

PM raps Opp-ruled States for not slashing fuel VAT



Sirish C Mohanty

on Covid-19.

The PM flagged seven non-BJP States - Maharashtra, West Bengal, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Jharkhand, and Tamil Nadu - for not reducing VAT and thus not lessening the burden on the common man. Excise duty was reduced in November by `5 on petrol and `10 on diesel. The excise duty is levied by the Centre; the VAT is imposed by the States.

Petrol and diesel prices reached `100 for the first time in June last year and have been staying around or more since then. Since March 22, after the recent elections in Uttar Pradesh and four other States, the Government has increased oil prices many times accounting for about `10 per liter till April 5.

"I request, do now what should have been done in November. You should pass on the benefit to the citizens

by reducing VAT," the Prime Minister said.

The States that reduced VAT has lower fuel prices; he added and in this regard listed the BJP-ruled States. Modi gave the example of Karnataka and Gujarat, both ruled by the BJP, saying they have suffered a revenue loss of nearly `5,000 crores and `3,500-4,000 crore respectively by reducing VAT, but they did so to help people. Their neighboring States did not, he said.

"I am not criticising anyone, just discussing," he said and cited Maharashtra, West Bengal, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Jharkhand, and Tamil Nadu, for some reason or the other not listening to the Central Government and the citizens in those States continued to be burdened.

"Some States reduced taxes but some States did not



give any benefit of this to the people. Due to this, the prices of petrol and diesel in these States continue to remain high. In a way, this is not only injustice to the people of these States but it also has an impact on the neighboring States," he said.

In Chennai, Jaipur, Hyderabad, Kolkata, and

Mumbai, petrol prices (per liter) are over `111, `118, `119, `115, and `120, Modi said, noting that they cost much lower at `102 in the Union Territory of Daman and Diu, `105 in Lucknow, `106 in Jammu, `105 in Guwahati and `103 in Dehradun.

The Prime Minister also said 42 percent of the Centre's

revenues go to the States. "I request all States that in a time of global crisis, we should follow the spirit of cooperative federalism and work together as a team," he said.

Many observers believe that the Centre and States are not ready to bring petroleum under Goods and Services Tax (GST) which could have brought oil prices under reasonable check. For some apparent comfort, there has been a softening of international oil prices below 100 dollars a barrel this month and also India has been purchasing cheaper oil from Russia but domestic fuel prices have still been soaring. Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaks during his meeting with Chief Ministers regarding the Covid-19 situation across the nation through a video conference in New Delhi on Wednesday.

PM Modi to visit Germany, Denmark, France from May 2-4

Announcing the visit, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Wednesday said the prime minister will first travel to Germany, then visit Denmark and will have a brief stopover in Paris on his return journey on May 4.



New Delhi, Apr 28: In his first trip abroad this year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will embark on a three-day visit to Germany, Denmark and France from May 2 amid the crisis in Ukraine and Europe's firm approach to dealing with it.

Announcing the visit, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Wednesday said the prime minister will first travel to Germany, then visit Denmark and will have a

brief stop over in Paris on his return journey on May 4.

In Paris, Modi will hold talks with French President Emmanuel Macron, who was re-elected to the top post on Monday after he defeated rival Marine Le Pen in the fiercely-fought presidential election.

"In Berlin, the prime minister will hold bilateral talks with Olaf Scholz, Federal Chancellor of Germany, and the two leaders will co-chair the sixth edition of the India-Germany Inter-Governmental Consultations (IGC)," the MEA said in a statement.

It will be Modi's first meeting with Chancellor Scholz who took charge of the top office from his predecessor Angela Merkel in December last year.

The Russian aggression in Ukraine is likely to figure in Modi's talks with the European leaders in all three countries. (Page-5)

Online classes back in private schools

Bhubaneswar, Apr 28: After the state government announced holidays given the severe heatwave from April 26 to 30, several private schools in the city have resumed online classes.

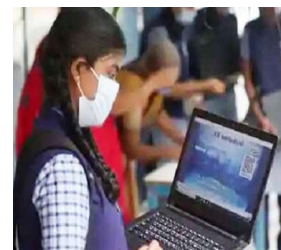
"Due to severe heatwave-like conditions in the state, schools in Odisha have been closed but online classes continue to compensate for the learning losses in the Covid years. Covid has taught us that learning should continue despite unfavorable weather conditions. And as the ethos of SAI goes, our children never stop learning, hence the online classes," said Nilakantha Panigrahi, principal, SAI International

School.

Parents said that online or hybrid classes offered much-needed comfort to children from the sweltering heat, and help them recover from the learning losses.

"As many as 50 children sitting in the classroom under one fan in this sweltering heat of around 43 degrees Celsius. If children feel suffocated and uneasy, how can they understand the lessons? Besides, traveling to school and returning in the blistering heat is quite exhausting," said Shrabani Kar, parent of a Class X student at Stuart School here that has resumed online classes.

"After a gap of two years, children have started



going to school. Now again if schools are closed then they will lose interest in studies. So it is better to have online classes than sitting idle at home," said Sunanda Nanda, parent of a toddler at KIIT International School. Doctors also advised children not to get exposed to the heat, to drink cold water, and enter an air-conditioned room immediately after coming from outside.

Eminent litterateur Binapani Mohanty passes away



An Economic professor Mohanty has more than 100 books to her credit. She was conferred with Padma Shri in Literature and Education category and received prestigious 'Atibadi Jagannath Das Samman'. Eminent Odia litterateur and poet Binapani Mohanty passed away on Sunday. She breathed her last at her residence in Cuttack due to age-related complications, her family said.

Cuttack, April 25: A professor in Economics, Mohanty has more than 100 books to her credit. She was the younger sister of eminent doctor Nirupama Rath and advocate Sachinadanda Mohanty, both of whom have passed away.

She was conferred with Padma Shri in Literature and Education category in 2020 and received the prestigious 'Atibadi Jagannath Das Samman'. Besides, she was also honored with Sahitya Akademi Award and Sarala Samman.

Mohanty received the

Sahitya Akademi award in 1990 for her collection of short stories entitled 'Pata Dei and other stories.' 'Patadei' was published as 'Lata' in Femina in 1986. Its Hindi dramatisation 'Kashmakash', telecast on Doordarshan, in the late 1980s was a hit. She wrote three novels and translated Russian folktales to Odia.

Mohanty's career began with the publication of 'Gotie Ratira Kahani' in 1960. Some of her best-known stories are Pata Dei, Khela Ghara, Naiku Rasta, Bastraharana, Andhakarara, Kasturi Murga O Sabuja Aranya, and Michhika.

Michhika.

Besides, many of Mohanty's short stories have been translated into other Indian languages. She has also translated a large number of books from Hindi and English.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Odisha Governor Professor Ganeshi Lal, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, BJP National Vice President Baijayant Panda, and Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan have expressed grief over the demise of the noted writer.

Taking to Twitter, PM Modi condoled the death of the noted writer and wrote,

"Pained by the passing away of noted writer Binapani Mohanty Ji. She made monumental contributions to Odia literature, especially fiction writing. Her works have been translated into various languages and attained great popularity."

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik expressed grief, saying it was an irreparable loss for the Odia literature world. Patnaik said that her funeral will be held with full state honors.

Condoling her death, Governor Ganeshi Lal said she enriched Odia literature in many ways.

Floral Tribute to Late Kedarnath Panda at Rayagada Sanskruti Bhawan

Rayagada, April 25: (Jogeswar das) Kedar Nath Panda, Sr Advocate & a renowned Social Activist of this region, had his last breath at the age of 71 years. He was the founder member of Rayagada Nagarika Manch and was actively involved in raising voices against the development deficit in the district due to the lackadaisical attitude of local citizens, bureaucrats & politicians. He even visited hinterlands like Parsali to

had the history of Rayagada in his mouth. As a master strategist & Chanakya of Rayagada, he dared to face illegalities & corrupt practices. He was an ardent champion of Odia culture.

To reminisce his contribution, a floral tribute was offered to the departed soul at Sanskruti Bhawan, Rayagada. Dr. Surya Narayan Tripathy, Ex-Principal, Rayagada College, Advocate Sunil



hear the plights of Dangaria tribes. He was equally philanthropic in dress distribution in interior tribal villages. His advocacy for restoring around 800 acres of land from the defunct Jeypore Sugar Company will be remembered by local netizens. He envisioned several development projects in Rayagada like a Govt Medical College, an airstrip, a smart old age home & orphanage, a working women's hostel, indoor & outdoor stadiums, etc.

He served as a municipality Councillor, Trustee Member of Jagannath Temple,

Balunkeswar temple, and many other social outfits. He always believed in the socialisation process and allied with those initiatives, which were meant for human welfare. Old age and ailing body did not deter him while he walked through the town to collect donations for the Tamilnadu flood or a campaign for a govt medical college in Rayagada. He

Kar, Advocate Arun Panigrahi, Sri Durga Panda, DCC President, Smt Bidulata Huika, State Convenor, Odisha Adibasi Manch, Prof Dr. D K Mohanty, Sri Ranjan Rath, Press Club President, Sri Narayan Panda, Sri Siba Gouda, Sri Jogeswar Das, State Secretary-BMS, Sri Sangram Pattanaik, Sri Atreya, Sri Nagaraju, Sri Rajesh Padhi from Centurion, Sri Jagannath Panda, Sri Ajay Rath & many others cherished their memories with late Kedarnath Panda. Dr. Badal Tah moderated the entire event.

It was resolved to request the district administration to name a road in his name such as Kedar Marg. He dreamt of a women's polytechnic in Rayagada. He also envisioned upgrading the ME school at Brahmin street to a high school. Dr. D K Mohanty suggested taking up the case with the District Collector.

World-class SCB Hospital dream in a shambles! Patients forced to deposit phones to avail stretchers

Attendants of many critical patients admitted in trauma casualty of SCB have been seen depositing their cellphones with a private agency to get stretchers and wheelchairs.

Cuttack, April 21: At a time when the Odisha government is dreaming to transform SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack into a world-class health institution, the State-run medical facility is miserably failing to cater to the basic need of patients.

While the premier healthcare institution had many times earned a bad reputation over several woes from the treatment of patients under torchlight to the dearth of beds, now reports of patients' attendants being forced to deposit their mobile phones to avail stretchers and wheelchairs have surfaced.

As per reports, attendants of many critical patients admitted

in trauma casualty of SCB have been seen depositing their cellphones with a private agency to get stretchers and wheelchairs.

The patients who visit the casualty to avail CT scan, x-ray, ultrasound, MRI, and other tests need stretchers and wheelchairs to move to different departments. However, the private agency looking after the service has been found asking relatives of patients to deposit their cellphones as security, much to their inconvenience.

"I have come to the hospital for an x-ray. When I asked for a stretcher, the person at the counter asked me to deposit my cellphone to take the stretcher. I was forced to deposit my mobile



to avail a stretcher," Prakash Chandra Ojha, a relative of a patient said.

Anupama Panda, volunteer, Sahaya which is engaged in providing stretcher service said, "Earlier attendants of patients used to furnish voter ID card to take stretcher. However, they often dumped the stretcher while leaving the hospital. In some cases, they take a stretcher with them while leaving the hospital. Nearly 30 stretchers have been missing in the last five years."

