

EOW arrests Fake Officer

Bhubaneswar(KCN): The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of Crime Branch has arrested



one accused, Himanshu Bhandarion from Noida, Uttar Pradesh for cheating Rs 2.35 crore from a businessman.

On being arrested, he was produced before the ACJM First, Surajpur Court, Greater Noida, UP on March 16 and was brought to Bhubaneswar on the strength of transit remand. He was produced before the JMFC, Barbil yesterday.

The arrest was made against a case registered on the basis of a complaint filed by Pramod Kumar Rout of Joda in Keonjhar district on the allegation of cheating to him to the tune of more than Rs 2.35 crore in the guise of paying him Rs 3 core from the Government of India, under Pradhan Mantri Rahat Kosh Yojana against his Insurance Policy with Max New York Life, using the forged & manipulated documents.

During the investigation, the EOW found that complainant Pramod Kumar Rout has been holding one policy in Max New York Life Insurance Company since March-2012. During the month of October 2019, he received a call from a person who identified himself as AK Walia, Fund Releasing Head, Ministry of Finance and informed him that complainant's above mentioned Insurance policy has been selected under Pradhan Mantri Rahat Kosh Yojana and that the Union

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10 million people have fled their homes in Ukraine: UN

Ukraine (KCN): Ten million people, more than a quarter of the population, have now fled their homes in Ukraine since Russia's invasion, the United Nations refugees chief said Sunday.



UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, said

nearly 3.4 million of the total had fled to neighbouring countries, mostly to the Polish border.

"Among the responsibilities of those who wage war, everywhere in the world, is

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State celebrates Pakhala Dibasa

Bhubaneswar(KCN): Odia people across the globe celebrated the Pakhala Divas, which is being observed on March 20 every year. This day is celebrated to enjoy the popular dish of Odia people, 'Pakha?'

As the date comes on a Sunday this year, the celebration has doubled. Social media platforms flooded with pictures, video and greetings.

Pakhala is the Odia term for an Indian dish consisting of cooked rice that is washed or lightly fermented in water. The water of the dish is known as 'Torani'. In order to make the traditional Odia dish more delicious, curd, cucumber, cumin seeds, fried onions and curry leaves are added along with the fermented rice.

There are many classifications of this dish such as Jeera Pakhala, Dahi Pakhala, Garama Pakhala and Basi Pakhala. Many city hotels and restaurants in the State offered this dish on this auspicious day.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan along with many political leader did not lose the opportunity to express their fondness towards 'Pakhala'. Both the leaders have shared some pictures and videos of eating Pakhala on this day.

In a video, Patnaik can be seen enjoying 'Pakhala' along with small fish fries, green leaves fry and other Odia cuisines. Also, he said in the video 'Pakhala mora Pasand' (Pakhala is my favourite).

"Pakhala is a meal that is a hit on every dining table and is the one thing that every Odia family has in common. Greetings to all Odias and food lovers on #PakhalaDibasa. The humble, healthy & flavourful delicacy is a must-try, especially for those uninitiated to Odia cuisine," tweeted Pradhan.



"#Pakhala – The Fermented Rice or Water Rice is part of every household in #Odisha . People of Odisha across the globe celebrate #PakhalaDibasa with much enthusiasm today. "#Pakhala – The Fermented Rice or Water Rice is part of every household in #Odisha .

People of Odisha across the globe celebrate #PakhalaDibasa with much enthusiasm today," said Sujeet Kumar, Rajya Sabha MP. Many Odia and non-Odia personalities but have love for Odisha and its culture like IAS and IPS officers have also shared pictures of eating the cool dish in their social media accounts.

"Today is #PakhalaDibasa Am going to have #Pakhala for lunch today.... amazingly delicious and one of the best food to have during summers... enjoy #pakhala #Odisha" said senior IPS officer Amitabh Thakur in a tweet.

"East or west Pakhala is the best," says former DGP, Abhay.

Similarly, IAS officer Sanjay Singh shared his picture enjoying the dish saying... Happy Pakhala day.

"Delicious and healthy. #PakhalaDibasa #PakahalaLove," wrote Cuttack DCP, Prateek Singh.

Obituary



✓ Premalata Mohanty

DOB:01/01/1939

DOD:10/03/2022



Pray peace for the departed soul



OM SHANTI Deeply Mourned By Family, Friends and Relatives

12 drowned during Holi

Bhubaneswar(KCN): At least a dozen people have died due to drowning in different districts following Holi celebrations since Dola Purnima. According to a report from Jajpur district, six youths drowned in Kharasrota river while taking bath after the Dola Jatra on Friday. Fire service personnel reached the spot and launched a rescue operation. One person was rescued alive while bodies of other six fished



out during a three-day search operation by Fire Service and ORDAF personnel concluded on Sunday.

After playing Holi, seven youths went for a bath in the river at Mangala Ghat near Badasuara village on Friday afternoon. However, the youths were swept away in the strong current of the river, said Anupama Biswal, local Sarpanch. Similarly, two youngsters drowned in Indravati river at Bania ghat under Kotpad police limits of Koraput district while taking bath after celebrating Holi yesterday afternoon. They were identified as Anukush Nayak and Jagannath Mohapatra of Belama Sahi. Abhijit Barik of Biribati area of Cuttack district was taking bath along with three friends in Mahanadi river at Nua Koruan ghat after playing Holi. He fell into deep water and was swept away in the river. The Fire Service personnel later fished out the body of Barik from the river. Another youth, Shatrughna Behera drowned while taking bath in a pond at Haridagotha village under Keonjhar Town Police limits. This incident was also reported yesterday. In another similar mishap, two labourers drowned in Mahanadi river in Kuchinda of Sambalpur district after Holi celebrations. They have been identified as Mukesh Yadav and Kailash Yadav, both from Balrampur district of Uttar Pradesh.

Darshan on Sunday too

Puri (KCN): Nearly allow entry of devotees into the 12th-century shrine on Sundays. Now the sanitization will be done during the night and not by



Sunday. After the outbreak of Covid-19, the temple was remained closed for the general public on all Sundays for sanitization of the temple premises. Now, in view of the significant decline in COVID-19 cases across the nation and improvement in the pandemic situation, Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) has taken this decision to

closing the temple. The decision in this regard was taken at the last meeting of the Chhatisa Nijog, the apex body of servitors. The devotees are paying obeisance to deities from the time of opening of Singhadwara (Lion's gate) in the early morning till pahada' (closure of the door) every day. Though the restrictions on devotees

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Vishwa Shanti Homyagna organised by Anandam Foundation

Bhubaneswar(KCN):On the auspicious occasion of Dola Purnima, Anandam Foundation, Bhubaneswar branch organised a "Vishwa Shanti Homyagna" at Kesura, Bhubaneswar. It was started at 11a.m. with Vedic mantras followed by Bhajan & Deshbhakti



Geet with the coordination of Gayatri Parivar, Bhubaneswar Branch. The locals joined us merrily and contributed in the programme. It was concluded with Purnahuti & Prasadam at 2pm. Shri Yudhishtir Nayak & Smt. Sushma Nayak were the hosts (Yajmans).

The whole village joyfully celebrated Holi altogether. Shri Manoj Das(General Secretary), Shri Dibakar Panigrahi, Shri Suryakant Mahapatra, Shri Tapan Kumar Sahoo, Shri Debabrata Mohanty and others attended the programme.

