

SEC begins process for urban local body polls



Bhubaneswar, Feb 3: With the finalisation of seat reservation process for various civic bodies, the state election commission (SEC) has begun the process of conducting election to over 100 urban local bodies (ULBs) which has been delayed by around three years.

The commission has set timeline for preparations of the final electoral, likely to be ready by this month-end. The SEC has already received seat reservation and ward delimitation process for

various ULBs. Hence, we can start the process of urban polls in the state, said state election commissioner Aditya Prasad Padhi.

Briefing reporters here, Padhi said there will be no new addition of voters in the electoral roll as the constituency-wise revised voters' list was prepared by the Election Commission of India on January 1.

"We will use the recently-revised voters' list and split it ward-wise. If the name (Page-11)

West Bengal governor prorogues assembly

Kolkata, Feb 13: West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on Saturday prorogued the West Bengal assembly with immediate effect.

"In exercise of the powers conferred upon me by sub-clause (a) of clause (2) of Article 174 of the Constitution, I, Jagdeep Dhankhar, Governor of the State of West Bengal, hereby prorogue the West Bengal Legislative Assembly with effect from February 12, 2022," Dhankhar tweeted.

The tweet, however, triggered confusion on whether it was the fallout out of the strained relationship between the Governor and the Mamata Banerjee administration.

An hour later, the Governor tweeted again clarifying that he had prorogued the assembly on the recommendation of the Mamata Banerjee administration. A senior government official too said that it was done on the recommendation of the

The tweet, however, triggered confusion on whether it was the fallout out of the strained relation between the Governor and the Mamata Banerjee-led administration.

government.

"It is indicated that taking note of government recommendation seeking

This is, however, not the first time that the Governor has prorogued the assembly. On February 9, 2021,

has prorogued the West Bengal Legislative Assembly from February 15, 2021, taking note of the recommendation dated Feb 15 to this effect," the Governor had tweeted last year.

Article 174 of the Indian Constitution says that the Governor shall from time to time summon the house or each house of the legislature of the state to meet at such time and place as he thinks fit, but six months shall not intervene between its last sitting in one session and the date appointed for its first sitting in the next session. Clause 2a of the Article says that the Governor may from time to time prorogue the house or either house or dissolve the (Page-11)



West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar

proroguing of assembly, Guv in the exercise of the powers conferred upon him by Article 174 (2) (a) the Constitution has prorogued WBLA w.e.f. Feb 12, 2022," Dhankhar tweeted.

Dhankhar had tweeted the same thing.

"In terms of Sub-clause (a) of Clause (2) of Article 174 of the Constitution of India, Governor of West Bengal Jagdeep Dhankhar,

Biden Dials Putin Over Ukraine, Warns Of "Swift, Severe Costs" On Russia

Moscow, Feb 13: Efforts to defuse the crisis in Ukraine via a frenzy of telephone diplomacy failed to ease tensions Saturday, with the White House insisting that Russia faces "swift and severe costs" if its troops carry out an invasion.

Russian President Vladimir Putin slammed Western claims that such a move might be on the horizon, calling the idea "provocative speculation" that could lead to a conflict in the ex-Soviet country, according to a Russian readout of a call with French President Emmanuel Macron.

Weeks of tensions that have seen Russia nearly



The Biden-Putin talks produced "no fundamental change" in dynamics

surround its western 100,000 troops intensified an all-out invasion could begin neighbour with more than after Washington warned that "any day" and Russia

launched its biggest naval drills in years across the Black Sea.

"If Russia undertakes a further invasion of Ukraine, the United States together with our Allies and partners will respond decisively and impose swift and severe costs on Russia," US President Joe Biden told Putin, according to the White House.

While the United States was prepared to engage in diplomacy, "we are equally prepared for other scenarios", Biden said, as the two nations stare down one of the gravest crises in East-West relations since the Cold War.

While the Biden-Putin talks were "professional and

substantive", lasting just over an hour, they produced "no fundamental change" in dynamics, a senior US official told reporters.

Russia's defence ministry added to the febrile atmosphere by announcing that it had chased off a US submarine that it alleged had crossed into its territorial waters near the Kuril Islands in the northern Pacific.

The ministry said it had summoned the US defence attaché in Moscow over the incident, while the Pentagon said only that it was aware of press reports.

Putin began his afternoon by holding talks with Macron that the (Page-11)

Odisha's Chikarada grampanchayat to see sarpanch election after 30 years

BHUBANESWAR: Even as a little more than one-third of the ward-member candidates and two per cent of the sarpanches in the forthcoming panchayat polls in Odisha have been declared as winners without any contest, a grampanchayat in the state for the first time in 30 years will choose its sarpanch through election.

Over 2,600 voters in Chikarada grampanchayat of Ganjam's Rangeilunda block for the first time will choose between 3 candidates for the post of sarpanch between February 16 and 24. Chikarada grampanchayat has only one village.

Sarpanch of the panchayat Mamata Mohanty, who was elected uncontested in 2017 panchayat polls, said it has been a tradition of the grampanchayat to not hold any election as the village development committee decides on that matter. "Since 1992 when our grampanchayat

was created as a separate one after being bifurcated from Randha grampanchayat, the village development committee has decided on all matters related to the panchayat including polls. Once the development committee comprising elderly members of the grampanchayat takes a decision, everyone abides by it," said Mohanty.

However, the tradition was broken this year after a number of youngsters decided that the village development committee may not be the best arbiter of everything about the village. "When everyone is talking about democracy, why should we not follow it? So, I decided to stand for the post of sarpanch," said Asantalu Reddy, a candidate. There are more than one candidate for the post of lone panchayat samiti member and 11 ward-member posts in the village.

Panchayat extension officer of Chikarada, Sudarshan



Bisoyi said apart from not seeing any electoral contest in panchayat polls in the last 30 years, the people in the grampanchayat don't enter into litigations that is the bane of most grampanchayats. "The village development committee tries to resolve the law-and-order issues and does not try to involve police or courts. But things are changing now and so it is imperative that elections are signalling the change. In any case, elections are good for democracy," he said. Though Article 243-E of

the Indian Constitution and the Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 imply regular elections every five years, several Indian states have been incentivising unanimous election to village panchayats arguing that such unanimity save poll expenses and help reduce litigations. Many state governments in India have been awarding financial grant on the basis of population of each village, and other incentives. The governments of Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan launched the scheme in 1960s

The Chikarada grampanchayat has signalled the change at a time more than one-third of the ward-member candidates and two per cent of the sarpanches in the forthcoming panchayat polls in Odisha have been declared as winners without any contest.

with the state now giving financial incentive of ₹5 lakh for villages having population less than 2,000, ₹10 lakh for gram panchayats having population between 2,001 and 5,000, ₹15 lakh for villages having population between 5,001 and 10,000 and ₹20 lakh for panchayats having population more than 10,000. The Gujarat government started the scheme in 1992 and revised it in 2001 as 'samara yojana'.

Though Odisha has no such scheme to incentivise

unanimous election, this year 36,523 candidates of the 91,890 posts of ward-members in the forthcoming panchayat polls in Odisha were declared elected uncontested by the State Election Commission. Similarly, of the total 6,793 posts of sarpanch in as many grampanchayats, 126 candidates were declared uncontested winners. In the case of panchayat samitis, 326 candidates out of the total 6,793 panchayat samiti were declared elected without contest.

Bhubaneswar's Khandagiri Mela Sees Participation Of Unique Sadhus



Bhubaneswar's Khandagiri Mela Sees Participation Of Unique Sadhus

Bhubaneswar, Feb 8: Even though the Magha Saptami Mela, also known as Khandagiri mela, is being observed sans devotees due to the present Covid-19 situation, a large number of sadhus have thronged the State capital to participate in the annual festival.

From Doctor baba to Pilot baba, from Standing baba to Rudraksha baba... these sadhus are catching attention of everyone at the mela venue for their unique assumed names.

Meet Doctor baba alias

Mahanta Mohan Giri. He is not a doctor by profession but prescribes medicines and his followers claim that the medicinal herbs and leave prescribed by the baba cures critical ailments.

The sadhu who claims to have studied Ayurveda from Nalanda University does not charge anything from devotees for the prescription.

"My friends told me about Doctor baba. He recommends ayurvedic medicine for paralysis, arthritis, brain stroke and other critical ailments,"

From Doctor baba to Pilot baba, from Standing baba to Rudraksha baba... these sadhus are catching attention of everyone at the mela venue for their unique assumed names.

said Rojalin Sahoo, a devotee.

"I have completed Ayurveda Ratna from Nalanda University. The degree is a five-year course. I provide treatment free of cost," said Mahanta Mohan Giri, or Doctor baba.

Similarly, another sadhu identified as Digambara Bam Bam Puri Maharaj is catching the eyeballs at the mela for his unusual attire. The baba goes by the name 'Rudraksha baba' as his entire body is draped with Rudraksha (stonefruit).

Mahant Chandan Giri, who is also known as Standing baba, is also another attraction at the festival. Every year, the baba keeps standing until the mela gets over.

Standing Baba claims his mentor is Pilot baba who fought

the Kargil war.

"I have faith on these sadhus. Therefore, I came here to seek their blessing to get a good job," said a devotee.

"I am not keeping well, so I came here to seek blessing for early recovery. If I recover, I will definitely come to the mela and offer prayers next year," said another devotee.

Notably, the Khandagiri Mela is being observed inside the temple at the historical hills with usual rituals without participation of devotees and with strict adherence to Covid-19 safety protocols due to the present Covid-19 situation.

Religious congregations, celebrations, operas have been strictly prohibited at the mela venue.

Stray dogs feed on newborn outside government hospital in Balasore; probe ordered

Balasore, Feb 4: A pack of stray dogs were reportedly feeding on the body of a newborn outside a government hospital in Odisha's Balasore.

The incident was reported near a Siddhi Vinayak temple. The dogs were feasting on the body parts of a newborn baby at the back gate of the district

A pack of stray dogs were reportedly feeding on the body of a newborn outside a government hospital in Odisha's Balasore. A probe has been initiated.



Stray dogs feed on newborn outside government hospital

hospital. The local residents informed the police stationed inside the hospital premises. The police are yet to ascertain whether the body was dumped by someone or whether it was washed away from other regions due to the unseasonal rains that occurred in the district today. Social activist Nazia Afrin told India Today that reports of stray dogs mauling newborns are regular in government hospitals and

in most cases, newborn girls are abandoned. Why is the administration unable to end the issue, she asked. Meanwhile, Chief District Medical Officer (CDMO) of Balasore DHH, Dr Dulansen Jagadev said, "I have ordered an inquiry. Right now I won't be able to say anything about the incident since I learned about it from the hospital manager. I can say anything about the incident only after an investigation is carried out."

Budget: Figures contradictory, Growth off the mark, PSU sale costly



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

A high-expectation ambitious Union Budget has many contradictions. It pines too high but may not create 60 lakh jobs and boost consumption.

It is a time of crisis. Farmers and youth are showing their displeasure. The micro and MSME sectors are in distress. People in the public sector are worried about job losses due to possible privatization. The economy hit by the pandemic has to come back to health and business must be on track to boost jobs and growth. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman appropriately bites the bullet of increased public expenditure but curiously cuts down on welfare and slashes key subsidies by

27 percent.

The 8 to 9 percent growth presumption is away from reality. Total expenses are calculated at 11.1 percent nominal growth. It is on assumption that retail or CPI inflation would be at 2.6 percent instead of the actual 5.6 percent. Inflation is global. It means the total expenditure is inappropriately calculated. Two years back there was a seven percent contraction means actual growth is far less. The worse, even 2019 growth was 3.7 percent as per NSO and not 4 percent as told earlier. Actual growth projections this year could be less.

Her arithmetic is conflicting. The government is short on

revenue earning is dependent on debt. It proposes to borrow Rs 14.95 lakh crore (lc) and of this Rs 11.6 lc crore will be raised from the shaky market. If the government picks up all the money, the credit will be more expensive. As the RBI rate rise is likely the cost of borrowings will increase. For creating jobs public sector is needed but it is being edged out.