"I have written to the superintendent regarding missing the stretchers many times. Now,

we are forced to keep their cellphones as security thinking that they will return the stretcher after use. I know patients face inconvenience due to the process, but we have no other option," she added.

SCB administrative officer Abinash Rout said, "I learned about the practice and held a discussion with the superintendent. Steps are being taken to prevent such practice in future."

"We will supply new stretchers and ensure adequate monitoring of stretchers by caretakers," he added.

Ayush : Indian economic wellness perk up as global market expands to \$430 b



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

India is leading global healthcare radical transformation by reimagining critical unhindered access to everyone through an array of traditional medicines by setting up a WHO center likely to generate billions of dollars of business.

It generates hope for a crisis-ridden economy having over 14 percent wholesale inflation. Gujarat will not be known only for the visit of UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who is paving way for a large defence-related deal, but also for establishing a new kind of medicinal, healthcare, and yoga Ayush excellence business. The potential in the sector is immense, according to a US Global Industry Analysis on Herbal Medicines - Global

Herbal Market Trajectory and Analytics. It estimates it to grow to \$ 430.05 billion by 2028 at a CAGR of 11.32 percent.

Healthcare may be different by 2030 as the World Health Organisation and India usher in a change for a people-centric system of traditional medicines or the grandma's prescription. It may revolutionize the pharmaceutical industry and the way the world uses medicines. It can make India an international competitor with a surge in its medicinal exports and healing concept. The hope has come as the country leads this initiative with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus inaugurating the \$ 250 million WHO-funded Global Centre for

Traditional Medicine inauguration at Jamnagar, Gujarat.

They give it a further push with the simultaneous first Global Ayush Investment and Innovation Summit 2022 in Gandhinagar, Gujarat. It witnessed a letter of intent (LoIs) worth more than Rs 9000 crore in major categories like FMCG, medical value travel (Heal in India), pharma, technology & diagnostic, and farmers & agriculture. Five significant MoUs were signed with Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Canada, and The Philippines for research and new academia, and one with the Ministry of Defence for promoting Ayush in cantonments.

Modi presented Rosemary Odinga, daughter of former Kenyan Prime Minister Raola Odinga, for regaining her vision lost in 2017 as the grand success of Ayurveda, which has created a \$ 18 billion export market during the last few years. The new Ayush visa introduced for Heal in India will create a concept of wellness that encompasses healing through not only just medicine. It gives a holistic approach to different foods and yogic practices to heal the body and mind as appropriate food prepares one for preventive care through a healthy lifestyle.

As healthy plant-based 'meat' products are to replace the animal products for a healthy

lifestyle, the expansion of the sector can only be imagined now says WHO D-G adding, "India will go to the world and the entire world will come to India".

Start-ups, entrepreneurs, unicorns, industry, and integrative medicine will increase investment for innovations in Ayush. This success can create 5.5 lakh jobs, Minister Ayush Sarbanand Sonowal estimates and helps farmers barge into novel high-earning propositions.

It is a WHO concern that found that the traditionally used herbal plants or leaves like that Giloi, Tulsi, Haldi-turmeric, dalchini-cardamom, or honey could counter the severity of the pandemic in several places. The WHO during the pandemic observed that the usage of various kinds of herbs met the global shortage of synthetic medicines. The occurrence of such consumer preferences was seen more in the Asian region. Herbal tea, coriander, turmeric, cumin, and garlic were extensively used to counter the 100 to 700 percent rise in medicine demands. The WHO observes that the alternative medicine people used created a curative system beyond their imagination.

"For many millions of people around the world, traditional medicine is the first port of call to treat many diseases," says Dr. Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General. "Ensuring all people have access to safe and


effective treatment is an essential part of WHO's mission, and this new center will help to harness the power of science to strengthen the evidence base for traditional medicine. We look forward to making it a success."

The world is now rediscovering the importance of India's traditional medicinal systems in Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani, Sowaigpa, Homoeopathy, and yoga. The effort is to make this relevant, even fashionable use today. In the process, it is even gaining the confidence to project and export these around the world. As the GCTM is supposed to coordinate world activities in such medicines and therapy it may promote studies in Latin America, Africa, elsewhere in Asia, and the rest of the world. This facility is intended to be a global repository of traditional healthcare knowledge.

Ayush Minister Sonowal says that this will change not only the healthcare but also alter the approach to India's role in the world's traditional medicine business. Between 2019 and 20 exports surged 45 percent. The market for medicinal plants in India stood at Rs. 4.2 billion (\$ 56.6 million) in 2019 and is expected to increase at a CAGR of 38.5 percent to Rs. 14 billion (US\$ 188.6 million) by 2030. The export value of ayurvedic and herbal products amounted to about \$ 539 million from India in 2021.

The total world herbal trade is currently assessed at \$ 120 billion. Overall Ayush exports reached \$ 18 billion from \$ 3 billion before 2014. The cultivation of medicinal herbs such as shankhapushpi, atis, kuth, kutki, kapikachhu, and Karanja are changing the Indian agrarian ayurvedic scenes and would empower the farmers with high incomes.

There is a huge gap between the supply and demand of medicinal plants to manufacture Ayurvedic medicines in India. According to the 'All India Trade Survey of Prioritised Medicinal Plants, 2019', demand for high-value medicinal plants increased by 50 percent, while the availability declined by 26 percent. This led to increased habitat degradation and levels of over-exploitation by pharmaceutical industries. The road developments and destruction of flora and fauna in the Himalayas and remote areas also decrease the availability of 65 species (10 percent of the total) falling into the critically endangered, vulnerable, and nearly threatened categories. The GCTM would study the ways to improve it; train farmers to adopt technology and a possible new development protocol.

The concerted effort is paving way for the growth of the sector and creates a sense of wellness for the health and the Indian economy. 

Dalmia Industrial Training Institute celebrated silver jubilee

Rajgangpur: Dalmia Private Industrial Training Institute (DITI), managed by the Dalmia Audyogik Shikshan Pratishthan trust and an initiative of Dalmia Bharat Group of Industries celebrated its Silver Jubilee Anniversary at the Dalmia Auditorium on 21st April. One of the pioneering skill enhancement institutions in India since 1997, Dalmia Private Industrial Training Institute (DITI) ranks seventh among ITIs in Odisha and the first in the Sundargarh district.

Governor, Professor Ganeshi Lal attended the celebration as the chief guest. Ganesh Jirkuntwar, Senior



Executive Director & National Manufacturing Head, Dalmia Cement (Bharat) Limited was the guest of honor.

Governor Professor Ganeshi Lal while extending his warm wishes for the institution for completing

25 years expressed hope that DITI would continue to add its value to the state and its people in the coming years.

Ganesh Jirkuntwar congratulated the management and the staff for spearheading the mission to produce

technically skilled people in and around Rajgangpur. The majority of them have been employed in both public and private industries.

During the event, 'The Shilpi, DITI's annual book was unveiled by the distinguished dignitaries.

DITI has been the 1st ITI level institute to be Integrated Management System (IMS) certified since 2014 for quality, environment, safety, and health, i.e ISO 14001 and OHSAS 18001 respectively. The institute also takes up the responsibility for the physical, financial, and social well-being of its students by offering regular health check-ups, life insurance,

scholarship facilities, special training, and social awareness programs like tree plantation, AIDS awareness, and sanitation among others. Additionally, DITI provides government assistance and incentives to graduates to help them become self-reliant. This Institute also started Short Term Training under Govt.'s Modular Employable Skill (MES) program, through the Directorate of Technical Education and Training (DTE&T), Odisha in the year 2014-15, as well as the Additional Central Assistant (ACA) program for unemployed youth in this locality for ST & SC candidates.

Presently, DITI is training 468 students including 43 girls, and imparting ITI certificate courses under CTS in five different trades i.e., Fitter, Electrician, Machinist, Welder, Computer Operator & Programming Assistant. Between 2014 and 2020, the institute has trained 1651 students, out of which 1018 are currently placed with companies like DCBL Cement (Rajgangpur), DCBL Refractory (Rajgangpur), L&T Construction (Cuttack), and Rourkela Steel Plant to count a few. A total of 83 students received training with the help of DCBL's CSR sponsorship between 2014 and 2021.

Nutrition Program "SOPAN" Expanded in Sundargarh

Sundargarh District Administration has extended the flagship program Odisha Pathway Strategy for Accelerated Nutrition (SOPAN), to non-SOPAN areas; across all 17 Blocks and 4 district ULBs. The program aims to address any nutritional gaps in children, adolescent girls, and pregnant and lactating women in this mining-affected and tribe-dominated region.

The state government has launched the flagship nutrition initiative SOPAN for remote areas from 1st April 2022 in 125 blocks in 22 districts through Anganwadi Centers (AWC). Seven blocks of Sundargarh district, largely affected by mining operations, were included in this scheme. However, the local administration decided to expand this nutritional coverage by using funds from the District Mineral Foundation (DMF) throughout the district. This outreach program was launched on 15th April at a special event organised at Zilla Sanskruti Bhawan. The ASHA & Gaon Kalyan Samiti (GKS) District Level Convention was also organized on this day.

The administration has also launched some key welfare programs such as 'Kalika' for the daycare of working women's children, the Transformation of Government Secondary School Hostels, the development of ponds in the villages, in addition to the launch of the new website of the DMF Sundargarh. At the time, the expansion of the existing ones and the implementation of new health projects were also started.

SOPAN will ensure



additional nutrition coverage among target beneficiaries in the Sundargarh district. Following the provision, severely underweight (SUW) children will be given specially formulated Chhatua for 75 days. Likewise, pregnant and lactating women would be provided hot cooked meals through AWCs for 150 days each, while teenagers would also be given special attention to supplement their nutrition.

"Looking at the needs of people from various blocks of Sundargarh, we are trying to come up with different initiatives. These all programs will benefit children and women, students, working women, and the rural population at large. As a priority, we are seeking suggestions and proposals from the public and involving the Gram Sabha in the design and delivery of various projects," said Sundargarh Collector Nikhil Pavan Kalyan.

Being a leading industrial zone, Sundargarh has a considerable population of working women.

Govt High School Hostels in Sundargarh district are being transformed with better facilities for boarders. The transformation work in 135 hostels has been taken in the first phase of the initiative. The transformed hostels will

have a modern library and reading room, repair and innovation, parlor games, gym, nutrition, extracurricular activities, and other facilities for the holistic development of students.

District administration places special emphasis on pond development at 279 GPs across all 17 blocks of Sundargarh. At least one pond will be rejuvenated in each Gram Panchayat for people's use and to support agriculture-related activity.

To inform the public about the various priority programs supported by the DMF, invite feedback and engage with various stakeholders, a new DMF Sundargarh website- www.dmf-sundargarh.in was also launched on the occasion. The website contains details of different projects supported by the DMF, an Annual Report, Newsletter, Videos and Podcast, and a social media feed as part of the outreach.

MLA Sundargarh Sadar Kusum Tete, MLA Talsara Bhabani S. Bhoi, Zilla Parishad Chairman Kunti Pradhan, Sundargarh Municipality Chairman Tanaya Mishra, Representative of Sundargarh MP Sukeshi Oram, CDMO Dr. Saroj Kumar Mishra and many other senior officers were present on the occasion.