Review of under construction Birsa Munda International Hockey Stadium and other Development Projects

Rourkela (KCN): Upon the instructions of Hon'ble Chief Minister Shri Naveen Patnaik, Chief Secretary Shri Suresh Chandra Mahapatra and Secretary to CM (5T) Shri VK Pandian visited Rourkela to review the progress of work on the Birsa Munda

over 20,000. Practice turfs, advanced fitness centre and floodlights for night time matches have been provisioned at the stadium. Sundargarh, the breeding ground of Indian hockey will become more synonymous worldwide with the completion of this advanced

overviewed the various aspects of transformed high school like Smart Classroom, e-Library, Modern Science Lab, playground and other infrastructure. Rourkela got placed among the Top 15 global cities in Bloomberg International Global Mayors

As part of the under construction Rourkela - One project, a Traffic Command Centre, Proposed Tribal Museum, Convention Hall, Market Complex, etc are being built. Road construction and city beautification is also being done on a war footing to make the city ready for international tourists and visitors ahead of the 2023 Mens Hockey World Cup, a marquee sports event. After the visit to different infrastructural projects, the top secretarial delegation of the government had a review meeting at the airport with the district officials. Chief Secretary Shri Suresh Chandra Mahapatra directed the concerned authorities to complete the different ongoing projects timely at Rourkela city in preparation for 2023 Mens Hockey World Cup. MLA Rourkela & District Planning Committee Chairman Shri Sarada Prasad Nayak, Collector



International Hockey Stadium and other development projects. Principal Secretary Industries Shri Hemant Sharma, Secretary Sports and Youth Services Shri R. Vineel Krishna and Managing Director IDCO Shri Bhupinder Singh Poonia joined this high level delegation. Upon reaching Rourkela, the team first reviewed the progress of the Birsa Munda International Hockey Stadium at BPUT Campus and advised the officials concerned to expedite the work for timely completion of the project. Odisha is the host for 2023 Men's Hockey World Cup. The world cup matches will be held jointly at Kalinga Hockey Stadium Bhubaneswar and this state of the art facility (Birsa Munda International Hockey Stadium) at Rourkela.

hockey facility. Govt High Schools in Sundargarh are getting a facelift in line with the state government's flagship initiative High School Transformation Under 5T. Hon'ble Chief Minister dedicated 67 transformed government high schools in Sundargarh during phase 1 of the programme. Work is in progress to take a step further and dedi-

Challenge 2021. A 5 MT Cold Storage facility has been setup at VSS Market, Chhend to support the livelihood of small farmers and fruit and vegetable vendors under the Global Mayors Challenge. Maa Tarini SHG, a local Women Self Help Group has been engaged to manage the cold storage. The high level team visited the facility and discussed various



cate over 100 transformed government high schools for the people of Sundargarh. The high level delegation visited Udit Nagar High School at Rourkela and reviewed the progress of work. Secretary to CM (5T) Shri VK Pandian

aspects of the same with Women SHG members. The team members praised the efforts of WSHGs running such a non traditional and modern initiative. Various development projects are being accelerated under Rourkela Smart City.

Sundargarh Shri Nikhil Pavan Kalyan, ADM Rourkela cum Commissioner RMC Dr Subhankar Mohapatra, senior officials of the district and Rourkela Municipal Corporation were present on the occasion.

Lions Club of Kolkata Harmony organised a Reiki Healing workshop

Kolkata (KCN): Lions Club of Kolkata Harmony organised a Reiki Healing workshop

also Stress-free and Peaceful state of mind. The participants were completely engrossed and



for Healthy and Happy life where people from various fields including Advocates, Doctors, students were present. This event was organised at Pragyan Bhavan, 40/2 Rupchand Mukherjee Lane Kolkata 700025 and was sponsored by Pragyan Foundation. Dr Suresh Kumar Agarwal, a Traditional Reiki Master guided the participants on how to live their life with not only good Physical Health but

motivated with the words of wisdom shared by Dr. Agarwal. Dr Namita Chakraborty, Advocate Anju Agarwal, Dr Naren Pandey, Mr Ram Ratan Agarwal, Mrs. Geeta Sinha, Mr. Suresh Kumar Gupta, Mr. Satya Prakash Tewari, Mr. Sadruz Zaman, Mrs Madhumita Ganguly were also present on the occasion. The attendees were awarded with certificate of participation.

INS Chilika Fire Brigade Carries Out Fire Fighting Operations in Nearby Village

Khordha(KCN): INS Chilika fire brigade put out a wild grass fire in nearby village of Akhupokhara. Naval sentry on duty at Solapokhari reported sighting major bush fire

brought the wild fire under control within half an hour. The timely action by the Naval Fire brigade helped in preventing major loss of life and property had it been not ex-



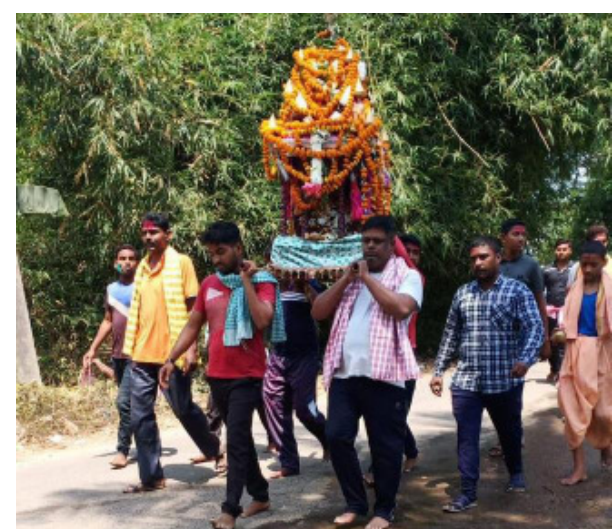
in evening hours of 19 March -22. On getting information the team under Lt.Cdr. Akshaya Kumar Sahu, officer of the day at INS Chilika reached the spot immediately

tinguished in time. The local people of Akhupokhara thanked the team for their timely fire fighting operation and prompt support by the Naval fire brigade.

Laxmi Narayan Radha Krishna Madira committee Baral observed Doli and Holi.

Cuttack Sadar (KCN) : Odisha traditional festival Doll, Holi, Mendha Kudia burnt, New Panji read ect observed by Laxmi Narayan Radha Krishna Madira committee Baral 42 Mouza Cuttack. All function celebrated by President Pitabash Beura, Vice president Sudhakar Jena, Cashier Artatrana

Behera, Sanatan Roul, Sanatan Beura, Biswaranjan Jena, Sudhanshu Sekhar Beura, Arakhita Jena, Ramesh Beura, Sankar Beura, Gopal Beura, Aru Beura, Samir, Mantu, Suraj Behera, Basua Beura, Lipuna, Papuna, Biki, Dipu, Janu, Gundu, Lulu, Pipa, Roni, Babu, Kunu, Kanha, Tima and all members.



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Vikrant Massey's 'Cargo' to be screened at South by Southwest festival in US



MUMBAI(KCN): Vikrant Massey-starrer "Cargo" will have its North American premiere at the 2020 edition of South by Southwest (SXSW) festival. The science fiction film, written and directed by Arati

Kadav, also features Massey's "Mirzapur" co-star Shweta Tripathi and actor Nandu Madhav. The story revolves around a lonely demon Prahastha who has been working on a spaceship for years for the Post Death