So the onus should shift to the private but they have rarely taken such responsibilities and never get into expensive borrowings. Without the active participation of the private sector, the creation of the promised 60 lakh jobs and higher consumption is not possible.

The market is choppy. The disinvestment target is being reduced as there are fewer buyers. It has come down to Rs 65,000 crore for fiscal 2023, from Rs 78,000 crore in 2022 and Rs 1.75 lc in 2020-21. But transferring even profit-earning 171 public assets, as per Manmohanomics, to the private seems fashionable. The Air India deal cost a fortune. After handing over the Air India, AI Express, and AI SATS Airport Services to Tata for a song, Rs 2700 crore cash, the government is saddled with Rs 51,970 crore losses, debt, and liabilities, says FM.

During 2021-22, the Centre infused equity of Rs 62,057 crore to clear AI

dues before disinvestment. Now another Rs 9259 has been allocated to AI Assets Holding Ltd (AIAHL), a new PSU, to handle AI's unsettled debt and non-core assets. So government spends over Rs 71316 crore (and Rs 51970 crore losses!) to "sell" the mammoth AI.

The buyer walks out with 168 Boeing and Airbus aircraft, prime assets, a settled international business, and the family pride. The UPA minister, who drove profit-making AI and Indian Airlines to losses during 2005-07, escapes unscathed.

The first PSU steel plant NINL, with Rs 6600 crore liabilities, for Rs 12,100 crore is sold to Tatas on the budget day. The buyer profits with a 1 million ton a year plant in Odisha, 2500 acres of land, and 102 million ton prime iron ore mine. The LIC and four banks are on a similar sale block. It is too costly a "privatization"!

The total projected expenses of Rs 39.45 lc may remain on paper. It could not spend budgeted Rs 38.45 lc in 2021-22. The actual expenses were Rs 75,000 crore less at Rs 37.70 lc.

It has a tax revenue of Rs 27.58 lc and wants to have capital expenses of Rs 7.5 lc, 35.4 percent more from the present Rs 5.5 lc but this year it spent only Rs 2.48 lc, 48 percent less. This cannot create more jobs. It reduces allocation on rural development,

health, and other programs. The Rs 50000 crore for MSMEs is the bank credit.

The budget assumes crude prices to remain in the \$ 70-75 range. But realistically if it reaches \$ 90 or more it would add to 49 basis point inflation and send government expenditure and growth figures haywire.

A tax is buoyant when revenues increase by more than, say, 1 percent for a 1 percent increase in GDP. Tax buoyancy this year is expected at 0.86 percent. It is less than 1.4 percent of 2021-22. It means the budget expects the taxes to grow at a lower rate. If that is correct many projections could go awry or increase borrowings and fiscal deficit.

The FM could not count on huge savings for boosting consumption as people are not spending. Pre-budget data reveals Rs 7 lakh crore household savings and Jan Dhan deposits swelling to Rs 39,000 crore. But the households with Rs 18000 crore debts are not spending.

The Kisan expects more. The farm sector alone has sustained growth of around 4 percent but 86 crore lost their land. The buoyant farm sector can boost manufacturing and overall demand. It requires a thrust for the income generation of the 80 crore people, instead of free food doles so that they add to the nation's income.

Possibly 52 percent of these 80 crores were in the informal self-employed economy till demonetization, according to an SBI study. Except for about 15-20 percent, including a chunk of land-lost farmers, are now laborers. Should we not revive that low-cost people-initiated informalisation? It is cheaper than unicorns and employs more. The nation needs to rethink.

Even MGNREGA allocations have been reduced to Rs 73000 crore from Rs 98000 crore of 2021-22.

Rural development, health, and laborers need more support. So does lowering of income tax rates to match corporate tax. People need more cash for consumption boost else the manufacturing industry would be suffering.

The nation needs a more people-oriented approach than mere 25000 km roads, airports, and digital connectivity that help the corporate builders, toll collectors, and fee extractors. Irrationally high tolls and cesses ideally are scrapped to keep prices in check. Taxes are not "hiked" but devious cess robs more and hikes prices.

The budget cannot have contradictory projections and has to be more imaginative to overcome the difficult days and help the country sustainably grow.

SER GM Visit Rourkela Region

South Eastern Railway's General Manager Archana Joshi had come to Rourkela on 4th February to visit the various nearby stations to inspect the facilities there. After completion of inspection work she came to Bondamunda and met local railway union representatives, people's

They raised an important issue for easy transportation of iron ore by creating a new freight corridor from Lathikata to Kalunga station. Rourkela Steel Plant's stockyards could be shifted to that area by which the city will become free from heavy trucks and trailers.

They also raised the



South Eastern Railway's General Manager Archana Joshi

representative MLA Subrat Tarai, and delegation of Rourkela Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI). All of them submitted their memorandums and thoroughly discussed the issues concerning Rourkela.

RCCI delegation led by its President Praveen Garg which included Vice President Prabhat Tibrewal, treasure Vishwanath Dey, Railway coordination secretary Milan Modi, submitted a memorandum containing various points related with city's citizens, launching of new trains, upgrading of facilities at Rourkela station.

RCCI demand list included the creation of a new Rourkela division carving out of the existing Chakradharpur division. They argued that the Rourkela zone contributes the highest revenue to SER, it has all the infrastructure necessary for a division.

issue of early completion if new platform no 6. It would immensely benefit the people living on another side of the city. They also demanded the restoration of Sambleswari Express, Tata-Bilaspur, Nagpur-Tata passenger, Hatia-Bhubaneswar Garib Rath, Rourkela-Gunpur Rajya rani Express trains at the earliest.

RCCI also demanded the establishment of a new rail coach factory at Rourkela. It would be cost-friendly for Railway as steel would be available from RSP. Moreover, it would generate employment opportunities for youths of the region. Praveen Garg later talking with the media said that the discussion with GM Archana Joshi was very cordial. She listened to them patiently and carefully. She said many things needs policy decisions at higher level. But, She assured them to take immediate steps wherever it is possible at her level.

Budget 2022-23 Reactions

Soma Mondal, Chairman, SAIL has put forward her reaction on the Union Government's budget- 2022-23 presented on 1st February. Giving her reaction she said,

"The union budget 2022-23 holds promise for faster economic development putting the Indian economy on a higher trajectory of growth. The budget envisages higher Public investment and capital spending by the Government. There is a direct focus on intensifying the infrastructure developmental activities through the PM Gati Shakti Programme with seven engines of growth, focus on Highways network, PM Awas Yojna in rural and urban areas, Har Ghar Nal Se Jal scheme, etc. The additional focus on the MSME sector will also trigger enhanced economic activities. These efforts are sure to have a positive impact on the overall economy and it augurs well for the steel sector."

Industrialist and author on economic subjects R P Gupta also expressed his thoughts about the union budget.

He found positive points in the budget which highlighted the strengths of the economy such as recovery from the pandemic, export growth of 16.5%, Forex Reserves of USD 634 billion, and the fiscal deficit at 6.8% of GDP within a prudent limit. Higher allocation in the budget for CAPEX and infra spending is indeed praiseworthy. However, alone government investment can't support the growth target of 8-8.5%, as fixed in the budget. Therefore, India must undertake a series of regulatory reforms for boosting private investment.

However, he also pointed out that the budget has failed to discuss the achievements and failures in the targets of the previous Budget. More so, the weakness of the economy is neither spelled out nor fully addressed.

"Unemployment is at record high level and the income of poor and middle class is adversely affected. High inflation has enlarged their miseries. Cash transfers and free ration is not a long-term solution. Budget could have provided the fiscal and monetary stimulus besides policy support to the Unorganized Sector, Farm Sector and MSME Sector which provides the largest employment," observed Mr Gupta.

Few policy announcements have been done and I am sure that; in the coming days, India shall make more announcements in resolving the impediments. So that, the growth target of 8.0-8.5% in F/Y-2022-23 is achieved and the job crisis is resolved," he added.

Another industrialist and former president of Rourkela Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Gaurishankar Agarwal lauded the union budget. He said this budget was futuristic. It has stressed infrastructure building and when there is huge capital expenditure it would automatically create employment opportunities. "I find the current budget as a growth-oriented budget. It would stimulate construction work in different fields from highways, waterways to airports. These all ultimately help in nation-building."

Continuous Casting Machine-3 creates new record

The Continuous Casting Machine-3 (CCM-3) of Steel Melting Shop-II department of SAIL, Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP) has created a new record in the longest sequence of heats. The all-time best performance was achieved by CCM-3 with the casting of a record 186 heats during the sequence.

It is worth mentioning that Continuous Casting Machine-2 (CCM-2) went for capital repair on 26th January 2022 for 5 days. So the challenge for



CCM-3 was to run continuously for the period to maintain uninterrupted production of the department. The team comprising operation, mechanical, electrical, and instrumentation took up the challenge and the Caster-3 sequence started on 26th January at evening 5:26 hrs. The Sequence culminated on 1st February 2022 at afternoon 2:36 hrs with a total casting time of 141 hours and 10 minutes. In the process, 186 heats were cast leading to a crude steel production of 29757 tons and 1119 slabs. The Secondary Steel Units and Basic Oxygen Furnace contributed immensely in achieving success by feeding heats at the right time, at the right temperature, and with the right chemistry.

The record yet again exemplifies the unmatched determination of the RSP collective who has time and again shown their brilliance to help the plant soar to new highs.

Dalmia Cement Launches Virtual OPD Clinic

In light of the current healthcare emergency sweeping the nation, Dalmia Cement (Bharat) Limited (DCBL) has launched a, virtual Out Patient Department (OPD) for its employees in Rajgangpur. The online Doctor-to-Patient OPD service provides uninterrupted health services to the employees affected by the pandemic. Both, COVID

patients and those at risk, can connect with specialist doctor over video conferencing and obtain medical treatment and advice for health-related concerns.

Ensuring the safety of its 5000 plus employees and family members across neighbouring villages, DCBL Rajgangpur plant's COVID taskforce and social media groups are monitoring pandemic-related activities more closely.

The virtual OPD service is in addition to the medical services already being offered at DCBL Rajgangpur plant's primary healthcare clinic, Spandan. The plant is also helping employees raise their immunity level with its mindfulness meditation drive. Employees can now join the plant's virtual yoga sessions, scheduled twice daily, to boost the immunity and mental wellness.

"Foreseeing the repercussions of the pandemic, we instinctively decided to work collaboratively so that the well-being of the employees is given priority without compromising on our work ethic and sustainable business practices," said Chetan Shrivastav, Executive Director, DCBL and Unit Head - Rajgangpur. He further said,

"We are confident that, through our efforts, the Dalmia Cement family in Rajgangpur as well as our neighbouring communities will be able to fight through these challenging times and come out stronger and more resilient,"

Odisha HC CJ inaugurates E filing station



JAGATSINGHPUR, Feb 12: The Odisha High court chief justice Dr. S Muralidhar inaugurated an E

filing station at district court premises here including another in Kendrapada court site through virtual mode.

Speaking at the inaugural event CJ underlined the importance of digital and electronics methods in judicial works in recent times and discharging professional duty for the legal fraternity, he appealed to young lawyers practicing legal profession to maintain its dignity and sanctity in their carrier, so also

he pleaded more and more women should come forward adhering legal occupation, CJ mentioned. Odisha HC's another judge Justice CR Das joined the event virtually and addressed the attending legal fraternity. Jagatsinghpur district bar association president Gagan Dash chaired the meeting, senior lawyer Rabindra Nath Mohanty addressed the inaugural speech, and general secretary Naresh Das proposed a vote of thanks.

Trouble created for BJD in Jagatsinghpur

JAGATSINGHPUR, Feb 12: Amidst rural polls campaigns are picking up in Jagatsinghpur district, Ex-minister and former BJD veteran Damodar Rout sudden arrival in election campaigning has created a flutter in the public domain.

Dama Babu abruptly jumped to the elections campaigning on Thursday visited a few Panchayat's as Gare, Pandua, Bagei, Zilla Parishad zone 2 under Kujanga block under his MLA son's assembly constituency Paradeep.