Scientist Nilachala Sahoo's Punyatithi Observed

Rajgangpur: Internationally acclaimed Refractory Technologist Dr. Nilachal Sahoo's first 'Punyatithi' was observed at Cement city Rajgangpur on 21st April under the aegis of Nilachala Foundation at Dalmia Vidya Mandir. In memory, his family members and well-wishers, organised a function at the Dalmia Vidya Mandir complex. Governor Professor Ganeshi Lal graced the function as the Chief Guest.

Dr. Nilachala Sahoo was a well-known name in the field of Refractory and Ceramics not only in India but also at the global level. He was born in a nondescript village Kulitaturkura (Bargarh district) in 1951. After acquiring M.Sc in Chemistry from G.M.College, Sambalpur in 1974. He dedicated his life to research work on Refractory and Ceramics and built an international reputation in those fields. Dr. Sahoo also worked on the development of ceramic radomes for missiles Trishul, Prithvi, and Nag with Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam who was then (1985-1988) Director of DRDO, Hyderabad.

He was called an encyclopedia of refractory during his lifetime. His excellent

career in the research and development of refractory, ceramics, and allied materials spanned over three decades in the Dalmia Institute of Scientific and Industrial Research (DISIR), Rajgangpur.

He had developed 45

showered praises for Sahoo for his sincerity, dedication for his work.

Dr. Kishori Dash, president of NF welcomed the guests. Dr. Sarojani Sahoo, the wife of N. Sahoo, donated Rs. one lakh to the G.M. University to



refractory products and processes which have been commercialised and 27 of them patented. Governor Professor Ganeshi Lal praised the late Sahoo as a simple man with one of the finest technological brains. Guest of honor Professor N. Nagaraju, Vice-Chancellor, Gangadhar Meher University, Sambalpur, Ganesh W. Jirkuntwar, Senior Executive Director & National Manufacturing Head, Dalmia Cement Bharat Ltd., Dr. M.K. Pathi, Educationist, Dr. J.N. Tiwari, former Executive Director, OCL India Ltd lavishly

establish an annual award to the topper in Chemistry. A Souvenir "Neelajyoti" was released on the occasion. Seven distinguished people from different fields were felicitated by the Foundation, among them were Professor Somnath Mishra, Ex-director NIT, Rourkela, Padmashri NP Guru, Abodh Sahu, Dr. Pradeep Kumar Singhdeo, Ms. Matilada Kullu, Asha Worker who found a place in Forbes India Women Power 2021, Abhishek Shukla, a Disabled cricketer, and Dayanidhi Dahima, a young filmmaker from Rajgangpur.

NTPC Dulanga Win Mines Safety Awards

Sundargarh: NTPC Dulanga bagged a total of six awards in Annual Mines Safety Fortnight 2021-2022 Prize Distribution Ceremony organised by MCL under the aegis of Directorate of Safety, Bhubaneswar and Chaibasa Region.

The different categories under which NTPC Dulanga won award are: 1st Prize in Safety Features in Equipment and Excavators for the year 2021-2022, 1st Prize in Swatchchata for the year 2021-

2022, 2nd Prize in Maintenance of Machines and HEMM Workshop for year 2021-2022, 2nd Prize in Publicity and Propoganda for the year 2020-2021, 2nd Prize in Publicity and Propoganda for the year 2021-2022, 2nd Prize for Group VTC for the year 2021-2022. Umesh Singh, AGM (Mining), Rajesh Ranjan, Safety Officer, and Subhash Kumar, Assistant Manager (Mining) of NTPC Dulanga alongwith counterparts from Sainik Mining received the awards.

First-ever riverine jetty inaugurated in Odisha

Paradip, April 25: Union Minister for Ports, Shipping and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal Monday inaugurated Odisha's first-ever riverine jetty here which will provide an opportunity to augment trade and commerce in the state, an official said.

Sonowal praised Indian Farmers Fertilizer Cooperative (IFFCO) Ltd for setting up the jetty which will explore the possibility of using waterways as a feasible mode of transport. The Paradip unit of IFFCO will utilise the jetty for transporting gypsum and fertilizers and it will reduce high logistics costs, time, and



the possibility of road accidents, the official said.

The jetty was conceptualised by Orissa

Stevedores Ltd (OSL), which was also given the responsibility for developing and operating the

same. On February 25, 2021, OSL had inked an MOU with Paradip Port Authority and IFFCO for the

Currently, the jetty can accommodate vessels up to 2,200 Deadweight tonnage (DWT), a measure of how much weight a ship can carry, an official release said.

development and operation of the jetty.

Currently, the jetty can accommodate vessels up to 2,200 Deadweight tonnage (DWT), a measure of how much weight a ship can carry, an official release said. It plans to develop and expand the facilities to accommodate larger vessels, which can directly cater to neighbouring countries, the release said.

OSL believes that Odisha's vast river network offers ample opportunities for trade and commerce in the state which would not only help ease congestion on roads but also reduce carbon footprint, making it one of the most eco-friendly ways of transportation, said Mahimananda Mishra, Managing Director, and Chairman OSL Group.

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PM Modi...

Reflecting the EU's tough approach in dealing with the Russian aggression, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said at the Raisina Dialogue on Monday that Europe will make sure that Moscow's "unprovoked and unjustified" aggression against Ukraine will be a "strategic failure."

India has not yet publicly condemned the Russian attack on Ukraine and has been calling for the resolution of the conflict through dialogue and diplomacy.

"During his visit, the prime minister and Chancellor Scholz would also jointly address a business event. The prime minister will address and interact with the Indian community in Germany," the MEA said.

In 2021, India and Germany commemorated 70 years of the establishment of diplomatic relations and the two countries have been strategic partners since 2000.

"This visit will be an opportunity to enhance and intensify cooperation in a broad range of areas and for the two governments to exchange views on regional and global matters of mutual interest," the MEA said.

From Germany, Modi will travel to Copenhagen at the invitation of the Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen. He will also participate in the second India-Nordic summit being hosted by Denmark.

The MEA said the bilateral component of the visit will include talks with Frederiksen as well as an audience with

Queen Margrethe II.

"The green strategic partnership was the first of its kind arrangement between India and Denmark. The visit would provide both sides an opportunity to review its progress, as well as examine ways to further expand our multifaceted cooperation," the MEA said.

"During the visit, Prime Minister will attend an India-Denmark Business Forum and also address members of the Indian diaspora," it said.

At the India-Nordic summit, Modi will also interact with other Nordic leaders including Prime Minister Katrín Jakobsdóttir of Iceland, Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre of Norway, Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson of Sweden and Prime Minister Sanna Marin of Finland.

The MEA said the summit will focus on subjects like post-pandemic economic recovery, climate change, innovation and technology, renewable energy, the evolving global security scenario and India-Nordic cooperation in the Arctic region.

"On his return journey on May 4, the prime minister will briefly stopover in Paris and meet Emmanuel Macron, President of France," the MEA said. "India and France are celebrating 75 years of their diplomatic relations this year and the meeting between the two leaders will set a more ambitious agenda of the strategic partnership," it said.

Secretary To CM (5T) V K Pandian Visits Jagatsinghpur's Maa Sarala Temple



Jagatsinghpur: Secretary to CM (5T) VK Pandian on Thursday visited the Maa Sarala Temple in Jagatsinghpur and held a discussion with the stakeholders over the issues pertaining to the development of the temple.

He took a round of the

temple premises and reviewed the facilities available for devotees. He also held discussions over various issues with the temple servitors and district administration.

Devotees from different parts of the country visit the shrine every day, so the

development of the shrine is essential for the benefit of the devotees. Pandian directed the district administration to immediately prepare a master plan for development based on the needs of the temple. It will be implemented in the 5T model after the approval of the Chief Minister.

Sarpanch Among Four Injured During Group Clash In Cuttack

Cuttack: Four persons including the newly-elected Sarpanch of Ekaberuan gram panchayat in Niali block of Cuttack district were injured during a group clash over political rivalry late Wednesday night.

As per sources, the

panchayat was embroiled in political controversy prior to the election. The situation escalated last night and it led to a clash between two groups. Four persons of each group were injured in the fight.

Sarpanch Prashant

Swain and Biswanath Swain of the opposition group were critically injured in the clash. After receiving preliminary treatment at Jagatsinghpur Hospital, they were shifted to SCB Medical College & Hospital in Cuttack.

Forest department experimentally use tryco hydrogel for rapid decomposition of leaf litters away to check forest fire



Baripada, April 25: With the inferno in forests and their peripheries is one of the challenging tasks for the forest department in Mayurbhanj district, the department has taken a little initiative with help of the scientists as an experimental basis for rapid decomposition of leaf litter on the forest floor which is the source to prevent the fire spread.

As part of an attempt to minimize forest fire in Similipal Tiger Reserve (STR), an

experiment was being carried out outside the boundary of the tiger reserve for rapid decomposition of leaf litter on the forest floor in collaboration with scientists of the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) in Trombay in Mumbai of Maharashtra. The experiment had been carried out near the Munidarha forest area within the Pitha Bata range of Baripada territorial division three days back, said Samrat Gowda, the Deputy Director of STR South division.

The DD of STR South also posted some photographs about the preparation of the act on an experimental basis on Twitter.

The DD said that he had recently attended a seminar held at Maharaja Sriram Chandra Bhanja Deo University (MSCBDU) and represented various challenges of Similipal Biosphere Reserve and the inferno in the biosphere reserve was one of them. The director of BARC Prof. Ajit Kumar Mohanty along with some

scientists were attending the seminar. During the representation, the scientists had been given an innovative idea.

The two scientists of a team consisting of Dr. Kuber Chandra Bhainsa, Head of Enzyme and Microbial Technology Section, Nuclear Agriculture and Biotechnology Division Bioscience Group, and Dr. Poulomi Mukherjee Scientific Officer and Forest Environmental Biotechnology Section, Nuclear Agriculture and Biotechnology Division, Bioscience Group both were from (BARC), came to the district and directed the tryco hydrogel. The DD said that after sprinkling the gel it keeps the leaf litter with moisture and it will take 15 to 20 days to decompose the leaf litter. After decomposition, that place would look like a fire line. If fire catches in a place, it cannot spread to other places due to the fire line, the DD said. The scientist's team would visit again to take stock of the situation on May first week, the DD said adding that once it will come to a positive result through the experiment and found no side effects then the department will aware of it.

However, the DD said as it was an experiment, the department had conducted it in a safe place outside the Similipal biosphere.

Frequent power cuts make misery for residents in the Mayurbhanj district

Baripada, April 26: With the intensive heatwave and increasing temperature along with frequent and unscheduled power cuts over the last fifteen days posed miserable conditions of residents of brought life miserable for the residents of two NACs and two Municipality areas, and rural pockets of Mayurbhanj district.

While the Chief Secretary of Odisha claimed that no power cut will be made during the summer as the mercury continued to increase day by day and the schools and colleges remained closed up to the end of the month for the same, the power supply department in the district has ignored the Government order.