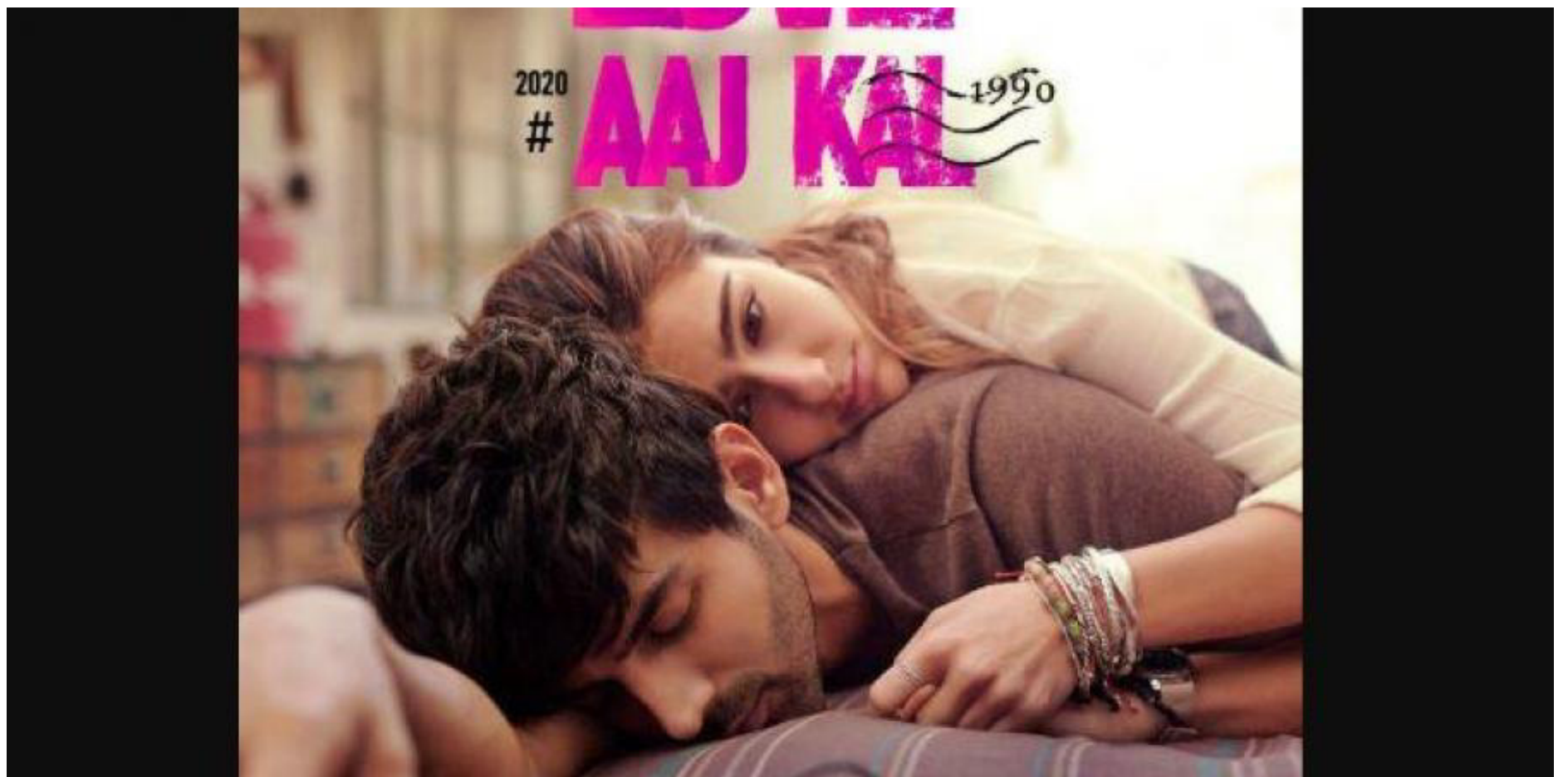
Transition services with the help of a female astronaut where dead people are recycled for rebirth. "Cargo" will be screened under the Global section of the film festival which will run from March 13 to 21.

Vikrant, who most recently featured alongside Deepika Padukone in "Chhapaak", said it makes him "proud" that the film has been chosen for the prestigious film gala. "Cargo" is one of the first Indian sci-fi

films to be there. And I feel blessed for receiving so much applause not just from the country but across the world. People have loved Chhapaak, they have embraced it with open arms and now 'Cargo' being selected

at this big a platform, I feel really fortunate," the actor said in a statement. "Cargo", which had its India premiere at the 2019 MAMI Film Festival under the spotlight section, is produced by Arati, Navin Shetty, Shlok Sharma and Anurag Kashyap.

First look of Imtiaz Ali's Love Aaj Kal two released



Kartik Aryan and Sara Ali Khan are the new romantic pair in Imtiaz Ali's Love Aaj Kal. Yes, the film's titled just that, not Love Aaj

Kal 2 or Aaj Kal. In a poster, we get a glimpse of their characters, Veer and Zoe, nodding off on top of each other. The poster also re-

veals the film's timeline, which will run from 1990 to 2020. "Meet Veer and Zoe, captured in their element. It's in these

simple, candid moments that love plays peekaboo, right? Love Aaj Kal," Imtiaz wrote. "Meet Veer and Zoe. Come get wound up

in our whirlwind wonderland Love Aaj Kal trailer out tomorrow," Sara added. The new Love Aaj Kal was shot in

Himachal Pradesh, Mumbai, and Rajasthan. The sequel also stars Randeep Hooda. The film is slated for Valentine's Day release.

No proof to link Netflix's '13 Reasons Why' to high US suicide rates: Study

NEW YORK(KCN): Contrary to the findings of a 2019 study that associated the Netflix series "13 Reasons Why" with an increase in monthly suicide rates among youth after the show's release, a new analysis finds no evidence to draw such a link.

The reanalysis, published in the journal PLOS ONE, revealed that after controlling for the dramatic increase in adolescent suicide in recent years, the show's release had no clear effect. "Our reanalysis casts

considerable doubt on the show having an effect on boys," said study author Dan Romer and research director of the Annenberg Public Policy Centre (APPC) from the University of Pennsylvania in the US. The reanalysis found that the increase in the suicide rate for boys observed in the original study by Jeffrey Bridge and colleagues for three months after the series' release was no longer evident after controlling for the ongoing trend in adolescent suicide.

In addition, the increase seen during the first month of the release began the month prior to the release, making it difficult to attribute the rise to the show. The reanalysis found no effects in the subsequent months of that year. The original time-series analysis of suicide rates found an additional 195 suicide deaths among boys ages 10 to 17 during the nine months following the series' release, on March 31, 2017, but did not find a similar result among adoles-

cent girls. Romer said he questioned that finding for two reasons: "First, contagion would be expected to be stronger for girls than boys because this show focuses on the suicide of a high school girl. Second, the prior analysis didn't take into account strong secular trends in suicide, especially in boys from 2016-2017."

When the first season of the Netflix show appeared in 2017, it created widespread concern that its graphic portrayal of a teenage girl's suicide

would lead to imitation among vulnerable young people, especially adolescent girls. The first such study found evidence of a jump in suicides among boys ages 10 to 17 in the three months following the show's release, but no effect for girls. Romer said that analysis relied on a forecasting method to project the likely trend in suicide for 2017. But that forecast failed to anticipate the actual trend. A second study by different researchers, published in JAMA

Psychiatry had a similar problem, Romer said. That study found an effect in boys and girls 10 to 19 years old in the three months following the series' release. But it similarly failed to control for the secular trend in suicide, again making it difficult to separate the effects of the show from the trend. APPC's reanalysis did find a modest rise in the suicide rate among adolescent girls during the first month following the release of "13 Reasons Why," but it was not statistically reliable, the researchers said.

"Taxation of Cryptocurrency & Virtual digital assets under Sec. 115B"

Virtual digital assets have gained tremendous popularity in recent times



and the volumes of trading in such digital assets has increased substantially. Further, a market is emerging where

payment for the transfer of a virtual digital asset can be made through another such asset. Accordingly a new scheme for taxation of such virtual digital assets has been proposed in section 115BBH in the Finance Bill, 2022.

2. The proposed section 115BBH provides that where the total income of an assessee includes any income from transfer of any virtual digital asset, the income tax payable shall be the aggregate of the amount of income-tax calculated on income of transfer of any virtual digital asset at the rate of 30% and the amount of income-tax with which the assessee would have been chargeable had the total income of the assessee been reduced by the aggregate of the income from transfer of virtual digital assets.

3. However, no deduction in respect of any expenditure (other than cost of acquisition) or allowance or set off of any loss shall be allowed to the assessee under any provision of the Act while computing income from transfer of such asset.

4. Further, no set off of any loss arising from transfer of virtual digital asset shall be allowed against any income computed under any other provision of the Act and such loss shall not be allowed to be carried forward to subsequent assessment years.

