Times Higher Education Asia University Rankings

2021 judge the universities through all core areas - teaching, research, citations, knowledge transfers, and international outlook. According to the rankings, NIT Rourkela is No. 1 in the overall category among all the listed NITs in India. It also topped the list in the Teaching and Ranking category. On this accomplishment The Director of the institute, Professor Animesh Biswas said - "NIT Rourkela has a strong platform for collaborative research and knowledge sharing among the different research groups scattered over several major departments facilitating faster developments and nurturing new ideas. We already have 11 different centers of research for carrying out multidisciplinary research activities. Presently with the collaboration with ISRO, NIT Rourkela is setting up Space Technology Incubation Centre, which will augment research in the area of space science technology."

## Bhoomi Puja of Hockey Stadium



ROURKELA: The construction work of the 20,000-seater Birsamunda International Hockey Stadium, touted to be the country's largest, began after the groundbreaking ceremony was held at Biju Patnaik University of Technology (BPUT) on 4th June. The stadium will come upon 15-20 acres of land, which is a dream

project of the Odisha government. It will host the FIH Odisha Men's Hockey World Cup 2023 along with Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar. Foundation for the stadium had been laid by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on February 16. The 'Bhoomi Puja' was held in the presence of Rourkela MLA Sarada Prasad Nayak and ADM Aboli

Sunil Naravane. IDCO officials and construction company Larsen & Toubro company's officials were present at the groundbreaking ceremony. IDCO is the executive agency while Larsen & Toubro Construction group has bagged the order to construct the stadium. The estimated cost of the new hockey stadium is Rs. 130 crores.



# J'spur district targets 1.04 Lakh hector land to cultivate in Khariff 2021



**JAGATSINGHPUR,** June 10: The Jagatsinghpur district administration has set a target to cultivate 1.04 lakh hector land in various

agricultural activities for the Kharif 2021 amid the Covid 19 outbreak.

Thrust will be given to increase the acreage of pulses,

oilseeds, vegetable farming, and other crops which will provide cash benefits and easy marketing for the farmers.

The district agriculture strategy committee meeting for Kharif 2021 was held through virtual mode, collector S K Mohapatra chaired the meeting and held an online talk with agricultural stakeholders and set a target to cultivate 86.220 hector paddy, 82 hector pulses, 15,815 hector vegetables, 1870 hector

sugarcane, and other crops.

More than 70 percent of the district population depends on the agriculture sector, the state government has announced special packages and schemes for farmers to boost agricultural and horticultural activities in the wake of the second wave of the Covid 19 outbreak.

As many as Rs 61,010 Lakh agriculture loan will be provided to farmers through banks and debtor farmers

will be covered under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal BimaYojana in the Kharif season to mitigate the risk of natural disaster, Committee decided at the meeting.

As agriculture season proceeds farmers are necessitating basic requirements as seeds and fertilizer, the supply of both agriculture components should adequately available to district farmers, agriculture

department and cooperative societies should watchful over the process, the collector instructed.

The virtual meeting was attended by Project Director DRDA, Assistant director Agriculture, District Agriculture Officer, block-level agriculture officer, engineers from irrigation department, horticulture, officials from NABRD attended and discussed different issues connecting to agriculture.

## World Environment Day celebrated at Paradip Refinery

**Paradeep:** The World Environment Day- 2021 was celebrated at Paradip Refinery, by organizing several activities on the theme - "Ecosystem Restoration" and with compliance to Covid protocol.

Mr VS Jain, Executive Director, and Refinery Head inaugurated the celebration and pledged the attending IOCL stakeholders to maintain Ecosystem restoration. Paradip Refinery has taken up several activities to improve resource utilization efficiency, such as freshwater reduction by using



Sewage treated water in lawn irrigation and use of Solar Photo Voltaic cell for generating green power, thereby reducing fossil fuel

usage, use of biodigester unit to convert waste into biogas, etc. Paradip Refinery's commitment towards the eco-friendly environment in and

around is demonstrated through greenery in the refinery complex, green township, and a grand ecological park with biodiversity features developed over a large area, ED Mr Jain revealed.

On the occasion of World Environment Day, the plantation of saplings was done by ED & RH along with Senior officials and representatives. To bring mass awareness, the activities like the slogan, quiz competitions, and suggestion drive were arranged for the employees.

## Five Dacoits arrested, stolen ornaments, mobile phones recovered

**JAGATSINGHPUR,** June 10: Paradeep police have resolved a robbery that occurred one month ago in Jhimani village on the outskirts of Paradip town, arrested five accused persons, recovered few stolen ornaments, mobile phones under their possession, and a light motor vehicle allegedly used for the crime.

The accused men were named Ramakanta Parida alias Kalia, Amit Kumar Kar alias Aditya stated to be the mastermind and their associates Rajesh Mahali, Shankar Rout, Deepak Sutar, all accused persons were presented in court on Thursday and forwarded to jail after Covid testing.

According to a press release issued by police informed that on April 29 as many as 10 to 12 unknown persons entered into one Safala Tarai house in Jhimani village under Paradeep lock police limits, burgled few gold ornaments, cash Rs 20,000, mobile phones at gunpoint, and fled away.

Basing on the complaint lodged at Paradeep lock police station police had launched a probe and successfully reached at accused Dacoits in different locations.



## Kujanga Market shut for an indefinite period

**JAGATSINGHPUR,** June 10: The Jagatsinghpur district administration shuts Kujanga Market for an indefinite period due to visitors, shopkeepers, and business establishments have been allegedly

flouting Covid 19 protocols. District collector S K Mohapatra passed this statutory order on Tuesday to be implemented with immediate effect to continue until further order. Collector gathered a field

enquire reports from the local administration, which informed that Kujanga Market has become a place where the Covid guidelines are blatantly breaking, no social distancing by either shopkeepers and visitors,

and witnessing huge congregations of people in market yards, nobody bothered obeying Covid lockdown protocols. Basing on the ground reports collector proclaimed Kujanga Market lock order.

## Tahasildar's to issue permission for social functions in J'spur

**JAGATSINGHPUR:** The Jagatsinghpur district administration has designated local Tahasildar's to issue permission for hosting social functions like

Marriage, funeral rites, thread ceremony, or any events and empowered them strict adherence and supervision of Covid 19 guidelines during the celebration. In this regard

collector S K Mohapatra has followed instruction from the state government R&DM department dated May 30 and empowered Tahasildar's issuing permission for any social

events amid ongoing lockdowns and shutdowns. As the state government instructions spell as 25 persons shall be permitted for Marriage event and for conducting

thread ceremony and funeral rites 20 persons are allowed to participate, so local Tahasildar's and authority have been assigned to study the ground reality

including adopting strict surveillance on the occasion before or after issuing the permission, collector Mohapatra directed in his order Friday.



# Pandemic corona endangers Similipal Biosphere Reserve

Baripada : The fire had gutted about two-thirds of one of Similipal, the largest biosphere reserves in India just two months back. The jungle was burning and the forest officials were helpless. Many medicinal plants have been reduced to ashes. Many wildlife species, including endangered and scarce ones, have perished in the wildfire. However, the fire was controlled after causing colossal damages. Then came the devastating cyclone Yaas and that too claimed its share of the devastation of the forest.

Now the real danger to the Similipal Biosphere Reserve comes from the inhabitants residing on the foot of the biosphere. About three lacks people reside in 600 villages that spread around the Similipa biosphere. Due to pandemic corona and subsequent lockdown the people have lost jobs. To meet both ends, the



inhabitants have turned their eyes back towards Similipal forests.

Many from the villages have returned to their earlier vocation of hunting in the reserve forest. In the meantime, the forest authorities have seized bows arrows from

Kaptipada, Udala, Baripada, Bangiriposhi, Manada, Jashipur, Karnjia, and Thakurmunda forest areas. Besides this, many people have returned to the business of timber by cutting trees from the Similipal forests due to a shortage of jobs for the

pandemic. For them, there is no shortage of trees in the Similipal forest. The biosphere reserve has the largest zone of Sal trees in all of India. In addition, the tropical monsoon climate provides ideal circumstances for the development of distinctive

biodiversity, highlighted by 1,076 species of vascular plants. Among them are 93 species of orchids, 300 species of medicinal plants, and 52 species of endangered flora. Two endemic Orchid species are *Eria meghasaniensis* and *Tainia hookeriana*. Other noteworthy flora species include *Callicarpa Arborea* (a species of beautyberry), *Bombax ceiba* (Cotton tree), and *Madhuca longifolia* (Mahua). Hence, whoever goes to the forest returns with something to meet for a living.