There has a provision for the power supply department to aware the residents before conducting a power cut and the department must inform the time duration of the power cut but without any announcement, the department has been allowing power cuts which the resident unable to bear the heatwave and are facing inconvenience in Karanjia and Udala NACs along with Baripada and Rairangpur municipalities in the district.

Dilip Kumar Mohanty, a resident of Bagicha Sahi, Ward No-7 Madhuban under Baripada municipality said that on Thursday, the concerned department had conducted power cuts from 2.38 pm to 3.05 pm for nearly more than half an hour. Anyhow, the concerned department must conduct the power cuts one to two times regularly for the last couple of weeks without any reason. Even the department is not aware of residents first before conducting the disturbance in the Baripada municipality area.

The department has conducted such disturbance

in other wards in the municipality area phase-wise but without giving any specific time that making owes a lot to residents even the children who are appearing the metric and higher education examination in this time, said the locals.

The rural pockets which are adjoining Baripada municipality are facing the same owes, three to four times the power cut reportedly occurred regularly. Dhananjay Singh, a resident of Shamakhunta said that besides frequent power cuts in a day, the department conducts power cuts after 10.30 pm for 15 to 20 minutes.

Dhirendra Patra a resident of Udala NAC said that we are bearing the money against the power consumption but the department has failed to provide a regular power supply for the last some days. If we contacted, the staff of the department was expressing any cause of power disturbance. Despite the department has taken several times for the repair and for maintenance it could not complete their service while the department conducted power cuts without any reason to harass the consumers, he alleged.

A similar situation has taken place in other municipalities and NACs in which the residents who want to operate motors for the collection of water and power use for other purposes are facing misery.

Contacted, Superintending Engineer of Tata Power North Orissa Distribution Ltd, Mayurbhanj Sudip Mishra said that due to technical problems and heavy load-shedding owing to the power cuts. Yet the staff were also aware and rushed to the structure once any technical fault reportedly came to notice.

Baripada municipality plans to make the town Wifi zone and town under CCTV surveillance

Baripada, 28 April:- Baripada municipality in Mayurbhanj district is planning to make the town a Wifi zone and installation of CCTV cameras in important places to keep a stub on people flouting prohibition or spoiling other illegal activities in the town.

The decision was made after a new council meeting was held on the premises of the municipality conference hall. The

councilors of 28 wards were attending the meeting and discussed the development of the municipality in presence of Chairperson Krushnananda Mohanty.

Chairperson Krushnananda Mohanty said that the cases like snatching of jewelry, stealing, and other illegal activities were taking place in many places and on roads in Baripada municipality, and the antisocials taking advantage due to the absence of CCTV cameras. Even

sometimes police are facing tough tasks to nab the antisocial. Once the CCTV Cameras install, it will help not only the police to check the crime but easily check the other illegal activities in the town. The municipality was also planning to make the town a Wifi zone to provide internet facilities for the youths in the present generation, he said that the new council body would request the Collector of Mayurbhanj to provide

funds from the district mineral fund for the installation of CCTV cameras and Wifi facilities.

Pipeline water supply facilities and tube-wells would be set up in several wards to cater to the water crisis, he said that a sum of Rs.25,000 financial assistance would be provided each to Uttar Sahi and Dakshina Sahi Chhau troops for the development of Chhau dance, he said.

Double murder in Bhubaneswar: Man kills wife, sister-in-law over family feud

The bodies were recovered from quarter number EWS- 23/4 at Chandrasekharapur housing board area

Bhubaneswar, April 24: The residents of Bhubaneswar on Sunday woke up to the shocking news of a man killing his wife and sister-in-law over suspected family feud. The deceased have been identified as Gayatri Sethi and her sister Saraswati.

Bodies of the sister-duo were found inside their house near Chandrasekharapur government hospital. The bodies were recovered from quarter number EWS- 23/4 at Chandrasekharapur housing board area.

It is suspected that both the sisters were murdered some two to three days back. The matter came to light this morning after Gayatri's husband Bijay Sethi was detained by the former's family members.

Gayatri's sister works at a private hospital in Bhubaneswar and used to visit her place frequently. Gayatri's family members had laid a trap for Bijay after they could not contact them over phone in the past couple of days.



"I had tried calling both my daughters on Thursday but failed as their mobile phones were switched off. Later, we arrived in Bhubaneswar and found the

house locked. As my son-in-law was also missing and not picking up calls, we were waiting for him near the house. We caught hold of him when he arrived to get some articles from the house today," said deceased Gayatri's mother.

The family members said that initially, Bijay tried to escape but later confessed to having killed Gayatri and her sister. Police have detained Bijay Sethi who has reportedly confessed to the crime. Bijay reportedly works at a private educational institution.

"Bijay used to torture my daughter. I had visited the hospital to search for my younger daughter but could not find her in hostel. As Gayatri's house was locked, we suspected something foul," said deceased Gayatri's father Sudan Sethi.

According to the family members, they found the house open at around 5 am today. "After interrogating Bijay, he confessed to have killed both my daughters. Later, we informed police," Sudan added.

Medical student from Haryana found dead in Odisha College

Nishant Kumar from Karnal in Haryana had taken admission in Bhima Bhoi Medical College in Bolangir district 10 days ago and was supposed to begin his first-year classes on Saturday. He was found dead on Friday. The mother of Nishant Kumar, 20, said her son was being ragged the day he joined the medical college in Odisha's Bolngir.



BHUBANESWAR, April 24: A day after a 20-year-old medical student at a government medical college in the western Odisha district of Bolangir died after allegedly falling off the roof of the hostel, his family members alleged that he was murdered.

Nishant Kumar from Karnal in Haryana had taken admission in Bhima Bhoi Medical College in Bolangir district 10 days ago and was supposed to begin his first-

year classes on Saturday. But on Friday afternoon, he was found dead under mysterious circumstances after falling from the roof of the seven-storeyed hostel building.

The mother of the young medical student said her son was being ragged the day he arrived at the college but the police insisted that it was early to arrive at any conclusion.

"My son was psychologically tormented and later murdered. He cleared

NEET without any coaching in his first attempt. Due to ragging and torture by seniors, he was not able to concentrate on studies and prepare a schedule," said the mother of the deceased after reaching Bolangir with other family members.

"I used to call my son daily. He was crying due to harassment. When I asked Nishant to report the matter to the authorities, he said his seniors will torture him more

for complaining. Two days ago, the seniors abused him and he was mentally very disturbed. A few hours before his death, Nishant narrated his ordeal to me over a video call describing how senior students were harassing him."

She alleged that the seniors had made a WhatsApp group and used to call the juniors for ragging at late night hours.

Dean of the medical college, Sabita Mohapatra said there was no ragging complaint by the deceased.

"We have anti-ragging squads that keep track of such occurrences," she said.

Bolangir superintendent of police Nitin Kushalkar said it was too early to say anything about the cause of the death as police were still waiting for the autopsy report.

"We have seized the laptop, phone, diary, and flute of the deceased from his hostel room for any possible clues to the death," said the SP.

This is the second case of a medical student's death under suspicious circumstances on a college campus over the last year.

MV Act violation: Bus ferrying BaraatIs fined Rs 3.70 lakh in Odisha

Bhubaneswar, April 23: A bus ferrying groomsman has been slapped with a fine of Rs 3.70 lakh for violating various rules under the amended Motor Vehicles (MV) Act in Sundergarh district.

As per reports, the bus from Odisha was returning to Bonai with baraatIs after a marriage function in Jharkhand when a team of Sundergarh Transport office led by Inspector Jitendra Kumar Murmu intercepted the vehicle during a routine inspection near Karimdiha last night.

Senior officials said that the bus had violated several road safety norms including air and noise pollution regulations. As per the challan levied by the Transport officials, the tax of the vehicle had expired in 2021 and it was operating without a valid permit, fitness certificate, and pollution under control certificate (PUC).

Senior officials said that the bus had violated several road safety norms including air and noise pollution regulations

Earlier on Thursday, the State Transport department had slapped a whopping penalty of over Rs 2.33 lakh on a school bus for flouting several motor vehicles protocols. The officials of Regional Transport Office-II in Bhubaneswar had seized the bus during an inspection drive near Damana square in the city.

The crackdown was launched as part of a special drive by the Odisha government for extensive checking of buses and other light vehicles used for carrying school students. The special drive will continue till April 27



'Ashwastthama Hatahath, Naro Va Gunjaro'



Sirish C. Mohanty

While the Kurukshetra war is happening Dronacharya who is the master of arrow art is on the Kaurava's side. It is very difficult to win against him or defeat him. Guru Dronacharya was almost invincible, but without killing him, the Pandavas couldn't win the Dharm Yuddha. Therefore a strategy was devised by the mastermind Lord Krishna to demoralize him by spreading the rumor of the death of his son Ashwastthama to whom he was excessively attached emotionally. Accordingly, the plot was set and Bhima killed an elephant named Ashwastthama and the message was conveyed to the Guru Dronacharya that Ashwastthama has been killed. However, Guru Dronacharya didn't believe and therefore it was decided to let him believe by making Yudhisthira utter these words. Yudhisthira protested and refused to tell any lies. However, in the larger interest of Dharma, he was convinced by Lord Krishna to utter the words 'Ashwathama Hatahath, Naro Va Gunjaro' which means 'though Ashwathama had died it is not

certain whether it was a Drona's son or an elephant'. Dronacharya in the din and bustle fails to hear the second half of the sentence and thinks that his loving son has died. Hearing this Guru Dronacharya got disheartened and laid his weapons. Dhristadyumna killed him to avenge the death of his father and satisfy his vow.

Amidst the allegations from certain quarters against the ongoing Heritage Corridor project around the Jagannath Temple in Puri, Gajapati Maharaja Dibyasingha Deb on Monday for the first time said that the centuries-old shrine's safety would not be affected by it. By doing this the Gajapati has dragged his unblemished reputation to controversy. Like lord Jagannath, people of Odisha, and around the country have deposed faith in Gajapati Maharaj of Puri. He is revered as the 'Chalnti pratima' or the moving idol of Lord Jagannath.

There have been many irregularities like the Nabakalebar scam in 2015. The mystery remains

still unsolved. The keys of the Ratna Bhandar of Sri Jagannath Mandir are yet to be traced out and that has gone to the cold store. Hundreds of acres of land belonging to the temple have gone into the scams, and are well in the dust bin of the administration. Astonishingly the Gajapati preferred to remain silent on those issues to keep intact his dignity. That also enhanced his reputation as he belongs to the next level.

But his intervention in the ongoing controversy raised many questions than answers. Gajapati says that there is no danger to the shine. Agar aap Gajapati na hote, toh in a democracy log jarur puchhte-how could he know that? Is he an expert on the subject? If so what was the use to call the ASI for the study and the need for a NoC by the ASI to undertake any expansion? On the other hand, if the Gajapati was sure by his divine wisdom that there is no threat to the temple he should have opined right from the start and there would have

been no possibility of any controversy to surface. Like Judhistira in the Mahabharata, Gajapati was slow in pronouncing if the heritage project got the green light from the ASI. Finally, the ASI declines to give NoC for the corridor excavation as per the RTI documents.