5. This amendment will take effect from

assessment year 2023-24.

6. TDS u/s 194S:

In order to widen the tax base from the transactions so carried out in relation to these assets, it has been proposed to insert section 194S to provide for deduction of tax on payment for transfer of virtual digital asset to a resident at the rate of one per cent of such sum. However, the person before making the payment shall ensure that the tax has been paid in respect of such consideration, in case the payment for such transfer is—

(i) wholly in kind or in exchange of another virtual digital asset where there is no part in cash; or

(ii) partly in cash and partly in kind but the part in cash is not sufficient to meet the liability of deduction of tax in respect of whole of such transfer,

7. Not applicable: In case of specified persons, the provisions of section 203A and 206AB will not be applicable. Further, no tax is to be deducted in case the payer is the specified person and the value or the aggregate of such value of consideration to a resident is less than Rs. 50,000 during the financial year. In any other case, the said limit is proposed to be Rs. 10,000 during the financial year.

For the purposes of the said section, 'specified person' means a person:—

(i) being an individual or Hindu undivided family whose total sales, gross receipts or turnover from the business carried on by him or profession exercised by him does not exceed one crore rupees in case of business or Rs.50 lakh in case of profession, during the financial year immediately preceding the financial year in which such virtual digital asset is

Narayan Jain

transferred;

(ii) being an individual or

Hindu undivided family having income under any head other than the head 'Profits and gains of business or profession'.

8. No TDS under other sections: It has also been proposed that if tax has been deducted under section 194S, then no tax is to be collected or deducted in respect of the said transaction under any other provision of Chapter XVII of the Act.

9. Furthermore, in any sum paid for transfer of virtual digital asset is credited to any account, whether called "Suspense Account" or by any other name, in the books of account of the person liable to pay such sum, such credit of the sum shall be deemed to be the credit of such sum to the account of the payee and the provisions of section 194S shall apply accordingly.

10. It has been proposed to empower CBDT to issue guidelines, with prior approval of Central Government, to remove any difficulty arising in giving effect to the provisions of said section and every such guideline issued by CBDT shall be laid before each House of Parliament, and shall be binding.

11. It has also been proposed to provide that in case of a transaction where tax is deductible under section 194-O along with the proposed section 194S, then the tax shall be deducted under section 194S and not section 194-O.

This amendment will take effect from 1st of July, 2022.

12. Gift of virtual digital assets: To provide for taxing the gifting of virtual digital assets, it has been proposed to amend Explanation to clause (x) of

section 56(2) to *inter-alia*, provide that for the purpose of the said clause, the expression "property" shall have the meaning assigned to it in Explanation to clause (vii) and shall include virtual digital asset.

This amendment will take effect from assessment year 2023-24.

13. Definition : "Virtual digital asset", has been defined in new clause (47A) inserted to section 2. A virtual digital asset is proposed to mean any information or code or number or Token (not being Indian currency or any foreign currency), generated through cryptographic means or otherwise, by whatever name called, providing a digital representation of value which is exchanged with or without consideration, with the promise or representation of having inherent value, or functions as a store of value or a unit of account and includes its use in any financial transaction or investment, but not limited to, investment schemes and can be transferred, stored or traded electronically. Non fungible token and any other token of similar nature are included in the definition.

14. Central Government may notify any other virtual digital asset as virtual digital asset by way of Notification in the Official Gazette. The Non-fungible tokens means such digital assets as notified by the Central Government. Further, Central Government can notify such assets which shall not be considered as virtual digital assets for the purposes of the proposed section. These amendments will take effect from 1st April, 2022.

(Narayan Jain is former Secretary General of AIFTP and author of the books "How to Handle Income Tax Problems" and "Income Tax Pleading & Practice" with CA Dilip Loyalka).

Story of Kashmir files

The movie 'Kashmir Files' has a metaphor whose meaning we must understand in totality. It has multiple dimensions that we must not just understand but also analyse correctly.



For the movie has come up at critical juncture in the current situation. If its theme has its own value and importance to the larger Indian society, it also has its importance from the angle of film-making and subsequent marketing and distribution that is generally alleged to be under the control of what has come to be known as film mafia. Thus while analyse the phenomenon called "Kashmir Files", it is necessary for all of us to know the correct details of how film was conceived, how it was put together through various stages, how the makers of the film fought countless obstacles craftily planted by the film mafia on its way, how it fi-

nally succeeded in arranging its distribution and exhibition across the country, though in an initially limited manner--and finally how it created a major emotional stir in the larger Indian Society.

Those who have seen the movie have exploded in to profound grief and shock after realising the details of one of the darkest chapters of human exodus in Independent India. Their shock stems not just from the details of the atrocities committed on the Kashmir Bandit community by people from other religious faith but also from the hitherto absence of awareness on that gory story. Their grief stems from the human suffering that the story demonstrates, as well as from the complete failure of the Government of the day and later to make protective and corrective measure so that a community got its due respect and space in the larger Indian Society.

Uma Shankar Prasad

Going by these standards, the

chief inspiration of the concept the celebrated film maker Mr Vivek Agnihotri and his team has done yeoman service to the national and patriotic cause. It was Mr Vivek Ranjan Agnihotri who had made in iconic movie earlier. The Tashkent Files depicting the conditions and situation in which the world found Prime Minister Mr. All Bahadur Shastri dead in Tashkent where he had gone for parleys with Pakistan Leaders with Russian mediation. Through that carefully-researched and professionally presented movie Mr Agnihotri brought to the fore the profound doubt the nation always carried in its heart about the cause and purpose of Mr. Shastri's untimely Demise in strange and mysterious conditions.

'Kashmir Files' has to be viewed with all these references and contexts in mind. Technically it may be one film or movie. Spiritually, it is a meta-

phor of a lot nuances of contemporary history that were kept hidden from public exposure by a carefully and craftily drafted evil agenda. That evil agenda was operational even when Mr Agnihotri started working on the movie. Every possible road-block was planted on the way so that the film could never see its successful culmination. Yet the film saw its fruition nevertheless, and has stormed into public domain like not one single film at least in recent years. But why were the attempts made to block the "Kashmir Files"? Who was behind those evil and sinister attempts?.

Despite this, some people as represented by Mr Vivek Ranjan Agnihotri or Ms Kangna Ranaut or a few others have often succeeded in breaking through those sinister barriers and create films of great importance to the larger society. "Kashmir File" is one such film for which Mr. Agnihotri and his team deserve societal appreciation and gratitude.

Columnist Khurda

Bridge over Jeera river a major plank for oppn parties

BARGARH: Delay in completion of the bridge over Jeera river connecting Bargarh town with cause the BJD government has involved its own associates to execute the project instead of engaging a "A hefty sum was sanctioned for the bridge but the contractor engaged by the ruling party mis-

Ambapali village turns into 'Gopapura'. Bargarh MLA Debesh Acharya,



Ambapali has become a major plank for opposition political parties ahead of the urban local body (ULB) polls. The bridge is coming up in place of 'Junha Pulia', an old iron bridge which was demolished after being declared unsafe for use. Construction of the new bridge started in May 2018 with a deadline to complete it by November 2020. However, work on the project is still under-way. President of district BJP Aswini Sarangi said more than a year has passed since the deadline, not even 50 per cent of the bridge project has been completed. "The bridge is being delayed be-

genuine contractor for construction work, leading to corruption," he alleged. Apart from residents of Ambapali, people of nearby Bijepur and Barpali blocks are also facing inconvenience in absence of a bridge over Jeera river. "We had staged several protests and even gheraoed the PWD office over the delay but to no avail. Though the local MLA had assured to complete the bridge by March this year, the project is still lingering," Sarangi added. Congress president of Bargarh Nihar Mahanand alleged that misappropriation of fund by the BJD has led to the delay.

used the funds due to which the project could not be completed on time," he claimed. Chandrabhanu Pradhan, an old-timer from Bargarh, said the delay in completion of the bridge has led to a number of problems for residents. "The space beneath the under-construction bridge has become a den for anti-social elements. Recently, illegal sand mining has also started here," he said. Pradhan further said non-completion of the project also caused various problems during Dhanu Yatra festival when Bargarh town transforms into 'Mathura Nagari', Jeera river becomes Yamuna and

however, said the bridge could not be completed due to technical glitches. The issues have already been discussed with the engineer concerned and an additional fund of Rs 8 crore allotted for remaining construction work. The project will be completed within next six months. "We will keep our promise made to the public. People are aware of our work towards development of the town which includes renovation of colleges, beautification drives and augmentation of sports infrastructure. They will definitely support BJD in the ULB polls," the MLA claimed.