During campaigning former BJD veteran Dama Babu urged people to cast vote for good people. While visiting Gare Panchayat the ex-minister spelled out that the rural polls are fought on a without party basis, only in Zilla Parishad elections do political parties give tickets to the aspirant candidate who fights elections in party symbol.



Dama Babu reiterated ex-chief minister Biju Patnaik's opinion, who had been forbidden party politics in Grama Panchayat elections so he appealed to people to exercise their franchise electing good people and deserving candidates acceptable for Panchayat.

While sources added that Dama Babu was accompanying a rally of BJD supporters, BJD backed contesting candidates of Panchayat's but he could not

directly voice to cast vote in favor of BJD. The incident has created a flutter among people, many have opined that Dama Babu was the father of Paradeep MLA Sambit Rout, voters were reputed that Dama Babu may campaign for the BJD candidate but he advocated electing good people for Panchayat cutting across party affiliations, informed Kailash Chandra Swain who is a Sarapancha candidate for Pandua Panchayat.

Moreover, Tirtol MLA Bijaya Shankar Das pushes BJD into trouble amid the ongoing GP polls. A photo of MLA Das with a girl in conceding mood going viral in social Media hugely, few have been informed that the girl has been recognized girl friend of MLA Das who is a bachelor, both had been running love affairs since years, recently their dealings have turned sour, the alleged photos have been posted in social platform defaming MLA Das who was busy in GP elections in his assembly constituency.

In turn during campaigning few people are questioning the credibility of the photo, few party insiders informed that MLA Das expresses his stupid silence over the photos, while the Panchayat elections coming nearer the opposition likely build an election issue, may damage BJD's image, few party insiders apprehend.

Alaka Ashram centenary celebrated

JAGATSINGHPUR, Feb 12: The Alaka Ashrama centenary celebration was inaugurated by state Governor Prof Ganeshi Lal through virtual mode. The celebration was held at Swadhinata Sangram Bhawan here, organized by Alka Ashrama Smruti Parishad.

Speaking at the event

chairman Gouranga Hota, Binayak Patnaik, educationists Mahendra Acharya, Banshidhar Patnaik, dramatist Kailash Mallick, Snehamayee Acharya were spoken on the occasion.

Moreover, a foundation stone laying ceremony of Alaka Ashram was organized at Chatara village here where



Governor discussed the pre-independence freedom movement of the country and the contributions of freedom fighters for achieving independence; he also greeted organizers hosting 100 years celebration of Alaka Ashrama.

Among others, Dr Shankar Kumar Sanyal, Gandhian Dr Bhagaban Prakash, Laxmi Das, Padmabhusan Dr Pratiba Ray delivered speeches through a computer-generated form. The centenary committee chairman former collector Sangram Keshari Mohapatra joining cybernetic mode informed that during his tenure as Jagatsinghpur collector had sanctioned Rs 20 Lakh for the renovation of Alaka Ashrama, sadly no progress has been made for the work, he rued. sources informed that due to delay in land supply by doner the project is lagging.

Committee working

the original Alaka Ashrama had been built 100 years back. Late Utkal Mani Gopabandhu Dash great-grandson Dhirendranath Dash laid the foundation stone of the new Alaka Ashrama.

Late freedom fighter Bhagirathi Mohapatra's kin Laxmi Prakash Mohapatra has donated a piece of land for the Alaka Ashrama founding, attending the occasion Mohapatra vowed to establish Alaka Ashrama here within one year by own arrangements. Among others historian Niharranjan Patnaik, journalist Gurukalyana Mohapatra, Sarvodaya leaders Gouranga charan Mohapatra, Biraja Devi, educationists Er Pravakar Swain, Biswajit Ray, Binayak Patnayak, advocate G C Kanungo, Gyana Ranjan Samantray, and Nirranjan Barik were attended the foundation stone laying event.

Demand for the restoration of the Puri- Paradeep Express train

JAGATSINGHPUR, Feb 12: Demand for more train services and restoration of Puri- Paradeep express train have increased, as thousands of people are using the train to commute Paradeep port town every day but due to Covid restriction, the train services have been suspended last four months. The unorganized train commuters have petitioned DRM Railways, Khurda appealing immediate restoration of Puri- Paradeep express train services to Paradeep port town. The commuters have been recognized as workers, laborers, and employees working in several industrial houses functioning in Paradeep, usually depending on rail services to go to their workplaces.

Mainly an express train Puri- Paradeep has been suspended past four months causing Covid 19 restriction, as result passengers are suffering immensely. The train starts from Puri in wee hours and reaches at Paradeep destination around 10.15 AM had been supporting the office goers, locals, and industries workers of Jagatsinghpur district. Furthermore, the train connects direct access to Puri holy town daily. Commuters of Paradeep adjacent have made a fervent plea for the restoration of passenger rail service between Puri to Paradeep and more trains on Cuttack- Para dip rail track urgently, informed a daily passenger. However railways sources said that train services will continue to be provided as per demand, we are ready to normalize operation but no time to be given because of the pandemic.

Betel vines demolition for JSW project complete in Dinkia

JAGATSINGHPUR, Feb 12: The ongoing betel vines demolition drive for the proposed JSW project in Erasama coast near Paradip was ostensibly ended, as many as 822 vines were razed to earth, and 757 betel growers have received compensation an amount of Rs 19 Crore.

Interestingly the anti-JSW bastion Dinkia village has been recorded the highest betel vines destruction, reports informed that 272 betel vine growers had opted to sacrifice their vines from them 261 vines have razed and



necessary compensation disbursed to the 218 betel farm losers.

According to the JSW press release reveals that the betel vines clearing was launched on December 22, 2021, from Govindapur Panchayat where 102 vines were cleared. Then the

initiative had continued in Dinkia Panchayat recognized as the anti-JSW epic center.

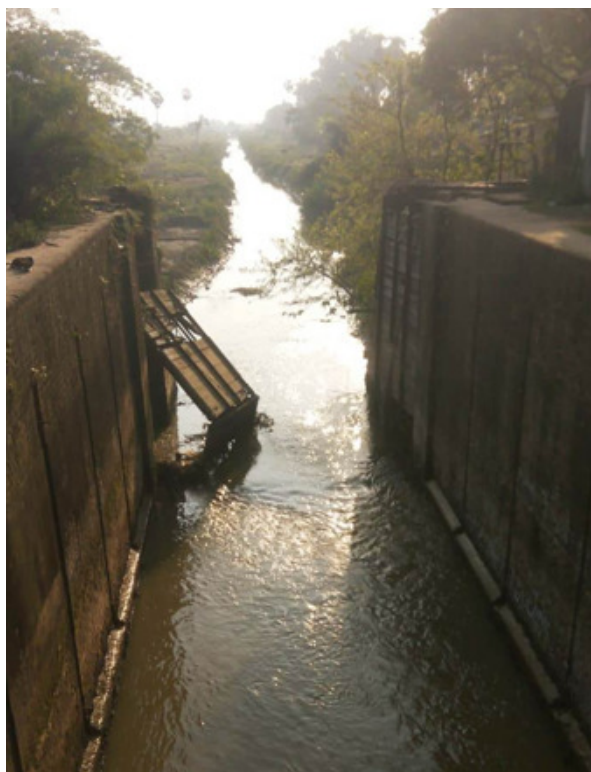
As many as 261 residents of Mahala village under Dinkia Panchayat had given willingness give their betel vines for the JSW project from them 251 have been demolished and 239 betel growers were

compensated.

Moreover Dinkia Panchayat's other revenue village Patana where 225 betel vine cultivators have been given their vines for the proposed JSW project, and have acknowledged compensation.

The JSW sources indicate that overall betel vines demolition in Dinkia Panchayat has concluded on Monday, few betel vine-growers who had been volunteered to clear their vines have been excluded due to disputes raised during the demarcation and consultations process.

Neglect in revival of Coast canal likely to impact rural polls in Balasore



Balasore, Feb9:-Neglect in the renovation of British era coast canal for a long time due to the alleged apathy of State Government and politicians is likely to impact the coming rural poll in Balasore district.

The century-old coast canal is 221-km long from West Bengal to Odisha where the thousands of farmers and fishermen were depending upon the canal as it used to enhance irrigation; pisciculture and flood control in both districts Balasore and Bhadrak of Odisha as well as many in West Bengal. The canal connects from the Hooghly River at Geonkhali, 72 km from Kolkata with the Matai River at Charbatia near Bhadrak through Bhograi and Baliapal, and Basta blocks in Balasore district that 13 km in Bhograi, 14 km in

Jamkunda in Baliapal, and 13 km from Jamkunda to Mandhata. The total 40-km stretch from Bhograi to Mandhata is lying neglected.

The residents of Jamkunda in the Baliapal block threatened to give the right answer in the panchayat polls as their demand for the revival of the century-old canal has not been fulfilled yet, despite the politicians promising in the last polls.

Jagannath Mahana and Mrunmay Singh the residents of Jamkunda panchayat of Baliapal block said that the canal is continuing to disappear due to the lack of maintenance and scouring. Once the old-canal revives, it will give extended support for the irrigation, pisciculture, and inter-state communication route as well as it will maintain for the

protection of countryside villages from high tides during cyclones and protect the entry of saline water in both districts.

The reports said that the canal construction was started in 1880-81 to protect people from acute famine and the cost of the project was around Rs.36 lakh. Later it was renovated in 1888 but the British Government stopped its renovation in 1909. Due to the meager interest of the department officials, Government and politicians so far no high budget has been allocated for the revival of the canal.

The villagers said besides the canal supported for relief to the famine and drought-hit during 'Na-Anka Durbhikhya' it had been used broadly for transport, trade, and communication

route which people of Baliapal, Basta, Bhograi in Balasore and checked the drought-hit people in Bhadrak districts.

There nearly 500-acre land had been irrigated by the water of the canal but due to poor allocation of budget from the Government has a factor for non-revival of the canal and huge disposition of silt causes farming obstruction. Contacted, Superintending Engineer of Balasore irrigation division Pravesh Kumar Pradhan said that the public had been demanded reviving of the canal and it will be helped for pisciculture. Though there are some registered farmers, they do not pay tax to the government for the benefits and no fund has been allocated yet for its revival from the Government.

Meager railway connectivity likely to play crucial role in polls

Baripada, Feb9: The neglect in railway connectivity hits the tribal-dominated Mayurbhanj district. With panchayat polls a few days away, the vital issue is likely to be another deciding factor for the political parties even though the leaders have been promising time and again before the last polls.

The allocation of one crore rupees for the survey of lines for the development in the railway sector in the recent budget is not a new thing as such practice had been there since long, so far no final location survey carried out by the railway department.

Residents only know the survey for the route connectivity in inter-states and inter-districts had been carried out the department by Kharagpur division under South Eastern Railway (SER) by spending government revenue in lakhs and the survey reports were submitted to higher authorities and Ministry of

Railway but practically route connectivity works are yet to commence. The people of the district had been demanded since long for the railway connectivity of 53km Bangiriposi-Garumahisani,

knowledge of the officers and politicians in the district.

President of Mayurbhanj Railway Travellers Forum Abhijeet Ram said that despite the scope for developing railway infrastructure in the

the route works, however, no political leaders had been urged before the Ministry of the railway to push the issue for long.

Due to the poor willpower of the politicians, a DMU train

commutes from the rural pockets of the district are forced to spend extra money reach Balasore by bus services, he said adding that even with the demand of two Baripada-Puri two trains for a regular

out by a team of seven officials of SER for the Chakulia-Budhamara railway line in 2019 which, when laid, will reduce the distance between Puri and Delhi by around 150 km. The railway line will provide an interchange option in addition to the existing Kharagpur-Tatanagar route since no final location of the survey has been carried out by the department, he said.

