

CM showers 'Ashirbad' for Covid orphans



BHUBANESWAR, June 20: Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Sunday announced a new scheme 'Ashirbad' for the education, health, and maintenance of Covid orphans.

Children who lost their parents or the main earning person of the family on April 1, 2020, or thereafter to Covid-19 will be eligible to be covered under the scheme. Such children under distress have been divided into three categories. Those who have lost both their parents, those who have lost either father or mother, and those whose main earning member of the family, either father or mother have died.

The Chief Minister announced that Rs 2500 per

month will be deposited in the bank accounts of family members who have taken the responsibility for the children after the death of their parents. The assistance will continue till 18 years of the child or till such date if somebody adopts him.

The children will get free treatment under the state government's Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana. Besides, they will be also included as beneficiaries under the National Food Security Act (NFSA).

As per the provision of the scheme, the children can also continue in the schools in which they were studying before the death of their parents. However, the relative who has taken the

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responsibility of a child resides somewhere else, arrangement of schooling will be made in that place. If necessary, the government will help in the admission of the children to Adarsh Vidyalaya or central school.

The Chief Minister said that if the relative of the child wants to admit him to some other school, the district collector will provide all assistance as per the Right To Education Act. The state government will also assist such children to pursue higher education under the Green Passage scheme.

Besides, if the relative who has taken the responsibility of a child is eligible for a house under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana

or Biju Pucca Ghar Yojana, out of turn allotment will be made for him. The relative will be covered under any other government welfare scheme as per his eligibility.

The Chief Minister said that the child welfare committee of the district will coordinate with the local tahsildar and police to protect the property of the orphan children. He said that the children can also get financial assistance from Biju Sishu Suraksha Yojana and Juvenile Justice Fund if necessary.

However, if a child does not stay with a relative and resides in any child care institution, the recurring deposit of Rs 1000 per month will be made till he is 18 years of age. (Page-14)

First key political move: Centre calls all-party meet on J&K delimitation



New Delhi, June 19: In what could be a renewed - and more substantive - push to the political process in Jammu and Kashmir after the District Development Council (DDC) elections, the Central government has

People's Democratic Party (PDP) President Mehbooba Mufti Friday confirmed that she had received a call to join a meeting with the "top leadership" in New Delhi. Home Minister Amit Shah, Jammu & Kashmir Lt Gov Manoj Sinha in New Delhi.

reached out to mainstream parties in the Valley for a meeting next week to discuss the delimitation exercise or the process of redrawing constituencies in the Union Territory.

This could mark the first step towards conducting Assembly elections. Sources in the J&K administration said the Delimitation Commission had written to Deputy Commissioners of all 20 districts last Tuesday seeking fresh information on several aspects including population density and topography in all the districts and Assembly constituencies. "Almost all districts have provided the information," the source said. The Commission, set up on March 6, 2020, had on March 3 this year received a one-year extension.

The Commission, chaired by Retired Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai, had last met on February 18 this year. Of the five Associate Members in the Commission, only two - Jitendra Singh, Minister of State and MP, and Jugal Kishore Singh, MP - attended the meeting. The remaining three, (Page-14)

Indians value religious tolerance: Survey

Most Indians - Hindus, Muslims, Christians or Sikhs, and others - say they are free to practice their religion and that they consider respect for other religions is "very important" to their respective faiths and being truly Indian, according to a new poll by Pew Research Center released on Tuesday.

The survey also found that members of most major religions - especially Hindus and Muslims - call themselves "very different" from people

of other faiths and disapprove of inter-faith marriages, and "overwhelmingly" make friends within their respective religious communities.

The survey also found that for a majority of Hindus their religious identity is "closely intertwined" with their perception of who is "truly" Indian - 64% say it is very important to be Hindu to be "truly" Indian. And most Hindus - 59% - also believe that Indians should be able to speak Hindi.



Pew said the survey was conducted among 30,000 Indians through face-to-face interviews in 17 languages in late 2019 and the beginning of

2020, a period marked by an escalation in sectarian tension over the passage of the Citizenship Amendment Act and the revocation of the

special constitutional status of Jammu and Kashmir, India's only Muslim-majority erstwhile state.

"While people in some countries may aspire to create a 'melting pot' of different religious identities, many Indians seem to prefer a country more like a patchwork fabric, with clear lines between groups," the report said.

But, first, what unites Indians. Most of them agree they are free to practice their

faith - 91% Hindus, 89% Muslims and Christians, 82% of Sikhs, 93% of Buddhists and 85% of Jains; 85% of Hindus, 78% of Muslims and Christians, 81% of Sikhs, 84% of Buddhists and 83% of Jains said respect for other religions is "very important" to being "truly Indian; and 80%, 79%, 78, 75%, 86% and 73% of the six faiths say respect for other religions is a very important part of their religious identity. There is more that they (Page-14)

As the pandemic ebbs, Odisha migrant workers begin to return



Brahmapur, June 28: Migrant workers who had returned to their native places in Odisha in the wake of the second wave of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19), three months ago, have started going back to their workplaces in states like Gujarat, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka.

The migrant workers preferred to go back to their workplaces given the declining trend of COVID-19 cases in India and fewer job opportunities in Odisha. Most migrant workers from Odisha work in the textile mills and the diamond industry in Surat and Ahmedabad and the fish processing units in Chennai and Mumbai.

Ahmedabad, Mumbai, and Chennai-bound trains have

been running to full capacity for the last four-five days due to the return of the migrant workers, a railway officer in East Coast Railway said. These trains were running with empty seats about a month ago.

Several migrant workers from Ganjam, Khurda, Gajapati, Rayagada, Jajpur and Balangir districts had returned to their native villages in March and April amid a surge of COVID-19 cases in their workplaces.

We estimate that only 40,000 migrant workers returned to Odisha in the wake of the second wave of COVID-19, Odisha labour commissioner Thirumal Naik, said.

Unlike the first wave, this time, migrant workers are not

- The migrant workers eager to go back to their workplaces given the declining cases and fewer job opportunities in Odisha
- Ahmedabad, Mumbai, and Chennai-bound trains from Odisha have been running to full capacity.

facing difficulties in returning. Most of them preferred to stay in their workplaces, as the factories were running with restrictions, the labour commissioner said.

Loknath Mishra, a social activist, said 200,000-300,000 people had returned to Odisha this year mostly apprehending COVID-19 infection.

In the wake of the country-wide lockdown, as many as 853,777 persons returned from three states - Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala - during April-September 2020 through special trains, sources said. Besides, many more people had also returned in special buses, on foot and also via sea routes. "The textile mills in Surat have resumed operations with the decline in COVID-19 cases in Gujarat. Instead of sitting here without a job, I decided to go to Surat once again," Dibakar Bhuyan of

Gangapur in Ganjam district, said. He had returned to his village in April.

Rabindra Sahu of Beguniapada in Ganjam said: "The textile mill owners might have engaged some others if we had not returned to our workplaces. Moreover, we have been sitting idle for the last two months due to a lack of work in our native places."

The state government however claimed as many as 49,370,569 person-days have been generated in the state from April to June 10 this year under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). The migrant-prone Ganjam district generated 10,104,989 person-days - the highest in the state during this period.

Ganjam Collector Vijay Amruta Kulange said several migrant workers who had returned, had benefited from MGNREGA in the district.

The Forest officials seize a leopard skin in Bolangir

Bolangir, June 29: (Sudhir Mishra) Acting on a tip-off, a team of forest officials led by Bolangir DFO Sameer Satpathy on Monday night raided a house in village Kaunsar under Titilagarh Forest Range and seized a leopard skin whose approximate market value would be around one lakh rupees.

We got specific intelligence input about leopard skin kept in village Kausar and a trap was laid and our team reached the village posing as bank officials for disbursing a loan. Under the instructions of the main accused, one youth while trying to shift the leopard skin, forest officials nabbed him and seized the skin, says Bolangir DFO Sameer Satpathy. The length of the skin is 2.7 feet (two feet seven inches) and its weight is 2 kg. The market value of the skin would be around one lakh adds Bolangir DFO. One person has been detained in this case. However the main accused could not be arrested



and efforts continue to nab the main accused. It is also suspected that the accused may have been involved in any such leopard skin racket. Reports of wild boar being killed by poachers in villages of Saintala Forest range emerges at regular intervals. After the arrest of the main accused and investigation, more details would come out says Bolangir DFO.

Savdhaan India actresses arrested in a robbery

Two TV actresses have been arrested in a robbery case

Mumbai, June 19: Mumbai's Aarey police have arrested two television actresses in a robbery case. These two actresses have earlier worked in shows like Savdhaan India and Crime Patrol. They were facing financial problems after shootings for TV shows stopped due to the lockdown imposed to fight the novel coronavirus pandemic. The two actors had recently shifted to a paying guest facility run by their friend in Aarey Colony in Mumbai. They stole more than Rs 3 lakh from a woman who was already staying there as a paying guest and fled. The two actresses became paying guests on May 18 in a posh building in the Royal Palm area of Aarey Colony. During the same time, a paying guest's Rs



3.28 lakh vanished from her locker. The woman filed a complaint at the Aarey Police Station and suspected that actresses Surabhi Surendra Lal Srivastava (25) and Mosina Mukhtar Sheikh (19) stole her bundle of money. During the investigation, the police saw the two actresses leaving with the bundle of money. When police showed them the CCTV footage, they confessed to their crime. Nutan Pawar, a senior officer of Aarey Police Station, said that apart from the popular shows Crime Patrol and Savdhaan India, the two actors have also worked in several web series and films. Police have recovered Rs 50,000 from the stolen amount. Both Surabhi and Mosina were produced before the court. The court remanded the duo to police custody till June 23.

4 inter-State dacoits held in Joda



Joda, June 17: Joda police arrested and court-forwarded four inter-State dacoits who were planning to loot trucks carrying iron ore passing between Joda to Rimuli on NH-520 of Keonjhar district. Joda PS IIC Padmalaya

Sahoo revealed that on Monday night at about 3 pm a suspected Xylo SUV having registration No. JH - 06D-4242 with four youths inside was parked at Kandra-Dampur road by the side of NH-520. A team of police consisting of ASI, Bileipada Beat house Azhar Khan, SI, Joda PS Sasmita Hari, and others immediately rushed to the spot. Having seen police, the Xylo sped away towards Jharkhand. However, the police team nabbed them and recovered from them a 9 mm USA-made pistol, mobile, and cash.

Padmalaya Sahoo has joined as IIC of the Joda police station replacing Raisen Murmu who has been transferred on promotion. Earlier, she was the IIC of Pandapada police station, where she had earned the reputation of maintaining law and order very efficiently. Joda Police station has been challenging by the constant menace of mineral theft and other anti-social activities. The limits of the police station touch to Jharkhand state borders and it needs extraordinary policing. When Padmalaya was

posted as the IIC and the first woman to hold that responsibility, there was doubt in the public acuity if she can manage her responsibilities where her male counterparts failed to deliver as expected. Her competencies don't end here. As promised by the 'Mo Sarkar', Padmalaya has brought about a sea of changes in the police behavior towards the ordinary people who visit the 'Mo thana' at Joda either to get their grievances redressed or for some other purposes.

China gains at India's cost

Economy on a roller coaster; Indian losses in Iran, Russia bolster China



Prof. Shivaji Sarkar

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The roller coaster Indian economic journey is likely to continue. It is recovering at 11.5 percent in the April-June quarter, says NCAER but SBI says the second wave has hit the economy.

The NCAER - National Council for Applied Economic Research - is a think tank. The SBI - State Bank of India - being practitioner has the pulse on its tips. None is wrong. The NCAER has taken the negative base of 2020-21 to measure activities and SBI knows the reality. The results are mixed.