The local markets around the Silipal hills are flooded with wooden planks from the freshly cut trees and are sold openly. Similarly, meats of hunted animals are being sold and distributed across the district. The menace is growing day by day while the forest department remains mute spectators because of their inadequate number of staff, protection, and other

causes.

After the devastating fire in the forests, the government had sanctioned additional money to meet the challenges by employing more temporary staff. But until now the deployment is not complete. Appointment of staff from far away places has also irked the local inhabitants. The newly appointed persons do not know the location and the forest and that helps the poachers and forest mafias to operate their clandestine jobs of destroying the forest.

Therefore to save the Similipal Biosphere Reserve, "the authorities must chalk out a long-term strategy with adequate funds" the local nature-loving people and intellectuals opine. Nevertheless, the local people must be involved and get appointed for the mission of saving the Similipal, they too add.

## People disgrace over the cancellation of the car festival at Dwitiya Srikhetra

Baripada, 13 June:-The Political outfits in the Mayurbhanj district were outraged at the decision of the State Government over the annual car festival. The State Government decided the annual car festival of Lord Jagannath at Srikhetra in Puri will be held without the participation of devotees this year due to the pandemic, such a decision should be taken

for Dwitiya Srikhetra in Baripada, fumed the political outfits.

Several social outfits have expressed views on social media on the decision of the State Government that intends to kill the tradition of Mayurbhanj.

District Congress Committee President Hemanta Das urged that the decision of the State

Government over conduct the annual car festival scheduled to be held in Puri only is most welcome but what was the problem to conduct the car festival at Dwitiya Srikhetra in Baripada? The annual car festival could be held at Dwitiya Srikhetra strictly adhering to Covid 19 protocol. He further blames the State Government was knowingly killing the

tradition of the district. While MLAs and workers of BJD were celebrating sports activities in Baripada stadium without observing Covid restriction and district administration provides them extended support for conducting the sports events, but what prevents them to conduct the traditional car festival in Baripada? The members of

the party will meet the Collector on Saturday and will demand to conduct the annual car festival in Dwitiya Srikhetra to preserve the tradition at least.

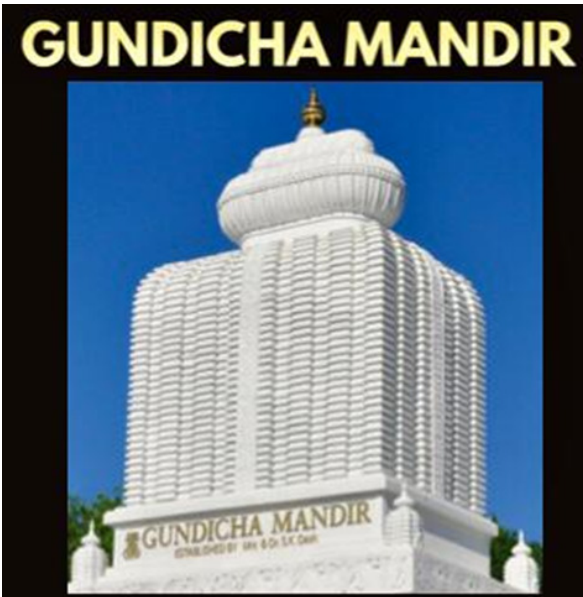
He said that the Baripada car festival has a special feature where the women devotees participate by pulling the chariot of Devi Subhadra.

BJP District President

Kandra Soren urged that while people in mass are found gathering in market places without keeping a social distance which is rather a bigger gathering than a car festival. The State Government should not stop the annual car festival in Baripada. The district BJP unit urged the State Government to change the decision immediately and preservation of tradition.



# Inauguration of Shree Gundicha Temple at Minnesota in the USA



Minneapolis, June 14: (Kishore Dwibedi) The Newly built Shree Gundicha Temple inside the premises of Hindu Temple in the state of

Minnesota in the U.S.A. is inaugurated on Sunday 13th June 2021 at 10.30 a.m. morning American time. Senator Amy Klobuchar and Mayor of Maple

Grove Mark Steffenson have inaugurated the majestic temple having magnificent stone carvings and other architectural attractions. Apart from the main Shree Gundicha temple at Puri, the Minnesota temple is being considered the first Shree Gundicha Temple in the entire World. The 43000 square feet long Hindu Temple was built on 80 acres of land at Maple Grove city in Minnesota in the year 2006. Established and is managed by the Hindu Society of Minnesota (HSMN), the huge religious structure has since been recognized as the biggest Hindu Temple in the USA. The Governing body of the

coveted institution is now headed by the Chairman renowned scientist Dr. Sitakantha Dash and President Pooja Bastodkar. Away from Dr. Dash prominent personalities involved in the establishment and improvement of the temple include Dr. Krishna Saxena, Dr. Sashikant Sane, Byron Byraiah, Mahendra Nath, and Punjabhai Patel. The Deities of Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra, Goddess Subhadra, and Lord Sudarshan are being worshipped here and Rathayatra is also being organized annually. A dream project of Chairman Dr. Dash, the Gundicha temple has been constructed with the major

contribution of his family. Over the years being evolved as the prime worshipping place for 50,000 devotees of Minnesota, the Hindu temple is observing its 15th Anniversary on 12th June 2021. The management body of the Temple, HSMN has planned three days long Grand Festival to celebrate the Annual Day of the main temple and the Inauguration of Gundicha Temple. The Governor of Minnesota Tim Walz will be the Chief Guest during the Anniversary celebration on 12th June 2021 at 10.30 a.m. American time. A Souvenir containing the Historical facts of HSMN since its formation in 1978, present

activities, future road map, and current functional projects will be released by Governor Mr. Walz. Chairman Dr. Dash honored all the project heads during the occasion. Kanak Dutt presented with this year's outstanding service Award. The evening of Twelfth June witnesses the staging of a colorful cultural Jamboori containing scintillating performances by established and upcoming artists. The three days long Mega Event is being hosted massively with the able and active stewardship of HSMN's Chairman Dr. Sitakantha Das, President, Pooja Bastodkar, and 17 members of the Planning Committee.

## "Suit was for publicity:" Delhi High Court The court dismisses plea by Juhi Chawla against 5G rollout, imposes costs of Rs 20 lakh

New Delhi, June 4: The Bench of Justice JR Midha said that it appeared that the suit was filed to garner publicity, noting how Chawla had circulated a web link of the hearing on social media.

The Court, therefore, imposed costs of Rs. 20 lakh on Chawla and other plaintiffs for abusing the process of law. "Plaintiffs abused the process of law. Costs of Rs 20 lakh is imposed on plaintiffs: Court. It appears the suit was for publicity. Juhi Chawla circulated the link of the hearing on social media," the Court said.

Taking note of the disruptions caused to the hearing on account of the link being made public by Chawla, the Court directed that a contempt notice be issued against the miscreants. A direction was also passed to the Delhi Police to take action and submit a report before the Court.

Justice JR Midha also ruled that the plaint was defective and not maintainable. "No case

made out for leave to institute suit (under Section 80)...or to sue in a representative capacity. Plaint is defective and not maintainable," the Court held.

Further, the Court noted that Chawla not only did not comply with the mandate under Section 80 of the Code of Civil Procedure but also flouted several other mandates under the Code. Importantly, the Court said that the plaint was not verified. It noted that only a few paragraphs were said to be "true to their knowledge". "There is no personal knowledge of averments. Plaint based on legal advice not maintainable," the judgment said.

After the pronouncement, Advocate Deepak Khosla, appearing for Chawla and other plaintiffs, sought a stay on the order. He submitted that the imposition of costs was without any legal basis. Rejecting the request, Justice Midha remarked, "Matter is over. You have your legal remedies."



Chawla along with Veeresh Malik and Teena Vachani (plaintiffs) filed the suit before the High Court, arguing that until and unless 5G technology is "certified safe", its rollout should not be permitted. Chawla and others had argued that it was a fact that there "could be danger of imminent nature" due to 5G and as per RTI responses, no studies had been conducted on the same.