While inaugurating the Railway Heritage Museum at Baripada on November 17, 2021, Union Minister of State for Jal Shakti and Tribal affairs Bishweswar Tudu told media that survey work of the new rail line between Bangiriposi and Gorumahisani has already been completed. The route connectivity work was expected to commence within a couple of months and Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw would inaugurate the project but no needful steps were taken so far.



around 80km Badampahar-Keonjhar, 55 km Budhamara-Chakulia and a regular basis train from Baripada to Puri via Cuttack and Bhubaneswar, but the demands are yet to be fulfilled having it has in the

district, nothing has been done to cater to the demands of the people in the district. The Ministry of Railway has been allocated funds for the survey of route connectivity in lakhs, after survey no progress for

who regularly provide the service from Bangiriposi to Balasore two times a day is presently communicated from Bangiriposi to Rupsa but the service up to Balasore is remained stopped and the

service, a special train is running from Bhanjpur to Bhubaneswar on Thursday (one time) in a week than not to cater to the communication problem from Baripada to Puri.

A survey had been carried

Price rise, inflation not addressed in budget; CM Naveen Patnaik

Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik said that the union budget has not addressed issues such as price rise and inflation



Bhubaneswar, Feb 1: Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Tuesday gave a mixed response to the union budget, welcoming various proposals announced by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman while denouncing some others.

Patnaik welcomed proposals to increase allocation under Jal Jeevan Mission, PMAY (Prime Minister Awas Yojana), while criticising the centre on price rise, inflation and LPG gas price.

"Middle class and poor people are heavily impacted by price rise and inflation. The budget has not addressed the price rise being faced by people. To compound this further, there is a sharp decline in LPG subsidies. This will affect household economics very badly and women will bear the brunt of LPG price rise," he said.

The focus of the budget on technology and infrastructure-led growth will have a positive impact. Proposed technology-led

development in health and education will help the country to a large extent in this pandemic, Patnaik said.

However, Patnaik said that reduction in MGNREGS allocation during a pandemic situation is not going to help the poor people.

"The sectoral allocation is slashed in critical sectors like agriculture and farmer's welfare, higher education, rural development and women and child development. This could hamper inclusive growth," Patnaik said.

The Odisha chief minister stated that there are serious issues of offtake by FCI leading to dislocation in paddy procurement. Further, reduction in food subsidy under NFSA will put farmers in serious trouble. The Production Linked Initiative schemes in fourteen sectors and extension of Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme would be helpful in mitigating supply side constraints, he

added.

Patnaik said, "The increasing level of Cess and Surcharge is shrinking the mandated transfers of share tax due to the States. More than 20 percent of the Union Taxes are proposed to be collected through levy of Cess and Surcharge which is against the spirit of co-operative federalism."

Patnaik also applauded the "Odisha Millet Mission" for being a game changer in promoting nutritional security and augmenting farmer's income. I am happy that the Government of India has recognized the importance of millet in the budget in the context of the declaration of 2023 as the International Year of Millets by the United Nations, he said. He further stated that Odisha is frequently affected by natural calamities and demand for special consideration was not met in the budget.

Odisha Govt Sends 5 More 'Corrupt' Officials On Compulsory Retirement

Bhubaneswar, Feb 8: Continuing its policy of zero tolerance towards corruption, the Odisha government on Tuesday sent 5 officers on compulsory retirement for resorting to dishonest practices.

The five officers, who have been issued the notice of compulsory retirement, include an engineer, a police inspector, a revenue supervisor, an SDPO and an Anganwadi supervisor. With this, 146 officials have so far been suspended or sent on retirement by the government for resorting to corrupt practices.

One of the officers, who has been issued compulsory retirement notice, is an Assistant engineer of ITDA, Baripada in Mayurbhanj. He was arrested on charges of having properties disproportionate to his known sources of income amounting to Rs 2.8 crore. His properties include a two-storey building in Bhubaneswar, a flat in Sailashree Vihar, a half-constructed building in Kalinga Vihar and three flats in Balasore.

SDPO of Balikuda in Jagatsinghpur Sarala Dei, who

faces the government action, was nabbed red-handed by Vigilance officials while accepting a bribe of Rs 20,000. The Vigilance raids revealed that she is in possession of 5 housing plots in Bhubaneswar, one plot in Pipili and two more plots in Jagatsinghpur.

Similarly, Anganwadi supervisor Pratima Sahu, who faces corruption charges, have been told to go on retirement. She was also arrested by Vigilance while accepting gratification. Police inspector Ramchandra Behera of Police Training College in Angul, who has several allegations of inefficiency and indiscipline against him, has also been retired from the service. Revenue Supervisor Hrudanand Sahu, working in tehsildar office in Keonjhar district, faces a corruption charge. He was nabbed by the Vigilance while accepting a bribe of Rs 20,000 from a complainant.

It may be noted that the government recently suspended a senior IFS officer and a senior IAS officer on corruption charges.



One-third of Odisha rural poll posts won unopposed, 90% of them by BJD

The opposition alleged the ruling BJD had threatened candidates from other parties to withdraw their nominations and used foul means to keep them away

Bhubaneswar, Feb 5: The Opposition BJP and Congress have cried foul as the ruling BJD's candidates formed 90 per cent of the 36,976 panchayat election nominees declared to have been elected uncontested by the Election Commission. This is for the first time in the state that one-third of the posts in a rural election have been won uncontested.

Of the total 91,890 wards in the state, 36,523 were won uncontested. So were 126 of the total 6,793 posts of sarpanch. Also elected

unopposed were 326 candidates of the total 6,793 nominees running for panchayat samiti posts.

The opposition alleged the ruling BJD had threatened candidates from other parties to withdraw their nominations and used foul means to keep them away. "The ruling party's leaders were given charge at the district level to manage the withdrawal of nominations. That such a huge number of seats won uncontested definitely raises questions. We too are in touch with all our party cadres at the district and



Out of 91,890 wards in the state, 36,523 were won uncontested

ward levels. Every discrepancy will be reported and we will approach the State Election Commission with enough evidence against the

BJD," BJP general secretary Golak Mohapatra said. "We have instances where candidates owing allegiance to the BJP were threatened and

pressured to withdraw from the contest."

Congress spokesperson Manoj Mohapatra said, "These are seats where the BJD knew that a win would have been difficult if all parties had contested. Because they were unsure of a win, they used all the force to keep candidates away."

The BJD, however, rejected the allegations and said that if there had indeed been any such incidents; they should have been reported to the commission

before it notified the successful candidates.

On Thursday the commission also released the breakup of candidates for zilla parishad zones. While the BJD has fielded candidates from all the 851 seats, BJP and Congress candidates are in the fray from 848 and 836 seats respectively. Candidates fielded by other parties are the BSP (159), JMM (47), CPM (72), CPI (38), AAP (32), AJSU (12), others (211) and independents (298).

Modi's Political Harakiri !



Sirish C. Mohanty

After BJP's defeat in the 2004 general elections, the BJP-BJD coalition government in Odisha continued but the BJP's central leadership gradually became dependant on the BJD while Naveen-led BJD gradually tilted towards the number-starved UPA government. The state unit of the BJP being a partner of the coalition government was not given the due weightage in the governance. The central leadership of the party too had a blind eye towards the complaint of the state leadership. During the heydays of POSCO investment, Juel Oram opposed the arbitrary decisions of CM Naveen to allot Khandadhar mines to the South Korean steel company. Instead of listening to Oram's points, LK Advani reprimanded him and warned him not to go against the CM. With a series of such incidents, the state leadership of the BJP lost the spirit of a coalition partner of the government. The deterioration of the state BJP was reached to such a level that Naveen had to be consulted

about who should be the chief of the state unit. Consequently, the BJP was dumped to fight alone in the 2009 general elections to lick the dust. After the 2014 elections, things didn't change for the state unit of the saffron party.

However, in the 2017 rural polls, the state BJP improved its tally significantly and becomes the second-largest party in the 2019 elections replacing Congress. The state unit of the saffron party was quite optimistic to fare better in the 2022 rural polls. Many failures of the BJD government, misgovernance, anti-incumbency, and crime against the woman were the main weapons of the state BJP to fight BJD. The Central leadership of the party including the PM applauded Naveen's leadership at crucial moments acting as speed-breakers for the state unit of the BJP.

In the last 4-years, the recent one is PM Modi's third praise for Naveen. Modi could have avoided this when BJP-BJD are locked in the Rural polls. Modi's lackadaisical praise to an

electoral opponent at this crucial time stabs the prospects of the resurgent state BJP.

The admiration for CM Patnaik on the floor of the Upper House comes at a time when the BJD and BJP are at daggers drawn on Odisha's rural landscape - as the parties are the main contenders in the ensuing Panchayat polls - has come in as a surprise to political observers back in the State.

Observers opine- an extol right from PM Modi at this crucial juncture when the State BJP is having an all-out war against the ruling BJD led by CM Naveen Patnaik for what they called the dispensation a 'failed administration' and delivering 'poor governance' that has acerbated the sufferings in the rural land of the State, could prove a booster dose for the BJD.

Is It A Political Harakiri?

A rewind shows that PM Modi had praised CM Patnaik on May 7, 2019 - the first after a bitterly fought election only a month before (Results were not declared then). PM Modi was in Odisha in the aftermath of the

Fani battering the State. Post carrying out an aerial survey, the Prime Minister with Patnaik in tow, said: "Naveen babu ne bohut acha plan Kiya (for evacuating 12 lakh people), Bharat sarkar usmein unke saath reh karke sari cheezon ko aage badha payegi."

However, on that day addressing a rally at Tamluk in West Bengal, PM Modi had said, "I just came from Odisha after reviewing the post-cyclone situation. I wanted to speak to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee over the phone. I called her but Didi is so arrogant that she didn't speak to me. I waited for her to call, but she didn't get back to me."

Then PM Modi said, "Speedbreaker Didi is doing politics. I wanted to speak to the state officials but the state government did not let that take place."

It was on March 18, 2020, when CM Patnaik tweeted "I have registered my sister's details in the Government portal for persons coming from abroad. I appeal to all of you to also register details about your family members and friends coming from abroad. This will help protect Odisha from CoronaVirus."

Quoting the tweet, PM Modi said, "Setting a great example, Chief Minister! I hope others also emulate Naveen Babu. We all can do our bit in preventing the spread of COVID-19."

On Feb 8, 2022, replying to

the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address in Rajya Sabha, while speaking on cooperative federalism, PM Modi said, "A significant increase in revenue has been visible following the reforms in the sector of coal mining. The revenues have increased to Rs 35,000 crore from Rs 14,000 crore in just a year. The auction revenue went to the State's kitty. Funds from the mining revenue go to the District Mineral Fund (DMF). The money realized has benefitted the states. When states grow, the growth will accrue to Centre's growth. This is what cooperative federalism is."

In the same vein, PM Modi then added, "Odisha has been in the forefront in implementing the reforms and conducting auctions. Therefore, I congratulate Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik for working shoulder to shoulder with the Centre."

A careful study of the above extols underlines one common point - unlike others, PM Modi praised CM Naveen Patnaik's inclination to work in tandem with the Centre in implementing the policy imperatives - be it Cyclone restoration or the reform agenda.

Political observers are of the view that the Prime Minister could have avoided referring to CM Patnaik on the floor of the house. But he didn't. However, they don't see it as political harakiri but as a political strategy.

Letter to the Editor

Dear Sir,

Your Spl story contains an in-depth study of the noble aims & objectives of our constitution which is the 'must read' for students and teachers of political science.

The threadbare analysis of all amendments in the past would enlighten and educate professional

politicians and political activists to form their opinion on the basic structure of the constitution. & probable changes in it to suit the changing needs as well as aspirations of our people.

This is how, the largest democracy can be robust dynamic, and vibrant in the future.

Secondly, your editorial presented a complete picture of various populist welfare schemes formulated by Govt. to extend financial benefits right from farmers, teachers, Anganwadi workers to newspaper hawkers.

You have also questioned the political morality of the Naveen govt. for reckless expenditure of huge funds

only to gain political mileage.

As you have justified in pointing that the cheap temporary favors would enable the govt. to ensure victory in the election but, it would fail to bring about any holistic growth.

All parties are indeed resorting to this unethical nefarious method to achieve their narrow political goals.