The concerns over the impact of the ongoing Puri Heritage Corridor project on the structural safety of the 12th century Jagannath temple seem to have turned into a political slugfest between the principal Opposition BJP and the ruling BJD in Odisha.


Raising the issue in the Lok Sabha recently, the BJP's Bhubaneswar MP Aparajita Sarangi alleged illegality in the implementation of this ambitious project being undertaken by the Naveen Patnaik-led BJD government. She also claimed that the state government carried on with its construction work in prohibited areas near the Jagannath temple despite the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)'s letter asking the government to "stop" it.

Sarangi, while referring to an ASI letter dated February 5, 2022, to the Odisha Bridge and Construction Corporation (OBCC), which is undertaking the digging work close to the temple's boundary wall, tweeted: "Archaeological Survey of India has issued a letter to the concerned authorities of Puri for stopping work in the Prohibited area (100 meters) of Jagannath

Temple, Puri. But work has not been stopped by the State Govt till now. Illegal this is! Isn't it time for all of us to SAVE OUR TEMPLE?"

The rules under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (AMASR) Act stipulate that the area within 100 meters of a protected monument is prohibited for any new construction unless the ASI and the NMA give their clearance in special cases.

For the Puri Heritage Corridor project, the NMA has issued a NOC to the state government for the construction of a cloakroom, a shelter pavilion, three toilets, an electrical room, and a pavement within a 75-meter radius of the temple. This is about the point that public amenities do not come under the definition of construction as per the AMASR Act, and the NMA has no objection if the project is carried out under the ASI's supervision.

The Gajapati is not an individual, but an institution revered by all Odias. This epitome of Odia faith must be free from any controversial ends. In the Mahabharat, Judhistira is a holly character but with a black spot of a machinated lie. Similarly, the Gajapati Maharaj is the last beacon of hope of 4.5 crores Odias and the first Sevak of Lord Jagannath. Any kind of black spot on him is unacceptable. 

Letter to the Editor

Dear Sir,

Your special story "When the leader grows taller than the party" deals with the comparative analysis between PM, Narendra Modi & Home minister Amit Shah on one side and Nitin Gadkari, Rajnath Singh on another side. Of course, Modi & Shah both were the star campaigners of the BJP in assembly

But, I differ with you regarding the ability of Modi and Shah in winning the election because Both the leaders

miserably failed in Punjab & West Bengal. Their mass appeal & charisma could not fetch votes for which BJP had to bite the dust.

In their home state Gujrat, also, there is a simmering discontentment & disenchantment of common voters towards these two stalwarts.

This is evident from the recent unprecedented mass rally of AAP, headed by Kejriwal.

Furthermore, I disagree with your views that Modi & Shah lack the art & craft of governance in

comparison to Rajnath Singh & Gadkari. Because Modi was the longest-serving Chief Minister of Gujrat along with Amit Shah as home minister by dint of their outstanding performance

in governance. That is why BJP is harping on the "Gujrat model of Governance" as the successful model to be emulated by other states.

In view, of this, it would not be wrong to conclude that a successful Chief Minister of a State may not be a successful Prime

Minister of India.

India is a union of states with diverse economic, political, social & regional challenges. In my view, Modi & Shah's ego-centric style of functioning in govt. & party has not only created a widening gap in top leadership, but also weakened the democratic spirit inside the party organisation.

Undoubtedly, both Gadkari & Rajnath Singh are mass leaders, and both are gifted with tremendous administrative skill & expertise to deal with the

opposition parties.

At present, Narendra Modi as the Prime Minister, is the supreme commander of our country with no imminent threat to his position, with a brute majority.

His statesmanship is facing a litmus test. Therefore, during the present domestic & international crisis, he should play a long & stable inning like a captain.

Bharat Patra
Rtd. Banker & Social activist,
Keonjhar.

Freebie Culture: A Race To The Bottom



Sirish C Mohanty

India is a Union of states. It is not a confederation of states. It is not a question of holding together but of coming together. The Union is indestructible. The configuration of the states which constitute the Union can change. The Union, therefore, is integral to both the Centre and the states. The strength of the Centre lies in the strength of the states.



pandemic. All over the world, these are considered to be desirable expenditures.

Therefore, it's not about how cheap the freebies are but how expensive they are for the economy, life quality, and social cohesion in the long run. We must dread the thought of replicating the culture of

something without charge or cost. It has been rife in Indian politics. It is a very well-known and widespread practice during the election. Freebies are the best lucrative methods adopted by political parties to lure voters. In the 2019 general election, not only the Congress party but BJP also joined the race to offer freebies. There is a paradigm shift in the offerings of freebies. Conventional offerings like free water, free electricity, and free health services have lost their charm.

New offerings like free gadgets and cash incentives are coming up. In every election, political parties are offering innovative, lucrative, and materialistic ideas of freebies. Some independent candidates go further in their freebies by offering helicopter rides and taking voters on a tour of the moon. Yes, we understand that the State should provide welfare and insurance to its citizens. The argument which favors freebies says that it is also another form of social welfare.

The origin of freebie culture in India can be traced to Tamilnadu politics. Afterward, political parties across the nation adopted this as one of the doctrines to woo voters. In welfare politics, freebies are also named hand-outs, doles, sops or incentives. These

terms are very encouraging. But in an under-tax country like India, it is not feasible to accept such things, as tax evasion also happens frequently.

Those who enjoy or avail of the freebies should be aware of the fact that these freebies are not coming from the pockets of any political parties but the taxpayers including them who are the beneficiaries. Freebies are not only a reflection of political promise but also an accepted way of life in India. The freebie culture started with some outlines such as it would help to enhance the capacity of poor people, reduce the poverty, and to empower the target beneficiaries.

Gradually, it is observed that there is a very thin connection between labor, work, outcome, and the nation's economy. Winning an election and good governance are two different things. Several political parties including BJD believe that freebies help avail good governance is questionable. The crucial features of good governance are equality,

education, and health service. Providing basic healthcare, an affordable education, and other essential services like water, house and electricity are the functions and responsibilities of any elected Government.

Economists opine that as long as any State has the capacity and ability to finance freebies then its fine; if not then freebies are a burden on the economy. The best example is Odisha's economy; here a newborn is indebted to the tune of Rs 23,761. There is little evidence to support the relationship between freebies and the economy. So freebies are only a bad political philosophy.

As far as farmers and their productivities are concerned, free electricity, free water, farm loan waivers, subsidies, and minimum support price are not sustainable solutions. The Governments both State and Centre have been providing such freebies to them. Ironically Indian agriculture is still marked by low productivity. As per statistics, China's rice productivity is 7 tonnes per hectare compared to India's 4 tonnes. China's rice productive land is only two-thirds of India's cultivable land. It means we have a huge cultivable land in India but the production in comparison to this is minimal. Freebies in the agricultural sector have also obstructed the use of innovation and acceptance of technology.

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

This version compels us to contemplate where India goes. The freebies in the

election manifesto are just like an open auction. Voters are at the receiving end. They often fail to digest the huge political promises. The democratic process of election and election promises should be clear with farsightedness. Further to this, the Madras High Court said freebies make people lazy and irresponsible in Tamilnadu. It may apply to people of other States. It is observed that there is a scarcity of local laborers in



Kejriwal muffled Delhi with freebies

the market. Local laborers are now replaced by migrant workers from other States.

Freebies culture paves the way to corrupt practice. The involvement of the middle man to get those freebies is widely visible. The KALIA scheme in Odisha is indeed to provide financial help to farmers. But, the distribution and utilisation of such financial help are yet to be scrutinized on a larger canvas. The unprecedented huge expenses incurred by the candidates in the just concluded rural and urban elections, and the occurrences of post-electoral violence in Odisha prove it.

John Maynard Keynes said, "There is no harm in being sometimes wrong - especially if one is promptly found out." In this case, it has been promptly found out that both the economics and politics of freebies are deeply flawed. Using freebies to lure voters develops voter's greediness, and may lead to a problem in choosing a good leader. When we don't have a good leader then democracy will be a mockery, and turns out to a race to the bottom.



J. Jayalalithaa

Mother of freebies in India

That is why in grappling with the complex issues of the Fifteenth Finance Commission was devoted the entire Volume IV to the states. Each state in this volume of the report has been analysed at great length; their deficits, debts, and macroeconomic stability, which includes the developmental challenges each of the states face.

The political dialogue built around freebies is burdened with danger. There is great ambiguity in what "freebies" mean. We need to distinguish between the concept of merit goods and public goods on which expenditure outlays have overall benefits. Examples of this are the strengthening and deepening of the public distribution system, employment guarantee schemes, support for education, and enhanced outlays for health, particularly during the

competitive freebie politics. We must go the route of achieving higher rates of economic growth. The race to efficiency is the race to prosperity. Freebies undercut the basic framework of macroeconomic stability. The politics of freebies distorts expenditure priorities. Outlays are being concentrated on subsidies of one kind or the other. What, therefore, does this mean to fiscal sustainability for states which are already debt-stressed? This state of the economy of states has a tangible impact of the Union.

Despite knowing the fact that these freebies will put State revenue in the red zone, political parties are competing with each other to lure the voters. There are some other examples of freebies where States provide phones, laptops, grinders, bicycles, and free transportation.

Freebies can be defined as



Naveen Patnaik masters the electoral use of freebies

equity, inclusiveness, social justice, and accountability. And these should be seen from a long-term perspective. The social, political, and economic developments through the freebies are very short-lived in nature.

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

Woman hires contract killer to eliminate husband in Bhubaneswar



After getting a whiff of his the illicit affair, Behera confronted his wife which led to an altercation between the two. Finding no other option, Behera's wife hatched a plan to eliminate her husband. She hired a contract killer named Jitendra Kumar Pradhan to execute her plan.


After getting a whiff of the illicit affair, Behera confronted his wife which led to an altercation between the two. Finding no other option, Behera's wife hatched a plan to eliminate her husband. She hired a contract killer named Jitendra Kumar Pradhan to execute her plan.

As per the plan, Jitendra along with his aides attacked Behera with iron rods and plastic pipes when he was going on an evening walk near Sports Complex in Mancheswar on April 16.

Though Behera sustained grievous injuries

in the murderous attack, he somehow managed to escape from the clutches of the assailants and complained to the Mancheswar police.

Acting on the complaint, police carried out raids on an apartment and arrested Ashok. Subsequently, the supari killer Jitendra was also nabbed by the police but Behera's wife is still at large.

Ashok reportedly confessed to his crime during questioning while efforts are on to arrest others involved in the crime, sources in the police said. 

Bhubaneswar, April 22: In a shocking incident, a woman along with her paramour allegedly hired a supari killer to eliminate her husband when the latter opposed their extra-marital affair. The matter came to the fore after the husband of the woman filed a complaint in this regard at Mancheswar police station in Bhubaneswar.

According to sources, the victim identified as Binayak Behera was working as a senior section engineer at Mancheswar Railway Workshop. When Behera got transferred to Puri, his wife developed an extra-marital affair with his driver Ashok Kumar Sahoo, a native of Hatatota in Angul, sources informed.