The Central government, however, contended that the suit was not maintainable because of Sections 80 and 91 of the CPC. Solicitor General

Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, submitted that the suit was frivolous and barred under Section 9 of the Code.

During the hearing that took place on Wednesday, the Court had said that the plaint was defective and had been filed for media publicity. The Court had also opined that there several lapses in Chawla's plaint in terms of the Code of Civil Procedure. The hearing on Wednesday was also marred by uncouth conduct by an unidentified visitor who started singing songs from Chawla's movies.

## Transgenders Observe Sabitri Brata In Odisha Capital

Bhubaneswar, June 10: While generally 'Sabitri Brata' is observed by married women who pray and fast before the Goddess Parvati wishing long lives for their husbands, the second wave of Covid-19 notwithstanding, members of the transgender community in Bhubaneswar came together to join the bandwagon on the auspicious occasion. Clad with bright and colorful saris, some members of the transgender community observed the holy festival in a subdued manner in the Capital City with strict adherence to Covid-19 norms. Clad with bright and colorful saris, some members of the community observed the holy festival in a subdued manner in the Capital City with strict adherence to Covid-19 norms. "We have taken prior permission from Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation to observe the festival in strict adherence with Covid-19 guidelines," said Meera Parida. "We all have conducted our Covid-19 tests before and got negative reports. This year we have decided not to offer



puja at any big temple and are observing the festival in an open space. We sanitized our hands, maintained social distancing, and put on masks while performing the rituals," she said. With puja thalis in their hands, the transgenders performed all the rituals of the festival and offered sindur, alata, flowers, and fruits to the deity as part of the worship. But the festival celebrated by the transgender community differs from the general in a specific way. Noted social worker Meghna said, "The custom is followed all over the country. Members of the transgender community observe 'Sabitri Brata' and worship their Gurus. We consider our Gurus as our husbands and pray the Goddess for their good health and long life." "Nowadays, kinnaras are also getting married and living with their husbands. The married kinnaras are observing the brata and praying for their husbands also," she said.

# The UK must apologize and pay India reparations for its colonial plunder



Sirish C. Mohanty

In May 2021, the German government announced a surprise, in an unprecedented move. It had agreed to pay •1.1 billion (about 98 billion Indian rupees) to the Herero and Nama people of present-day Namibia as reparations for the genocide it perpetrated there between 1904 and 1908. As the colonial administrators of what was then called Southwest Africa, the German military caused the death of nearly 80% of the Herero population and 50% of the Nama population at the time.

Calling it "the darkest period in our shared history", German foreign minister Heiko Maas stated that Germany has a historical and moral responsibility to pay reparations to and seek forgiveness from Namibia and the victims' descendants for its horrific past crimes. Maas stated that the amount would be channeled towards "reconstruction and

development", with the local community playing a critical role in determining how these resources will be deployed.

In apologizing unambiguously and agreeing to pay such a high sum as reparations, Germany's actions stand in stark contrast to the approach adopted by its European neighbors. Hence, while the issue of seeking a formal apology and reparations from India's past colonizers, the United Kingdom (UK), has triggered a re-evaluation of India's position on this.

## The cause for reparations

Briefly, the cause for the payment of reparations by the UK to India arises from their following harmful actions:

The British during their rule in India deliberately, and systematically de-industrialized India, destroyed Indian cloth, steel, and shipbuilding industries, among others.

They did this for their benefit, building administrative, agricultural and infrastructural mechanisms designed instead to extract Indian natural resources to the maximum possible extent. They then used these resources to fuel the rapid industrial growth in Britain and treated India as a captive market for British-made goods.

This was coupled with high tariffs and barriers to trade that resulted in the sustained draining of capital from India, leaving a country that contributed to more than 20% of global trade before British colonial rule. India was made a crippled economic state when it achieved independence in 1947. The Anarchy was part of a deliberate plan to drain India's wealth for British profit - India's initial colonizer, after all, was a for-profit corporation (the East India Company).

The British stayed in extreme violence, famine,


and suffering on the Indian people only to drain India's wealth. There are innumerable instances of such cruelty. Some prominent examples include the ghastly Bengal Famine of 1943, in which more than 2.5 million Indians were killed due to artificial food shortages created to meet the growing British demand during the Second World War, and the Jallianwalla Bagh Massacre of 1919, in which hundreds of people peacefully celebrating the festival of Vaisakhi were murdered in cold blood by British General Dyer, who faced little to no repercussions for his actions. Across the 200+ years of Company and Crown rule over India, there are many such examples of deliberate actions taken to sacrifice Indian lives to serve British economic, political, and strategic interests.

The British sowed the seeds of communal tension and division in India, culminating in the bloody partition. This was achieved through what were called "Divide and Rule" policies, strategically allying with some caste and religious groups, and pitting such groups against each other, to consolidate their power. Indeed, through actions

such as the creation of separate Hindu, Muslim, and Christian personal laws and separate Hindu and Muslim electorates from 1909 onwards, the British played a central role in the creation of the distinct "Hindu" and "Muslim" identities that continue to be at severe loggerheads in India today.

The case for reparations argues that the cumulative impact of these machinations was the economic devastation and social fragmentation of India, coupled with the concurrent enrichment of Britain. This has led to the vast disparities between India and the UK seen today. These actions always have been and always will be morally reprehensible - indeed, it is said that as far back as 1788, graphic descriptions of the Company's treatment of Indians in Warren Hastings' impeachment trial in Westminster Hall caused many in the audience to "swoon and faint", prompting a backlash against the Company's cruel actions in India. The continued perpetuation of these wrongdoings over hundreds of years, therefore, warrants an expression of guilt and remorse by the UK through the payment of reparations.

The most prominent proponent of this current case for British reparations to India is Congress parliamentarian and former minister of state for external affairs, Shashi Tharoor. His viral speech at the Oxford Union in 2015 arguing for such reparations even triggered a rare instance of cross-party political agreement, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi endorsing his view that the British owed reparations to India.

In his speech, however, Tharoor concluded that since the damage sustained by India was so vast and unquantifiable, the amount of reparations to be paid by the UK to India did not matter. In his view, even an annual payment of £1 by the UK government to India would be enough, as it is the sentiment of taking responsibility for past crimes committed by the British in India and the expression of true guilt and remorse by the British that would go a long way in healing the persistent wounds of colonialism. As the then-German Chancellor Willy Brandt sinking to his knees at a memorial to the thousands of Jews who lost their lives in the Warsaw Ghetto as a sign of German atonement for its role in the Holocaust. 

## Letter to the Editor

Dear Sir,

You have initiated an important debate in your special story on "whether Secularism is a boon or bane" for our country.

As we know, Secularism advocates that govt. should be neutral without any interference in the matter of religious belief, faith & worship. And religion is separated from the political, economic & social aspects of life.

But, in reality, religion is now not only

influencing our whole gamut of life but also dominating Indian politics. Some Political parties are clandestinely promoting religious fanaticism & fundamentalism with a sole motive to capture power.

Besides this, we Indians are, by birth, suffer from bigotry, orthodoxy & obscurantism...

As a result of which our Secularism is sarcastically commented on & labeled as "Pseudo-secularism" by the critics.

The memorable statement of Dr BR Ambedkar regarding the future of our constitution is still relevant today. "However, good the constitution maybe, if those implementing it, are bad, the constitution will prove to be bad.

Therefore, our constitution has not failed, but we have failed.

**Bharat Patra**

**Rtd. Banker & Social activist, Keonjhar**



# Incapable unity in obnoxious diversity



**Sirish C Mohanty**

thereby sowed the seed of religious diversification, and with timely watering of patronage of the Raj, it grew to a giant tree with roots spreading to the entire country. Finally, from the same Bengal, the tree bore the venomous fruit to divide the country while the Raj was busy packing up for the final departure. However the British could create several sycophants who would after the independence carry forward the legacy of diversification in India. It was visible during the debate of the constituent assembly to frame the constitution in 1949. Despite the fresh burns of the partition of the country, the constitution was cleverly drafted to perpetrate sacrifices to the majority Hindus to facilitate the newly diversified minority community. Thus the legacy of religious diversification was carried forward. Had the constituent assembly emphasized the importance of unity in diversity, they could have prescribed one law for all Indians without discrimination on a religious basis. Thus, the unity of the country was incapacitated and a new diversity took birth from the first day the constitution was adopted on January 26, 1950.