But the outcome of the coming panchayat election would throw light on how far the gullible voters will muster courage and conviction not to be easily influenced & misled by the immediate monetary gain while giving their mandate.

Bharat Patra
Rtd. Banker & Social
activist, Keonjhar.

Money Matters In Elections



Sirish C. Mohanty

Suchitra is followed by Jaladhara Mohanty who with the ruling party's support is contesting from zone no 14. His total assets are pegged at Rs 3 crore.

Apart from this, five candidates have assets worth more than Rs 50 lakh, as per affidavits filed by the contestants.

Another Odisha district is Kendrapada. BJD candidate Pradipta Ghana (38) from Zilla Parishad zone-25 in Marshaghai block is the richest of the candidates in the district owning movable and immovable assets worth Rs 2.2 crore. Ghana, a businessman, owns two luxury vehicles, seven trucks besides jewelry, savings, insurance policies, houses, and agricultural and housing plots.

42-year-old Jyosnarani Jena, a housewife contesting from Zilla Parishad zone 8 in Kendrapara and a BJD can-



Mahakud along with his once political rival Kusha Apat funded the election campaigns and awarded the privilege by the vulnerable BJD of selecting candidates for the rural polls. Similarly, earlier in the 2019 general elections too Sanatan without contesting the polls successfully selected and funded the lone seat of MP and Member of Assembly seat from Champua. According to press reports, these candidates of

sources in the region thrives in Keonjhar with his support. However, Sanatan's selected BJD MLA Minakshi Mahanta surprisingly opposes Sana's candidates confusing the voters. This is in short the impact of money on politics in a state like Odisha.

Now let's come to our topic of discussion-Money matters in elections. In the increasingly high stakes world of election campaigning, aggressive displays of candidate wealth, from cash handouts to alcohol distribution, to big rallies, are becoming more common and more extravagant.

While money plays a key role in most elections across the country, the particular reliance of Indian parties on candidates with great personal wealth is quite a unique phenomenon. To answer this question, one needs to understand how candidates are selected and the policymaking role of legislators in India's political system.

India's parties display very low "intra-party democracy" because the party's policy decisions are routinely made by a small coterie of party elites. More importantly, party tickets are typically distributed-or even sold-by these elites in the absence of a functioning democratic process within the party.

Even if a candidate wins his or her seat, anti-defection laws effectively prevent elected representatives from having much of a role in policymaking. In such a scenario, third-party actors have few incentives to invest in specific candidates, rather than a party at large. With little opportunity to rise out-

side funds, candidates must largely finance their election campaigns. Naturally, this has led to a rise of wealthy candidates. In the 2014 national election, candidates reported a median wealth of ₹23.8 lakh -approximately 27 times the nominal per capita income of India in 2014-2015 of ₹88,533-which is, in turn, significantly wealthier than the general population.

There are reasons to be worried about this rise of self-financing candidates in India. First, if candidates need to be wealthy to contest an election, only a small subset of the population can realistically hold office, resulting in legislators that have less in common with the citizens they represent. Second, if parties increasingly look at personal wealth to select candidates, instead of characteristics of "quality" such as education or constituency service, then elected politicians may become worse at representing their constituents.

Finally, and most importantly, if campaigns must be self-financed, then candidates may view contesting elections as an investment rather than a sunk cost, leading to greater levels of corruption in office as legislators try to recoup the costs of contesting elections. Indeed, related evidence suggests that incumbent politicians enjoy a significant return on their assets. Candidates from competitive parties (defined as a party that was one of the top two finishers in a constituency) selected candidates who were approximately 20 times richer than candidates from non-competitive parties. This implies that can-

didates with any chance of winning an election are much richer than the overall candidate pool.

Even when restricting attention to the top two candidates, the richer candidate reported moveable asset wealth about four times greater on average than the poorer candidate. As the wealth gap grows between the top two candidates in a constituency, the richer candidate has a higher probability of winning. In the median case, the wealthier candidate is about 10 percentage points more likely to win than the poorer candidate.

Taken together, these analyses provide statistical evidence that competitive parties are more likely to field wealthier candidates, and, even when focusing only on those candidates that have some chance of winning, wealth is strongly correlated to electoral success.

This result is consistent with growing incentives parties face selecting wealthy candidates to self-finance increasingly expensive campaigns. Self-financing candidates, in addition to covering their campaign costs, can bring in funds for the party and subsidize poorer candidates. Possibly, that might be the reason of Naveen-led Odisha government has a record number of 13 crorepati ministers in the cabinet after the 2019 elections.

The root cause of the rise of wealthy candidates is the weak representative role of state's elected politicians. The rules governing the system are such that, even after winning the election, legislators have little power in policymaking-which is controlled by a small set of party elites. In short, state's politicians have little incentive to invest in actually becoming good representatives, and they are more likely to see the election as an economic investment in the future. It all adds up to a compromised democratic system in which the candidates for whom we vote need not represent our interests.



Sanatan Mahakud the unquestioned king of Keonjhar

are over ten crorepati candidates in the battle of rural polls from the Jajpur district alone. Seven such Crorepati candidates are supported by the ruling BJD, while the rest three have the support of BJP.

Pranati Lenka, contesting from zone no 13 with BJD's support is the richest, and her assets are pegged at Rs 5 crore. Lenka was a Zilla Parishad member from zone no 13 and is trying hard to retain the seat.

Suchitra Biswal, also supported by the BJD, is contesting from zone no 10. She has assets worth Rs 4 crore.

candidate, possesses assets worth Rs 2.1 crore which include two housing plots at Bhubaneswar and a luxury vehicle worth Rs 8.5 lakh. More than 12 candidates in the fray own property worth over Rs 50 lakh or above. Swapnarani Khandua (36), a BJP nominee from Zilla Parishad zone-16 in Pattamundai block, is in personal and joint possession of Rs 82 lakh of movable and immovable assets.

The election funding in the Mineral-rich Keonjhar district has a different story. Just as strikingly, Sanatan

the rural polls - who spent a lot on their campaigns - were presenting themselves as 'Sanatan Mahakudnka Samarthita Prarthi', or Sanatan Mahakud-backed candidates with the usual BJD symbol. Mahakud can afford the generosity, thanks to his financial might. According to his election affidavits, his assets have grown from Rs 3 crore in 2009 to Rs 51 crore in 2014 - a growth of 1,700% in five years. Today, Mahakud is the unquestioned king of Keonjhar, in other words, the ruling BJD despite having writ over highly productive mineral

Hyundai regrets offense caused to India after backlash on Pak distributor's Kashmir tweet

New Delhi, Feb 8: South Korean auto major Hyundai Motor Company on Tuesday regretted the offense caused to Indians by "unauthorised Kashmir-related social media posts" by its distributor in Pakistan and said the action was against its global policy.

On Sunday Hyundai Motor India had faced backlash on social media, after a dealer of Hyundai in Pakistan posted a message supporting separatists in Kashmir, and #BoycottHyundai trended on Twitter in India with many people asking to stop buying the company's products in the country.

A twitter account of a Hyundai dealer in Pakistan with handle @hyundaiPakistanOfficial had posted a message supporting Kashmir Solidarity Day, supporting what it called as "struggle for



freedom".

"As a business policy, Hyundai Motor Company does not comment on political or religious issues in any specific region. Therefore it is clearly against the Hyundai Motor's policy that the independently owned distributor in Pakistan made unauthorized Kashmir related social media posts from their own accounts," the company said in a statement posted on

social media.

Stressing that Hyundai Motor Company has been investing in India for many decades and "remains strongly committed to Indian customers", it said, "We deeply regret any offense caused to the people of India by this unofficial social media activity." The company further said once the situation was brought to its attention, it made the distributor acutely

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aware of the "inappropriateness of the action".

"We have since taken measures to ensure the distributor which misused the Hyundai brand identity has removed the social media posts and we have put in place processes to prevent a future recurrence," the statement said.

Clarifying that its subsidiary, Hyundai Motor India, is not associated with the distributor in Pakistan, the company said, "We strongly reject the distributor's unauthorized non business related social media activity."

Hyundai Motor India is the second-largest carmaker in the country after Maruti Suzuki India. It currently sells 12 models, including Creta and Venue in the domestic market.

In December last year, the automaker announced plans to invest around Rs 4,000 crore to drive in around six electric vehicles in India by 2028. It is planning to roll out a mix of models based on its existing range as well as completely new vehicles based on its global platform 'E-GMP' over the next few years.

Established in 1967, Hyundai Motor Company is

present in over 200 countries with more than 1.2 lakh employees.

On Monday, Quick Service Restaurant (QSR) chain KFC apologised following outrage on social media over a post from its Pakistan-based franchise supporting separatists in Kashmir. Similarly, another QSR chain Pizza Hut also issued a statement saying "it does not condone, support or agree with the contents of a post circulating in social media" after facing backlash over an Instagram post on Kashmir by its official handle in Pakistan.

Male tailors measuring women police for uniforms in Andhra sparks row; women's commission seeks report

Male tailors measuring women police for uniforms in Andhra sparks row



Nellore, Feb 8: Pictures and videos of male tailors measuring women police personnel for uniforms in Andhra Pradesh have gone viral. The incident took place in Nellore district. After noticing male tailors deployed to take the measurements, the women officers objected to it and raised concerns.

Superintendent of Police (SP) Vijaya Rao intervened in the issue and replaced the team of

male tailors while additional SP Venkataratnam was deployed to look at the entire issue. SP Vijaya Rao assured that stringent action would be taken on the entire issue. He added that disciplinary action would be taken against the head constable who deployed the male tailor and assured that the women's privacy was safe.

As the video and photographs of the measurement row went viral, the SP also announced action on the 'unauthorised entry' and said that police will take action on the person who filmed the incident. Andhra Pradesh Women's Commission chief, V Padma, also spoke to the Nellore SP and sought an explanation. Meanwhile, the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) has condemned the 'disrespect' of women police personnel. TDP Mahila state president, Vangalapudi Anitha, strongly objected to the use of male tailors.

"Not just the common women, even the women police have any security now," fumed the TDP leader. The TDP has demanded an explanation from Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy about the incident.

Dutch journalist interrupted on-air by Chinese official, IOC says 'one-off'

Beijing, Feb 5: A journalist from The Netherlands was dragged away by a Chinese security official while he was reporting live during the Winter Olympic Games opening ceremony in Beijing. The journalist, Sjoerd den Daas, was delivering his live report to public broadcaster NOS on Friday evening when local security officials interrupted him in the middle of the live broadcast.

According to multiple reports, Daas was then dragged away by one official, while his camera was also shut down.

"Our correspondent @sjoerddendaas was pulled away from the camera by security guards at 12:00 pm live in the NOS Journaal," said NOS on Saturday in a tweet, while sharing the video of the incident.

In the following tweets, the channel said the reporter is "safe and was able to finish his story a few minutes later". "Unfortunately, this is increasingly becoming a daily reality for journalists in China," the broadcaster added on the micro-blogging site.

Calling it an "isolated incident", the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has said it "will not affect foreign media's reporting at the Games". "Obviously, we have been in touch with the NOS, the state broadcaster, and it was an unfortunate circumstance," IOC spokesperson Mark Adams was quoted as saying by Reuters.

However, the NOS has denied having been contacted by the committee, the report also added. "Neither the NOS management, nor the chief editors of news and sport, our Olympic team

leadership in Beijing, or our correspondent himself has spoken to anyone from the IOC about yesterday's incident," the NOS spokesperson said.

Games participants, including the media, are restricted to a "closed loop" during the Games, which includes venues, media centre and accommodation. According to regulations, all participants must remain in that loop for the entire duration of the Games as part of China's health measures to minimise the risk of Covid-19 spread during the event.

With footage of the incident going viral on social media, many have raised concerns over whether visiting media will be allowed to do their job freely in China during the Games. Responding to the concerns, IOC spokesperson Mark Adams, in a press briefing on Saturday, said, "These things do happen and I think it's a one-off. I hope it's a one-off and we will assure you that within the closed loop you will be able to carry on your work."