In this debate, people have overlooked the fact that amid clashes with China, the country is ceding its economic interests in the neighbouring Taliban-infested Afghanistan and a long-time trusted friend - Afghanistan, to

the rival, who is also trying to make ingress into Myanmar, Bangladesh, Nepal, and the Indian Ocean region.

Iran is a critical example of how years of good work and relations could be lost under western sanctions to China. Iran has been critical for India in petroleum imports at rupee-rial terms and was mutually beneficial. It has come down to zero. India initiated the Chabahar - meaning "four seasons" port - in the middle of a storm over the fate of Indian investments. The port project is the creation of Atal Behari Vajpayee's NDA-I in 2003. India has virtually lost most of it, due to its inability in countering sanctions, including the 1000 km rail project to Turkmenistan, free trade zone, and more importantly developed

as a trade link to Afghanistan and Central Asia. PM Narendra Modi revived it with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and Afghan President Ashraf Ghani in 2016. It was supposed to create jobs in India, Iran, and Afghanistan. It reminds me of the non-aligned movement (NAM) and how the country withstood many super power machinations.

External relations decide domestic economic health. It has to be strengthened else the country might lose in other areas as well. Disagreements with Russia are rising as Russia - West - US confrontation makes it lean more on China. This has an impact on relations in and around the subcontinent. Post-pandemic criticality has even otherwise impacted external trade. Increasing exports to Bangladesh may be a silver line but much of it is "re-exported" to North-East for ages. India's \$ 500 billion forex kitty overflow is linked to it. The RBI has to spend on managing this kitty and rupee rates. If trade and international relations grow that expense is reduced.

The country is active in increasing relations but it is not easy in choppy international waters. The direct impact is being seen in higher crude oil import costs, tried to be managed with the highest doses of taxation, leading to a severe inflationary situation.

Amid these comes an assessment by S&P Global Ratings. It says that India's economic recovery is expected to be "less steep" than the bounce back in 2020 and early 2021. The reason is households are having a tough time with the erosion of their savings. The rate of household bank deposits to GDP declined to 3 percent in the third quarter of FY 20-21 from 7.7 percent in the second quarter, when economic activity resumed a bit. In addition, the household debt-to-GDP ratio has been increasing since the end-March 2019. It rose to 37.9 percent in December 2020 from 37.1 percent in September 2020, according to RBI.

This could hold back expenditure on consumption as the economy reopens because of the concern of households to rebuild their savings in a country where social security is at its lowest and job losses continue. The second phase lockdowns reduced mobility by 60 percent and disrupted the services the most though manufacturing and exports were less hit. The problem is manifested in reduced consumption, including vehicle sales. The S&P says a gradual revival is underway and the economy may grow at 9.5 percent, as RBI predicts.

The revival may not be that easy perhaps. The Confederation of Indian Industry's (CII)

latest Business Outlook Survey finds 79 percent of the respondents expect production, supply, and sales to be adversely affected and consumption demands depressed in the coming period. It is concerned about people losing jobs and livelihood. This could bring down overall demand and growth. It says the GDP will grow but depends on factors such as fresh stimulus, new reforms, and the state of the global economy. It has called upon the government to inject Rs 3 lakh crore spending through the printing of currency notes and direct cash transfers, rural job schemes, and reducing GST rates. In other words, CII has suggested higher money circulation and cash flow speed up the economy.

It is an indirect criticism of the post-demonetization fad for an electronic transaction that keeps most money blocked in banks and increases hunger and cash flow. The CII view is contrary to its previous opinion that said supporting the poor with doles increases the crowding of cities and raises costs of the industry and creates "irresponsible" governance through severe deficits. Its support for printing money is to keep the lending rates low as the government's extra borrowing from the market would increase

competition between the government and private sector will drive up interest rates.

The flip side is that more money circulation would further increase prices and hit the poor more. Interest rates would also rise.

The CII prescription is not easy is proven by a statement of Oberoi group CEO Vikram Vohra that he has been approached by many hotel owners who want to sell their properties in the post-covid19 scenario. The combined debt in the hotel sector is estimated at Rs 50,000 crore and many owners and investors are under severe stress. Mergers and amalgamations are to be real but that does not indicate that the sector would be back in health shortly.

The NCAER is not hopeful as it says though there could be some moderation in inflation for a month or so it will rebound beyond August with the rise in farm wages, crude oil prices, and other factors adding to the rise in prices. The NCAER, like the CII, calls for an expansionary policy. The situation remains difficult despite the government spending Rs 67,000 crore on free food policy.

The revival has to be there but the prescription would be complex and time-consuming. The roller coaster journey would continue and may take two to three years to return to the 2019 level.

Rourkela among 50 Champion Cities

ROURKELA: The Steel City Rourkela has made it to the list of 50 Champion Cities across the globe in the 2021 Global Mayors Challenge of the Bloomberg Philanthropies for its worldwide innovation competition in the category of economic recovery and inclusive growth. The competition encourages

innovative and promising ideas in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The 50 finalists were selected after a committee of global experts reviewed applications from 631 cities of 99 countries.

2 cities have been

selected from India. Pune is the other city to have featured in the climate and environment category in the 50 finalists' list.

The 2021 Global Mayors Challenge gives the 50 "champion cities" access to world-renowned experts in innovation and data to help them improve upon their idea. As a Challenge finalist, Rourkela has advanced to the four-month championship phase of the competition, to be held from June to October, during which 15 winners will be chosen. Each winner will be entitled to \$1 Million and multi-year technical assistance to implement and scale its idea. The winners



will be announced early next year.

Steel city proposed to address the challenges faced by small farmers, vegetable and fruit vendors by establishing solar-powered cold storage solutions at various locations.



The project has options to distribute and deliver fresh fruits and vegetables at the doorstep of citizens through battery-operated vehicles.

Rourkela Municipal Corporation (RMC) Commissioner DibyajyotiParida has

congratulated all the stakeholders for this recognition. He said, "These ideas -- waste management, cold chain storage, strengthening of vegetable food distribution process -- could support the livelihood and empower self-help groups. It can also revive the economy in the post-COVID scenario and achieve the UN sustainable development goals in the city".

The Bloomberg Philanthropies remarked, "Rourkela's idea is compelling because it brings gender equity, as the majority of vendors are female, and it is envisioned to be managed entirely by women

federations across the city,"

Deputy Commissioner RMC, Sudhansu Kumar Bhoi is leading the proposed project, being implemented under the guidance of Commissioner RMC, DibyajyotiParida. Prasanta Kumar Nayak, has been designated as the project manager for the same. The initiative is being implemented with technical support from agro tech and clean energy startup Koel Fresh Pvt Ltd. Led by Koel Fresh CEO, Ashutosh Nayak, a team of current students and alumni of NIT Rourkela is working on the project.

Rooftop Rainwater Harvesting Get Priority in Sundargarh



Sundargarh: To help recharge the depleted groundwater level, State Government has been promoting Rooftop Rainwater harvesting projects. The Sundargarh district administration has prioritized the program and taken up various projects across all 17 blocks.

By end of May, 651 projects have been made operational across the district, while the rest 385 more projects will be operational before the rainy season. The District Mineral Foundation (DMF), Sundargarh has been providing financial support to the initiative.

Rainwater harvesting projects are being implemented at govt office buildings and residential

quarters, schools, colleges and hostels, and other public utility buildings. Through this project, the runoff water during the rainy season will be collected in the harvesting pits through pipes and it will gradually recharge groundwater levels.

The water reaching the ground also helps to replenish nearby ponds, streams, tube wells, and agricultural fields. Thus, the project aims at mitigating the water crisis during the summer season in addition to being a progressive and eco-friendly solution.

"Everywhere around us, the groundwater level has been depleting day by day due to extensive use of water. We shouldn't indulge in wasting water rather we

need to use water judiciously. On the other hand, the water runoff flowing into the rivers needs to be checked. Hence we aim to initiate rooftop rainwater harvesting projects at all the govt offices, public institutions, and govt. quarters as a long-term and viable solution to save water for the future," said Collector and DM, Nikhil PavanKalyan.

Voluntary organisations have been entrusted by the district administration to implement this project with a focus on people's participation. The project helps rural poor, as well as migrant returnees, earn a living during an uncertain time of COVID19.

Earlier, rainwater was going to waste as runoff. With the government's new initiative, the groundwater will be recharged and elevate the groundwater level in many locations in the district from this season.

The rooftop rainwater harvesting project is expected to reduce the migration of people from rural areas as this project has ample potential to provide livelihood in the district.

RSP provides pipes to various key customers

Rourkela: The ERW Pipe Plant of SAIL, Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP) has created a niche for itself by manufacturing pipes of varied thickness range to cater to the diverse market demand across the country.

For the first time since inception, it manufactured ERW pipes of a thickness (5.0/6.0/6.9 mm) mm x 457.2 mm (18 inches Outer Diameter) and (6.3/7.9mm) x 355.6 mm (14 inches Outer Diameter) API Grade - B - PSL.1 of High D/T and

stringent length restriction and supplied 25 kilometers and 18 kilometers of the two different specifications respectively to the Government of Mizoram.

Similarly, the Mill supplied 54 kilometers of High Diameter/Thickness ratio pipes to the Government of Karnataka, West Bengal, and Mizoram. Besides it also supplied 86 kilometers long high D/T pipes to the Government of Karnataka and Mizoram. The total dispatch

comprised 49278 Tons of Pipes.

Steel Executives' Federation of India (SEFI) general secretary and RSP Executives' Association (RSPEA) president BimalBisi said the infrastructure development of the airport is a welcome step. The timely completion of the infrastructure would fasten the activities for commercial operations from the Rourkela airport which might start by year-end.

Dalmia Cement Donate Oxygen Concentrators

Rajgangpur: Dalmia Cement company has further extended its hand to help the district administration in its fight against pandemic Corona. Dalmia Cement handed over 8 oxygen concentrators to district authorities at Sundargarh on 12th June. The company's Deputy Executive Director Saroj Kumar Rout and SanjibSahu of the Corporate Affairs department presented the concentrators to Collector Nikhil PavanKalyan. Project Director of DRDA B.S.Patel was also present on this occasion. The company's Senior Executive Director Ganesh W Jirkuntwar in his message reiterated the company's commitment to stand with the state government in this hour



of crisis. He said, "It is our priority to help in making our area and district Covid free. Mr. Rout also said that Dalmia Management stands with the state government. It is to be mentioned here that Dalmia Management on earlier occasions has also taken various steps like sanitizing the town area, Kutra area, distribution of sanitizers, face masks in the area through the district administration.

OSDCD paid a dividend to the government



Jagatsinghpur: Odisha State Cashew Development Corporation Ltd [OSDCD] paid a dividend of Rs 46,51,200 to the State Government to the extent of 30 percent of its paid-up capital. Suresh Chandra Mohapatra, Chief Secretary received the dividend of OSCDC on behalf of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik

from OSCDC chairman Amarendra Das. Suresh Kumar Vashishth, Secretary, Agriculture and Farmers' Empowerment Department along with Chairman and MD of OSCDC were present in the program.

Odisha State Cashew Development Corporation (OSDCD) Ltd. was established in 1979.

The corporation needs to replace the 40 years old 60% of cashew plants to increase productivity and hence need a huge amount of funds. The state government has taken several steps as the sizing of manpower, introducing voluntary Retirement Scheme, financial and debt restructuring, for pursuing clear policy framework, to convert loss-making PSUs into profitable ones, OSCDC is one of them, Mr Das said

The OSCDC Ltd., declared as Nodal Agency in 1993, for the development of cashew in the state. The corporation has been paying an accumulative dividend of Rs 5, 34, 86,800 to the government since 1995-96, Mr Das added.