However, with time the burns of the partition gradually healed, the country successfully progressed with the constitution and the pace of the spread of the created diversity remained limited until the reign of Indira Gandhi. During the period of emergency, Indira brought the 42nd amendment to incorporate 'secularism' in the preamble of the constitution, making it self-contradicting and consequently tinkering of the sacred constitution became a handy tool of the unscrupulous politicians. The fate of the rising sun of the national unity was



sealed. The vote-bank politics surfaced with the obnoxious diversity. Several regional political outfits mushroomed across the country while the fortress of Congress began to crumble. The left parties consolidated their grip over West Bengal by boosting the religious diversification and Dravidian parties in the South flattened their foot on the ground banking on furthering the linguistic-cultural diversification in the country. The unity in diversity was reduced to the status of a slogan only.

After the 1998 general election, the BJP-led coalition known as the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) under Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee formed a government that lasted for a full term; this was the first non-Congress government to do so. In the 2004 general election, the NDA suffered an unexpected defeat, and for the next ten years, it was off the power but a responsible opposition. Long-time Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi led it to a landslide victory in the 2014 general election.

The official ideology of the BJP is integral humanism. The party expresses a commitment

to Hindutva, and its policy has historically reflected nationalist positions. However, due to the lack of number, the 1998-2004 NDA government did not pursue any of these sensitive issues. It instead focused on a largely liberal economic policy prioritizing globalization and economic growth over social welfare.

But soon after 2014, the Modi led BJP with an absolute majority adopted a foreign policy centered on nationalist principles. The abrogation of the special status to Kashmir was a manifest step towards empowering national unity while eliminating the discordant forces. BJP's another milestone program of implementation of a uniform civil code once it comes into force will embolden the long-forgotten national unity, and that would be no less than a national renaissance.


The regional parties, the Left and Congress who earlier thrived on diversification to hang on power were perturbed and began the machination to unseat the Modi government at any means-ethically or else! First, they started in vain with the 'award wapsi' involving left-leaning intellectuals and artists. The machination aimed

at tarnishing the radically improved image of the government nationally and globally. The universities are the most sacred institutions that produce the future citizens were not spared; see the state of affairs in the prestigious JNU. To oust the Modi-led government the university was turned into a hotbed of divisive politics. The century-old Congress as an opposition forgot its sacred responsibilities and its leaders like Mani Shankar Ayer and Navjotsingh Sidhu even went to belligerent Pakistan to solicit help to unseat the BJP government. But Modi government's surgical strike and Airstrike deep inside Pakistan restricted the economically dwindling enemy country to venture any further steps against India. During the Doklam impasse with the Chinese, the Congress leaders secretly connived with the Chinese Ambassador disrobing the national unity of the country.

All opposition parties openly support the farmer's agitation even breaching the Red fort on January 26. With the growing population, we need more members of Parliament and to

accommodate them the government constructs a new parliament building the Central Vista that should have been welcomed by all as national pride. But the opposition parties oppose it only for the shake of opposition. The foreign media like the Guardian writes "Unsurprisingly, the Islamic origin of these buildings offends the current regime in Delhi. It is why the tyrant Modi and his henchmen are destroying it. It is an abomination that Modi's hate-filled campaign to de-Islamify India is allowed to continue via the destruction of a world-class monument." Here the British paper Guardian also joins the chorus of adding fuel to the fire of religious diversification.

The pandemic of Corona has devastated the country. With the bold encouragement of the Modi government, the Indian scientists have developed a vaccine in a record time that raised eyebrows around the world. It's a national pride to be rejoiced by all fellow countrymen. Astonishingly, the opposition parties didn't say a word of praise to our scientists, rather mocked the vaccine as the Modi vaccine and spread rumors not to take it. More amusingly, later on, they lined up to take the shots. Nothing could be more hazardous than this for a country aspiring to be a superpower. In a democracy, a responsible opposition only enjoys the luxury of being chosen as the next ruling party, but not by unwarranted criticism. Ultimately it makes them a laughing stock.

It's time, all irrespective of affiliations must be united to build a strong united India. The country is first then comes who rules or ruled. The unity in diversity should be the mantra of every modern Indian. 



# Mahatma Gandhi's great-granddaughter sentenced to 7 years jail in South Africa

**Ashish LataRamgobin was accused of defrauding businessman SR Maharaj after he advanced R6.2 million to her for allegedly clearing import and Customs duties for a non-existent consignment from India. He was promised a share of profits.**



**Ashish LataRamgobin**

Johannesburg, June 8: A 56-year-old great-granddaughter of Mahatma Gandhi, who was accused in a six-million-rand fraud and forgery case, has been sentenced to seven years in jail by a Durban court.

Ashish LataRamgobin

was found guilty by the court on Monday.

She was accused of defrauding businessman SR Maharaj after he advanced R6.2 million to her for allegedly clearing import and Customs duties for a non-existent consignment from India. He was promised a share of profits.

LataRamgobin, who is the daughter of noted rights activist Ela Gandhi and late MewaRamgobind, was also refused leave to appeal both the conviction and the sentence by the Durban Specialised Commercial Crime Court. When the trial in the case against

LataRamgobin started in 2015, Brigadier HangwaniMulaudzi of the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) had said that she allegedly provided forged invoices and documents to convince potential investors that three containers of linen were being shipped in from India.

At that time, LataRamgobin was released on a bail of 50,000 rands.

On Monday, the court during the hearing was informed that LataRamgobin had met Maharaj, director of the New Africa Alliance Footwear Distributors, in August 2015. The company

imports and manufactures and sells clothing, linen, and footwear.

Maharaj's company also provides finance to other companies on a profit-share basis.

LataRamgobin had told Maharaj that she had imported three containers of linen for the South African Hospital Group NetCare.


"She advised him (Maharaj) that she needed R6.2 million. To convince him, she showed him what she claimed was a signed purchase order for the goods. Later that month, she sent him what seemed to be a NetCare invoice and

delivery note as proof that the goods were delivered and payment was imminent," she said. Because of Ramgobin's family credentials and NetCare documents, Maharaj had entered into a written agreement with her for the loan.

However, after Maharaj found out that the documents were forged and NetCare had no arrangements with LataRamgobin, he laid criminal charges. Ramgobin was the founder and executive director of the Participative Development Initiative at the NGO

International Centre for Non-Violence, where she described herself as "an activist with a focus on environmental, societal and political interests."

Several other descendants of Mahatma Gandhi are human rights activists and among them are LataRamgobin's cousins Kirti Menon, the late Satish Dhupelia, and Uma Dhupelia-Mesthrie.

Ramgobin's mother Ela Gandhi in particular has been internationally recognised for her efforts, including national honors from both India and South Africa. 

## Opposition parties slam Naveen Patnaik govt over Odisha's poor ranking in NITI Aayog report

Bhubaneswar, June 6: On Thursday, Odisha slipped from the 15th rank last year to the 19th rank in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) rankings released by the NITI Aayog for 2020-21. Though its composite score improved from 58 to 61, it remained among the bottom five states along with Nagaland and Chhattisgarh.

Two days after Odisha slipped four places in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) rankings released by the NITI Aayog for 2020-21 and was listed among the bottom 5 states, opposition BJP and Congress slammed the Naveen Patnaik government over its dip in the rankings.

On Thursday, Odisha slipped from the 15th rank last year to the 19th rank in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) rankings released by the NITI Aayog for 2020-21. Though its composite score improved from 58 to 61, it

remained among the bottom five states along with Nagaland and Chhattisgarh. Performances of the states were assessed from 16 SDGs - zero poverty, no hunger, good health and well-being, quality education, gender equality and peace, justice, and strong institutions.