EV battery explodes, killing 1 and injuring 3 in Andhra Pradesh

The victim K Siva Kumar purchased the electric bike only on Friday. The detachable battery of the vehicle was kept on charging in his bedroom on Friday night and it suddenly exploded in the early hours when all were fast asleep, Suryaraopet Inspector of Police V Janaki Ramaiah said.

Amaravati, April 24: A 40-year-old man was killed when the battery of his new electric bike exploded causing a fire in his bedroom in Vijayawada city in the early hours of Saturday. His wife suffered burns and was in a critical condition in hospital, police said. Their two children also suffered from asphyxiation but were stable, the police added.

The incident was similar to the one that happened three days ago in Nizamabad town in neighboring Telangana where an electric vehicle battery exploded killing an 80-

year-old man. These were the two major incidents involving EV batteries in the two Telugu states, while similar mishaps were reported from other states like Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu in recent days.

The victim K Siva Kumar, who was a self-employed DTP worker, purchased the electric bike only on Friday. The detachable battery of the vehicle was kept on charging in his bedroom on Friday night and it exploded in the early hours when all were fast asleep, Suryaraopet Inspector of Police V Janaki Ramaiah said.

The explosion caused a minor fire in the house gutting the air-conditioning machine and some household articles. Neighbors who saw smoke billowing out of the house broke the doors open and pulled out the family trapped inside. Siva Kumar died while being shifted to a hospital in an ambulance. His wife was




admitted to a private hospital for treatment, where she was kept under 48-hour observation, police added.

"The exact cause of the explosion is not known. Fire services personnel also visited the scene to determine the cause. We have also spoken to the EV company to check whether an electric short circuit could be the reason for the battery explosion," the inspector said.

A case has been registered and an investigation was taken up. Incidentally, government think tank Niti Aayog had two days ago

come out with a draft battery swapping policy for electric vehicles and suggested incentives as well as a rigorous testing protocol for swappable batteries.

It came amid rising concerns over safety issues around electric vehicles. Further, union minister Nitin Gadkari had on Thursday said companies found negligent will be penalised and a recall of all defective EVs will be ordered after receiving the report of an expert panel that has been formed to enquire into the matter. 

Text books sold to Kawadiwala, school headmaster suspended in Odisha




The headmaster of Sargigarh Upper Primary school in Koida block of Sundergarh district, identified as Chhanda Charan Singh has been suspended from service following an inquiry by the Block Education Officer (BEO).

Koida, April 21: Even as children struggle to get access to good education in several parts of Odisha, a headmaster of a school in the State was placed under suspension on shocking charges of selling textbooks meant for the students to scrap dealers (kawadiwala).

The headmaster of Sargigarh Upper Primary school in the Koida block of Sundergarh district, identified as Chhanda Charan Singh has been suspended from service following an inquiry by the Block Education Officer (BEO). As per reports, the BEO had conducted an inquiry after getting information regarding the selling of books to the scrap dealer by the headmaster of the concerned school. The matter had come to light after an autorickshaw carrying large quantities of textbooks

was stranded on the road after a breakdown on April 18. The vehicle was carrying around 3,000 textbooks from several academic sessions. Taking strong cognizance of the incident, BEO Md Shakeelur Rehman and three members of the Cluster Resource Centre Coordinator (CRCC) went to the school and initiated a probe on Wednesday.


"We received information regarding the breakdown of a vehicle carrying some textbooks, and after an inquiry, we found evidence regarding unauthorized selling of textbooks," said Rehman. The BEO has also submitted a report to the District Education Office for necessary action. Residents have demanded a detailed investigation to ascertain the involvement of others in the case. 

Elderly man rapes and attempts to murder minor girl in Barbil, Odisha

Barbil, April 23: In a saddening incident, an elderly man allegedly raped and attempted to murder a minor girl in ward number 15 under Barbil police limits in the Keonjhar district.

Reportedly, a 10-year-old minor girl was tied by her hand and legs following which the accused elderly man allegedly raped her. The accused then attempted to kill her by smashing her with a huge piece of stone for the fear of getting exposed.

However, as the minor girl fainted on the spot, the accused man left her behind naked and escaped. The locals spotted the minor girl naked and rushed her to the Department of Paediatrics of Government Medical College and Hospital in Keonjhar.

Later, the minor girl was shifted to District Headquarters Hospital (DHH) in critical condition. The family has demanded the accused be arrested and severely punished. 

NALCO faces coal scarcity as daily supplies diverted, few trains to spare

Indian state-run aluminum producer National Aluminium Co Ltd (NALCO) is facing a coal supply shortfall, due to supplies being diverted to priority electricity generation and a shortage of trains to deliver fuel to NALCO's power plants.

Daily supplies to NALCO were falling short of requirement by at least 5,000 tonnes due to the train shortage, a senior company official told Reuters, adding that the company had coal inventories that would last only four days.

India has diverted coal supplies from the non-power sector, and put on hold plans for some fuel auctions, in a bid to ensure

coal availability for utilities and tackle widespread power outages across the country.

There is also a general shortage of trains to move coal around the country. State-run Indian Railways has fallen short of utilities' requirements by 16% in the first half of April, a government official familiar with the matter said.

NALCO data seen by Reuters show that supplies by state-run Coal India under a long-term supply deal fell short of the contracted quantity by 17% in 2021/22, while shortfalls were more than 75% under another related deal.

A shortage of trains to deliver coal to utilities is



exacerbating a coal supply crisis which has led to power cuts across the country.

Mahanadi Coalfields (MCL), the Coal India unit which supplies NALCO, said it has sufficient coal and has asked NALCO to prioritize moving coal via conveyor belts

and trucks instead of using trains. It said it was prioritising the sending of coal via rail to power stations.


The NALCO official said it was not possible to increase transport by road due to "logistical challenges".

The NALCO Officers' Association, a welfare

India has diverted coal supplies from the non-power sector, and put on hold plans for some fuel auctions, in a bid to ensure coal availability for utilities and tackle widespread power outages

association for executives of the company, is taking legal action over the coal supply shortfalls, alleging poor planning by the Indian government and the various state bodies involved.

"The lopsided prioritization of the union government and the

lackadaisical attitude of the railways has triggered the present crisis," said Subir Palit, a lawyer representing the NALCO Officers' Association, which has taken the coal ministry, MCL, and a unit of the Indian Railways to court over the supply shortfalls. 

Orissa HC asks ECoR to allot rakes to NALCO for transportation

The interim direction came on the petition filed by Nalco Officers' Association which had moved the High Court seeking a direction to resolve the serious crisis of coal shortage hitting the PSU.




Cuttack, Apr23: The Orissa High Court has directed the East Coast Railways (ECoR) to allot rakes for transportation of coal to the National Aluminium Company (NALCO) at Angul.

The interim direction came on the petition filed by Nalco Officers' Association which had moved the High Court seeking a direction to resolve the serious crisis of coal shortage hitting the PSU.

Earlier, the Mahanadi Coalfields Limited (MCL), a subsidiary of the Coal India Limited, had reduced its supply of coal to NALCO. The MCL is supplying

8,000 MT of coal to the aluminium giant every day in place of an agreed 18,000 - 20,000 MT per day.

The reduction of the daily supply quota of coal has hit the NALCO hard. Apprehension over shutting down of the smelter plant cannot be ruled out if the coal supply is not normalised.

"If a request is made by NALCO to the East Coast Railway to allocate four rakes per day to transport coal from MCL's Bharatpur Mines to NALCO's plant at Angul, such request should be considered by the East Coast Railway on priority basis," the High Court said. 

Mamata slams Modi on fuel subsidy: Spent Rs 15k crore in 3 years

New Delhi, Apr 28: Hitting out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi for urging non-BJP ruled states to cut VAT on petrol and diesel in the "national interest", West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday asked when would the central government clear all the pending dues it owed to the state, and said that she would reduce the tax on the petroleum products more than the BJP-ruled states.

"The Centre owes West Bengal Rs 97,000 crore, I request the PM to pay us half of that amount and we will provide higher subsidy on petrol and diesel than the BJP-ruled states," said Banerjee.

"The West Bengal government has spent Rs 1,500 crore in the past three years to subsidise petrol and diesel in the state. We have been providing a subsidy of Re 1 on every litre of petrol and diesel for the past



Earlier in the day, PM Modi came down hard on Opposition-ruled states and said some states did not reduce VAT on petrol and diesel despite the excise duty cut by the Centre last November

three years," said Banerjee hours after Modi in a virtual interaction with chief ministers flagged higher fuel prices in opposition-ruled states such as Maharashtra, Kerala and West Bengal and asked the state governments to reduce VAT in the "national interest" and for the benefit the common man.


Terming the PM's comment "one-sided" and "misleading", she said, that there was no scope for the chief ministers to speak at the meeting, and hence, they could not counter the Prime Minister's statement. "We listened to you carefully but had no scope to counter you. We do not agree with

your views."

The CM accused the Centre of allocating more funds to the BJP-ruled states and neglecting the opposition-led states.

"The Prime Minister praised the BJP-ruled state governments for reducing VAT on petrol and diesel and criticised the non-BJP states for not doing so. But what he did not mention is the Union government has been giving unequal treatment to the non-BJP ruled states when it comes to payment of central dues."

"It would have been better had the PM not spoken on the fuel price hike in a Covid-19 review meeting, it was his agenda," said Mamata, reiterating her demand for a reduction in fuel prices.

Joining Mamata, her party Trinamool Congress called the meeting with the PM a "gyan baato" session and demanded that the Centre clear dues it owes to the West Bengal government. 

BJP-ruled States HP, U'Khand, UP CMs say ready for UCC

New delhi, April 26: The chorus for implementation of the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) is rising among the BJP-ruled States with Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur on Monday saying "we are open to implementing it". Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh Chief Ministers have already expressed their commitment to the UCC, which calls for one law for all religious communities in relation to marriage, divorce, inheritance, and adoption.

Asked about the implementation of the Uniform Civil Code in his State which is to elect a new Assembly by the year-end, the Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister said, "UCC is a good step. It is being examined in the State. We are open to implementing it in Himachal Pradesh."



HP CM Jai Ram Thakur

Pradesh."

Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya on Saturday said that his Government was seriously planning to implement the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in the State.

The statement came soon after Union Home Minister

Amit Shah, while addressing a meeting of party leaders at the BJP office in Bhopal on Friday, reportedly said, "Issues like CAA, Ram Mandir, Article 370 and triple talaq have been resolved. Now, it is time to focus on the Uniform Civil Code."

He also reportedly said it

would be implemented in Uttarakhand as a pilot project and a draft was being prepared for the purpose.

Echoing the Home Minister's view, Maurya said, "One law for all in one country is the need of the hour. It is required that we should get out of the system of one law for one person and another for others. We are in favor of a common civil code."

He said the Uttar Pradesh Government was "thinking in this direction seriously". Earlier in March, after returning to power Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami had announced that the State has decided to implement the Uniform Civil Code.

"We have decided to implement the Uniform Civil Code in the State. The State Cabinet unanimously

approved that a committee (of experts) will be constituted at the earliest and it will be implemented in the State. This will be the first State to do so," Dhami had said. It was also part of the election promise of the BJP in Uttarakhand.