'Russia's siege of Mariupol involved war crimes', says Zelenskyy as he suspends Ukraine parties with Moscow links

LVIV: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said early Sunday the siege of the port city of Mariupol would go down in history for what he said were war crimes committed by Russian troops. "To do this to a peaceful city, what the occupiers did, is a terror that will be remembered for centuries to come," Zelenskyy said in a video address to the nation. Russian forces have pushed deeper into the besieged and battered city, where heavy fighting shut down a major steel plant and local authorities pleaded for more Western help. In the capital, Kyiv, at least 20 babies carried by Ukrainian surrogate mothers are stuck in a makeshift bomb shelter, waiting for parents to travel into the war zone to pick them up. Some just days old, the babies are being cared for by nurses who cannot leave the shelter because of constant shelling by Russian troops who are trying to encircle the city. The fall of Mariupol, the scene of some of the war's worst suffering, would mark a major battlefield advance for the Russians, who are largely bogged down outside major cities more than three weeks into the biggest land invasion in Europe since World War II. "Children, elderly people are dying. The city is destroyed and it is wiped off the face of the earth," Mariupol police officer Michail Vershnin said from a rubble-strewn street in a video addressed to Western leaders that was authenticated by The Associated Press. Details also began to emerge Saturday about a rocket attack that killed as many as 40 marines in the southern city of Mykolaiv the previous day, according to a Ukrainian military official who spoke to The New York Times. ALSO READ | Russian military slog in Ukraine a 'dreadful mess' for Vladimir Putin

Russian forces have already cut Mariupol off from the Sea of Azov, and its fall would link Crimea, which Russia annexed in 2014, to eastern territories controlled by Moscow-backed separatists. It would mark a rare advance in the face of fierce Ukrainian resistance that has dashed Russia's hopes for a quick victory and galvanized the West. Ukrainian and Russian forces battled over the Azovstal steel plant in Mariupol, Vadym Denysenko, adviser to Ukraine's interior minister, said. "One of the largest metallurgical plants in Europe is actually being destroyed," Denysenko said in televised remarks. The Mariupol city council claimed hours later that Russian soldiers had forcibly relocated several thousand city residents, mostly women and children, to Russia. It didn't say where, and AP could not immediately confirm the claim. Zelenskyy adviser Oleksiy Arestovych said the nearest forces that could assist Mariupol were already struggling against "the overwhelming force of the enemy" and that "there is currently no military solution to Mariupol." Despite the siege in Mariupol, many remained struck by Ukraine's ability to hold back its much bigger, better-armed foe. The United Kingdom's Defense Ministry said Ukraine's airspace continued to be effectively defended. "Gaining control of the air was one of Russia's principal objectives for the opening days of the conflict and their continued failure to do so has significantly blunted their operational progress," the ministry said on Twitter. Russia is now relying on stand-off weapons launched from the relative safety of Russian airspace to strike targets within Ukraine, the ministry said. In Mykolaiv, rescuers searched the rubble of the marine barracks that was destroyed in an apparent missile attack Friday. The region's governor said the marines were asleep when the attack happened. It wasn't clear how many marines were inside at the time, and rescuers were still searching the rubble for survivors the following day. But a senior Ukrainian military official, who spoke to The New York Times on condition of anonymity to reveal sensitive information, estimated that as many as 40 marines were killed, which would make it one of the deadliest known attacks on Ukrainian forces during the war. Estimates of Russian deaths vary widely, but even conservative figures are in the low thousands. Russia had 64 deaths in five days of fighting during its 2008 war with Georgia. It lost about 15,000 in Afghanistan over 10 years, and more than 11,000 in years of fighting in Chechnya. Russia's number of dead and wounded in Ukraine is nearing the 10% benchmark of diminished combat effectiveness, said Dmitry Gorenburg, a researcher on Russia's security at the Virginia-based CNA think tank. The reported battlefield deaths of four Russian generals — out of an estimated 20 in the fight — signal impaired command, Gorenburg said. Russia would need 800,000 troops — almost equal to its entire active-duty military — to control Ukraine long-term in the face of the armed opposition, said Michael Clarke, former head of the British-based Royal United Services Institute, a defense think tank. "Unless the Russians intend to be completely genocidal — they could flatten all the major cities, and Ukrainians will rise up against Russian occupation — there will be just constant guerrilla war," said Clarke. The Russian military said Saturday that it used its latest hypersonic missile for the first time in combat. Maj. Gen. Igor Konashenkov said Kinzhal missiles destroyed an underground warehouse storing Ukrainian missiles and aviation ammunition in the western region of Ivano-Frankivsk. Russia has said the Kinzhal, carried by MiG-31 fighter jets, has a range of up to 2,000 kilometers (about 1,250 miles) and flies at 10 times the speed of sound. Pentagon press secretary John Kirby said the U.S. couldn't confirm the use of a hypersonic missile. ALSO READ | One of Europe's biggest steelworks damaged in Ukraine's Mariupol

U.N. bodies have confirmed more than 847 civilian deaths since the war began, though they concede the actual toll is likely much higher. The U.N. says more than 3.3 million people have fled Ukraine as refugees. Evacuations from Mariupol and other besieged cities proceeded along eight of 10 humanitarian corridors, Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk said, and a total of 6,623 people left. Vereshchuk said planned humanitarian aid for the southern city of Kherson, which Russia seized early in the war, could not be delivered because the trucks were stopped along the way by Russian troops.



Ukraine and Russia have held several rounds of negotiations aimed at ending the conflict but remain divided over several issues, with Moscow pressing for its neighbor's demilitarization and Kyiv demanding security guarantees. Around Ukraine, hospitals, schools and buildings where people sought safety have been attacked. At least 130 people survived the Wednesday bombing of a Mariupol theater that was being used as a shelter, but another 1,300 were believed to be still inside, Ludmyla Denisova, the Ukrainian Parliament's human rights commissioner, said Friday. "We pray that they will all be alive, but so far there is no information about them," Denisova told Ukrainian television. A satellite image from Maxar Technologies released Saturday confirmed earlier reports that much of the theater was destroyed. It also showed the word "CHILDREN" written in Russian in large white letters outside the building. Russian forces have fired on eight cities and villages in the eastern Donetsk region in the past 24 hours, including Mariupol, Ukraine's national police said Saturday. Dozens of civilians were killed or wounded, and at least 37 residential buildings and facilities were damaged including a school, a museum and a shopping center. In the western city of Lviv, Ukraine's cultural capital, which was hit by Russian missiles on Friday, military veterans were training dozens of civilians on how to handle firearms and grenades. "It's hard, because I have really weak hands, but I can manage it," said one trainee, 22-year-old Katarina Ishchenko. Zelenskyy has also ordered to suspend activities of 11 political parties with links to Russia. The largest of them is the Opposition Platform for Life, which has 44 out of 450 seats in the country's parliament. The party is led by Viktor Medvedchuk, who has friendly ties with Russian President Vladimir Putin, who is the godfather of Medvedchuk's daughter. Also on the list is the Nashi (Ours) party led by Yevheniy Murayev. Before the Russian invasion, the British authorities had warned that Russia wanted to install Murayev as the leader of Ukraine. Speaking in a video address early Sunday, Zelenskyy said that "given a large-scale war unleashed by the Russian Federation and links between it and some political structures, the activities of a number of political parties is suspended for the period of the martial law." He added that "activities by politicians aimed at discord and collaboration will not succeed." Zelenskyy's announcement follows the introduction of the martial law that envisages a ban on parties associated with Russia.