"The state of Odisha figures in the list of bottom five states of the SDG report of NITI Aayog. It is shameful and very unfortunate for us," said Bhubaneswar MP and BJP leader Aparajita Sarangi. "I wonder that the state of Andhra Pradesh has 9.2 percent people who are living under the national poverty line. Many families in Bhubaneswar parliamentary constituency are yet to get pucca houses under the government scheme. At least 14.2% or 1 crore people are still living in kutch houses in Odisha while in West Bengal the figure is only 6% and in Andhra Pradesh, it is 3.2%." "The central government has



sanctioned lakhs of pucca houses to Odisha. Where are these?" she asked.

The BJP leader said Odisha ranked sixth from the bottom in the list of 28 states in the category of Zero Hunger of the sustainable development goal. At least 29 percent of children below 5 years are malnourished in the state, which was mentioned in the report, she said. Besides, 47.6 pc of pregnant women and 29.5 pc adolescents are anemic.

"The state's rank in the Gender Equality is 11 from the bottom. Criminal cases against

women in the state have come to the fore. As per the report, 103 women in 1 lakh are exploited in the state. The harassment cases against women continue to surge since 2015. The BJD government has failed to ensure the safety and security of women," she alleged.

In the category of Economic Growth, Odisha ranked second from the bottom among 28 states. The state secured zero ease of doing business despite undertaking various programs like 'make In Odisha'.

Sarangi said in the 'No Poverty' category, Odisha's population below the poverty line (32.59 pc), households covered by health insurance (47.7 pc), and those living in kutch houses (14.2 pc) showed no improvement. "Odisha is among the worst performers in the goal of providing decent work and economic growth. It also was adjudged a laggard in Decent Work and Economic Growth with only 11.92 bank branches and 15.72 ATMs per one lakh population.

"Even employment provided against demand under MGNREGA saw a marginal drop," she said.

State Congress president Niranjan Patnaik said BJD may not face any immediate repercussions of their misgovernance, but the fact is the people of Odisha will continue to suffer. "Congratulations to the BJD govt. Odisha has now

slumped to 21st position from 16th, in NITI Aayog's SDG India Index," he tweeted.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as the Global Goals, were adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030.

However, BJD leader and Rajya Sabha MP Amar Patnaik alleged that there could be some discrepancies during the preparation of the SDG ranking. "SDG report is not a political report. It should not be used to play dirty politics, but use for fostering more development. Unfortunately, the BJP is doing politics even not going through the report thoroughly. The data provided by the state has not been taken into account in the SDG report," said the BJD MP. 



# High Covid surge in Rayagada: Media Cares appeals CM and Utkal Alumina for a Covid Hospital

Rayagada, June 6 : (Jogeswar Das) Since the inception of the Covid-19 2nd wave, Rayagada has witnessed the highest ever surge last Friday. It was 310 out of which mostly the cases were identified from Rayagada urban & rural, Gudari and Muniguda as 72, 69, 59 & 57 respectively. This is a point of concern despite strict lock & shut down measures. According to the SOP issued on 16th May 2021 by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, GOI on Covid-19 containment and management in urban, rural, and tribal areas, there was a three-tier infrastructure such as Covid Care Centre(CCC) to manage asymptomatic cases, Dedicated Covid Health Centre(DCHC) to manage moderate cases & Dedicated Covid

Hospital(DCH) to manage severe cases. During the 1st surge in 2020, a DCHC was established in the premises of ESI hospital at JK Pur. There was no Covid Hospital in Rayagada. But at the fag end of 2020, 110 beds got ready including eight Intensive Care Units(ICUs), four High Dependency Units(HDUs), and four ventilators. Though still the DCHC at JK Pur has not been reflected in Odisha Govt's health portal, the CDM & PHO Dr.Artabandhu Nayak says that the same is a Dedicated Covid Hospital(DCH) as there is the provision of ICUs, HDUs, and Ventilators.

"The only Govt Covid hospital is not able to accommodate the increasing severe caseloads. So, many Covid-19 patients are moving to neighboring AP or



Bhubaneswar/Cuttack, etc, and facing lots of difficulties. Though there are several advanced medical pieces of equipment dumped at the hospital, most of those are even unpacked today due to

a lack of trained technicians. The death rates have increased. During the last month of May, the number of death has crossed the number of the 1st surge. While it was 45 for the whole

year of the 1st surge, it is 63 for just two months till last Friday. The doctors and other medical staff despite being overburdened, performing their job in the hospital. So another Covid

Hospital is the need of the hour in the district. While other industries like Tatas in Gopalpur & Duburi(Jajpur), Jindal in Anugul, and Rourkela Steel Plant in Sundargarh have established Covid Hospitals as Centres of Excellence, the scribes have written to Utkal Alumina of Birla, which has established a world-class bauxite refinery in Kashipur, to establish another Covid Hospital in Rayagada in partnership with Govt of Odisha as a part of its CSR perspective", said Sri Ranjan Rath, a senior scribe and Secretary of Media Cares, Rayagada, an outfit created to support the Corona affected working journalists and their family members and mobilize govt entitlements meant for them.

## World Bank slashes India growth forecast in FY22 to 8.3%

**Economic activity in FY22 will benefit from policy support, including higher spending on infrastructure, rural development, and health, and a stronger-than-expected recovery in services and manufacturing, the World Bank said**



The World Bank on Tuesday slashed its FY22 growth forecast for India to 8.3% from the 10.1% pace it estimated in April, as an economic rebound

in the early part of this year collapsed amid a devastating resurgence of coronavirus infections in Asia's third-largest economy. "In India, an

enormous second covid-19 wave is undermining the sharper-than-expected rebound in activity seen during the second half of FY2020/21, especially in services. With surging covid-19 cases, foot traffic around work and retail spaces has again slowed to more than one-third below pre-pandemic levels since March, in part due to greater restrictions on mobility," World Bank said in its latest Global Economic. Though many states have started easing the lockdowns imposed to break the chain of infections with the waning of the second wave of the pandemic, the massive job loss, and depressed consumer sentiment have

forced most professional forecasters to revise their growth projections to slower than 10% for FY22. The government has announced free foodgrain for the poor but has desisted from declaring any stimulus package yet.

Economic activity in FY22 will benefit from policy support, including higher spending on infrastructure, rural development, and health, and a stronger-than-expected recovery in services and manufacturing, the World Bank said. "Activity is expected to follow the same, yet less pronounced, collapse and recovery seen during the first wave. The pandemic

will undermine consumption and investment as confidence remains depressed and balance sheets damaged. Growth in FY2022/23 is expected to slow to 7.5% reflecting lingering impacts of covid-19 on households, corporate and bank balance sheets; possibly low levels of consumer confidence; and heightened uncertainty on the job and income prospects," it added.

In India, the FY22 budget marked a significant policy shift toward higher expenditure targeted at healthcare and infrastructure to boost the post-pandemic recovery, the World Bank said.

"The government

announced health-related spending would more than double and set out a revised medium-term fiscal path intended to address the economic legacy of the pandemic. Following deteriorating pandemic-related developments, the Reserve Bank of India announced further measures to support liquidity provision to micro, small, and medium firms and loosened regulatory requirements on the provisioning for non-performing loans. The renewed outbreak, however, may require further targeted policy support to address the health and economic costs," it added.



# A tale of two states, two parties



Punjab CM Singh and UP CM Yogi

In recent weeks, political observers have been treated to yet another demonstration of the contrasting working styles of the two main national political parties, the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The context may have been different, but in both Uttar Pradesh (UP) and Punjab, strong chief ministers (CMs) were under fire. In Punjab, it was more friendly fire and in UP, while there was

criticism from within, this was supplemented by visible discontent among a section of citizens. Both states also go to the polls in early 2022, and, at least till earlier this year, both CMs, Punjab's Amarinder Singh and UP's Yogi Adityanath were expected to help their parties return to power. Yet, the management of the political dynamic in the two states could not have been more different. Punjab has seen

a strange situation of a popular 79-year-old CM having to explain himself to a party that is such a pale shadow of its former (and glorious) self that it should be grateful to have leaders that can deliver its states. Based on media reports, it appears that at least some of those arrayed against Amarinder Singh has the support of the party high command, despite the possible adverse implications in the polls. Indeed, Punjab's Opposition, all at sea a few months ago, must be cheering the happenings in the Congress camp. In some ways, this is not very different from the way the Congress treated Bhupinder Singh Hooda, who might have well delivered it Haryana in 2019 had things played out differently.