Meanwhile, the journalist has responded to the IOC's claims of it being an isolated incident on Twitter. "In recent weeks, we, like several foreign colleagues, have been hindered or stopped several times by police while reporting on subjects related to the Games," Daas said on Twitter.

"Therefore, it's hard to see last night's incident as an isolated incident, as the IOC claims, although such interference rarely happens live on the broadcast. And now back to work," he added in the following tweet.

Sensodyne asked to discontinue advertisements in India



Ordered the discontinuation of advertisements of Sensodyne

said in a statement on Wednesday.

As per the order, the CCPA has directed GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) Consumer Healthcare to

"recommended by dentists worldwide", "world's no.1 sensitivity toothpaste" and "clinically proven relief, works in 60 seconds" and the documents submitted

consumers as the company runs a 24X7 channel and is broadcast on a daily basis across the country in various languages.

Naaptol was directed to

The Central Consumer Protection Authority has also passed an order against Naaptol Online Shopping Ltd for misleading advertisements and unfair trade practice.

discontinue all advertisements for Sensodyne in the country within seven days of the issuance of the order as the ads showed dentists practicing outside India endorsing the products.

Given that the regulations governing dentists in India clearly bar endorsement of any product or drug publicly, the CCPA said GSK Consumer Healthcare "cannot be allowed to circumvent the law in force in India and show foreign dentists to exploit consumer apprehension towards tooth sensitivity." "Therefore, advertisement of Sensodyne products in India which show endorsements by dentists practising outside India qualify as 'misleading advertisement' in terms of Section 2 (28) of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019," the order said.

The CCPA has also directed Director General (Investigation) to submit a report within 15 days after probing the claims

by the company in support of these claims.

"We confirm the receipt of the order from the CCPA. While we are looking into it in detail, we would like to clarify that our marketing initiatives are compliant with the applicable laws and industry guidelines. We are a responsible and compliant company which is committed to the welfare of its consumers," GSK Consumer Healthcare spokesperson said in a statement.

Taking up another suo moto case, the CCPA passed an order against Naaptol Online Shopping Ltd asking the company to discontinue misleading advertisements of "Set of 2 Gold Jewelry", "Magnetic Knee Support" and "Acupressure Yoga Slippers".

The CCPA has also imposed a penalty of Rs 10 lakh on Naaptol, saying its misleading advertisements have had a far reaching impact on numerous

clearly mention in the episodes offering products for sale to consumers that it is a recorded episode and does not show the live status of inventory of the production, the order said.

It further directed Naaptol to immediately discontinue any practices which create "artificial scarcity" of products, including showing that the product is available only today if it is going to be on sale within the next 30 days as well.

The company has been asked to clearly display on its channel or platform running a promotion that it is a pre-recorded episode.

The CCPA has also directed Naaptol to redress the complaints filed between May 2021 and January 2022 and submit a report within 15 days.

The National Consumer Helpline data indicates that 399 complaints were registered against Naaptol from June 2021 to January 25 this year, it added.

Atanu Bhowmick takes over as Director In-charge of Rourkela Steel Plant

Rourkela, Feb 11: Atanu Bhowmick has assumed charge as Director Incharge of SAIL, Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP) on 11th February 2022. Before joining RSP, Mr. Bhowmick was Executive Director (Works) of SAIL, Bokaro Steel Plant. Bhowmick joined Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL)'s Rourkela Steel Plant in 1988 after completing his BTech in Metallurgy from NIT (the erstwhile REC), Rourkela.

His first posting was in the Blast Furnace Department of RSP, where he worked for 29 years, serving in various capacities, learning the intricacies of iron making, and rising steadily in the hierarchy by hard work, commitment, and dedication. He was promoted to the post of General Manager (renamed later as Chief General Manager) in the year 2016. Subsequently, in December 2018, Mr. Bhowmick took charge of the Services area, and thereafter in May 2019, he was made the Head of Projects of RSP.



In October 2019 he was elevated to the post of Executive Director and posted in Bokaro Steel Plant. After a short tenure as ED (Operations) at Bokaro, Mr. Bhowmick took over the responsibility of ED (Works) in February 2020. With his rich experience, Bhowmick led a cultural transformation in Bokaro that led to a more harmonious working environment, robust operational discipline as well as higher production, productivity, and profitability. It is worth mentioning here that, a 2nd generation steel man, Atanu Bhowmick is the son of Late B. B. Bhowmick, who superannuated from the Materials Management department of RSP in the year 1992. Born and brought up in Rourkela, Bhowmick had completed his schooling at St. Paul's School and Intermediate from Government College, Rourkela before pursuing his Degree in Engineering. After taking over the reins of RSP, Bhowmick has expressed immense happiness over his return to Rourkela, which he has always considered his home. "Rourkela has always been very close to my heart as I have spent my childhood, formative years as well as the first 31 years of my service career here. It's the blessings of Lord Jagannath that I have been once again allowed to serve this land and this Steel Plant," he has said in a message to the Rourkela collective.

From Page-1

West Bengal...

Legislative Assembly. Clause 2 gives him the power to dissolve the house.

"The Governor's tweet triggered some confusion. I had a word with Partha Chatterjee, state parliamentary affairs minister and secretary-general of TMC. He said that there is no conflict (between Raj Bhawan and the state government) on this issue. The Governor has a role to play in summoning, proroguing, and dissolving the house. The recommendation of proroguing the assembly went from the state cabinet. The confusion was triggered because the Governor has developed a habit of tweeting everything including an administrative

process," said Kunal Ghosh, TMC spokesperson.

Biden Dials...

French presidency said lasted one hour and 40 minutes. Macron's office said "both expressed a desire to continue dialogue" but, like Washington, reported no clear progress.

SEC begins ...

of any voter (figured in assembly-wise electoral roll) is missed during preparation of ward-wise electoral roll, it can be restored. Correction is also allowed if name of a voter from a particular ward is mistakenly added in another ward," said Padhi.

Once the ward-wise split is done, the draft electoral roll (both soft and hard copies) will be shared with the national and state level parties.

According to the schedule, the draft electoral roll will be published on February 10 while objections and suggestions from general public can be received between February 11 and 16, which will be scrutinised by February 18. The final electoral roll will be prepared by February 24 and it will be sent to the state poll panel on February 28.

Official sources in the SEC said as many as 110 civic bodies including three municipal corporations, 48 municipalities and 59 notified area councils (NACs) are likely to go to poll in April-May this year.

Governor's powers, friction with states, and why this happens often

In recent years, the bitterness between states and Governors have been largely about the selection of the party to form a government, deadline for proving majority, sitting on Bills, and passing negative remarks on the state administration.



West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar with Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee

Last week, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee blocked Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on Twitter. She said she was "forced" to do so because of his "unethical and unconstitutional" statements and accused him of treating government officials like "his servants". Dhankhar responded with a series of tweets on the "essence and spirit of democracy" and said the CM's move was "against constitutional norms".

Days earlier, the Tamil Nadu government had taken exception to Governor R N Ravi's Republic Day speech articulating the benefits of NEET, the medical entrance exam. Tamil Nadu has passed a Bill to exempt the state from NEET; Ravi has sent it back to the state.

These are two of many examples of bitterness between states and Governors.

What is the law on Governor-state relations?

Although envisaged as an apolitical head who must act on the advice of the council of ministers, the Governor enjoys certain powers granted under the Constitution, such as giving or withholding assent to a Bill passed by the state legislature, or determining the time needed for a party to prove its majority, or which party must be called first do so, generally after a hung verdict in an election.

There are, however, no provisions laid down for how the Governor and the state must engage publicly when there is a difference of opinion. The management of differences has traditionally been guided by respect for each other's boundaries.

What have been the friction points?

In recent years, these have been largely about the selection of the party to form a government, the deadline for proving majority, sitting on Bills, and passing negative remarks on the state administration.

In November 2018, then J&K Governor Satyapal Malik dissolved the Assembly amid indications that various parties were coming together to form the government. This paved the way for the Centre to later bifurcate state into two Union territories, by considering the Governor as the government.

In November 2019, after a hung verdict in Maharashtra, Governor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari quietly invited BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis and administered his oath as CM. This government lasted just 80 hours. Six months later, Koshiyari refused to nominate CM Uddhav Thackeray to the Legislative

Council, leading Thackeray to meet PM Narendra Modi to resolve the issue.

In West Bengal, Dhankhar has often commented on law and order and political violence. Ravi, in his previous stint as Nagaland Governor, had criticized affairs of the state and allegedly interfered in administration.

In December 2020, Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan turned down a request to summon a special sitting of the Assembly to debate the three central farm laws.

Following the Karnataka polls in 2018, Governor Vajubhai Vala invited the BJP to form the government and gave BS Yeddyurappa 15 days to prove the majority. Challenged by Congress and JDS in the Supreme Court, it



JK Guv Satyapal Malik

was reduced to three days.

Such frictions surface in regular intervals

Allegations of the Centre using the Governor's position to destabilize state governments have been made since the 1950s. In 1959, Kerala's E M S Namboodiripad government was dismissed based on a report by the Governor. Several state governments have been dismissed since then, including 63 through President's Rule orders issued by Governors between 1971 and 1990. These have included the Birender Singh government in Haryana (1967); Virendra Patil government in Karnataka (1971); M Karunanidhi government in Tamil Nadu (1976); BS Shekhawat government in Rajasthan and SAD government in Punjab (1980); Janata Party governments in UP, Odisha, Gujarat, and Bihar (1980); N T Rama Rao government in Andhra in (1984); and Kalyan Singh governments in UP (1992, 1998). These became less frequent during the coalition era at the Centre and the emergence of strong regional parties.

Why does this happen?

"Because Governors have become political appointees," said NALSAR chancellor and constitutional expert Faizan Mustafa. "The Constituent Assembly envisaged governor to be apolitical. But politicians become Governors and then resign to fight elections."

Constitutional expert Alok Prasanna of Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy said: "The CM is answerable to the people. But the Governor is answerable to no one except the Centre. You can sugar coat it with ideas of constitutional morality and values, but the truth is there is a fundamental defect in the



Karnataka Governor Vajubhai Vala and BS Yeddyurappa
Constitution."

There is no provision for impeaching the Governor, who is appointed by the President on the Centre's advice. While the Governor has a 5-year tenure, he can remain in office only until the pleasure of the President.

In 2001, the National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution, headed by retired CJI M N Venkatchaliah and set up by the Atal Behari Vajpayee, said, "... because the Governor owes his appointment and his continuation in the office to the Union Council of Ministers, in matters where the Central Government and the State Government do not see eye to eye, there is the apprehension that he is likely to act following the instructions, if any, received from the Union Council of Ministers... Indeed, the Governors today are being pejoratively called the 'agents of the Centre'."

In the Constitution, there are no guidelines for the exercise of the Governor's powers, including for appointing a CM or dissolving the Assembly. There is no limit set for how long a Governor can withhold assent to a Bill.

Reforms have been suggested

From the Administrative Reforms Commission of 1968



Odisha CM Nilamani Rout was dismissed despite enjoying majority

to Sarkaria Commission of 1988 and the one mentioned above, several panels have recommended reforms, such as selection of the Governor through a panel comprising the PM, Home Minister, Lok Sabha Speaker, and the CM, apart from fixing his tenure for five years. Recommendations have also been made for a provision to impeach the Governor by the Assembly.

No government has implemented any of these recommendations.

Modicare Vs Naveencare Explained



Even as Odisha, Delhi, and West Bengal are the only three states that have put 'No Entry' sign for the Ayushman Bharat- Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY), otherwise known as Modicare, the biggest health insurance scheme in the world will soon don the pan Indian hues.

Either later this year or early next year, Modicare will make its debut in Odisha. This will become possible as the Employment State Insurance Corporation (ESIC), under the Union Ministry of Labour, has recently agreed with the National Health Authority - the implementing agency of Modicare.

As per the MoU, nearly 14 crore ESIC beneficiaries may avail of cashless medical services under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY). The benefit is currently (as of Jan 31, 2022) available in 157 districts of the country. The Ministry will extend the facility to the whole of 735 districts in phases.