Two held passing lewd comments and casteist remarks to Tirtol MLA and his PSO

JAGATSINGHPUR: The Raghunathpur police have arrested two persons, allegedly passing lewd comments and delivering casteist remarks to Tirtol MLA Bijaya Shankar Das, and his PSO Sameer Kumar Panda, and private secretary Niranjana Sathy. However, police informed another person's involvement in the case was at large and a search drive has been launched to nab him very soon. The report said that legislator Bijaya Shankar Das on Friday had visited Odapada village under Raghunathpur block participating in a blood donation camp organized by the local BJD unit. While the blood collection was underway three persons inside the camp premises sought slogans against MLA Bijaya Shankar and passed casteist remarks and lewd comments against him including his secretary and PSO. Later local BJD supporters overpowered these three persons and placed the situation under control and MLA returned Bhubaneswar without harm. While the incident sent a bad message and credibility to MLA in the BJD corridor, MLA's private secretary Niranjana Sathy and PSO Sameer Kumar Panda lodged an FIR in Raghunathpur police station against three persons who had passed lewd comments and casteist remarks. These three men identified in the FIR as Manoj Mohanty of

Dharadharpur village, Anil Khatua from Jagannathpur village, and Paramananda Swain alias Aru from Raghunathpur. The police swung into action promptly after registering two cases and successfully nabbed two persons as Anil Khatua and Manoj Mohanty from their village on Saturday night and forwarded them to court. While another accused Paramananda Swain has fled from the Raghunathpur area soon after the case registered against him but a manhunt has launched tracing him very shortly, informed Raghunathpur police station IIC Devendra Mohapatra.

Sources informed that a section of Raghunathpur BJD supporters was unhappy over the MLA Bijaya Shankar Das's activities and style of functioning in regards to discharging the duty of a public representative, the young legislator, and son of late BJD veteran Bishnu Das is fully guided by his private secretary and few sycophants controlling him at Bhubaneswar. While people have been suffering amid Covid 19 pandemic, MLA unheeded over the crisis, so the unruly incident that happened at the blood donation camp resulted in collective public resentments through three BJD strong sympathizers, sources added.

CM laid the foundation stone for two Oxy plants in J'spur

JAGATSINGHPUR: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik laid the foundation stone of two Oxy plants and liquid medical oxygen [LMO], pressure absorption systems in Jagatsinghpur district headquarters hospital [DHH] and Paradip through video conferencing.

The virtual foundation stone laying ceremony was organized at DHH attended by Minister Raghunandan Das, MLA Prasanta Muduli, MP Dr. Rajashree Mallick, collector S K Mohapatra, CDMO Dr. Bijaya Panda, SP Prakash R, and officials from few departments.

Expressing gratitude to CM attending public representatives, officials and minister Das said that the Jagatsinghpur DHH has received a new facelift after honorable CM has developed its bed capacity, other infrastructures, and today gifted two oxygen plants to establish, so he thanked CM.

Woman kills her mother for opposing love affairs

JAGATSINGHPUR: In a bizarre incident, a woman killed her mother when the latter disapproved of her love affair with a man. The report said that one elderly woman Rumika Kandi hailing from Bandar village under the Balikuda area was reported dead in his home two days ago in mysterious circumstances.

While probing the case Balikuda police had picked up

the deceased's daughter Mamina Kandi a married woman and her lover Rajesh Kandi alias Siva and interrogated both in the police station.

During marathon interrogations, both confessed murdering Rumika when she disagreed with the further continuance of their love affairs.

Although Mamina was

married, a mother of two children had been long residing in mother Rumika's house for the past few years. Siva Kandi was a frequent visitor of Rumika's house. Meanwhile after arresting both were produced in court on Thursday and forwarded to jail and further investigation is on, informed investigation officer Anirudha Rout.

99.09 % pass HSC examination in Jagatsinghpur district, the highest rate in the state

JAGATSINGHPUR: The Board of Secondary Education Odisha [BSEO] conducted the annual High School Certificate [HSC] examination results declared on Friday, Jagatsinghpur district registered 99.09 % pass results and reported the highest pass percentage in the state, boys outshined girls this time in the district.

A total of 13220 students from 268 high schools appeared this year's HSC examination 2021 from

them a total of 13140 examinees cleared the examination registered a pass percentage of 99.09. As many as 6694 boys and 6446 girls passed in HSC examination. A total of 71 students received A1 followed by 778 A2, 1699 B1, 2860 B2, 3469 C, 3055 D, 1208 E, and only 80 examinees declared fail. Moreover, the ex-regular pass percentage in Jagatsinghpur district recorded 85.67 this year,

about 1528 students appeared in the HSC examination from them 1309 examinees cleared the examination.

Notable to inform the annual HSC examination 2021 had been canceled by state government causing Covid pandemic, later education department had adopted a formula passing HSC examinees basing on their performance in the class IX and pre-board examination.

Nabakrushna Choudhury's death anniversary was celebrated



JAGATSINGHPUR: The former Odisha chief minister, veteran freedom fighter, and socialistic leader of late Nabakrushna Choudhury's death anniversary was celebrated in his native village Kherasa on the Jagatsinghpur's outskirts on Thursday.

Jagatsinghpur district administration organized the celebration in collaboration with municipality authority, social activists, and the general public, collector S K Mohapatra paid floral tribute in statues located at late Choudhury's village and Collector office premises here. Collector Mohapatra paying his

tribute described that late Choudhury was the son of the soil and Jagatsinghpur district is proud of him, he was the inspiration of all sections of people, a pioneer of agriculture movement in-country during the pre-independence period.

Among others ex municipality chairman Madhusudan Sahoo, DIPRO Kamini ranjan Patanayak, municipality chairman Ashok Kumar Karna, NHM manager Sukanta Kumar Pradhan, Deepak Patnaik few municipality employees accompanied by collector Mohapatra during the celebration.

Mayurbahnj Sal seeds collectors in distress



Baripada, 29 June: Despite the involvement of SHGs in the procurement of sal seeds, the seed collectors are not happy over the

procurement policy made by the district administration and the Government. The minimum support price of a kg of sal seed has a fixed rate of Rs.20 but the forest dwellers demanded to increase the minimum support price to at least Rs.50 to Rs.60 for a kg. Once the Government will consider the issue of forest dwellers, then it will encourage the forest dwellers as well as impact the economic empowerment of the forest dwellers, they said.

Sakila Murmu, a resident of Nichuapada under Moroda block said that due to poor procurement of sal seeds by the concerned department, the forest dwellers are selling at Rs.10 to Rs.12 less than MSP fixed by the

government. Mostly the small traders of West Bengal and Jharkhand states were procuring the sal seeds at Rs.25 to Rs.30 per kg of sal seed two years back while a poor number of forest dwellers were selling seeds to clusters. Due to the pandemic, no traders from outside the State are procuring the seed. While the seed has a growing demand to produce oil, it has found poor procurement for the last two years for the pandemic, he said.

Another Rukuni Naik, a sal seed collector said that though the SHGs members are involved in the procurement of sal seeds, they did not come to rural pockets. Poor procurement by SHGs and local and outside traders are two factors for which

the forest dwellers could not sell the seeds, she said that at least Rs.2000 to Rs.3000 a small income was getting by selling the seeds annually but now she had to sell Rs.10 per kg seed to local traders as the outside dealers are absent in the pandemic time.

Mayurbhanj district is bestowed with a vast reserve of Sal forest which is a source of livelihood for the thousands of forest-dwelling people. The sal seeds are generally ripened during April and May and fall from the trees. The forest dwellers are engaged to collect the seeds in these months. To avert exploitation from the traders of both locals and outsiders, the Government has procured the sal seed after fixing the MSP and the ITDA of the district

procuring seeds from the forest dwellers through SHGs.

In the district, the ITDA of Karnjia and Baripada is procuring the forest minor procures from the forest dwellers through SHGs support. The district has 26 blocks and many forest dwellers in these blocks are collecting sal seeds and other minor forests produce to sustain their livelihood.

When contacted, Executive Engineer of Baripada ITDA Basanta Sethy said that this year, the ITDA had provided Rs.10 lakh to procure the sal seeds after two procuring centers were set up in Betnoti and Bangiriposi blocks. The SHGs groups have just started the seed procuring.

Farming black Kadaknath brings cheer to Odisha families in COVID-19 times

COVID-19 has led to a huge demand for the black meat of the breed, said to have medicinal properties

Kendrapada, June 28: The Kadaknath, the black, protein-rich breed of chicken from Jhabua in Madhya Pradesh, is changing the lives of people in Odisha for the better in these dark days of the novel pandemic coronavirus (COVID-19).

The fear of COVID-19 has made many in the state eat the meat of Kadaknath to increase their immunity. As a result, farmers are making good money, Surya Narayan Mishra, a senior scientist at the Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), Odisha University of Agriculture and Technology (OUAT), Kendrapara, told.

"Kadaknath farming offers great scope and potential because of its supplementary income and additional

employment to farmers. We are providing proper training and other equipment to farmers," he added.

He noted that Kadaknath was considered a premium breed. Its black meat was priced three times more than that of broiler chicken due to its high iron content and much lower cholesterol levels than other breeds.

"We are supplying Kadaknath chicks to farmers after getting them from the Central Poultry Development Organization in Bhubaneswar," Mishra said.

Satyabhama Pradhan, district project manager, Odisha Livelihood Mission (OLM) of Kendrapara said large numbers of COVID-19-hit returnee migrant workers

and self-help group (SHG) members were busy rearing and selling Kadaknath after getting financial help from the organisation. "We provide up to Rs 200,000 to SHGs to rear Kadaknath," Pradhan said.

The reason for the growth of Kadaknath farms currently was the increasing demand for its meat which was believed to have medicinal properties, Pradhan added.

A senior official of the government-run Odisha Livelihood Mission, Bhubaneswar said 10,000 families from Kendrapara, Koraput, Rayagada, Malkangiri, Keonjhar, and other districts earned their livelihood by rearing Kadaknath with the help of OLM, KVKs, and the Odisha Tribal Empowerment and Livelihoods Programme of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes Development department.

Parameswar Swain of Rajnagar in Kendrapara district is one such person. He said:



I was working as a mason in Pune. I returned to my village last year due to the COVID-19 lockdown. I took up Kadaknath farming in July 2020 after getting a loan of Rs 200,000 as part of a community-based initiative by OLM. Now, I am reaping

profits due to the huge demand for the black meat of Kadaknath. My wife Kamala is helping me.

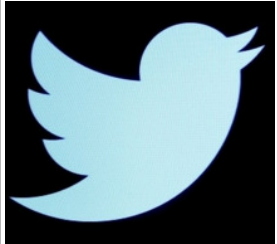
Swain said the cost of a chick was Rs 70. A chick grew into an adult within two months and weighed around 1.5-2 kg. "The rate of a

kilogram of Kadaknath meat is Rs 400-500. I am now rearing 500 birds at my farm. We are supplying Kadaknath to nearby towns, Paradip, and other areas. I will not return to Pune as this bird has provided me with proper livelihood to sustain my family," he added.

Rule of land supreme, not your policy: Parliamentary panel to Twitter

On Wednesday, Twitter became the first US-based social media platform to lose legal protection in India

New Delhi, June 18: The meeting comes as the Centre is at loggerheads with the microblogging site over the new Information and Technology (IT) rules. Indian representatives of microblogging platform Twitter appeared before the parliamentary panel chaired by Congress' Shashi Tharoor to discuss the issue of its guidelines and the misuse of its platform. During the deposition, Twitter India's public policy manager Shagufia



Kamran and legal counsel Ayushi Kapoor represented Twitter before the panel.