In contrast, in UP, where the CM has come under fire

for his handling of Covid, including by some of his party leaders, and where the old Thakur vs Brahmin identity politics seemed to be raising its ugly head again, the BJP has acted quickly. The leadership of the party (including the prime minister, home minister, and party chief) and its ideological parent, the RashtriyaSwayamsevakSangh have met; and both sent separate teams to Lucknow. The party has decided to back Yogi Adityanath for the 2022 polls (although surprises cannot be ruled out). The link between working style and outcomes in politics isn't as clear as it is in business, but it does exist. Recent events in Punjab and UP may well explain why the BJP remains India's political hegemon, and the Congress a minor player in national politics.

## Congress Targets Odisha CM, PM Over Covid-19 Vaccine Procurement

Bhubaneswar, June 4: The Odisha Congress on Friday hit out at the BJP-led Central Government and the BJD-led Government in the State over the vaccination drive in the State.

Congress MP from Koraput, Saptagiri Sankar Ulaka, Jatani MLA Suresh Routray, and Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) working president Pradeep Majhi demanded immediate vaccination of 4.5 crore population of the State.

Addressing a presser in Bhubaneswar, Congress MP from Koraput, Saptagiri Sankar Ulaka, Jatani MLA Suresh Routray, and Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) working president Pradeep Majhi demanded the immediate vaccination of 4.5 crore population of the State.

The Congress leaders also demanded the Centre for universal free vaccination for 130 crore people in the country. They also



Congress MP from Koraput, Saptagiri Sankar Ulaka

demanding both the Central and State governments for making alternative arrangements for vaccinating people in the tribal and western belts of Odisha.

Ulaka alleged while Chief Ministers of other states are directly asking the Centre to procure Covid-19 vaccines, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has been hesitating to do so.

Targeting CM Naveen Patnaik, Ulaka said "This is saddening that the global tender floated by CM Naveen Patnaik did not even have participation from companies like Bharat Biotech and Serum Institute. The CM is hesitating to tell the Prime Minister to procure vaccines. Instead, he

(Naveen Patnaik) is insisting the CMs of other states tell the PM about the vaccine requirement," the MP added.

"Many areas in undivided Koraput and parts of Western Odisha which are dominated by tribals do not have mobile phone connectivity. How will the people receive OTP for registration in the Cowin portal," he asked.

"Therefore, alternative arrangements should be made for inoculating people in tribal and rural areas of the region," he demanded.

However, BJP State party spokesperson Jatin Mohanty countered the allegations and said that Congress has an old habit of bringing baseless accusations and the party is still to overcome the habit.

"They (Congress members) very well know that as the vaccines are manufactured in the country or procured from outside the country, they are being distributed to the states as per their population. Unless the entire 130 crore

population of India is vaccinated, we cannot achieve victory in the battle against Covid-19," Mohanty stated.

"The Centre is taking all necessary measures for expanding the production of vaccines in India. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar is on a US visit in this regard. As soon as the Centre receives vaccines, it will be distributed among the states."

The Centre recently told the Supreme Court that one crore Covid vaccines will be available every day and the process will end by November-December, he said.

Mohanty further added, "This nothing but a nexus between Congress and BJD to target the BJP-run Central Government and politicise the vaccination drive in the country. However, they will never be successful in their attempt," stated the BJP spokesperson.

## Suvendu Adhikari, Dilip Ghosh to Lead BJP Offensive

The party is set to approach Rashtrapati for action against Mamata Banerjee-led government for the post-poll violence.



The BJP in West Bengal is all set to rework the strategy to counter the ruling TMC dispensation in the days to come as the party's top leadership, both in the Centre as well as in the State, continues to express concern over the post-poll violence in Bengal.

A meeting was held on Tuesday at the party office in Hastings where Dilip Ghosh chaired the meeting of the State office bearers, zonal observers, and the morcha chiefs among the others.

The biggest worry for the saffron party right now is the post-poll violence.

BJP State President Dilip Ghosh announced that the party would knock on the doors of the President of India against the TMC-led government which gave a deaf ear to the killings of the BJP workers. Ghosh also said that his party leaders would be holding demonstrations across the State to highlight how their party workers were targeted by the TMC for political vendetta.

The BJP President hit out at Mamata Banerjee for claiming that the post-poll violence took place before she took oath as the Chief Minister and then the law and order were under the Election Commission.

"Our information reveals 33 people have died in post-poll violence after she took the oath. In all, 40 people have died so far," he said.

This comes in at a time when the Leader of Opposition, Suvendu Adhikari, is in the national capital, where he briefed Home Minister Amit Shah about the law and order situation in Bengal. Apart from meeting BJP National President JP Nadda to discuss how the party needs to establish itself as a very strong opposition in Bengal, Adhikari will also be calling on Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday.

Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankar has also been raising the issues of law and order and how the State government has largely ignored his demands for a report. Sources say that the Governor who met with the Chief Secretary on Monday has also appraised the Centre about the developments.

However, in the crucial party meeting in Kolkata, some senior leaders were seen missing as Suvendu Adhikari is in Delhi and the National Vice-President and the Krishna Nagar MLA, Mukul Roy, is in isolation and is facing certain post-Covid related complications. Roy's wife is in hospital.

Many questions were asked why a senior face like Rajib Banerjee was also missing from this meeting, the party clarified that Rajib was not a State office bearer, but was invited as a special attendee. However, Banerjee cited personal reasons for not attending.



# China's three-child policy is an admission of failure




The announcement seems driven less by giving people freedom of choice, and more by the challenges posed by a shrinking labor force and a fraying demographic structure. The increase in the aging population has become an economic and social burden

China's announcement that it will now permit couples to have three children is a major step for a country that, until 2016, implemented a coercive, often brutal, one-child norm. The announcement seems driven less by giving people freedom of choice, and more by the challenges posed by a shrinking labor force and a fraying demographic structure. The increase in the aging population has become an economic and social burden. These factors have a geopolitical impact too, for they will hamper China's ambitions of becoming an economic and military superpower that can

challenge the United States (US).

Fertility rates in China have dipped to 1.3 children per woman in 2020 - India's fertility rate is 2.3. This puts China on a par with aging societies such as Japan and some European nations, but without their accumulated household wealth. But after first pushing couples to have only one child, China will now have to, at a considerable economic cost, ramp up incentives to couples to have more children. Couples are reluctant for costs of living have increased. Many young women are unwilling to sacrifice career goals. And

many couples, themselves single children, have the additional burden of being caregivers for their parents.

The median age in China today is 38.8 which will rise to 55-56 by 2050; for India, it is 29 now and will go up to 38; and for the US, it is 38 now and will be 44-45 by 2050. Engineering a baby boom after a history of Malthusian family planning will be no easy task. There is a lesson for India. At a time when there are calls to impose restrictions on family size as a way of addressing the population "problem", China's experience shows that it doesn't work in the long run. 

## France President Emmanuel Macron Slapped By Unknown Assailant

**On his visit to the Drome region in south-eastern France, President Emmanuel Macron was assaulted by a person on Tuesday. Two persons have been arrested**




**France President Emmanuel Macron**

On his visit to the Drome region in south-eastern France, President Emmanuel Macron was assaulted by a person on Tuesday. The French President was slapped in the face as he reached out to citizens gathered to witness the President stop by at the Drome, as part of his grand tour of the country to 'take the pulse of the nation'.

In the video that has now taken the internet by storm, the French

president can be seen reaching out to greet citizens gathered behind a barricade. Just as Macron extends his hand to greet a man amongst the crowd, the person allegedly shouted 'Down with Macronia' as he furiously slapped the French President. The French President was immediately moved away by his security entourage, who quickly intervened and pinned the assailant to the ground.

### Two persons arrested

As per reports in local media, two persons have been arrested in connection to assault. The identity of the assailant and his motives are yet to be ascertained. French Prime Minister Jean Castex has said that the incident was an affront to democracy. The incident took place while Macron was on a visit to the Drome region in south-eastern France, where he met restaurateurs and students to talk about how life is returning to normal after the COVID-19 epidemic. 