The Himachal Chief Minister who spoke to newsmen on the sidelines of an event here reiterated the BJP's commitment to UCC. "We need to see best ways to implement UCC in Himachal. We will take a decision soon," he said.

"We will not rush into the decision. It's a good step and we are examining it. Its implementation is not ruled out before the November state elections. The matter is under active consideration," he said.

The BJP-ruled Goa already has UCC that it inherited from the time of

Portuguese rule. The Goa family law, originally the Portuguese Civil Code, continued to be implemented after its annexation to India in 1961.

The BJP has promised to implement the UCC and the issue formed part of its 2019 Lok Sabha election manifesto.

The Constitution of India under Article 44 of the Directive Principles lays down that the state shall endeavor to secure a UCC for the citizens throughout the country. The architect of the Indian Constitution B R Ambedkar had maintained that "we cannot call ourselves a modern nation unless the UCC is implemented in the country".

The Opposition parties want wider consultations on the subject and have asked the BJP not to "bulldoze" the issue.

Residents oppose eviction drive, gherao Revenue Minister's residence in Bhubaneswar

Bhubaneswar, April 23: Areas like Udaynagar, Baraman, Sundarpur, Pathargadia and Chunakoli are inhabited by around 2,500 landless families with a total population of around 10,000. In the presence of police force, an eviction drive was launched in Udaynagar area with engaging a JCB machine on Friday. On being informed, senior Congress leader Suresh Routray reached the spot and halted the drive.

"Without any prior notice, a JCB machine and a posse of policemen reached the village to evict the people yesterday. I along with the villagers sat in front of the earth mover and halted the drive. We told them to carry out the drive only after providing permanent land documents," said Routray.

"We all belong to

Terming the eviction drive launched in their village as illegal, the villagers of Udaynagar put up a strong opposition to it while demanding permanent land documents under Jaga Mission



scheduled caste and scheduled tribe and are landless. We demand the government should provide four decimal lands each to us under Jaga Mission. Today we visited Revenue Minister Sudam

Marmdi's residence to submit our memorandum. With the Minister being absent, Jatni MLA talked with the former, informing him about our demand," said a resident Ajay Jena.

Nitish Kumar Opposes UCC in Bihar

Bihar is an exception as the ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in the state appears divided over the issue. In the latest news, Bihar chief minister (CM) Nitish Kumar's party Janata Dal (United) (JD-U) has rejected the growing demand from BJP leaders to introduce UCC in the state.

On Monday, senior JD-U leader Upendra Kushwaha made it clear that there was no need for UCC in Bihar, ignoring the Union Home Minister Amit Shah's stress on implementing it across the country two days ago.

"UCC is not possible till Kumar is CM. There is no question about implementing the UCC in the state. The party will not compromise on its principles. The country is being run as per the constitution," said Kushwaha, chairman of the JD-U's national parliamentary board.

Kushwaha is considered close to Kumar and known



as a champion of Mandal politics. His questioning of the BJP leaders' demand to implement UCC in the state in line with other BJP ruled states is widely seen as a part of JD-U's efforts to corner the BJP on this issue.

"We will not support implementing UCC at any cost and are ready to oppose it," he said. Kushwaha stated this in reply to senior BJP leader Sushil Kumar Modi, former deputy chief minister. Modi said that UCC should be implemented in Bihar following Shah's announcement. Shah reportedly announced last week that after Ram Mandir,

CAA, Triple Talaq and Article 370, the UCC will now be implemented in the country.

BJP state spokesperson Sanjay Tiger said UCC is a need of the hour, and it should be implemented in the interest of the nation. Several BJP leaders have demanded a UCC in Bihar in the last few days. A political watcher said Kushwaha's statement is seen as part of Kumar's strategy to send a political message to ally BJP's top leadership in Delhi that his party will not follow the saffron party's plan to polarise society further.

Will Intensify 'Anti-Encroachment Drives', Say Delhi Civic Bodies' Mayors

South and East Delhi Municipal Corporations have said that regular meetings to identify encroachment sites and to conduct anti-encroachment drives are being held in both the municipalities.

New Delhi, April 22: Unfazed by the criticism over demolition drive in Jahangirpuri, BJP-ruled south and east civic bodies on Friday said they will intensify anti-encroachment drives in their jurisdictions and will continue to identify structures encroaching public land.

South and East Delhi Municipal Corporations have said that regular meetings to identify encroachment sites and to conduct anti-encroachment drives are being held in both the municipalities.

Delhi BJP chief Adesh Gupta had earlier written to mayors of both the corporations for removal of



encroachments "by Rohingyas, Bangladeshis and anti-social elements" in their areas.

South Delhi Municipal Corporation Mayor Mukesh Suryan said regular meetings are being held to chalk out strategy to remove encroachment from public

land.

"We are going to intensify our anti-encroachment drives. No one (encroacher) will be spared. Today (Friday) also we held a meeting with officials and identified several sites in SDMC jurisdiction.

"More places are being added and by Monday we

will have a final list and an action will then be carried out accordingly," Mr Suryan told PTI.

When asked if encroachments will be removed in sensitive areas like Shaheen Bagh and Okhla, Mr Suryan did not take any names, but stressed that

encroachment will be removed from all places.

East Delhi Municipal Corporation Mayor Shyam Sundar Agarwal also said that anti-encroachment drives are already underway and will be intensified further. "We have identified several areas where encroachment is a major problem which many a times lead to traffic snarls. Some of these locations are in areas like, Nand Nagri, Jaffrabad, Seelampur etc," Agarwal said.

He added that on Friday instructions were issued to deputy commissioners of Shahdara North and South zones to prepare detailed roadmaps and necessary arrangements for carrying out these drives. He said that people in the area will be informed about the drive through loudspeakers a day before.

Chaotic scenes had unfolded in Jahangirpuri on Wednesday when roadside

stalls and shops allegedly built on public land were pulled down by the North Delhi Municipal Corporation in the presence of huge contingents of police and paramilitary, triggering recrimination among political parties before the Supreme Court intervened and stopped the drive.

The north civic body's mayor Raja Iqbal Singh had on Thursday said that following the Supreme Court's orders there will be no action in Jahangirpuri, but asserted that notices will be sent to encroachers in other areas falling under the municipality's jurisdiction.

The North Delhi Municipal Corporation on Friday carried out a "routine" anti-encroachment drive in Sector-7 Rohini and removed some temporary and concrete structures to clear the road near Sai Baba Temple in the area, officials said.

Alwar Temple Demolition: No Order To Bulldoze Temples

Alwar, (Rajasthan), April 23: As the political war over the Alwar temple demolition intensifies, Media has accessed the Alwar demolition proposal of 2021 which is the same copy as the 2016 proposal. According to the copy, there was no order to demolish the temple but to reconstruct the Gaurav path whose construction was halted in 2016.

The order has mentioned that the illegal encroachment had to be removed to ensure the construction of the path. The order directed to resume the construction of the path after demolishing an equal area from both sides of the road. This order was passed by the Sub-divisional office after it was decided unanimously.

The Gehlot government has passed the same order which was drafted by the BJP in 2016. This order mentions

According to the copy, there was no order to demolish the temple but to reconstruct the Gaurav path whose construction was halted in 2016.

nothing about the demolition of temples. The BJP's order also discusses the electric pole demolition and every inch of the land that would be broken down but has no mention of a 'masterplan' as quoted by the Congress government.

Despite the order being reviewed several times, there is no statement in the order that points to the claims that the BJP government intended

to demolish the temple.

A 300-year-old Shiva temple razed in Rajasthan

On Friday, the demolition of two temples, among other structures, in Rajasthan's Alwar district earlier this week created a political storm with the BJP accusing the Congress-led government of hurting the sentiments of Hindus by using bulldozers on temples.

Alwar district collector



Nakate Shivprasad Madan said that the board of the Rajgarh municipal council passed the proposal to demolition the illegal structures and the action was taken according to the decision of the local administration, in the

presence of police.

The collector stated that a proposal to remove encroachment was passed, in the meeting of the board headed by the chairman. He further mentioned that the action of demolition was done after the Executive Officer

issued notices.

It is further learned that the executive officer of the council on April 6, had issued notices to 86 people to remove encroachment from the road, and sufficient time was given for the same. The officer informed that on April 17 and 18; more than 100 structures were demolished. It was then stated that one time was completely demolished and the idols removed, while the second one was partially taken down but the sanctum sanctorum is safe.

Urban development minister Shanti Dhariwal said that in a meeting of the board in September 2021, the proposal to remove the encroachments to widen the road as per the master plan was passed and action was taken in compliance with the board's decision after serving notices.

Putin, Xi, and Modi join global leaders in wishing Macron for second term as French Prez

Paris, April 25: Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday joined several other world leaders to wish French leader Emmanuel Macron for securing a second term as the country's president, news agency AFP reported citing the Kremlin.

Putin's congratulatory message comes despite France being a part of several sanctions that the European Union has slapped on Russia for the Ukraine war, which is now in its third month. Macron has expressed support for banning Russian oil and coal as part of a new round of sanctions against the Kremlin after the Bucha killings.

PM Modi took to Twitter on Monday morning to congratulate Emmanuel Macron on being re-elected as the President of France.

In his tweet, he wrote, "Congratulations to my friend Emmanuel Macron on being re-elected as the President of France! I look forward to



French President Emmanuel Macron with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin

continuing working together to deepen the India-France Strategic Partnership."

China's President Xi Jinping also congratulated his French counterpart on his re-election, defeating far-right leader Marine Le Pen at the polls. Xi said he would "like to continue working with

President Macron to maintain diplomatic relations based on independence, mutual understanding, foresight, and mutual benefit," AFP reported citing a readout from state broadcaster CCTV.

On February 24, when Russia launched its "special military operation" to

demilitarise and "denazify" Ukraine, the French President had warned Moscow of an uncompromising response to its attack on its neighbor.

"We will respond without weakness to this act of war, with calm, determination, and unity," the French President said in his address to the

nation on the day of the invasion, calling Russia's aggression "a turning point in Europe's history".

Macron is said to be

call earlier in the day, Macron had also spoken to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to discuss possible

ways to secure immediate de-

Putin's congratulatory message comes despite France being a part of several sanctions that the European Union has slapped on Russia. Macron has expressed support for banning Russian oil and coal as part of a new round of sanctions against the Kremlin after the Bucha killings.

engaging in heavy diplomatic lifting between the West and Russia since the beginning of the war. He is one of the prominent leaders of the West who has spoken to Putin on several occasions after Russia invaded Ukraine.

Macron and Putin also spoke over the phone a few days before the war, on February 21, in a bid to avert the "biggest war after World War II". In a separate

escalation.

Later in March, when US President Joe Biden said that Putin "cannot remain in power" and called him a "butcher", Macron cautioned Biden against a verbal "escalation" of the ongoing Ukraine war. The French President said that the West needs to be "factual" and do everything needed to ensure that the "situation does not get out of control".

Will Uttarakhand act as beacon for Uniform Civil Code?