During the meeting, the panel asked the company, if it follows the law or the land, to which a representative responded saying, "We follow our policies," news agency ANI reported. The members then told Twitter that the law of the land is "supreme" and asked the company to abide by them. They also asked Twitter to explain why it should not be fined for 'violating' the rule of the land, reported news agency PTL.

"We appreciate the opportunity to share our views before Standing Committee on IT. Twitter stands prepared to work with the Committee on important work of safeguarding citizens' rights online in line with our principles of transparency, freedom of expression, and privacy," a Twitter spokesperson said after the meeting, as per ANI report.

"We will also continue working alongside the Indian Government as part of our shared commitment to serve and protect the public conversation," the spokesperson also said.

The meeting comes as the

Centre is at loggerheads with the microblogging site over the new Information and Technology (IT) rules. Last week, the Parliamentary standing committee on Information and Technology summoned Twitter India officials over issues related to misuse of the platform and protection of citizens' rights.

On Wednesday, Twitter became the first US-based social media platform to lose legal protection in India, meaning that the company will now be held responsible for tweets, data hosted by it. It will not be considered as a platform hosting something that somebody has tweeted, but it will be editorially responsible for the posts.

The Union government revoked the protection, saying that the social media giant failed to comply with the new IT guidelines despite being given multiple opportunities.

Earlier this month, Twitter faced backlash by government officials after it briefly removed the 'blue tick' verification badge from the personal account of vice-president Venkaiah Naidu and of several senior RashtriyaSwayamsevakSangh (RSS) functionaries, including its chief Mohan Bhagwat.

In May, a special cell of Delhi police sent a notice to Twitter, seeking an explanation of how it described an alleged "Congress toolkit" tweet against the Central government as "manipulated media".

Delhi Police is investigating a case of an alleged toolkit created by Congress to defame Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The notice was sent after Twitter tagged Bharatiya Janata Party's national spokesperson Sambit Patra's tweet on the alleged toolkit as "manipulated media". The police reportedly had also questioned Twitter India MD Manish Maheshwari on May 31 and visited the Twitter India offices in Delhi and Gurgaon on May 24 over the issue.

Reduce Vac supply to the private sector: Odisha minister

Bhubaneswar, June 27: The Odisha government has urged the Centre to reduce the allocation of Covid-19 vaccines to the private sector from the current 25 per cent to 5 per cent.

State Health and Family Welfare Minister Naba Kishore Das raised the issue in a letter to Union Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan on Saturday. "For the state of Odisha, the government and private vaccine allocation ratio of 75:25 may be revised to 95:5 ratio, keeping in mind the ground reality. Procurement by private hospitals in the state is negligible. To date, only seven private hospitals in Odisha have been able to procure vaccines from the



State Health and Family Welfare Minister Naba Kishore Das raised the issue in a letter to Union Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan

manufacturers," Das said in the letter, adding that private hospitals provide services to only 5 per cent of the state's population. "As per the existing guideline, the state will lose out its proportionate share of 25 per cent allocation of vaccines to the private sector," he said, adding that the vaccination drive will be "severely affected" if the guidelines are not changed.

"Since June 21, 2021, we are able to vaccinate more than 3 lakh beneficiaries per day

and will continue our endeavour to achieve 100 per cent vaccination in the state," he said in the letter. As per the revised Central guidelines that came into effect from June 21, the Centre will directly procure 75 per cent of the doses manufactured by vaccine companies, and distribute this to the states free of cost. While private hospitals will have exclusive access to the remaining 25 per cent, the states will aggregate the demand of private

hospitals, keeping in view equitable distribution between large and small private hospitals and regional balance. Based on this aggregated demand, the Centre will facilitate the supply of vaccines to the private hospitals and their payment through the National Health Authority's electronic platform.

On Friday, the Odisha government decided to stop the supply of vaccines to private hospitals.

International Webinar on Mystery of Cosmos

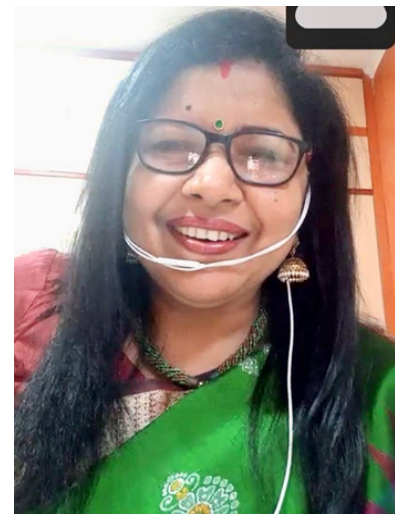
NorthCarolina, June 26: (Kishore Dwibedi)The sole reason behind the Worldwide catastrophe created by the corona crisis is the loss of essence and excellence of humanity amongst the human beings, declared the Director of International Indecency Prevention Movement (IIPM) Dr. Arundhati Debi. Delivering her speech as Chief Speaker during the International Webinar entitled "Mystery of Cosmos" organised by IIPM to mark the Enlightenment Day of its Founder Revered Shri Kumar Bhai, Dr. Debi dwelled extensively on the origin of cosmos, the logic behind the creation and evolution of creatures. After creating water, earth, air, plants, and animals, God created human beings with a purpose to keep control of all these lesser mortals, she added. The humans have been bestowed upon Intellect, Judiciousness, and varied resources to ensure the wellbeing of mankind, she elaborated. But over time, the human beings turned wayward and started violating the norms of the constitution designed by Almighty, she informed. Dr. Debi further pointed out that Excessive greed for materialism and extensive destruction of the ecosystem became the order of the day. Due to false ego and uncontrolled arrogance, human beings started projecting themselves as the creators, she said. As a result, the harmony between man and nature got severely damaged paving the way

for large-scale devastation caused by the advent of the covid virus, she explained.

Delivering the welcome address through video conferencing in the spiritual convention, Chairman of World Odisha Society, Kishore Dwibedi advised the gathering not to get panic due to the present scary scenarios and surrender themselves before the Almighty with a selfless mind, contented body, and pious soul.

Taking part in the deliberations distinguished dignitaries attached the highest importance to the relevance of Decency in the current situation and appealed to pursue the path of sanity shown by Kumar bhai. The participants include Dr. Rabi Narayan Behera, KrupanidhiBiswal, Hrushikesh Patra, BirajaMohapatra, Vinayak Das, Dr. Sunanda Mishra Panda, ManojKhatua, NirakarBeura, Krushna Kumar, Durga Madhab Mishra, Gitanjali Swain, JhumJhumPardhi, AkshaySamal, BimalBhal, Dayanidhi Rout, Madhusmita Panda and Prakash Nayak. IndramaniNayak, Khirabditanaya Debi, Santosh Rout, ShrimantBiswal, and PushpanjaliBarik presented musical tributes to Kumar Bhai during the occasion. The students of SovaniyaSikhyashram enthralled the audiences with their spellbound dance and music recitals.

The prominent personalities



present include Dr. NaliniPati, DharendraKar, Abhay Kumar Nayak, BaradaPrasanna Das, KrushnaNayak, Dr. DebendraMajhi, SanatanMahakud, Bharat Mishra, Dr. L.N. Tripathy, PitambarBarik, AhalayaBarik, SaritaMohapatra, Kasturika Patnaik, M.S.Zaman, Tapas RanjanParida, Mamta Pradhan, Santosh Adhikari, Minati Debi, Banalata Debi, Dr. Pradipta Mishra, Niranjana Bhai, Manoj Das, NiradBaranKhuntia, Raghunath Mandal, Barun Mohanty, Ajay Behura, Manju Tripathy and Sudhansubala Panda.

At the outset of the virtual meeting, Silence was observed in the memory of the victims of the covid - 19 pandemics.

Pragmatism to reduce Kashmir's 'Dilki Duri'



Sirish C. Mohanty

Kashmiris have been fed on the staple of special status, autonomy, and similar rhetoric for decades. There will continue to be echoes of it for some more time. But, broadly, the urge today is for restoration of political authority. Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi's meeting with the leaders of various political parties from Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) is significant for several reasons.

Not a single invitee skipped or boycotted the meet. This was perhaps the longest all-party meeting held on J&K in several years. The leaders spent close to four hours with the PM and his team. Not one of them has complained about the proceedings. On the contrary, everyone, including Mehbooba Mufti, admitted that the meeting was cordial, and they got the opportunity to candidly convey their views without anybody contradicting or interrupting them.

Delhi should draw the right inferences from it. Although delayed, as the PM admitted, this was an important move by him to

complete the process initiated two years ago by annulling Article 370 and 35A. The response of the political stakeholders at the meet, especially those from the Valley, should be seen by Delhi as a reflection of the current sentiment among the people.

Kashmiris have been fed on the staple of special status, autonomy, and similar rhetoric for decades. There will continue to be echoes of it for some more time. But, broadly, the urge today is for restoration of political authority. That dominant sentiment was expressed by the majority of the leaders at the Delhi meet when they talked about the restoration of statehood, formation of a new legislature, and return of the reins of power to the people's representatives.

Condescension should not be the way to look at this important change of heart, nor should Delhi gloat derisively over the "capitulation" of the Kashmiri leaders. Instead, it must be understood as their willingness to leave behind contentious issues and

move on. In that, the most important message that the Valley leaders have delivered to Delhi was that they trust the leadership.

"Kashmir needs a stern state," Jagmohan told in the early 1990s soon after he served as the governor of J&K. "We have pampered it like a mother. We should also be stern like a father", he explained. Delhi has shown its sternness in the last couple of years. Kashmiris have got the message. Now is the time, not for pampering, but positivity.

Mufti Mohammad Sayeed had made an important submission at the time of the formation of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-Peoples Democratic Party government that by agreeing to join hands with the BJP, six million Kashmiris had placed their trust and fate in the hands of a party that they perceived as Hindu. "Dilkidoori" can be Shortened when Delhi understands the message of the present meeting also, not from the hyperbole of 9 pm television news, but with a pragmatic eye.

The Delhi meet was also

significant because of the prominence given to the political leadership by relegating non-political operatives, including officials and agencies, to a backseat. The travesty of J&K has been that it was sought to be handled through non-political players over all these decades. The metaphorical "Delhi kidoori" was a result of this cockeyed handling only.

One of the achievements of the Mufti-BJP government, during its short-lived stint of less than a year, was to restore the primacy of political leadership. PM Modi gave a clear indication of similar intention when he said at the meet, "Our priority is to strengthen grassroots democracy. Delimitation has to happen at a quick pace so that polls can happen, and J&K gets an elected Government that gives strength to its development trajectory."

The annulment of Article 370 was the first step in building a "Naya Kashmir". The next natural step should be to build a "Naya Agenda", new agenda. The PM had set the tone for it at the meeting calling for a "corruption-free, developed and progressive J&K, where all-round growth is furthered". 'All-round growth' also meant attending to the injustices meted out to sections of the population such as the Kashmiri Pandits, people of Jammu, refugees, among others.

The scrapping of Article 370 has paved the way for that. But the traditional Valley parties have

an aversion to this agenda. They thrived on an agenda of separatism and hate. Some of them continued to peddle that fake agenda by invoking issues such as the restoration of Article 370 and special status at the meet. But these parties have increasingly lost their relevance in the state over the last few years. People are in no mood to fall for their jumlabazi anymore.

That should lead to the rise of a "NayaNetritva", new leadership, in the state. Indications of the rise of that new leadership were discernible at the Delhi meeting itself where the traditional players such as the PDP and National Conference were seen sharing the platform with relatively new entrants such as Sajjad Lone and Altaf Bukhari, with all getting an opportunity as equal stakeholders.