## Backpack helicopter named 'CopterPack' takes to the skies for the first time in a trial flight

### KEY HIGHLIGHTS

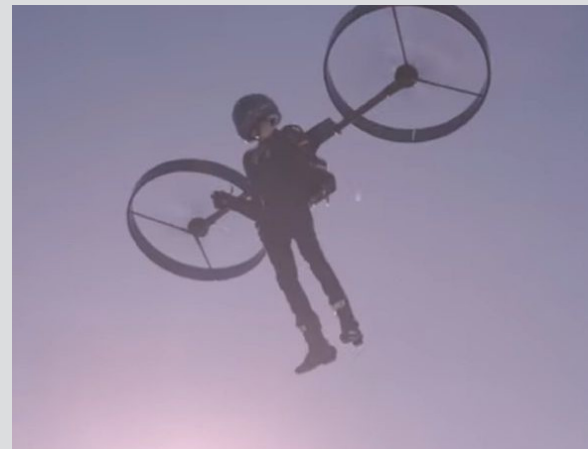
- A backpack helicopter runs on a helicopter motor and rotor that is strapped to a person's back
- The pilot can walk about on the ground wearing it and can also use it to fly at low altitudes
- It also uses a harness like a parachute harness. It should have straps between the legs of the pilot so he/she does not fall out during the flight

Many have grown up watching cartoons and action about this, thinking someday it will be possible for a person to fly with the help of a special device.

That fictional representation has now become a reality.

For the first time, a backpack helicopter was filmed taking a trial flight on a beach in Australia.

The short video shows the device known as CopterPack taking the skies with a pilot who is



**The video of CopterPack has wowed many social media users who were impressed by the device's stability and handling.**

wearing a protective suit and a safety helmet.


A backpack helicopter runs on a helicopter motor and rotor that is strapped to a person's back. They can walk about on the ground wearing it and can also use it to fly at low altitudes.

In this case, the CopterBack has two large turbines that are attached to the pilot's backpack, allowing it to take flight.

The video of CopterPack has wowed many social media users who were impressed by the

device's stability and handling.

A person wrote, "Hmm. Looks fun. Not sure it represents a practical means of transport but that doesn't mean I wouldn't love one. How long can it operate? How much does it weigh? What happens if a rotor cuts out? How much will it cost?"

"This is insane, I love it! While someone else said, 'Whoawhoaa who is this who made this? Amazing!!!" wrote another. 



# Nokia's Collapse Turned a Sleepy Town in Finland Into an Internet Wonderland

**The lay-offs were the best thing that happened to Oulu in Finland**

In the early days of the mobile phone, Nokia was everywhere-ubiquitous, inescapable, supreme. It created the best-selling 1100, with a keypad like droplets of water; the gray-blue 3310; even the cutting-edge 8810, with a slip-sliding protective cover that felt like the future. You always remember your first: For many people, one of these phones, pre-loaded with the game Snake (or its illustrious successor, Snake II) and the OG ringtone, was it. In 2009, at its peak, Nokia was the 85th largest company in the world.

Within a couple of decades, the world's attention had shifted to mobile phones. Nokia, with its background in wireless equipment, dominated. In 1991, Oulu was the site of the first GSM wireless phone call; two years later, the company launched the first mobile phone able to send texts. Around that time, the Finnish word for mobile phones went from jupinalle-"yuppie teddy bears"-to the far more dignified (and Nokia-trademarked) kännykkä or känny, loosely suggesting an extension of the hand. By 2008, the company sold 40% of the world's mobile phones.

When Nokia was small, it wanted to be the first in the world. The company had pioneered



text messaging, camera phones, and mobile gaming; in the process, it turned the cellphone from a novel luxury into an absolute necessity.

Nokia's success elevated Finland along with it, boosting the national economy by as much as 25% over a decade. Oulu blossomed from a northern college town into a tech hotspot. In the early 2000s, Nokia employed nearly 5,000 workers in Oulu alone, or about 4% of its global workforce, with a further 2,000 local subcontractors also on the books.

In business, if you stay with contended mindset, then your growth is over, someone else will come and disrupt the market. Nokia had grown complacent, under the assumption that the top spot was theirs for good. Exactly that happened. At the same time, cheaper Chinese exports threatened its more basic models. South Korean

technology quickly developed smartphones with aggressive marketing. Nokia never thought of adopting Android technology.

For about a decade, starting in 2005, Nokia suffered setback after setback. Hungry foreign competitors, meanwhile innovating at a frantic pace. Consequently, Nokia was out of the market and its workers were laid off. But contrary to the expectations of residents and the Finnish media alike, Nokia's tumble did not take the town with it. Though hailed as a national tragedy, Nokia's slump hasn't been the disaster for Oulu many had feared. At this hour of crisis, the Finnish government stepped in. Like many of its Scandinavian neighbors, Finland requires relatively high taxes from individuals and corporations alike. The government provides free health care for all and one

of the world's best public education systems. Finland spends the highest 7.2 % of the GDP on education far ahead of the US 6.2% and India 3.1%. Unemployment benefits are also robust: A family of four eligible for housing assistance may receive benefits up to 73% of their previous wages (the US system would give the same family about a third as much). Many Finns aren't surprised by the support from governments and businesses-they expect it. The city's technical universities were at least partially responsible for Nokia's earliest roots in Oulu, laid in the 1970s. The city has two universities, including the northernmost school of architecture in the world; an idyllic public sauna, staffed entirely by volunteers; a symphony orchestra; and cultural and sporting events befitting a much larger city. If you want to

participate in the Air Guitar World Championships, take part in a 44 mile (70 km) cross-country skiing marathon, or pay your respects at an old-school thrash metal festival, Oulu should be high on your list.

The transition from handset juggernaut to invisible technological unguent was not without casualties. However, with the presence of technical talents, Nokia went ahead. Today, the firm is doing just fine, though its primary money-makers are less obvious than they once were. The Finnish giant now derives most of its income from those invisible elements of the mobile internet that allow you to access an infinite repository of information from almost anywhere in the world: routers, network processors, base station radio access units, and other whizz-bang components.

At its height, the company had sucked in the city's talent like a whirlpool. Now, that same talent has the opportunity to flourish elsewhere, thanks to structured support and intervention from the local government, entrepreneurs, and Nokia itself. It is still the largest employer in town-earlier this year, the company's Oulu 5G operation was honored by the World Economic Forum as a

world leader in the sector-but there are now many more options for enterprising tech workers with a yen to stay in the north.

Oulu's greatest hits have much greater name recognition than their shared point of origin: 5G. Texting, and then chatting online. Paying for things with your mobile phone, and fitness trackers. All of these inventions, and thousands more like them, were developed, thought up, tested, or launched from this sleepy Nordic spot, some 120 miles south of the Arctic Circle. To this day, the town remains home to the world's most talented engineers, still at work at other things that might someday improve your life: a smart ring that tracks your sleep and fitness, for instance, or directional speakers that push sound only where it is required. Once upon a time, these engineers might have been employed by Nokia. Today, many of their efforts-a promising "insect protein" tech company, for instance, or VR stroke rehabilitation-are at the behest of startups dreaming of making a big time. Encouraging education seldom fails, it gives back if not today, tomorrow, or the day after tomorrow. Finland is the best example of it.



# Parable of the Prodigal son; returns home

- Mukul Roy co-founded the TMC in 1998, became Mamta's lieutenant, worked towards a stunning TMC win in 2011, and passively helped return in 21
- BJP leader Mukul Roy with TMC National General Secretary Abhishek Banerjee during his re-joining of TMC



Kolkata, June 11: Mukul Roy, 67, is arguably one of the most important political figures in West Bengal after Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, at least for the past decade and a half. Beginning his political career with the Youth Congress, Roy co-founded the Trinamool Congress with Banerjee in 1998, became her lieutenant, worked towards a stunning TMC win in 2011 against the Left, and retained power in the next term as well.

Such was his influence in the Trinamool Congress that Banerjee pressured the

Congress-led UPA government to drop Dinesh Trivedi and appoint Mukul Roy as Union Railways Minister in 2012.

TMC leaders told that in those years if Banerjee was the emotional fountainhead of the party, and its undisputed leader, it was Roy who controlled the cadres, knew party members in every block of the state, and kept the organization running. However, in 2015, the two fell out after Roy was named in the Narada and Saradha scams, and in a move that would have deep

repercussions in Bengal politics, he joined the BJP in November 2017.