Goa inherited uniform civil law from the Portuguese and since 1961 this common law has been part of India's statute



Enshrined as a Directive Principle of State Policy in the Constitution of India and mentioned in the BJP manifestos of 1998 and 2019, will Uniform Civil Code (UCC)-a common personal law for all Indians regardless of religion, sex, gender and sexual orientation-be a reality as India embarks on its 75th year of Independence? A decision of the Pushkar Singh Dhami-led

Uttarakhand cabinet, taken in its very first meeting after the elections provides a beacon of hope. Will Dhami be able to herald a change which two BJP MPs failed to do when they introduced legislation in November 2019 and March 2020, respectively, which were later withdrawn as political resolution on the issue was not forthcoming? A law passed by Uttarakhand will have state-

specific application, but it certainly will open the sluice gate for similar action elsewhere.

Talk of the need for Uniform Civil Code begins in 1948 was a vintage. Jawaharlal Nehru and B.R. Ambedkar were favourably disposed but conservative thought prevailed. British divide and rule saw enactment of separate personal laws for different religions and free India inherited that legacy. Portuguese Civil Code, a common personal law for Catholics, Protestants, Hindus and Muslims was in force in Goa, Daman and Diu when these territories were liberated in December 1961: The Goa Family law, which came into force after amalgamation of these territories into the Union of India, was a successor to the Portuguese common law and these became part of the Indian statute. Thus since 1961 a part

of India has harmoniously implemented the Uniform Civil Code.

The Seventh Schedule of the Constitution, which defines and specifies allocation of powers and functions between the Union and the States, has a concurrent list which empowers Uttarakhand to legislate a proposed UCC-it will be subject to assent by the President of India. No state law can be in conflict with a Central legislation. Thus if the President's assent is granted to Pushkar Dhami's move, it will in effect signal the Union Cabinet's approval-will this nod be followed up by an all-India enactment by Parliament?

Article 44, which is part of Directive Principles of State policy, states: "The State shall endeavour to secure for citizens a Uniform Civil Code throughout the territory of India." Directive Principles are

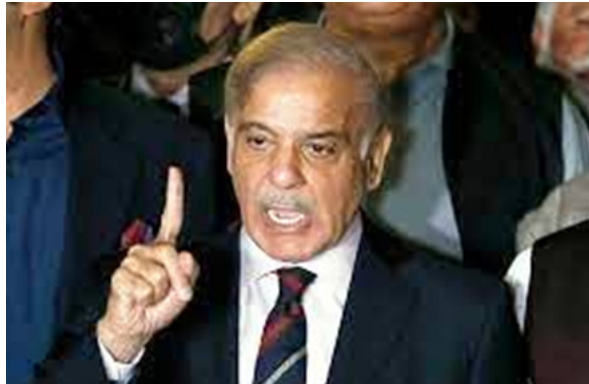
not enforceable in a court, but are considered fundamental in governance of the country. In an affidavit filed before the Delhi High Court in response to a petition favouring UCC filed by a BJP worker, Ashwini Upadhyay, the counsel of Union of India stated that the Centre will consider introducing UCC after consulting all stakeholders. This consultation process should ensure to make India's "Unity in Diversity", a coinage by Rabindranath Tagore oft quoted by Jawaharlal Nehru, an actuality.

Free India codified Hindu law in 1956 but failed to legislate laws for Muslims, who continue to be governed by Sharia law. The Shah Bano case in 1985 brought the need for UCC into sharp focus. The Government of Rajiv Gandhi initially took a progressive view but ultimately succumbed to the pressures of the conservative

lobby. The Narendra Modi government has taken some bold steps to protect the rights of the Muslim women and it is perceived that BJP has benefitted electorally. Will the legislation of Uttarakhand, if enacted (at present a panel has been set up by Dhami cabinet) act as a beacon?

UCC shall replace Hindu Marriage Act and Hindu Succession Act (which cover Buddhists, Jains and Sikhs as well), Indian Christian Marriage Act, Indian Divorce Act, Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act and similar religion-based personal laws besides bring under the umbrella of a common law applicable to all citizens, including Muslims. If Goa can have a common code over the past six decades, so perhaps can the rest of India. Provided there is political will and a negotiated unanimity of all stakeholders is crafted.

Dynasties rule and the subcontinent



With the ouster of Imran Khan as the Prime Minister of Pakistan through a no-trust vote in the National Assembly, Islamabad, like at least two of our immediate neighbors, has returned to the rule of dynasts. The coalition government led by Shehbaz Sharif and supported by the Bhutto-Zardari family reflects the return of the dynasts to the center stage of politics in that country. It is not a coincidence that in Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina, daughter of Banga Bandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rehman is in power as are the Rajapaksa brothers, who have put Sri Lanka in its worst

economic crisis to this date.

India has been governed by dynasts for many years, mostly by the Nehru-Gandhi family or their supporters, at this juncture, it remains the only major nation in the region where the Prime Minister does not come from a political family, and none of his relatives are in active politics either. Narendra Modi can easily be credited for curbing the influence of families in India; although several powerful political individuals or their relatives control the reins of power of multiple regional parties, several fresh faces have emerged on the political scene.

Sirish C Mohanty

Even the worst critics of the BJP shall admit that none of its principal leaders from the time of Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, Balraj Madhok, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Lal Krishna Advani, and Murli Manohar Joshi have ever encouraged their family members to join politics or have made any attempt to hoist them on the masses.

Modi continues the tradition and has pre-empted the emergence of many dynasts in his party by selecting his Chief Ministers in a manner that they do not carry any political baggage. Barring Basavaraj Bommai in Karnataka, whose father was the Chief Minister of the state earlier, none of the present CMs belonging to the BJP are dynasts. Bommai was appointed to placate B.S. Yediyurappa, whose son is also trying to occupy a key position in the government, but this is unlikely to happen since the BJP's central leadership is seriously considering a change in leadership there, given that the Assembly polls are due early next year. However, many middle-level leaders of the saffron brigade occupy important posts and while the party claims that they have made it to the top because of merit, their opponents point to their political background. Having said that, there is no leader other than Modi who wields a similar degree of influence in the party, and the Prime Minister is himself a strong critic of dynasty politics.

The Congress is a party that has been controlled for the past several decades by the Nehru-Gandhi family. With their diminishing influence, the Gandhis who used to continue to call the shots now find themselves in a position where their clout in the country is declining. Congress has lost most of the major elections it has

contested in the past eight years. Since the most famous dynasty of Independent India is losing its way, many other families that derived power from their lineage find themselves isolated. But regional parties such as the DMK, the YSR Congress, the National Conference, the PDP, the Akalis, the INLD, the Samajwadi Party, the RJD, the Shiv Sena, and the BJD in Odisha continue to keep dynastic politics alive.

The emergence of Mamata Banerjee and Arvind Kejriwal indicates that hard-working individual leaders have been rewarded by the people for their work; notwithstanding that they have any political support from their family backgrounds. These two leaders are expected to pose a challenge to the BJP as and when the time comes but they still have a lot to do before that.

The supreme irony is that while the BJP is opposed to politics of inheritance, it has admitted several leaders in their organization who, while they were with the Congress, were accused of being dynasts. Examples are Vijay Bahuguna, Rita Bahuguna, Jyotiraditya Scindia, R.P.N. Singh, and Jitin Prasada.

In neighboring Pakistan, credit must be given to Imran Khan that he was able to counter and neutralize the influence of the Sharif and Zardari-Bhutto families. It is another matter that they are back now, but politics is a game of possibilities, and who knows when elections take place, Imran Khan may return with a thumping majority.

Sri Lanka has a long history of being administered by dynasties. After the assassination of Solomon Bandaranaike, Colombo 1960 elected his wife, Sirimavo Bandaranaike, who also attained the distinction of being



the first woman Prime Minister in the world. Later her daughter, Chandrika Kumaratunga was elected to the top positions.

The Rajapaksas are in power at present but their main challenger is Sajith Premadasa, the leader of the Opposition, whose father Ranasinghe Premadasa was the President when he was assassinated several decades ago. Globally too, there have been dynasts that have thrived. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is the son of former PM Pierre Trudeau. George Bush Junior emulated

his father to become the President of the United States. The Kennedys have a special place in American history and Hillary Clinton, wife of Bill Clinton was nominated by the Democratic Party to contest against Donald Trump. In Japan, former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is the son of Shintaro Abe, an erstwhile Foreign Minister.

Thankfully in India, the popularity of non-dynasts has started to be reflected in public life. However, nothing in politics can be taken for granted, and there is still a long way to go. 🇮🇳

The Velvet Queen

Powerful hymn to the land of the snow leopard

This account of a photography expedition in Tibet goes beyond usual nature documentary territory in its writerly contemplation of the wild

Marie Amiguet and Vincent Munier's "The Velvet Queen," opening in New York and Los Angeles, is a calming, meditative experience. You can feel the chill in the air when you're watching it, and it often achieves a hypnotic tone, thanks in no small part to a gorgeous score from the two geniuses Nick Cave and Warren Ellis, who find the perfect compositions for a project that reaches for something greater than a typical nature documentary. "The Velvet Queen" is at its strongest when it allows for silence on this gorgeous landscape, using only its mesmerizing score to elevate the imagery into something poetic about the beauty of Mother Nature. But while

the visuals and music are stunning, the two subjects of the film (and its co-director) have a habit of over-explaining what they're doing not just in practical terms but remarkably self-serious philosophical ones as well. Other than a comment here or there about the hunt that these two men find themselves on, I could have discarded literally every soundbite in "The Velvet Queen," and would have preferred to just get lost in this frigid corner of the world.

"The Velvet Queen" unfolds in a mountainous, seemingly inhospitable part of the world, on the peaks of Tibet. Here, photographer (and co-director) Munier and his pal



Sylvain Tesson (a famous author who wrote a successful book about the events of this film titled The Art of Patience - Seeking the Snow Leopard) spend their days seeking wildlife that's

often unseen by human eye. Munier hunts animals in this part of the world but only to shoot them with a camera, never a gun. He has a deep, almost religious view of the natural world, and it's made him a household name in his field, leading to the award for BBC Wildlife Photographer of the Year three years in a row.


Munier narrates this journey through soundbites and conversation with Tesson. The joy he expresses over finding recent bear feces is downright inspiring. Especially as the world seems to be collapsing again, it's comforting to see someone so thrilled by something that's not man-made. His buddy Tesson even points out that what

what they're seeing.

Sadly, Munier and Amiguet don't trust their audience quite enough. We wished for an almost Werner Herzog approach to the material here that didn't spell out the philosophy or importance of mother nature as much as "The Velvet Queen" feels comfortable doing. And yet it's never quite self-serious enough to defeat what the film does well. Every time I felt like "The Velvet Queen" was spinning its wheels, the team would stumble onto some new vista of shot of an animal living in its own habitat. There's a calming serenity to the best of "The Velvet Queen," especially as the team gets closer to their end goal, a shot of a rare snow leopard. The idea that we should step out of our technology-driven



he's doing-hunting wild animals-is about as old the human species itself. As they spot falcons on a cliff face that practically camouflage themselves into it or antelopes fleeing an as-yet-unseen predator, Munier and Tesson display not only a deep intelligence but respect for

worlds to be reminded of the existence of creatures of such beauty, majesty, and intelligence feels valuable at the end of 2021. Maybe we should all connect with mother nature more than we have been lately. I'm bringing the music of Nick Cave and Warren Ellis with me. 



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