There was a time when the Valley's politics was dominated by one party and one family. The Atal Bihari Vajpayee years brought a new player - PDP - into the ring. The time has come for more such parties to occupy political space in the state. Some in Delhi expect the new players to be the amplifiers of Delhi's ruling establishment. National parties such as Congress and BJP are there for that. What the state needs are not "mouthpieces" of Delhi, but genuine representatives of the people. The PM's message that "it is the people, especially the youth, who have to provide political leadership to J&K, and ensure their aspirations are duly fulfilled" should be understood in that spirit.

Letter to the Editor

Dear Sir,

Concerning the editorial & special story of ur last issue U have focussed on reparation by UK govt. & unity of our nation which is very relevant & important in the present-day context.

Regarding apology & reparation to India by present govt of UK, You have justified by citing the example of Germany. But, right now, British India has already been divided into Pakistan & Bangladesh. Hence, it is a moot question whether the UK will pay reparation with an apology to all three countries?

As Indian history says, the Indian society was already

divided, & fragmented much before the arrival of Moghul & the British empire.

During 200 years of British rule, the provincial Kings, zamindars, dewans, acted as British agents and played a notorious role in exploitation, corruption, atrocity, loot, arson, brutal killing to get a reward/recognition from the British.

Although, as you have argued Britishers did some good works for their interest, these developmental, progressive-oriented activities had a far-reaching positive impact on India. The parliamentary form of democracy was also borrowed from U.K.

On account of the tremendous progress of our country

in the economic, social & political arena, India is emerging as a 'Global power'. But, it is a matter of grave concern & remorse, that the unity & integrity of our nation is being threatened due to casteism, communalism, regionalism, & religious fundamentalism.

At this, critical juncture, the "cultural nationalism" is the antidote that can make a "Resurgent strong, vibrant, and India.."

Bharat Patra
Rtd. Banker & Social activist, Keonjhar

Naveen's Serenity And Mamata's Volatility In Pinpricking Politics



Sirish C Mohanty

As does a decent education and a high level of reading often tweeted referring to Naveen's trademark civility. That was again on display during the Prime Minister's brief visit.

Whether Mamata was right in doing what she did is a matter of debate. Perhaps she could have shown more tact and attended the meeting irrespective of her intense displeasure over what she believes are constant and deliberate provocations by the Centre. But Mamata is mercurial and she chose to snub Modi in her way. She kept the Prime Minister, along with the state governor and two central ministers, waiting. Then she walked in with her chief secretary, handed over a list of demands to the Prime Minister, and exited. Photographs of the two meetings the Prime Minister held in Bengal and Odisha told contrasting stories. Pictures of the Bengal meeting showed chairs on one side of the venue empty. In Odisha, the venue was full with the chief minister and other state officials in attendance.

Now, the question is why did the chief ministers of two neighbouring states hit by the same cyclone react differently to the PM's visit to determine damages and extend help in rebuilding? Well, the answer lies not just in the different personalities that Mamata and Naveen are, but also in the sharply different political realities of their respective states. No less important, the two are looking at different prospects for themselves. Aggressively challenged by the BJP, Mamata is fighting to hold on to her chair and secure her political future. In contrast, Naveen—currently the country's longest-serving chief minister who has been in the position since 2000—



has far less at stake for himself. In his seventies and not in perfect health, he is seeking to secure his legacy, and niceties are perfectly in order in his scheme of things.

But more than their contrasting personal traits and individual stakes, it is the political realities of the two states that are the reason behind Mamata and Naveen reacting differently. For example, Naveen won the 2019 re-election handsomely, defeating a resurgent BJP in the state squarely. It is not that the BJP did not go all out against him. But having bitten the dust at the polls, the saffron party has gone virtually quiet in Odisha. But for perfunctory statements and a few odd protest rallies, the BJP has left Naveen undisturbed. It is a tacit admission that the party cannot match Naveen in a state where polarisation is difficult because of its minuscule Muslim population.

It has, however, been an entirely different story in Bengal. Having lost the elections—securing a disappointing 77 against the projected tally of more than

200—the party has not given Mamata a respite even for a day. As soon as the results were announced, the party launched a high-decibel campaign against political violence that they claimed was targeted against their workers. The accusation though was only partly true. While more BJP workers were possibly killed in the violence, supporters of Mamata's Trinamool Congress too were targeted in places. The BJP was also alleged by TMC to be giving the violence a communal spin by making specious claims.

Soft-spoken and a man of few words, Naveen has never shot off his mouth in a similar manner. He has been spared by opponents of savage attacks too. When the BJP is working overtime to deride Rahul Gandhi as a 'Pappu' and lower his public standing, the party has never attempted a similar trick on Naveen—the original Pappu. Naveen's nickname is Pappu and his close friends—very few now—call him so. The BJP has also desisted from making fun of Naveen by calling him

Chhamu (king) that many Odias address the chief minister as in private.

There is an explanation for Mamata's volatile reactions to the BJP's constant needling. Unlike Naveen who grew up in a rarefied social circle and had his political position almost served on a platter because of his family lineage, Mamata had to struggle hard to achieve whatever she has. From a lower-middle-class background and minus a convent education, she is a street-fighter who battled entrenched Communists and braved murderous attacks to excel. Her struggle has been infinitely more intense and fierce than that of Naveen. And this explains why she would guard her turf against the marauding BJP more zealously. Naveen's trademark niceties may mean nothing to her.

Take the recent Cyclone Yaas, for example. At a review meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi to take stock of the damage wrought by the cyclone, the Odisha Chief Minister broke with tradition to announce that he would not ask for any

central assistance because he didn't want to 'burden' the Central government, which is engaged in a difficult and prolonged battle with Covid-19. Instead, he sought long-term support to build a cyclone resilient power system and embankment along the 480 km-long coast of the state. This was predictably hailed as evidence of a 'new' brand of politics and a perfect example of cooperative federalism.

Of course, more often than not, the image building has been backed by solid work on the ground. Under Naveen's watch, Odisha has certainly emerged as a role model in managing natural disasters for other states to follow. More recently, the BJD supremo's skill of turning adversity into an opportunity was on full display when he shot off a letter to Chief Ministers of all states seeking to build a consensus on the Centre procuring Covid vaccines and distributing them among states. The letter came after the state government cut a sorry figure over the fiasco of the 'global tender' floated by his government. No vaccine manufacturers came calling despite the state government first easing the conditions and then extending the date for the opening of the tender by a week to attract suppliers. By now, it is clear that the foreign manufacturers of vaccines don't want to do business with states and would rather deal with the Centre. But in writing the letter to all CMs, Naveen was not just seeking to gloss over the ill-advised move to go ahead with the global tender, but also to position himself as a consensus builder at the national level.

Flying Sikh Milkha Singh, independent India's first sporting superstar, dies at 91

PM Narendra Modi pays tribute to Milkha Singh

New Delhi, June 19: In a tweet, PM Modi said that Milkha Singh inspired millions around the world, and added that India has lost a colossal sportsperson. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday paid his tributes to legendary India sprinter Milkha Singh, who passed away at the age of 91 after a month-long battle with Covid-19. In a tweet, PM Modi said that Milkha Singh inspired millions around the world, and added that India has lost a colossal sportsperson.

"In the passing away of Shri Milkha Singh Ji, we have lost a colossal sportsperson, who captured the nation's



imagination and had a special place in the hearts of countless Indians. His inspiring personality endeared him to

millions. Anguished by his passing away," PM Modi tweeted.

"I had spoken to Shri

Milkha Singh Ji just a few days ago. Little did I know that it would be our last conversation. Several budding


athletes will derive strength from his life journey. My condolences to his family and many admirers all over the world," he added.

The Padma Shri awardee was 91 and is survived by his golfer son Jeev Milkha Singh and three daughters. Nirmal Kaur, Milkha Singh's wife, also died after fighting Covid-19 about 3 weeks back.

As per news agency PTI, his condition turned critical this evening as he developed complications, including fever and dipping oxygen saturation levels, after a bout with Covid-19, in the Intensive Care Unit of the PGIMER hospital in

Chandigarh.

A former army man, Milkha Singh won several laurels for the country in track and field events across the globe. He won four gold medals for India in the Asian Games, winning the 200 metre and 400 metre races in the 1958 Tokyo Asiad. He followed it up with gold medals in the 400 metre and 4x400 metre relay races in the 1962 Jakarta Asiad.

Singh was unlucky to have missed out on an Olympic medal as he finished a close fourth in the 400 metres final at the 1960 Rome Olympics. 

Groom Calls Off Wedding After No Mutton Curry on Menu, Marries Another Woman



In a bizarre incident on Wednesday, a man in Odisha's Sukinda walked out on his bride on the wedding day after her family failed to serve mutton in the feast and later married another woman of the area before returning home. According to New Indian Express, 27-year-old Ramakant Patra, who is a resident of Rebanapalaspal in the neighboring Keonjhar district, reached the wedding venue in Bandhagaon village with his baraatis. The bride's family then welcomed him and following the necessary rituals, they were taken to

the dining hall.

However, before lunch, members from the groom's family demanded to be served mutton curry. Since there was no preparation made for mutton curry, an argument began between the families and things started turning ugly. Patra then called off the marriage when he learned that mutton curry was not served for lunch. Despite the bride's family pleading to him to change his mind, Patra refused to carry on with the marriage ceremony and left the venue with his kin.


Patra then went to his relative's home at Gandhapala village of

The groom, 27-year-old Ramakant Patra, is a resident of Rebanapalaspal in the neighboring Keonjhar district in Odisha

Kuhika panchayat in Sukinda and later got married to another woman of Phulajhara in Tamka the same night before returning to Keonjhar. No police complaint has been lodged yet regarding the matter.

The incident joins a long list of bizarre wedding scenarios that have been occurring for some time. In another incident the bride was the one to call off the wedding, however, the reason was the groom's inability to read without glass. The wedding was called off in Uttar Pradesh's Auraiya at the last moment after the groom could not read the newspaper without his glasses on. Arjun Singh, a resident of Jamalpur village of Sadar Kotwali area, had fixed the marriage of his daughter, Archana, with

Shivam, who is a resident of Banshi village. Singh chose Shivam as he was a "well-educated boy" and soon fixed the date of marriage, and began all preparations.

However, things did not go as planned on the wedding day. Arjun Singh told News18, "When the Baraat procession came to the house on June 20, the groom was constantly seen wearing spectacles the whole time." The women of the family, including the bride, felt suspicious that he has weak eyesight and then asked the groom to read a Hindi newspaper without his glasses on, which he failed to do. Since the groom could not see without his glasses, the bride refused to marry him. 

'Judge Hearing Nandigram Recount Plea BJP Member': Mamata Counsel Seeks New Bench

Kolkata, June 18: The counsel of Mamata Banerjee wrote to the secretary of the Acting Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court, seeking reassignment of her petition challenging the election of BJP MLA Suwendu Adhikari from Nandigram to another bench.

At present, the plea is being heard by Justice Kaushik Chanda, who the counsel claimed was "an active member of the BJP". Since the adjudication of the election petition will have political ramifications, it was prayed that the matter be assigned to another judge by the Acting Chief Justice, who is the master of the roster.

The Trinamool Congress supremo's lawyer also stated in the letter that she "had objected to the confirmation of the Hon'ble Judge as a Permanent Judge of the Hon'ble High Court at Calcutta" and as such, apprehends there is a likelihood of bias on the part of the judge concerned. The counsel urged that the letter be placed before the Acting Chief Justice forthwith "for necessary re-assignment of Election Petition to avoid any prejudice and/or presumption of prejudice". (Page-12)



Third covid wave: When Will it Arrive?

New Delhi, June 19: AIIMS Director DrRandeepGuleria on Saturday warned that if Covid-appropriate behavior is not followed and crowding not prevented, the next wave of the viral infection could strike the country in the next six to eight weeks.