BJP leaders meet PM Modi amid ongoing exercise for government formation in 3 states

NEW DELHI: Top BJP leaders, including party chief J P Nadda, and Union ministers Amit Shah and Rajnath Singh, on Sunday met Prime Minister Narendra Modi amid the ongoing exercise for government formation in Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Goa. The meeting is underway at the prime minister's residence and it is also being attended by BJP general secretary (organisation) B L Santhosh. In the recent round of assembly polls, the BJP won in these three states and Manipur, while the Aam Aadmi Party came to power in

ter of the hill state where the party has stormed back to power for an unprecedented second successive term. Though the party won the Uttarakhand polls, Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami lost his assembly seat. In Uttar Pradesh and Goa it is almost certain that the party will repeat Yogi Adityanath and Pramod Sawant as chief ministers, but it has to take a call on the structure of the cabinet in these states. In case of Uttar Pradesh, the party has to take a call on who to appoint as deputy chief min-



Punjab. Earlier in the day, the BJP reposed faith in N Biren Singh and nominated him as the chief minister of Manipur. In Uttarakhand, the newly elected BJP MLAs will meet in Dehradun on Monday to choose their leader who will be the next chief min-

ister, as Keshav Prasad Maurya, who held the post in the previous BJP government, lost his assembly seat. It is expected that by the end of next week, the BJP will complete government formation process in Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Goa.

“Niladri” Barbil celebrate “Pakhal Diwas”

Barbil (KCN): “Pakhal Diwas” has been observed by the leading organisation Niladri

Shri Tulshi Munda, writer Rajkishore Das, Birabikram Murmu, Deputy General Manager, Odisha Mining Corporation, Sushant Das, IIC Barbil Police Station. “Pakhal is not a food, it is related to our Jagannath culture,” The uniqueness of pakhal is decorating and this age old food is getting aloof from the kitchen of the people of modern generation, Rajkishore Dash commented. It has become a favored food of many Odia and its medicinal properties have become world famous and that the food of our ancestors has made Oriya famous in the world market as well, said Sushant Dash. People in the tribal community are more likely to be healthy because they use Pakhal as their daily food. This is not a food a medicine for good life, said Tulshi Munda. The secretary of Niladri’ Santanu Dash said that the tradition and custom of Odia is Jagannath culture and should reach to everyone. Kapil Mohanty, president of Niladri thanked everyone who joined this celebration and this would encourage Niladri to promote Odia heritage in the future to come, he added.



in Barbil. Niladri is said to be an organisation dedicated to propagating and spreading the Utkaliya sentiment. For the past 7 years, Niladri has been celebrating this day keeping the tradition and culture of Odisha was prepared and served according to traditional customs and methods. Various other curry were also served based on odia recipe. The event was officially inaugurated by Padma

Odisha Celebrates Dola Jatra

Bhubaneswar: The culture rich State, Odisha has started celebrating one of the biggest Hindu festivals Dola Jatra with pomp and gaiety amid COVID restrictions. Holi is one of the most visual festivals in the world. Although most associate it with throwing lots of abeer (coloured powder) in the air, its rituals are filled with symbolism. Holi signifies the arrival of spring, the end of winter, and for many, it’s a day to meet friends, family and neighbours. Dola Purnima is a popular festival in Coastal Odisha and some parts of western districts. It

Dhenkanal, Subarnapur, Boudh, Angul, etc. The six-day festival known as Dola Jatra begins from the Falguna Dasami day. The idol of village deities, especially of Lord Krishna, is carried to all the homes in the villages on a decorated Veemana (palanquin). The people carrying the idols and those following it are semared with Abira (dry colours). Some scriptures testify that the Madanotsav, the festival held in honour of Madana or the Cupid, was later transformed as the Dolatsav or swing-festival of Krishna. Therefore, Krishna is propitiated on this occasion as Madanamohana. Description of the festival as Dolatsav finds mention in a number of puranas and other Sanskrit texts. On the auspicious occasion of Dola Purnima, the four deities inside the sanctum sanctorum of Lord Jagannath temple in Puri are decked up in Suna Besa seated on the Ratna Simhasana. The Suna Besha is much loved by the devotees as divine siblings are decked in gold jewelry embellished with diamonds and gems taken out from the temple treasury. On this occasion, Governor Ganeshi Lal, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan greeted the people of Odisha. Extending his heartiest greetings on the occasion of Dola Purnima, the Governor prayed for the well-being and prosperity of all before Lord Dolagobind. “My sincere greetings and best wishes to the people of the state on the occasion of the holy month of Dola. May the abundant grace and blessings of Lord Dola Gobinda fill the lives of all with happiness and prosperity,” Naveen tweeted.



is the full-moon day in the month of Falguna (March). Through the festival the spring is welcomed and enjoyed with mirth and merriment. This festival has been referred to in the puranic texts as Basantotsav or the spring-festival. People took a procession of the idols of Radha and Krishna seated in beautifully decorated Vimans. Amid hundreds of cymbals and gongs beating in unison, and firecrackers, the palanquins of Radha and Krishna were brought on procession to different streets of the locality. This Dola Jatra is being celebrated in every village of Cuttack, Jajpur, Kendrapada,

“Asha maa” died in a road accident at Rugudi

Barbil (KCN): One Asha Maa died in one road accident at Guali under Rugudi police station of Keonjhardistrict. Being a iron ore and manganese area Joda mining zone remains over crowded with mineral laden trucks through out the roads. Unfortunately due to mismanagement of traffic and lack of parking place thousands of vehicles transporting minerals do occupy the Road. This leads to fatal accidents many time. It is need not to say that the local administration has been ignoring such parking. Jaleshwari Apat, an Asha maa of Guali area died on the spot by an unknown truck while going by her scooty vide regd no OD09P 5974.



Rugudi police arrived at the spot and brought her body to the Barbil community Health Center for autopsy. Residents of the area have complained that the OMC and JSW mines in the area have massive production without proper arrangement of Parking area. The unsystematic loading and transportation procedure has been vital cause of accident. This area has witnessed many fatal accidents and no suitable arrangement has made neither by the administration not mining company to streamline the problem

Mahotsav Enthralls Audience

Bhubaneswar: ‘Vrindaban Mahotsav’-2022, the flagship Indian classical music concert was held by Department of Tourism, Government of Odisha in association with Vrindaban Gurukul Trust, Bhubaneswar at Rabindra Mandap, Bhubaneswar here on Saturday. The programme was started with welcome address by Padma Bibhusan Pt. Hariprasad Chaurasia. Organised every year during the festival of Holi, the annual musical extravaganza this year brought together Indian classical musical maestros for an evening of scintillating musical performances. The concert, which marked 12 mellifluous years of Vrindaban Gurukul’s establishment, was telecast live on DD Bharati and social media handles of Odisha Tourism. The musical soiree witnessed participation of legendary Indian classical music artists of international repute. Highlighting the beauty of Lord Krishna’s bansuri, the concert began with a flute recital by the disciples of Pt. Hariprasad Chaurasia of ‘Vrindaban Gurukul’. It was followed by a harmonious duo performance by renowned Indian Classical Sitar player Pt. Subhendra Rao and Indian Classical Cello player Vidushi Saskia Rao-de Haas. Enrapturing the audience next with the vocal prowess in Indian Classical music was Padma Bhushan Begum Parween Sultana. The concluding performance of the evening was by Pt. Abhijeet Banerjee, a highly noted Tabla player. Started as a joint initiative of Odisha Tourism and Vrindaban Gurukul to bring eminent Indian classical music artists from across the globe and promote our State’s music, art & culture, ‘Vrindaban Mahotsav’ today features as a permanent fixture of Odisha Tourism’s vibrant events calendar. The concert was attended by Suresh Chandra Mohapatra, Chief Secretary, Odisha; Vishal Kumar Dev, Principal Secretary, Finance; Sachin Ramachandra Jadhav, Director & Addl. Secretary, Tourism and Vidya Krishnan, Chief General Manager, SBI, Bhubaneswar