When he joined the BJP, Mukul Roy brought with him all his administrative and political nous of Bengal. It was around that time that the party began looking seriously at building its base and expanding in West Bengal. BJP general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya used Roy's organizational skills as well as a widespread and deep-rooted network in the state to raise the BJP as a force. "Roy's contribution since the early days cannot be ignored in BJP as it emerged as the main opposition party in a state like West Bengal where Left politics had its deep roots," said a BJP leader who was involved with the party function in Kolkata. Come 2019 Lok Sabha elections and the results were there for all to see - the BJP won a staggering 18 seats of the 40 in West Bengal.

Vijayvargiya, according to party sources, had tried to persuade the BJP top leadership to reward him with positions. While Roy had expressed his desire to be part of the Union Government, Prime Minister Narendra

Modi did not entertain the idea, mainly due to the charges of corruption against him.

Finally, the BJP leadership gave him a position in the organization. When J P Nadda constituted his team in September 2020, Roy was elevated as the national vice-president of the BJP. Roy's elevation had triggered a public outburst from Rahul Sinha, who had then been dropped as a secretary in the organization.

Mukul Roy has been disillusioned with the BJP leadership for a while - it began even before the assembly election. TMC sources told that Roy was not in favor of fighting the assembly elections for the BJP, but was asked to fight the Krishnanagar seat, which he won.

During the heated campaign with the TMC, Roy seemed to take a backseat, with BJP state president Dilip Ghosh and newly inducted Suvendu Adhikari taking all the political space, the latter fighting a pitched battle with Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee in Nandigram. Immediately after the elections, Banerjee also

showed signs of softening towards Roy, drawing a difference between him and Adhikari.

Immediately after the election results, there were further signs of a fallout between the BJP and Roy, after he did not attend at least two meetings, leading to intense speculation.

The final nail in the coffin for an already settled Roy was the appointment of Adhikari as the leader of the opposition, despite Roy's crucial role in bringing the BJP up as a force to reckon with, some in the BJP said. Both Roy and Adhikari had won their assembly seats, but only one was treated with "respect," TMC leaders said. "In TMC, there may be differences, but we always knew the importance of Mukul Roy. In BJP, it is Suvendu Adhikari who is getting the meetings with Amit Shah and Prime Minister Modi."

A senior BJP leader claimed that Roy was under pressure from the TMC leaders to "put emotional pressure" on him "through his son Subrangshu Roy as he is going through some personal issues". Both Roy


and his wife Krishna have been dealing with post-Covid health issues. "Banerjee has extended all help to the family," said the leader. While Mamata's nephew Abhishek Banerjee went to the hospital to meet with the family, senior BJP leaders including Prime Minister Narendra Modi reached out to Roy over the phone. Subrangshu recently praised Banerjee for her handling of the Covid pandemic and the post-Cyclone Yaas situation.

For the BJP, this is now a crucial time, in terms of its political future in the state. Already, the state unit of the BJP has been complaining of a violent reprisal from TMC cadres across the state after the latter's emphatic win. Someone as important as Roy returning to the TMC is now a further boost to the ruling party. Welcoming him to the party, the TMC supremo Mamata said, "Mukul Roy is our son, he has returned home." "We welcome Mukul Roy. He will play an important role in the party," West Bengal CM and TMC chief Mamata Banerjee added. 

From Page-1

## Odisha Again ...


depends on paddy production and sale. The Government had procured 70.56 lakh MT paddy in 2019-20 for which Rs 12,087 crore had been transferred to farmers' bank accounts. In 2020-21, 72.56 lakh MT paddy was procured and Rs 13,514 crore has been transferred to farmers so far. The process for procuring Rabi paddy is underway in the State." He said that a proposal recommending hike in paddy MSP had been cleared by the State Assembly with consensus twice in 2017 and 2018. The proposal says that if the MSP of paddy was increased to Rs 2,930, the farmers would get 25% profit.

"Considering the economic condition of farmers of the State, the Centre should take decision for their interest," Sahoo said adding that his department has been writing to the Centre on various occasions since a long time putting forth its demand for MSP hike of paddy to Rs 2,930. 


## SAIL 'dissolves' ...

crore annually while under the new arrangements, the RSP and BSP would run their mines with a fraction of the cost, he said.

Bisi further added that the strategic advantages will include better liaison prospects for governments of Odisha and Jharkhand for statutory compliances to augment productions, improve the link with Chakradharpur Division of South Eastern Railway for augmenting dispatch and availability of railway rakes, and monitoring of mines besides removing operational hurdles.

Under it, RSP would get control of Bolani, Kalta, Taldihi, and Barsuan iron ore mines in Sundargarh and Keonjhar districts of Odisha, while BSP would get Chiria, Megatburu, Kiruburu, Gua, Bhavnathpur, and Kuteswar mines in Jharkhand. However, SAIL or RSP sources neither confirmed nor denied the development. 

## Over 700 Doctors Lost Battle To COVID-19 In 2nd Wave; 28 From Odisha

Bhubaneswar: The healthcare workers in the country are the worst victims in battle against COVID-19 as the deadly virus has claimed over 700 lives of doctors in second wave of the pandemic. So far, 719 doctors have died of COVID-19 during second wave in the country, revealed a list by Indian Medical Association (IMA). As per the list, Bihar registered the highest of 111 martyrs followed by Delhi (109). While Uttar Pradesh lost 79 doctors to the virus so far, 63 doctors have died due to the disease in West Bengal. The States including Rajasthan reported 43 doctors deaths, 39 in Jharkhand, 37 in Gujarat, 36 in Telangana, 35 in Andhra Pradesh, 32 in Tamil Nadu, 28 in Odisha and 24 in Kerala. 



# Roohi: An entertaining blend of laughs and thrills



**Critic's Rating: 3.5/5**

**STORY:** Two small-town boys, Bhaura Pandey (Rajkummar Rao) and Kattanni Qureshi (Varun Sharma) are stuck with Roohi (Janhvi Kapoor) under strange circumstances. She seems to be a simple, demure girl, but they soon realise that she has another side to her - her "ghostly" personality, Afza. Bhaura develops feeling for Roohi, and Kattanni falls for Afza. With a strange romance brewing between the trio, Bhaura wants to get rid of Afza, while Kattanni wants to make sure she lives on so that he can romance her. Their crazy attempts to find a solution to their problem lead them into strange, but comic situations, where they encounter bizarre

characters. What happens next forms the crux of the story.

**Review:** For many years, Bollywood did not

give the horror-comedy genre a shot. But it sure seems to have caught the fancy of filmmakers in recent times. Director



Hardik Mehta tries to blend the two genres in Roohi and succeeds to a large degree. In the film, the three actors at the center of the plot - Rajkummar, Varun, and Janhvi - are in great form and complement each other's performances. Rajkummar, yet again, pulls off another part that

again, he flaunts his flair for comedy. Whether as Roohi or Afza, Janhvi doesn't miss a beat. She delivers the chills with as much ease while playing Afza as she does as the timid Roohi.

The film has its share of laughs with references made to moments from iconic films - for instance,

mind. At over two hours, the film could do with a tighter edit. Apart from all the entertainment, the film promotes the concept of self-love and self-belief, which works to a certain degree, but the ending seems a tad bit convenient, haphazard and lacks the punch that one is fed right from the




has him playing the small-town guy with colored hair and a goofy smile. Though his character may have similarities to his role in Stree, he ensures that this one stands out with different mannerisms and body language. But one does wonder if this is one role he is taking on far too many times. Varun shines with his great comic timing and pitch-perfect expressions. The actor pulls off comic parts with a certain ease, and here

Rose "letting" Jack die in the iconic Titanic and the unforgettable 'palat' moment in Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge. The film, written by Mrighdeep Singh Lamba Gautam Mehra, is replete with well-written one-liners, which land smoothly on most occasions.

What the film lacks is a deeper narrative. There is a passing mention of what the main characters do with a back story, but very little sticks on in your

start. As for the music, the two main tracks - Nadiyon Paar (reprised version of Let the Music Play) and Panghat - that play out during the opening and closing credits are the highlights of the soundtrack mainly composed by Sachin-Jigar and stay in your mind even after the movie is over.

Overall, the film remains true to its genre and packs a good dose of entertainment. 

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