Fears of a third wave have been rampant, even as the effects of the devastating second wave in India in April and May remain to be mitigated. India saw spiraling infections, increased fatality, shortage of healthcare facilities, and medical oxygen amid a peak of cases. Lockdowns and strict restrictions were also initiated in most parts of the country to combat the disaster.

Now that cases have begun to come down, and curbs get relaxed, experts are warning of an impending third wave, which some say would affect children more.

When is the third wave expected to hit India?

Earlier, India's epidemiologists had indicated that the third wave of COVID-19 is inevitable and is likely to start from September-October. However, DrGuleria said on Saturday that it might arrive in the next six to eight weeks until Covid-appropriate behavior is followed aggressively, along with stricter surveillance and area-specific lockdowns in case of a significant surge.

A snap survey was recently conducted by Reuters between June 3-17 wherein 40 specialists, including doctors, scientists, virologists, epidemiologists, and professors from around the world, were asked when they expected the third wave to hit.

Over 85% of the survey respondents, or 21 of 24, said the next wave will hit by October, including three experts who predicted that the pandemic may hit again as early as August, while

another 12 said it is likely to strike in September. The remaining three experts said the third wave may come between November and February.

Will it be deadly for children?

Health Ministry officials and DrGuleria have reiterated often that there is no evidence to suggest that children will be affected more in the next wave of the infection.

However, some experts believe the upcoming wave may prove more deadly for children. In the poll conducted by Reuters, nearly two-thirds of experts, when asked if children and those under 18 years would be most at risk in a potential third wave, said yes.

"The reason being they are a completely virgin population in terms of vaccination because currently there is no vaccine available for them," Dr Pradeep Banandur, head of epidemiology department at National Institute of Mental

Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS), was quoted as saying in the report.

On Friday, addressing concerns around the impact of the third coronavirus wave on children, Luv Aggarwal, Joint Secretary, Health Ministry, said: "It may not be true that children will be disproportionately affected in the third wave as the serosurvey shows seropositivity was almost equal in all age groups. But the government is not leaving any stone unturned in terms of preparations."

In a study, the World Health Organisation and the All India Institute of Medical Sciences have said that a possible third wave may not affect children in any disproportionate way. The finding was based on a seroprevalence study done in five states on a sample size of 10,000. Covid-19 seroprevalence in the age group below 18 is 55.7 per cent and above 18 is 63.5 per cent.

Will the third wave be

better controlled than the second?

Experts have said the third wave of Covid-19 in India may be better controlled than the second due to a lot of factors. The opinion poll conducted by Reuters said the wave will be controlled better as many people will be vaccinated by then. It added that the number of cases will be much less than what India witnessed in the second wave.

DrGuleria has said the third wave will be more controlled, as cases will be much less because more vaccinations would have been rolled out and there would be some degree of natural immunity from the second wave.

Lockdowns and Restrictions, Norms Crucial

However, some experts have maintained that the third wave may still prove to be extremely difficult. Dr. Suranjit Chatterjee, a senior consultant at Apollo

Hospitals, warned that if safety norms are not followed by people and if there is no strict enforcement in case of violations, then "we are in for trouble again".

"The way cases have come down from over 28,000 at peak in April to 131 cases reported yesterday, it is such a dramatic fall in numbers. And, if lockdown was the primary reason for it, then we have to tread very cautiously now with the restrictions being slowly erased," he told PTI.

"But, if people show laxity by not wearing masks or wearing them inappropriately or violate social distancing norms, and if law enforcement agencies do not penalize and ensure violations do not increase in quantum, then we are certainly in for trouble. And, the next wave could be worse than the second wave situation," he said.

Tata Power's plans challenged in Odisha Electricity Regulatory Commission

Consumer activist Ananda Kumar Mohapatra has raised objections to the applications stating in the current form they do not conform to the prescribed regulations of OERC.



BHUBANESWAR, June 27: Ahead of hearing of Tata Power's applications for approval of annual business and capital expenditure plans for the four distribution companies for 2021-22, the Odisha Electricity Regulatory Commission (OERC) has been requested to direct the petitioners to file the applications under OERC

(Terms and Conditions for Determination of Wheeling Tariff and Retail Supply Tariff) Regulations, 2014.

Consumer activist Ananda Kumar Mohapatra has raised objections to the applications stating in the current form they do not conform to the prescribed regulations of OERC. He stated that the OERC regulations have no provision for filing an annual

business plan as it has to be long-term for five years. Further, approval of an annual business plan is of no use at this point of time when the Commission has already determined bulk and retail supply, and transmission tariff for the current fiscal, he argued.

He said Regulation-4 speaks about multi-year tariff

framework, filing of business plan and trajectory specific parameters for approval of aggregate revenue requirement (ARR) and the expected revenue from tariff and charges of the licensees (discoms). Regulation-5 deals in detail with the business plan and the procedures of its filing.

"The Capital Investment

Plan (CIP) shall be prepared following the sales/demand forecast, power procurement plan, distribution loss trajectory, targets for quality supply, etc. The CIP shall be consistent with the perspective plan developed by the State Transmission Utility (STU) based on the data submitted by the distribution licensees. The investment plan should also include yearly phasing of capital expenditure along with the financing plan and corresponding capitalisation schedule," said the regulation.

Despite all the regulations in the matter of business plan, the licensees with some ulterior motives have tried to mislead the stakeholders. This cannot be

taken for hearing unless and until the above discrepancies and irregularities are rectified by the licensees. He urged the Commission to issue necessary directions to the petitioners for correction of the petitions and spell out the source from which they have taken the annual business plan.

Mohapatra also opposed the June 10 public notice issued by OERC which while inviting objections/suggestions to the petitions of Tata Power, mentioned the filing of business plans by licensees - TPCODL, TPWODL, TPSODL, and TPNODL - for the current fiscal. He urged the Commission to issue a corrigendum to its notice.

For CM Face, AAP Needs a Game-Changer Like Sidhu to Make a Mark in Punjab



New Delhi, June 21: The Aam Aadmi Party's elusive search for a Sikh chief ministerial face for Punjab for the last five years was a key factor in the party losing the last assembly elections in the state and is now its biggest challenge for a revival in Punjab where it had emerged as the main opposition party.

The party needs a game-changer to revive itself in Punjab and make a mark. AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal in Amritsar on Monday said a Sikh will be the party's CM face in Punjab and the party will declare the name at the right time. The AAP seems to be learning from its mistake from the last elections. Then, in 2017, AAP did not declare its CM face despite Punjab's political culture of voting for personalities like Prakash Singh Badal and Captain Amarinder Singh who have been the declared CM faces of their respective parties. Kejriwal then said having a CM face "was not important" as the people of Punjab trust his party.

The AAP, however, did say the CM will ultimately be a face from Punjab and not Kejriwal. The Delhi CM

himself had termed himself being a CM face as a "rumor". The real reason for AAP shying away then from naming a CM face was multiple faces in the party seen as contenders, including Sangrur MP Bhagwant Singh Mann, whose image was seen as an inhibiting factor by the party in declaring him as one. The other contenders were HS Phoolka and Sukhpail Singh Khaira.


AAP's Choices This Time

The situation is not much different this time as the party seeks a prominent Jat Sikh face. One such face of the party, MLA Sukhpail Singh Khaira, has left the party and joined the Congress. Phoolka had quit the party in 2019. Bhagwant Mann remains the party chief in Punjab and the party's sole MP from the state, but despite his popularity, many in the party consider it a gamble to pitch him as the CM face. MLA Harpal Cheema, the AAP leader in the assembly, and former MP Professor Sadhu Singh are other faces that AAP has in its ranks here.

However, the big game-changer for AAP could be someone like Navjot Singh Sidhu who seems on a complete collision course inside his party, the

Congress. Kejriwal had confirmed in 2017 that Navjot Singh Sidhu had extensive talks with AAP then and a lot of efforts were made to bring him but it ended as a closed chapter. Sidhu joined the Congress where he is in a war of words with his CM. The AAP has not revealed yet if it has opened the channel of communication with Sidhu again.

Kejriwal on Monday said he respected Sidhu and would not indulge in any loose talk around the speculation around him. In 2017, Kejriwal had made it clear that Sidhu never asked AAP to declare him as their CM face. The AAP, however, knows Punjab is its best chance to make a mark outside Delhi and it had only itself to blame in the 2017 elections by not declaring a CM face and hobnobbing with radical elements that cost it the election despite momentum on the ground.

The AAP has been on a downward spiral in Punjab since with its present faces in the state, and the Congress has termed it as a party that only loses its deposit whenever it contests an election in Punjab. Sidhu has been at the forefront of attacking the Badals and his party alike for non-action on the sacrilege and police firing cases of 2015, an issue that AAP has also taken up in a big way as a poll plank. The party on Monday inducted the former SIT head who had probed these sensitive cases and later resigned from service, Kunwar Vijay Pratap Singh. The AAP bringing Sidhu on board may be the game-changer it needs. 

Disciplinary Proceedings Against Alapan Bandyopadhyay Begins

Following up on its show-cause notice, the Center has started penalty proceedings against ex-chief secretary of West Bengal Alapan Bandyopadhyay alleged misconduct and misbehavior. A memorandum sent to the newly appointed advisor to the West Bengal chief minister by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) has asked Bandyopadhyay to respond within 30 days on the charges made against him. The former chief secretary has been warned of major penalty proceedings that allow the central government to withhold pension or gratuity, or both, either in full or in part, officials said. "Shri Alapan Bandyopadhyay is hereby informed that the central government proposes to hold major penalty proceedings against him under Rule 8 of the All India Services (discipline and appeals) rule, 1969 read with rule 6 of All India Services (death cum retirement benefits) rule 1958," the memorandum read. Rule 8 of All India Service (discipline and appeals) deals with the procedure for imposing major penalties. "8(2) Whenever the disciplinary authority thinks that there are grounds for inquiring into the truth of any imputation of




misconduct or misbehavior against a member of the Service, it may appoint under this rule or under the provisions of the Public Servants (Inquiries) Act 1850, as the case may be, an authority to inquire into the truth thereof," rule 8 sub-section 2 states.

Sub-sections of this rule detail the procedures to follow for an inquiry. According to officials, under this rule, employment and post-retirement benefits like pension could be withheld if found guilty.

Rule 6 of All India Service (death cum retirement benefits) deals with the recovery of pension. "The central government reserves the right of withholding a pension or gratuity, permanently or for a specified time, if the pensioner has been found guilty of misconduct," rule 6(1) states.

Officials said the DoPT issued the mono after finding Bandyopadhyay prima facie guilty of indiscipline. The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) had also sent him a show-cause notice for violating the Disaster Management Act, which is a criminal offense. However, the current notice by the Center is under charges of indiscipline.

According to the memorandum from the Center, if Bandyopadhyay does not respond within 30 days he will face an inquiry. The former chief secretary has been asked to respond whether he pleads guilty to the charges or not. "Shri Alapan Bandyopadhyay is directed to submit within 30 days, in a written statement whether he wants to be heard in person," the letter sent to Bandyopadhyay on June 16 stated. 

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Earlier in the day, Justice Chanda adjourned till June 24 Banerjee's petition for declaring the election of Adhikari, the Leader of Opposition in the West Bengal Assembly, from Nandigram null and void. Banerjee has alleged possibilities of tampering with EVM machines and suspected foul play behind the counting of votes for the Nandigram seat. She has accused Adhikari of committing corrupt practices as mentioned under Section 123 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951. She had moved the high court after her plea before the Election Commission seeking a recount was turned down.