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Tax growth exposes Modi government's forecasting inaccuracies on economy

The estimates of FY22 tax revenue versus actual collections until last week shows the government's poor fiscal marksmanship, or the accuracy of budget forecasting, to some extent. The revised budget estimates pegged gross tax revenue growth at 24.1% for FY22. But the first three quarters (April-December 2021) had already clocked in a 44.2% increase, which means, the revised estimates imply that gross tax revenue will decline by 14.8% in Q4, as per an RBI article titled Union Budget 2022-23: Some pleasant fiscal arithmetic, released last week. This, despite the historical norm of receiving significant proportion of tax revenue (33.2% on average with a y-o-y growth of 12%) in the last quarter of any given fiscal year.

Based on actual tax collections data for April-January FY22, revised estimates suggest an implicit decline of 18.4% in gross tax revenue during the months of February and March 2022, while the implicit decline in corporation tax, income tax, GST, customs duty and excise duty works out to 29.2%, 26.5%, 2.3%, and 20.7%, respectively, the article noted.

In reality, tax collections, barring disinvestment proceeds, are going gangbusters. Gross direct tax revenue as on March 16 saw a stupendous 38% increase over the previous fiscal, indicating that even revised estimates will be over-achieved.

What's unclear though is the reason behind the government's overcautiousness in revenue projections for Q4 - a period when tax buoyancy, or the responsiveness of tax revenue to growth in nominal GDP is typically higher during recovery years.

In contrast, the revised estimates for FY22 pegged gross tax revenue buoyancy at 0.9, as against the average of 1.4 registered in the past years of economic recovery.

Likewise, direct and indirect tax buoyancy have been budgeted at 1.2 and 0.5 in FY22, as against the average of 1.7 and 1.3, respectively in recovery years.

Moreover, buoyancy in FY23 is based on a nominal GDP growth assumption of 11.1%, which will most likely be exceeded. If fiscal forecasts are way off the mark, it undermines the credibility of annual budgets.

While the Covid-19 pandemic related economic uncertainty is one possible factor for such conservatism, it's also likely that we still haven't adjusted to the advanced budget making process.

The modest projection of FY23 nominal GDP at 11.1% also bears testimony to this fact.

Unlike in the past when the first advance estimates of GDP were released at the end of January after taking into account the economic activity of the first three quarters of the fiscal, to

facilitate budget making, they are now being released in the first week of January, but this takes into account data of the first two quarters of the fiscal alone, leaving enough room for forecasting bias.

It was only a few years ago that the government seemed to have cracked economic forecasting with accuracy.

For instance, a 2017 SBI Research note observed that there was a significant improvement in fiscal architecture in addition to fiscal consolidation in FY17.

Prior to 2006, the audited figures always remained within the budgeted figure, but the trend reversed and the difference between budget estimates and the CAG audit figures bulged.

In FY17, however, the difference narrowed significantly. Incidentally, the past few budgets too were applauded for transparency in budget accounting. But, as for assumptions and projections of revenue and growth, they are far from actuals.

Tax revenue

Gross direct tax revenue as on March 16 saw a 38% increase over the previous fiscal, indicating that even RE will be over-achieved.

EOW arrests Fake Officer

Continued from page-1

Government will release an amount of Rs 3 crore in his account.

Subsequently, the complainant received one letter in his mobile through Whatsapp, which was issued under the signature of one Suresh Mathur, HOD (Intermediaries) Insurance Regulatory & Development Authority of India (IRDA), wherein it was mentioned "...the authority request you to pay dues and receive your fund of Rs 1,56,36,500 within next 4 hours".

Along with the above letter, he also received some other communications/photographs in his Whatsapp. Investigation of the case also revealed that when the complainant did not respond to the above letter and remained silent for some days, a series of calls were received by him from different persons & from different mobile numbers, who identified themselves to be employees in the office of AK Walia, who induced/persuaded the complainant to transfer cash through RTGS and provided several bank Account numbers. Being persuaded, the complainant, during the period from November 19, 2019 to February 4, 2021, had transferred around Rs 2.35 crore in instalments.

However, even after lapse of time, when no amount was returned to the complainant, he doubted their activities and on his contact, he found all the mobile numbers (from which he had received calls) were switched off.

Complainant also received many letters on Whatsapp issued by the Ministry of Finance, RBI, Income Tax Department, and images of two bank Demand Drafts in favour of the complainant amounting to Rs 1,27,73,000 and Rs 70,81,800, the police said.

"All these letters/ documents were found to be fake and forged. During investigation it was found that there is no such person like Walia instead accused and his gang members were impersonating as high level officials to cheat the complainant," said the EOW.

It was found that the accused is one of the members of the gang which is involved in many such cases in various States. Investigation of the case is continuing. Efforts are on to identify/arrest other members of the gang, they said.

Darshan on Sunday too

Continued from page-1

have been withdrawn, visitors need to follow the Covid appropriate behavior such as wearing masks, maintaining social distance, and hand sanitization while visiting the temple.

This decision has come as huge relief for the devotees, especially those who are employed in different government and private organizations. Usually, as Sunday is a holiday for them, the employees visit Puri for have darshan. Due to the restrictions, such employees were unable to get a glimpse of Lords, said a temple official.

Earlier, devotees required double vaccination certificates or RTPCR-negative reports obtained within 72 hours for entering the temple. This restriction was also lifted last month.

10 million people have fled their homes in Ukraine: UN

Continued from page-1

the suffering inflicted on civilians who are forced to flee their homes," UNHCR chief Filippo Grandi said, implicitly holding Russia.

ALSO READ: Ukraine war is backdrop in US push for hypersonic weapons

"The war in Ukraine is so devastating that 10 million have fled, either displaced inside the country, or as refugees abroad," he said.

UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, said Sunday that 3,389,044 Ukrainians had fled across the country's borders since Russia invaded on February 24.

Another 60,352 joined the exodus since Saturday's update, a flow roughly the same as the day before.

Some 90 per cent of those who have fled are women and children. Ukrainian men aged 18 to 60 are eligible for military call-up and cannot leave.

ALSO READ: Pope Francis slams war as 'sacrilege,' 'repugnant'

UNICEF, the UN children's agency, said more than 1.5 million children are among those who have fled abroad, warning that the risks they face of human trafficking and exploitation are "real, and growing".

The UN's International Organization for Migration (IOM) also said that as of Wednesday, 162,000 third-country nationals had fled Ukraine to neighbouring states.

Millions more have fled their homes but remain within Ukraine's borders.

Some 6.48 million people were estimated to be internally displaced within Ukraine as of Wednesday, according to UN and related agencies, following an IOM representative survey. Before the conflict, Ukraine had a population of 37 million in the regions under government control.

Here is a breakdown of which neighbouring countries Ukrainian refugees headed to, according to UNHCR:

Poland

Six in every 10 Ukrainian refugees -- 2,050,392 so far -- have crossed the Polish border, according to UNHCR's latest figures. Many of those heading west from Ukraine into Poland, Hungary and Slovakia then travelling further on into other nations in Europe's Schengen open-borders zone.

"We estimate that a large number of people have moved onwards to other countries," UNHCR said.

Romania

UNHCR said 527,247 Ukrainians had made their way into Romania, including a large number who have crossed over from Moldova, wedged between Romania and Ukraine, to reach the EU member state.

The vast majority are thought to have made their way onto other countries further into Europe.