Significantly, ESIC insured persons in 12 states namely Assam, Chhattisgarh, J&K, Ladakh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Nagaland, Rajasthan, and Tripura have been integrated with AB-PMJAY.

Since the integration of ESIC with Modicare depends upon the availability of ESI medical facilities and Insured Persons (IP) coverage in that area, in the next expansion phase, around 4-6 districts, including a couple in western Odisha, will be brought under the AB-PMJAY scheme, said ESIC sources here.

ESIC Beneficiaries In Odisha

As per the data available

with ESIC regional office in Bhubaneswar, there are over 28.7 lakh beneficiaries in Odisha. The beneficiaries in Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh have been lower at 17.3 lakh and 19.5 lakh, respectively.

The latest data shows that the total ESIC subscribers nationally stand at over 19 crores. The agency has added 5.42 crore new subscribers between September 2017 and July 2021.

What Is ESIC?

Employee State Insurance scheme is conceptualized to cover workers from certain health-related contingencies such as permanent or temporary disablement, sickness, death due to employment injury, or occupational disease, which impacts the earning capacity of the worker or leads to loss of income. In sum, the legislation has been enacted by the Union government to provide social security to organized sector workers.

The Employees' State Insurance Act, 1948 applies to non-seasonal,

alone. The scheme provides cashless secondary and tertiary health care services to even destitute, primitive tribal groups and bonded labor.

The Key Takeaway

As the Odisha government has red-flagged the Modicare, the PMJAY cannot become universal in the State, though the scheme will cover around 28 lakh beneficiaries in Odisha via the ESIC route before the 2024 General Elections.

However, the Centre is planning to extend Medicare to employees of all Central government employees under the CGHS (Central Government Health Scheme) and Railways route before the 2024 elections.

Odisha has red signaled Modicare and has rolled out Naveencare. Here is a comparison between the two rival schemes.

Modicare

As per Union Health Ministry, AB-PMJAY is the world's largest Government funded health assurance scheme. PMJAY provides

The automatically enrolled beneficiary families are households without shelter, people living on alms, manual scavenger families, primitive tribal groups, landless laborers, and bonded laborers.

The scheme can also be availed by a household dwelling in one room with kutcha walls and roof, construction workers, street vendors, coolies, and all those households identified under the deprivation criteria by the SECC 2011. The total hospitalizations since launch have reached 2 crores. Over 16 crore Ayushman cards have been distributed across 33 states/UTs.

Naveencare

This is also a health assurance scheme funded by the Government of Odisha. It provides health assurance up to Rs.5 Lakh per family per year and Rs 10 lakh for women members per annum for secondary and tertiary healthcare hospitalizations. The auto-enrolment facility is available for cardholders of Biju Krishak Kalyan Yojana, RSBY, BPL, and AAY.

However, all those low-income households, who don't have any such card, have to acquire an annual income (below Rs 50,000 in rural and Rs 60,000 in urban



PMJAY Cards Vs BSKY Cards

manufacturing establishments employing 10 or more workers. For health and medical institutions, the threshold limit is 20 or more workers. The wage ceiling is Rs 21,000 per month.

In contrast, the AB-PMJAY or Modicare is a universal health assurance scheme. This does not apply to organized sector workers

health assurance up to Rs.5 Lakh per family per year for secondary

and tertiary healthcare hospitalizations. It is a completely cashless and paperless scheme. The benefits under the scheme are portable across the country.

There is no cap on family size, age, or gender.

areas) certificate from district-level officials.

The number of Naveencare cards distributed is not available. But the target is 3.5 cr. The State government has not placed the hospitalization data in the State Assembly. It has only provided the data on free medical services availed by people at all levels in the State.

Since Article 370 move, 1,697 Kashmiri Pandits posted in govt depts: MHA

New Delhi: The ministry of home affairs informed Parliament that 1,697 Kashmiri Pandits have been appointed in various government departments by the Jammu and Kashmir administration since August 5, 2019, when article 370 was abrogated from the erstwhile state and it was broken up into two union territories.

Responding to question in the Rajya Sabha, union minister

special status to the erstwhile state, and Article 35A, which barred non-locals from buying or owning immovable property in Jammu & Kashmir, settling there permanently, or availing benefits of state-sponsored scholarship schemes. The constitutional provision acknowledged the special status of the (then) state of Jammu & Kashmir in terms of autonomy and its ability to



of state for home affairs Nityanand Rai said that as per data provided by the government of Jammu and Kashmir, 44,684 Kashmiri migrant families were registered with the Office of the Relief and Rehabilitation Commissioner (Migrants), Jammu, comprising 1,54,712 individuals.

"In order to rehabilitate Kashmiri migrant families, the government of Jammu and Kashmir has appointed 1,697 such persons since August 5, 2019 and selected additional 1,140 persons in this regard," he said.

The government said in August last year that nine properties in Jammu & Kashmir have been given back to Kashmiri Hindus who fled the Valley due to terrorist violence in the early 1990s. It had said at the time that the government was taking steps to restore several ancestral properties of Kashmiri Hindu families that left the region between 1990 and 1992.

On August 5, 2019, the Centre effectively revoked Article 370, which bestowed

formulate laws for the state's permanent residents.

J&K is currently governed by the Centre through Lt Governor Manoj Sinha. Union home minister Amit Shah recently said last month that as soon as the situation becomes normal, (J&K's) statehood would be restored, stating the Union government's position. "Delimitation has started and soon elections will be held. I've given assurance in the Lok Sabha that as soon as the situation becomes normal in Jammu and Kashmir, statehood will be given back to J&K."

Responding to a separate query, Rai said in the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday that 439 terrorists and 109 security personnel were killed in 541 terror incidents in Jammu and Kashmir since Article 370 was repealed.

Rai said 98 civilians were also killed in these incidents and private properties worth about 75.3 crore were damaged.

"During these incidents, no significant public property has been damaged," he added.

Rahul Bajaj, the Man Who Gave Indian Middle-Class Wheels, Passes Away

Known for his integrity and business ethics, Bajaj never compromised on quality. This integrity in public life had set him apart from the rest, along his boldness and speaking his mind unhesitatingly, according to Srinivasan



Rahul Bajaj, Chairman emeritus of the Bajaj group

Pune, Feb 13: Rahul Bajaj, the man who made two-wheelers a part and aspiration of every Indian middle-class household, passed away on February 12. Veteran leader was 83. "Rahul Bajaj died today at 2.30 pm. He died due to heart and lungs problems. He was admitted for past one month in Ruby hall

hospital in Pune," Dr Parvej Grant, chairman of Ruby Hall hospital told.

He was at the helm of India's second largest auto company for over five decades. Under his strong leadership, Bajaj Auto reached the hearts of millions in the country. Two-wheelers in India had been synonymous with

Bajaj between 1970s and 1990s.

Born on June 30, 1938 in Kolkata, Bajaj graduated with an Honours Degree in Economics from the prestigious St Stephen's College, Delhi in 1958. He also had an MBA from Harvard Business School. In 1926, Jamnalal Bajaj, Rahul Bajaj's grandfather formed Bajaj group of companies. After finishing studies, Bajaj took over as chief executive officer of Bajaj Auto in 1968. Within a few years of his stint at the helm, Bajaj expanded into new businesses, including cement, electrical appliances and scooters

Bajaj Group steered the diversified entity during India's transition from a closed economy to a liberalised one. The company launched its most iconic scooter Bajaj

Chetak and within few years it became one of those most-loved two-wheelers in the country. For rising aspirations middle-class Bajaj Chetak was a matter of pride. And this trust continued for years. The iconic tune of 'Humara Bajaj' advertisement became synonymous with their hopes of a better future in the 1980s-90s.

Very few companies have dominated the market the way Bajaj did for decades. In 1950s and 1960s, Bajaj group sold three-wheeled autorickshaws and mini trucks. In 1960s, Bajaj established a plant to manufacture Vespa scooters in collaboration with Piaggio of Italy. From 1970s, the company became the undisputed in the two-wheeler market in

India.

Bajaj was one of the first companies to launch a locally made motorcycle in India through a tie-up with Kawasaki of Japan. Even when the demand for scooters faded away in the late 1990s, Bajaj changed the gear and shifted to stay relevant. Under his leadership, Bajaj Auto saw its turnover growing to Rs 12,000 crore from just Rs 7.2 crore with the firm's scooters becoming the mainstay.

Known for his 'frank and fearless' nature, Rahul Bajaj was truly an icon who shaped the two-wheeler industry. He has never shied away from making his position clear on the policy concerning industry and others. Remembering him, Anand Mahindra chairman of Mahindra Group wrote, "I

stand on the shoulders of giants. Thank you, Rahulbhai, for letting me clamber up onto your broad shoulders, advising me, cheering me on, and encouraging me to be bold."

Rahul Bajaj served twice as the President of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), once at the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM). Bajaj also as the chairman of the erstwhile Indian Airlines. In 2001, Rahul Bajaj was awarded with Padma Bhushan the third highest civilian honour in the country. He was also a former chairman of the International Business Council, World Economic Forum and a former member of the South Asia advisory board of Harvard Business School.

The vivacious voice of Keonjhar falls silent



Kiran Shankar Sahu, (11.9.1940- 07.02.2022)

It would not be an exaggeration that the District Mineral Foundation was the brainchild of Kiran Shankar Sahu because his report on villainous mining scams was

well accepted and six pages of his report were incorporated in the Saha commission's report. Later on, Kiran Shankar Sahu had declared virtual war against the district administration for blatant violation of DMF Rules as well as misutilization of DMF & OMADC funds. He was creating panic and fear in the Govt. Machinery by his "Letterbomb".

Recently, due to his constant and continuous appeal, the Human Rights Commission had visited to conduct on-the-spot verification relating to the faulty and dangerous construction of bypass road connecting from Kolkata to Mumbai. Sri Sahu with the

member of the Citizen Forum successfully convinced the commission by showing a geographical map and field visit. Sri Sahu was a Wing Commander in the IAF proved again after retirement as the Commander of Civil society of Keonjhar. Undoubtedly, as an intellectual giant, he was respected wherever he went.

It would be worthwhile to mention that Sri Sahu was endowed with noble human virtues. He was known as kind-hearted and hard-hitting for the public cause. He was generous in giving donations for various social and cultural activities. He used to extend financial assistance to the poor and meritorious students

seeking higher study.

It goes without saying that his 33 years of social service made him immortal. It was a matter of pride that the North Orissa University felicitated him by conferring "Bhoomi Putra" honor in recognition of his towering personality and outstanding contribution to Keonjhar.

Kiran Shankar Sahu was a strong believer in Karma yoga. Despite ill health, he lived a dedicated and devoted life with a great vision for the all-around development of Keonjhar District. He was a legend in the civil society movement. The big vacuum created on his death can hardly be filled up.

Odisha's First SEC Debendra Kumar Mishra Passes Away



Bhubaneswar, Feb 12: Odisha's first State Election Commissioner retired IAS officer Debendra Kumar Mishra passed away today at 12.30 PM. After recovering from Covid-19, Mishra died

while undergoing treatment for other ailments at a private hospital here. Mishra died at the age of 85.

He had held different important positions in the State government before being appointed as the first State Election Commissioner of Odisha from 1994 to 1999. The mortal remains of Mishra will be kept at his Saheed Nagar residence tomorrow for the public to pay their last respect to the departed soul.

Mishra's mortal remains will be cremated at the Satya Nagar crematorium tomorrow at 11.30 AM, family sources said. Mishra's death has been condoled in various circles.

Hijab Row Heats up in Karnataka

List of Nations that have Made Face Coverings in Public an Offence



Hijab Row Heats up in Karnataka,

Bengaluru, Feb 9: Protests for and against the 'hijab' intensified in various colleges of Karnataka on Tuesday with state's Home Minister Araga Inanendra appealing for peace. All eyes are now on the Karnataka High Court which has begun hearing the petition filed by five girls studying in a Government Pre-university College in Udupi, questioning hijab restriction in college.

A section of Muslim girls are demanding permission wearing headscarves to college, while the state government has cracked the whip making uniforms

mandatory for students attending classes in educational institutions.