A section of lawyers also staged a protest in front of the high court over Justice Chanda being assigned to hear the election petition by the Trinamool Congress supremo. "We have no personal ill-feeling or allegation against the judge, but he was associated with a particular political party," one of the lawyers said. The judge should recuse himself from hearing Banerjee's plea, he added. Listing the matter for hearing next Thursday (on June 24), Justice Chanda asking Banerjee's lawyer to serve copies of the petition to the opposition parties. He also said that

Banerjee is required to be present on the first day of the hearing as it was an election petition.

Meanwhile, the Trinamool Congress also tweeted from its official handle an image of Justice Chanda with state BHP president Dilip Ghosh. "Justice Kaushik Chanda is seen sharing a stage with BJP's @DilipGhoshBJP. Unsurprisingly, he's also the judge who has been assigned to hear the #Nandigram case. As the Indian Judiciary system gets murkier day by day, will there be any justice in this case? Only time will tell."

TMC MP Derek O'Brien further wrote, "Who is that person 'circled' in both pics? Is the Justice Kaushik Chanda of Calcutta High Court? Has he been assigned to hear the Nandigram election case? Can the judiciary sink any lower?"

However, BJP state vice-president Joy Prakash Majumdar hit out at the ruling camp's move and said the judiciary should be respected. He said, "It is unfortunate that the ruling party in Bengal is behaving in such a manner. They should respect the judiciary. I also condemned the tweet of TMC MP Derek O'Brien." 

Pak Drone Strike At Jammu Air Base

Jammu Airport Explosions: Two Indian Air Force personnel suffered minor injuries in the explosions that took place a little before 2 am at the high-security airport located around 14 km from the border with Pakistan



Jammu, June 27: In what is believed to be the first use of drones in a terror attack on an Indian military facility, two blasts took place at the Air Force base in Jammu Airport in the early hours of Sunday.

Two Indian Air Force (IAF) personnel suffered minor injuries in the explosions that took place a

little before 2 am at the high-security airport located around 14 km from the border with Pakistan. Reports say the explosions, at 1.37 am and 1.43 am, were heard a km away.

One of the blasts caused damage to the roof of a building in the technical section while another bomb exploded in an open area.

"The attack at the IAF station in Jammu is a terror attack," said Jammu and Kashmir police chief Dilbag Singh.

An FIR has been registered under the anti-terror Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act that allows the arrest of suspects and their detention for up to six months without evidence. The National Investigation Agency has taken over the probe.

Teams from the IAF, the National Bomb Data Centre, forensic experts, and the Jammu and Kashmir police are also investigating the attack.

The police chief said another major strike was

averted when a terrorist, believed to be working for the Pakistan-based outfit Lashkar-e-Taiba, was arrested with an IED (Improvised Explosive Device) that was to be used for a strike "in a crowded place". The arrest is not linked to the airport attack, Dilbag Singh said.


"Drones with payload were used in both the blasts at Jammu airfield. Another crude bomb was found by the Jammu police. This IED was received by a Lashkar e Taiba operative and was to be planted at some crowded place," Mr Singh told.

The Jammu airport is a dual-use facility under IAF control, also used to operate

passenger flights. Jammu Airport director Pravat Ranjan Beuria told PTI there was no disruption in flights.

The blasts took place hours before Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Army Chief General MM Naravane began a three-day visit to Ladakh to review India's operational readiness and to interact with troops in the backdrop of a drawn-out standoff with China.

There have been reports over the past two years of Pakistan using drones to drop weapons across the border. The first incident emerged in August 2019 in Punjab when a crashed

drone was found in a village in Amritsar. In September, terrorists arrested by security forces allegedly revealed that drugs and weapons were dropped in Punjab in eight drone sorties. On June 20 last year, the Border Security Force (BSF) shot down a suspected spy drone in the Kathua district of Jammu. The very next month, a network of tunnels from across the border were revealed in Jammu. In September, the Jammu and Kashmir police found weapons dropped from drones at a village in Akhnoor, also in Jammu. Three militants who had received weapons through such drops were arrested. 

Indigenous Aircraft Carrier To Be Commissioned Next Year: Rajnath Singh

Kochi: India's first 'made-in-India' Aircraft Carrier - INS Vikrant - will be commissioned next year and its combat capability, reach and versatility will add formidable capabilities in the country's defense, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said at the southern naval command in Kochi.

In a statement to the media after visiting INS Vikrant at Ernakulam wharf of the Cochin port to review its construction progress, Rajnath Singh described it as "India's pride and a shining example of Atmanirbhar Bharat". INS Vikrant is also known as the Indigenous Aircraft Carrier 1 or IAC-1. "The project was originally approved by the NDA government and has made significant progress in recent past despite COVID-19.

"Commissioning of the Indigenous Aircraft Carrier (IAC) next year will be a befitting tribute to 75 years of India's independence",

INS Vikrant is also known as the Indigenous Aircraft Carrier 1 or IAC-1. "Commissioning of this IAC next year would be a befitting tribute to the 75th year of India's independence", Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said.

Mr Singh said in the statement read out to the media.

"The combat capability, reach and versatility of the aircraft carrier will add formidable capabilities in the defence of our country and help secure India's interests in the maritime domain," the Defence Minister said.

The minister said it was a pleasure to review first-hand, the work being done on the Indigenous Aircraft Carrier.

Rajnath Singh, who reviewed Project Seabird at Karwar, which will be the largest naval base of the Indian Navy in the future, and will provide the facilities and infrastructure to support the navy's

operations in the Indian Ocean Region and beyond, said the government is fully committed to a strong navy and these two projects are examples of our unwavering focus.

"Our impetus to modernization, harnessing India's indigenous industry and know-how, is a key priority. Forty-two of the 44 warships on order being built at Indian shipyards is a testimony to this", he said.

He said the Indigenous Aircraft Carrier boasts of nearly 75 per cent indigenous content, from design to steel used in construction, to key weapons and sensors.

The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC)



has also recently accorded approval for RFP of Project 75-I under the Strategic Partnership model, which will give further fillip to the indigenous development of niche manufacturing technologies, the minister said.

"These measures will help enhance the Indian Navy's operational reach and prowess to protect India's maritime interests," he said.


Rajnath Singh said the Indian Navy remains poised and combat-ready to tackle any challenge.

"Navy's proactive forward deployment during the Galwan standoff signaled our intent that we seek peace but are ready for any eventuality," the minister added.

He said the Navy has also made significant contributions in the fight against COVID-19, bringing back Indian citizens from overseas during Op SamudraSetu-I, and much-needed Liquid Medical Oxygen during SamudraSetu-II, despite dangers of COVID-19

spread onboard warships.

SAR efforts by the Navy during Cyclone Tauktae showcased the spirit of daring and courage among our men and women in whites, he said.

"Our efforts are in alignment with the Prime Minister's vision of SAGAR, or Security and Growth for All in the Region, and the wider goal of a Free, Open and Inclusive Indo-Pacific, to ensure peace and stability in the region," he added. 

Regional Parties Can't Do Any Good To The Country: Assam CM Biswa Sarma



At an e.Adda held recently, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma spoke on Centre-state relations, on those excluded by the National Register of Citizens, and why he supports the Citizenship (Amendment) Act.

On his now-famous meeting with Rahul Gandhi

We went to meet Rahul Gandhi... elections were nearing. But during the meeting, I saw that Rahul was not interested in the meeting. He was busy playing with his dog Piddi. We were served tea and biscuits, and the dog picked up a biscuit from the plate. I thought someone would take away that plate but I saw everyone taking biscuits from it. I was not a frequent visitor so I realised that this must be normal for everyone here. That day I realised that enough was enough. But having said that, I am grateful to him. If I am in this position today it is also because of that famous meeting and because Rahul Gandhi did not appreciate me being in the Congress party.

On whether the Congress needs the Gandhis

I'll say that the Gandhis have outlived their utility. I

am sure that at some point in time Sonia Gandhi was needed to unite the party. But today, India has changed. I do not think that the Gandhis can serve the Congress now. Every empire has to fall at some point in time.

On whether the BJP has a Modi cult at the top

The culture of the BJP is rooted in India's grassroots. So whatever people may say about Mr Modi, he is not a cult, he is a father figure. There is no similarity between the Gandhis and Modi.

One wants to empower his family, another wants to empower India's young generation.

On NRC and the fate of people excluded from it

In 2005, Dr Manmohan Singh had spoken to the leadership of AASU (All Assam Students' Union) and had concluded that Assam needed an NRC. Now NRC has been done but in between, we noticed that certain manipulations had taken place.

What we are demanding is that a 20% verification takes place in the border district and 10% re-verification takes place in the heartland. Today it has excluded 19 lakh people... a foreigner tribunal has been set up. People will now go to that court and they will establish that they are Indian citizens. After that, we have to take it up with the government of Bangladesh and we must try to send them back. But if it is not possible, at least disenfranchise them.

On the Citizenship (Amendment) Act

CAA is just discharging your historical responsibility. It should not be seen from a communal framework. CAA is just an agenda which you need to finish. The Congress during the Partition should have clearly stated that there is a Hindu population with you who you should take care of and if you don't, then they will get automatic citizenship in India. I think our Indian Muslims should have been generous. They should have said that yes if they are being tortured if they are being persecuted, let us bring them back to India.

On discrimination against refugees on grounds of religion

Can any Muslim say that I have been persecuted for religious reasons in Pakistan, in Bangladesh? Muslim refugees have come to India because of economic reasons. India has a historical, constitutional, and legal responsibility towards the minorities of Pakistan and Bangladesh.

On his comment during campaigning that he did not want minority votes

We did maximum welfare programs in areas where the "35%" people (minorities) live. We have taken up construction of 8 lakh houses for Muslims in Assam. Roads, buildings, colleges, institution after institution are being built in areas where they live. But as a political person, I know that I'm not going to get my vote from there. So if I am a bit realistic and if I concentrate my resources in a place where I will get votes, what is wrong with that? But today as a Chief Minister, if you ask me, whether I am going to work for that 35% or not - I will answer, 'yes, I am going to work more and more for the welfare of that 35%'. But as a BJP (politician) why will I go to seek votes where I am 100% convinced I am not going to get even a single vote?

On how the Covid challenge could have been tackled better

On the one hand, everybody wants to contain and combat Covid but at the same time, they want to try and attack Modi too. They have a two-fold agenda: contain Covid and contain Modi. I think India should have collectively fought Covid. The Covid battle should not have been bipartisan.

On his meteoric rise and success in the Modi BJP

Sonowal (former Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal) and I came from other parties into the BJP. We were fortunate to have got the opportunity to work directly under the Prime Minister and with Amit Shah. Because both of them have guided us, I think we

immediately became part of the ideological family and today nobody considers us outsiders. They have accepted us and we have been able to rise.

On whether the alternative to the BJP is now coming from regional parties

I think it's Mr Modi's biggest achievement that now liberals are saying that the Congress is no longer an alternative, regional parties are. But regional parties creating a national alternative will never be possible because states compete with each other. Bengal and Bihar cannot come together, Bengal and Assam cannot come together and even if you do, there will be conflict. So the coming together of regional parties cannot silence the might of the BJP at the national level.

CM showers... Indians value ...

If the child has lost either his father or mother who was the only earning member and now staying with the surviving parent, Rs 1500 per month will be provided for his maintenance. The amount will be deposited either in his or his parent's account. Besides, if the surviving parent is the mother, she will also be entitled to MadhuBabu Pension.

The chief minister asked the district collectors to prepare a list of Covid orphans with assistance from the District Child Protection Committee, Childline, and panchayat level organizations. He directed the collectors to launch a drive every year so that no Covid orphan is left out from the scheme.

agree on - 77% of Hindus believe in karma, as do Muslims; a third of Christians and a majority of Hindus believe in the purifying powers of Ganga, and in northern India the survey found that 12% of Hindus and 10% of Sikhs, and 37% of Muslims identity with Sufism.

Now, what sets them apart, according to the Pew survey. Most Hindus - 66% - believe they are very different from Muslims, and Muslims nearly reciprocated that with 64% of them saying they consider themselves very different from Hindus. Two-third of Jains and half of Sikhs, however, say they have a lot in common with Hindus. The difference in self-perception among Hindus and Muslims manifests in opposition to interfaith marriage. Roughly, two-thirds of Hindus in India want to prevent inter-religious marriages of Hindu women (67%) or Hindu men (65%), the survey said. It was also found that larger shares of Muslims feel similarly - 80% say it is very important to prevent Muslim women from marrying outside, and 76% say it is very important to stop Muslim men from doing so. A majority of those polled say their close friends are from the same religious group - 86% of Indians overall, 86% of Hindus, 88% of Muslims, 80% of Sikhs, and 72% of Jain. But Hindus were divided on who they preferred as neighbours - 45% said they were fine with anyone, 45% said they will not be willing to accept members of at least one of the religions as neighbours, mostly, 39% Muslims.

First key political...

Farooq Abdullah, Mohammad Akbar Lone, and Hasnain Masoodi, all MPs of the National Conference, did not attend. In this meeting, an overview on the process of delimitation in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir - detailing various sections of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019, and Delimitation Act, 2002 - was presented before the Members.

So far, the National Conference had stayed away from the consultative process of the Delimitation Commission.

But the PAGD meeting on June 9 after a gap of over six months was to arrive at some kind of broad understanding on the way forward. During a discussion on participation in talks, if offered by the Centre, PDP's Mehbooba Mufti is learned to have said she would not take a "maximalist approach".

Sources in the security establishment had earlier this week told that "feelers have been sent to political parties in J&K to hold discussions" before the process of delimitation moves forward across J&K.

A source in the Central government said, "Things have settled down in Kashmir. Developmental works are in progress. The security situation is under control. It is only fair to reach out to political parties. I can confirm that such a move (Prime Minister entertaining an all-party delegation from Kashmir in Delhi) is quite likely." Sources in the government said Assembly elections, as and when they happen, will not be a surprise. "Yes, it is likely the process may be hastened and it may be achieved by the end of

2021. But in any case, it will happen only after the Delimitation Commission submits its report," the source said. Meanwhile, Union Home Minister Amit Shah Friday held two high-level meetings concerning issues related to the development and security of Jammu and Kashmir. He issued several directions which included expanding the coverage of MGNREGA, setting up an Agri industry in every district, and strengthening of security and intelligence apparatus in the Union Territory.

Both meetings were attended by Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir Manoj Sinha and Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla among other officials. The meeting on security was also attended by National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and chiefs of IB, RAW, CRPF, and J&K Police.

"Comprehensive development of Jammu and Kashmir is Modi government's top priority. Held a meeting to review development works in Jammu and Kashmir and directed concerned departments to quicken the pace of development," Shah said in a tweet.

In the meeting, the Union Home Minister dealt with a host of issues including generation of employment for local people, increase in farmers' income, and schemes under PM's development package for the region, refugees from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, and West Pakistan, and power projects.

High Command Culture: a hidden treasure of democracy if used with caution

Political observers have been enthralled by the spectacle of the Congress setting fire to the best part of its own house. Punjab is one of the few North Indian states where the Modi wave has made no real impact. The Congress's charismatic and experienced Chief Minister (CM) Capt. Amarinder Singh has not only kept the BJP at bay, but he has also left the Akalis in disarray and prevented AamAdmi Party from growing.

His reward for all of this was on display when the Congress high command which had nourished and encouraged Navjot Singh Sidhu, the celebrated former cricketer and former Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MP, decided to treat Sidhu and Amarinder as being on par. It listened respectfully to the CM's detractors, did not act against Sidhu when he called the CM names, and made Amarinder seek the approval of an internal committee of mostly second division leaders. The Gandhis, who have known Amarinder for decades, did not meet him.

In most countries with a Westminster-style system of government, there is no such concept as High Command. Nor is it common in countries with a federal structure. In the United States, for instance, a Democratic governor may respect President Joe Biden but he knows the President does not have the power to remove him or even, to discipline him.



Well, in Jawaharlal Nehru's time, the Congress had no high command to speak of. The prime minister (PM) had an enormous moral stature (throughout the country, not just in the Congress party) and the party president was usually a well-respected figure. But state CMs were also powerful men with their political bases. Some of them even openly disagreed with the PM who respected their views and their right to do things their way.

The Congress developed a high command structure only under Indira Gandhi. When PM Lal Bahadur Shastri died suddenly in Tashkent in 1966, it was the powerful state CMs and Congress leaders who selected Indira Gandhi to be his successor. But the leaders expected her to do their bidding and within three years Mrs Gandhi had rebelled.

In 1969, she split the Congress, calling her faction the Congress (R) while the state leaders controlled the organisational faction called the Congress (O). Mrs Gandhi wiped out the Congress (O) in

the 1971 election and never again allowed any powerful state leaders to grow too strong in the Congress. Assembly elections were fought in her name and she would nominate CMs herself. Generally, she chose people who had no independent support bases and owed their positions only to her. All important decisions were referred to Delhi and the concept of a high command to which these obedient lance naiks reported, took hold in the Congress.

In 1977, Mrs. Gandhi was ousted from the Congress after a massive defeat following the Emergency, so she split the Congress again, calling her faction the Congress (I). In the 1979/80 election, Congress (I) emerged victoriously and the high command structure reasserted itself. It remained that way through Rajiv Gandhi's reign too.

This arrangement collapsed towards the end of Narasimha Rao's term when it became clear that he was no election-winner. State leaders realised the central leadership could do

nothing for them. So they rebelled. For instance, Mamata Banerjee walked out and started her party. In Tamil Nadu, every Congressman of note left to found the Tamil Manila Congress.

When the Congress finally returned to office eight years after Narasimha Rao, the high command structure re-emerged but it was no longer as strong as it once had been. For instance, the Congress leadership needlessly alienated the family of the late YS Reddy (YSR) which led to the emergence of the YSR Congress, founded after Jagan, YSR's son, walked out of the Congress. In 2004, Andhra had been the key to the Congress's victory. Now, after the exit of the YSR faction, Congress hardly counts for anything in the state.

Ever since its collapse in two successive general elections, Congress has struggled to impose the high command model on its states. In Madhya Pradesh, it disregarded Jyotiraditya Scindia's claims and appointed Kamal Nath as CM. In Rajasthan, Ashok Gehlot was appointed over Sachin

Pilot's objections. Only in Punjab, was there no other obvious candidate for the job so Amarinder became CM.

But the high command model did not work. Scindia departed for the BJP leading to the collapse of the Madhya Pradesh government. Sachin Pilot rebelled and the government survived only after he had been mollified. His aides now suggest that the high command has not kept its end of the bargain and Rajasthan remains a ticking time bomb for the Congress.

In Assam, the high command model led to Hemanta Biswal Sharma leaving for the BJP after he had an unsatisfactory meeting with Rahul Gandhi. (He is now CM and the BJP has won two elections in a row in Assam.) In Maharashtra despite the high command's reservations (if not outright objections) the Congress's MLAs, opted to join a coalition with the Shiv Sena.

So, in many ways, Punjab is the last gasp of the high command model. Amarinder Singh is old-school enough to make the journey to Delhi to explain himself. But another leader in his place (say, Sidhu, who has form in this regard) could simply threaten to walk out of the party, as so many others have done, so successfully.

None of this is to say that the growing failure of the High Command model within Congress is a triumph of inner-party democracy. It is much more pragmatic than that.

If the High Command wants people to listen to it, then it must assure them that their legislative seats are safe, that they can win elections in the name of the High Command. This was why the model worked in the Indira era.

The problem is that the present Congress High Command is not able to offer any such assurances. The Congress's electoral record is dismal, while many of those who have left have flourished outside the Congress. (At least five non-Congress Chief Ministers are people who walked out of the Congress complaining about the High Command.) If Rahul Gandhi can demonstrate that he is a vote winner, then the high command model would seem strong and unchallenged again. But, as of now, this has not happened.

But the high command model remains one of India's great - if slightly dodgy - contributions to global democratic practices. It may be dying in Congress but just look at the BJP. As the party continues its transition to becoming a mirror image of the Indira Gandhi Congress, the high command model has never seemed stronger. Nothing of note happens in the BJP without the involvement of Narendra Modi or Amit Shah who appoints all CMs. State leaders know who the bosses are.

So yes, the Congress high command model is on its way out. But the BJP's high command model looks set to rule and rule.

Sherni

VidyaBalan film is a strange beast

VidyaBalan fronts a film about the primacy of nature and human greed and headlined by the majestic tiger

Sherni cast VidyaBalan, Brijendra Kala, Vijay Raaz, Sharat Saxena, Mukul Chadha, Ila Arun
Sherni director Amit Masurkar
Sherni rating 3 stars

For a film that comes from a very mainstream production house, 'Sherni' is a strange beast. A list actress fronts a film about the primacy of nature and human greed, headlined by the majestic tiger. No, it is not National Geographic, it is Bollywood.

Straight away, you want to hand out props to Amit Masurkar for daring to go down an untrodden path. And then you remember that he has already been there, done that: his 'Newton' was a terrific, trenchant look at the India which dwells in the cities, and the other, which lives in its deep interiors, especially those overrun by 'Maoists', and how the world's largest democracy manages to knit the two.

In the way, it takes us into the forests and those who dwell there, four-legged and two-legged animals, and shines a light on the murky goings-on therein, 'Sherni' seems

almost like a follow-up to 'Newton'. But that's where the comparison between the two ends: much more attention in the new film is paid to the king of the jungle whose pole position on the food chain maintains a balance in the ecosystem. As a character says, 'tiger haitoh jungle hai, jungle hai, toh baarish hai, aur baarish hai toh dharti hai', or wise words to that effect.

Balan plays a straight-laced forest officer newly transferred into tiger country, where she soon realizes that she's stepped into a minefield. There has been a ghastly kill, and a man-eating tigress is a chief suspect. Two rival political camps turn the tiger into a burning election issue, and a hunter shows up, hungry to add another notch on his belt. And the new lady forest officer, trying to do good, is the cynosure of all eyes.

This little village is a cauldron in which

conservation, environment, politics is simmering away, and the flashpoints are the deaths of those villagers who are forced to take their cattle to tiger country because their grazing land has been gobbled by the powerful mining lobbies. You get a great bird's eye view of the dense, green forest, and in the far distance, a glimpse of a tiger, a heart-stoppingly beautiful animal being hunted by those who have encroached on to his land.

'Sherni' has its high points. VidyaBalan gets in some smart swipes about being a professional first, not a 'Mahila, not just with a blustery local who tries to shout her down, but also her spouse (Mukul Chadha) who shows up unexpectedly, armed with mum, and mum-in-law (Ila Arun, delightful). As a local teacher who is her ally, Vijay Raaz livens up the scene. Brijendra Kala, as the area in charge, a typical babu who wants to be everyone's friend and no one's enemy without doing a thing, a hoot. And Neeraj Kabi, in his brief role of an experienced forest officer who says one thing but



means another, leaves an impact. The all-male gatherings of the netas and the officials and their hangers-on, especially one where liquor is flowing freely and the men are in their cups, are spot on.

Balan is a good choice

for these kinds of solid roles: here she is caught between getting enough star wattage (she strides just a little ahead of her colleagues; the camera rests just a little longer on her reactions), and giving us an accurate representation of doing

one of the toughest jobs in modern India, to keep our green lungs safe from predators of all kinds. Also, it's nice to have other women in the forest team who have a say in the proceedings.

When a tiger burns bright, we glow too.

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