Here's a look at countries that have banned face coverings, including hijabs, burqas, full face helmets and balaclavas.

SWITZERLAND: Switzerland banned the 'burqa' in March 2021 after a far-right proposal to ban facial coverings won a narrow victory in a binding referendum on Sunday. The proposal was put forward by the same group that organised a 2009 ban on new minarets. The measure to amend the

Swiss constitution passed by a 51.2-48.8% margin, provisional official results showed. While the bill is being touted as ban on Islamic system of veil and burqa, the proposal also aims to stop violent street protesters from wearing masks. "In Switzerland, our tradition is that you show your face. That is a sign of our basic freedoms," Walter Wobmann, chairman of the referendum committee and a member of parliament for the Swiss People's Party, had said before the vote. Facial covering is "a symbol for this extreme,

political Islam which has become increasingly prominent in Europe and which has no place in Switzerland," he said. Muslim groups condemned the vote and said they would challenge it.

FRANCE: In 2011, France banned face coverings with "Law of 2010-1192: Act prohibiting concealment of the face in public space". The act was passed by the Senate of France on 14 September 2010. The act banned wearing of face-covering headgear, including masks, helmets, balaclavas, niqabs and other veils covering the face in public places. The ban also included the burqa if it covers the face. The ban was highly debated in the public as people raised concerns over immigration, nationalism, secularism, security, and sexuality. The advocates of the ban said face coverings hindered the clear identification in terms of security risk and 'forcing' women to cover their face under Islamic practices was sexist and oppressive. Opponents of the ban said that it encroaches on individual freedoms and targeted Muslims for their beliefs.

NETHERLANDS: In

Netherlands, a face covering in public can invite a fine of at least •150. The ban came into force in August 2019, applies to burqas, veils fullface helmets and balaclavas. The ban came into place here after 14 years of debate.

SRI LANKA: The country's Cabinet cleared a proposal in April 2021 to ban all forms of face veils in public places "due to national security concerns". The move came at a time when the Sri Lanka government was urging people to wear face masks in public to prevent the spread of coronavirus. The government had, however, said that the move was only in the form of a proposal and there was no reason to implement it in a hurry.

BELGIUM: Full face coverings, including burqas, in public are banned in Belgium since 2011. People violating the law can face a fine or up to seven days in jail. However, Belgium only has around a million Muslims and out of those, only 300 wear burqa or niqab.

CHINA: In 2017, China banned burqas, veils and "abnormal" beards in a predominantly Muslim Xinjiang province in what it claimed was a "crackdown on religious extremism." The

ordinance, which also forced people to watch state television, focused on outer garments that covered full body, including the face.

DENMARK: In Denmark, the burqas were first banned in August 2018 months after validating the law in May that year. The law imposes a fine of up to •135 for offenders.

AUSTRIA: In Austria, the law mandates that people should make their face visible from hairline to chin, under the law known as Law against Wearing Face Veils. The ban has been in place since 2017. Violators of the law face a fine of up to •150.

BULGARIA: In Bulgaria, the burqa ban has been in place since 2016 with violators facing a fine of up to •750. However, it has made exemptions for people playing sport, at work or in a house of prayer.

EUROPEAN UNION: In July last year, European Union's highest court upheld a 2017 ruling allowing employers in Europe to forbid women from wearing headscarves to work. The ruling was met with massive criticism and human rights activists and Muslim nations condemned the decision, saying it would encourage Islamophobia. 

Discounted booze at IGI domestic section

NEW DELHI, Feb 10: You will soon be able to buy premium liquor at a discounted rate at the Delhi airport even while travelling on domestic routes. Six liquor shops with a variety of foreign and Indian brands are likely to open at the three terminals in the next few days.

The excise department of the Delhi government has also allowed the retail licensees to shift stores from non-conforming areas to authorised commercial markets in the same zone. The move is likely to benefit about 134 liquor shops, which could not be opened after the civic bodies refused to allow them operate in those areas.

With the new excise policy allowing the stores to lure customers by offering gifts and discounts, the stores at the domestic sections of the IGI airport will be the alternate to the duty-free shops of the international arrival terminal, which see a huge rush of flyers from abroad buying liquor at a low price.

According to the policy, 10 stores can be opened at the domestic and international terminals. Officials said six stores, one each at the arrival and departure sections of terminals 1, 2 and 3, would be operational by the first week of March. Excise officials will carry out the



mandatory inspection before their launch in the next few days.

Large numbers of Delhiites often travelled to the neighbouring districts of Faridabad and Gurgaon in Haryana to buy liquor, which was earlier cheaper there. The new policy allows the store

owners to offer discounts on maximum retail prices and some shops in Delhi have been offering up to 35% discount on some select brands.

"The airport is one of the best places to sell premium and expensive brands of liquor. Since alcohol is now cheaper in Delhi

after discount, those going to Gurgaon and Haryana will also buy liquor here," said an official.

The excise policy has pre-defined 32 zones for equitable distribution of liquor vends across the city. The policy has also made it mandatory for the opening of two vends in each ward falling in non-conforming areas. The civic bodies, however, did not allow these shops to operate as the same violated Delhi Master Plan 2021. Close to 30 shops were sealed while 100-odd were served notices.

After a government-appointed committee confirmed that operating liquor

shops in non-conforming areas was not possible, the excise department allowed the licensees to shift them. "We have been told that 67 municipal wards are 100% non-conforming areas. However, the licensees will have to shift to an authorized commercial area within the same zone," said an official.

Of the 849 shops allowed to come up in Delhi under the new policy, 564 have already opened. "With the issue of non-conforming areas sorted, we hope 134 shops will become operational in the next few days, and the rest will also open soon," said an official.

Lata Mangeshkar (1929-2022): Nightingale falls silent



Lata Mangeshkar was 92.

Lata Mangeshkar, one of the country's most towering cultural icons whose singing moved generations since Independence, was so impossibly prolific that she was able to do what artists rarely can.

From the hymn to the love song, an entire nation in prayer to an individual heartbroken, she was the voice of their music that struck chords, both perfect and popular: an astounding blend unmatched in Hindi film music to this day.

"Kambakht galti se bhi besura nahi gaati (She doesn't sing out of tune even by mistake)," Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan had famously said about her, in mock exasperation and genuine admiration. Lata Mangeshkar was a moniker for excellence, versatility and accessibility, one that will endure in the countless voices that are - and will continue to be - inspired by her.

Mangeshkar, besides her 25,000 songs - each a lesson in discipline, grit, and brilliance - also did many other things. She made India and Pakistan unanimously agree over one thing: the power of her music and melody. Be it the famed story of a letter that came to All India Radio from

Lahore, which said that India could have Kashmir if they could give Lata Mangeshkar to Pakistan or stories of her legions of fans on the other side of the contested border, some of them senior classical musicians who spoke of her as Partition's biggest loss for Pakistan, there was a special bond between the two countries when it came to agreeing on the magic of Mangeshkar's voice.

Noor Jehan, the iconic singer Mangeshkar admired and followed, once said of her: "People say that she admires me. Par Lata toh Lata hai. Meri nazar mein Lataji ki tarah koi aaj tak paida nahi hua."

Mangeshkar was born in Indore in a Sikh neighbourhood and raised in Kolhapur in a musical family. Her father Master Dinanath Mangeshkar was a musician from the Gwalior gharana who ran a drama company. He was Lata's first guru. She went to school only for a day. She was about five and took her sister, a young Asha (Bhosle), along with her. But the school wouldn't allow such a young child to sit in the class with her. She decided to never go back. At home, she would listen to her father teaching his students and imbibe the pieces. One day, her father

Lata Mangeshkar's extensive oeuvre spanned 70 years - incomparable to any other Indian artist in the century.

spotted her correcting one of his students and was astounded at how deftly the child taught. He decided to teach her the ropes of classical music. But his untimely death led Lata, the eldest child of the family, to begin work at 13.

It was Master Vinayak, her family's close friend and the owner of Navyug Chitrapat Movie Company, who took care of the family and helped Mangeshkar become an actor and singer.

Her first song was in Vasant Joglekar's Marathi film Kiti Hasaal (1942), but it did not make the final cut. She sang a few more songs for Marathi cinema before moving to Mumbai in 1945. There, she began training under Ustad Aman Ali Khan of the Bhendibazaar gharana. Vinayak also introduced Mangeshkar to composer Vasant Desai. After his death in 1948, it was composer Ghulam Haider who took Mangeshkar under his wings and introduced her to filmmaker Sasadhar Mukherjee, who had just set up Filmistan studio. But Mangeshkar was rejected by Mukherjee who thought her voice was too thin. Angry that his judgment had been doubted, Haider went on to proclaim, "Music composers will beg Lata to sing for them."

Haider gave Mangeshkar her first significant break with the song Dil mera toda, mujhe kahin ka na chhoda (Majboor, 1948), a piece that echoes Noor Jehan's slightly nasal style. In some years, Mangeshkar was singing differently, in that thin yet mature voice that was to fulfil Haider's vision.

When she sang Aayega aane wala, the haunting Khemchand Prakash

composition from Mahal (1949), it would take a newly born nation's breathe away and seal her supremacy in the Indian film industry for decades to come, with no rival in sight.

The song broke all records at Radio Ceylon and people flooded its office with letters to ask for the singer's name (The gramophone company

the ladder of her art and success, one song at a time, stories about rivalries came to the fore, the most significant being with her sister and veteran singer Asha Bhosle. In a radio interview to Ameen Sayani in 1984, titled 'Lata Se Darte Darte', Mangeshkar had said: "Asha is my sister and we have very different styles. She gets her share of the songs and I get mine. There is no question of rivalry..."

Music composer OP Nayyar never asked Mangeshkar to sing for him. Notable fallout was with Mohammad Rafi, with whom she had performed most of her

from Madhubala and Waheeda Rehman to Kajol and Madhuri Dixit. She sang through the '90s and some part of the 21st century and songs such as Yaara seeli seeli (Lekin, 1990), Maaye ni maaye (Hum Aapke Hain Koun!, 1994), Jiya jale (Dil Se, 1998), and Mere khwabo mein jo aaye (Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge, 1994) were a testament to the power of her voice to transcend the age of the actor.

Her last popular outings included Veer Zaara (2004), where composer Madan Mohan's old tunes were resurrected, and the poignant Lukka chhippi in Rang De



only carried the character's name until then). Lata Mangeshkar had arrived.

From the timeless Mughal-e-Azam (1960) song Pyar kiya toh darna kya or the hymnal Sahir Ludhianvi piece Allah tero naam ishq tero naam (Hum Dono, 1961) or the playful Piya tose naina laage (Guide, 1965), every time Mangeshkar sang, left her listeners enthralled. After Independence, against the backdrop of the India-China War of 1962, when she sang Kavi Pradeep's Aye mere watan ke logon to C Ramachandra's tune, she would move a nation, and it's Prime Minister, to tears.

As Mangeshkar climbed

legendary duets. This argument was over royalty issues. While Mangeshkar wanted royalty for her songs from the record company, Rafi believed that once the song had been sung and the singer paid for it, it wasn't the singer's property anymore. The two did not sing between 1963 and 1967.

Some of her most successful collaborations were with composers Naushad, Anil Biswas, S D Burman, Shankar Jaikishen, C Ramachandra, Salil Chowdhury, Hemant Kumar, Roshan, Madan Mohan, Khayyam, Jaidev and Ravi, among others. Mangeshkar sang for a gamut of actors -

Basanti (2006). She was awarded the Dada Sahab Phalke Award in 1989 and Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian honour in 2001, besides a host of other accolades.

Lata Mangeshkar is survived by her three sisters, Meena Khadikar (90), Asha Bhosle (88), Usha Mangeshkar (86), and brother Hridaynath Mangeshkar (84). While all the siblings have had careers in film music, it was Bhosle, 88, who came closest to Lata Mangeshkar's popularity. Hridaynath Mangeshkar is a noted composer in the Hindi and Marathi film industry. His daughter, Radha Mangeshkar, is also a playback singer.

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