Moldova

The Moldovan border is the nearest to the major port city of Odessa.

UNHCR said 362,514 Ukrainians had crossed into the non-EU state, one of the poorest in Europe. Most transit through the small nation, en route westwards to Romania and other countries beyond.

Doctors Without Borders (MSF), at the Palanca crossing -- the closest to Odessa -- said thousands were arriving daily.

The medical charity said the majority coming through were currently refugees fleeing the Russian attacks on Mykolaiv, the next major city along the Black Sea coast -- and were people anxious to cross the border.

Local volunteers "welcome them with tea and food, and some tents to shelter them from the wind", MSF said.

It reported men dropping off women and children in cars and then leaving for the front.

Hungary

The number of Ukrainian refugees who have crossed into Hungary has now topped 300,000, at 305,518, UNHCR said.

Hungary has five border posts with Ukraine and several frontier towns, including Zahony, where local authorities have turned public buildings into emergency centres for refugees. SlovakiaA total of 245,569 Ukrainians made it across the country's shortest border into Slovakia.

Russia

Some 184,563 refugees have sought shelter in Russia since the invasion began.

In addition, UNHCR said 50,000 people had crossed into Russia from the separatist-held pro-Russian Donetsk and Lugansk regions of eastern Ukraine between February 21 and 23.

Belarus

And 2,548 refugees have made it north to Belarus, UNHCR says.

Diesel price for bulk users hiked Rs 25/litre; private retailers stare closure

NEW DELHI: The price of diesel sold to bulk users has been hiked by about Rs 25 per litre in line with a near 40 per cent rise in international oil prices, but retail rates at petrol pumps remain unchanged, sources said.

Petrol pump sales have jumped by a fifth this month after bulk users like bus fleet operators and malls queued up at petrol bunks to buy fuel rather than the usual practice of ordering directly from oil companies, widening the losses of retailers.

Worst hit are private retailers like Nayara Energy, Jio-bp and Shell, who have so far refused to curtail any volume despite a surge in sales. But now closure of pumps is a more viable solution than continuing to sell more fuel at rates

up electricity, sources said.

There is hardly any bulk or industrial user of petrol, diesel is widely used in industries.

The wide difference of about Rs 25 per litre between the bulk user rate and petrol pump price has prompted bulk users to refuel at petrol pumps rather than book tankers directly from oil companies, they said.

This has led to widening losses of oil companies, who were already bleeding from selling petrol and diesel at way below the cost.

While Nayara Energy did not reply to an email sent for comments, Jio-bp -- the fuel retail joint venture of Reliance and UK's bp -- said "there is a massive surge of demand at fuel stations (retail outlets) due to increased delta of Rs 25



per cent between retail and industrial price of diesel, leading to heavy diversion of bulk diesel (direct customers) to retail outlets.

"There is also a very heavy lifting of fuel by dealers and both B2B & B2C customers, who have advanced their purchases, to top up their tanks and capacities in anticipation of price increase which is overdue.

Due to this immediate surge there have been record sales in March 2022, which is putting strain on the entire logistics and supply infrastructure," Jio-bp spokesperson said.

This is further exacerbated by shortage of Tank Trucks and rakes due to sudden surge in demand along with limited availability of TT crew during the festive period across the industry, the spokesperson added.

While private retailers have not disclosed sales, PSU retailers have sold 3.53 million tonnes of diesel from March 1 to 15, up 32.8 per cent from a month earlier.

The sales were 23.7 per cent higher year-on-year and 17.3 per cent higher than sales in March 1-15, 2019.

Oil Minister Hardeep Singh Puri last week said that fuel sales had jumped 20 per cent due to hoarding in anticipation of price increase, but sources insisted the sales also increased because of bulk users queuing at petrol pumps.

A Jio-bp spokesperson said in spite of challenges, Reliance is fully committed to meet the demand of its retail customers.

While Nayara has 6,510 petrol pumps in the country, Jio-bp has 1,454.

PSUs control 90 per cent of the 81,699 petrol pumps in the country.

In 2008, PSU retailers were paid government subsidies for selling petrol and diesel at below cost but private retailers were kept out of such a scheme.

This time around, PSU retailers have been asked to square up their losses from inventory gains and higher refining margins they are earning now.

But private retailers do not have refineries to cover up for retail losses.

ICC rates Bengaluru pitch where India played second Test against Sri Lanka as 'below average'

DUBAI: The Chinnaswamy Stadium pitch in Bengaluru, which was used for the second Test between India and Sri Lanka earlier this month, was on Sunday rated "below average"

field Monitoring Process, which was introduced on January 4, 2018, "if a pitch or outfield is rated as being substandard, that venue will be allocated a number of demerit points.



by the ICC. India had defeated Sri Lanka by 238 runs in the Test which began on March 12 and ended inside three days.

The venue thus received one demerit point under the ICC Pitch and Outfield Monitoring Process.

"The pitch offered a lot of turn on the first day itself and though it improved with every session, in my view, it was not an even contest between the bat and ball," match referee Javagal Srinath said in a statement issued by ICC.

Srinath's report has been forwarded to the BCCI.

In 2017, the Bangalore wicket was rated as below average by ICC match referee Chris Broad after the second Test between India and Australia.

According to the revised ICC Pitch and Out-

BNP Paribas Open: Iga Swiatek beats Simona Halep to reach finals

INDIAN WELLS: Iga Swiatek rallied from a break down in each set to beat Simona Halep 7-6 (6), 6-4 on Friday night and reach the final of the BNP Paribas Open.

Swiatek saved two set points in the first-set tiebreaker when she overcame deficits of 3-1 and 5-3. She won the final four points, with Halep committing errors on three of those points, before Swiatek cracked a forehand win-



ner off Halep's second serve. Halep received a racket abuse warning for smashing her racket on the court.

Swiatek took a 2-1 lead in the second set that featured five service breaks. Halep took a medical timeout and had a trainer wrap her upper left thigh.

Halep then broke Swiatek twice while taking the next three games for a 4-2 lead. But Swiatek took over from there. She won the last four games in a row, with Halep winning just four points total on her serve while getting broken twice. Defending champion Paula Badosa played Maria Sakkari in the other semifinal later Friday night.

On the men's side, Taylor Fritz defeated Miomir Kecmanovic of Serbia, 7-6 (5), 3-6, 6-1 to reach the semifinals for the second time in five months.

The 24-year-old American is in the midst of the best stretch of his young career, and it all began in the desert in October. That's when the tournament was held last year, pushed out of its traditional March spot because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2021, Fritz came into Indian Wells ranked 39th in the world. He beat top-10 players Matteo Berrettini and Alexander Zverev before losing in the semis to Nikoloz Basilashvili of Georgia. He's now No. 20 - having reached a career-high

16th in February - and is 24-8 since last year's tournament. He's made the quarterfinals in five tournaments and reached the fourth round of a Grand Slam tournament for the first time in January at the Australian Open. "Things are starting to come together. I feel like my level as a player has gone up a ton," he said.

Fritz has recorded many milestones at Indian Wells, where he's always a crowd favorite. He first began coming to the event as a kid, having grown up near San Diego as the son of former WTA Tour player Kathy May. "I didn't watch any matches," said Fritz, who instead chased players for autographs, including Andy Murray and Bernard Tomic.

Fritz made his debut in a Masters 1000 main draw at Indian Wells and notched his first

top-10 win here in 2017. His father, Guy Fritz, is a former ATP Tour pro who coaches the men's tennis team at the nearby College of the Desert. "It feels like a second home. Just the energy is completely different," he said.

Fritz is the first American to reach consecutive semifinals at Indian Wells since Andy Roddick in 2009-10. The last American to win the tournament was Andre Agassi in 2001; Fritz was 3 years old at the time. "There's no place I'd rather have these results than here," Fritz said.

After he and Kecmanovic split sets, Fritz dominated the third. He raced to a 5-0 lead before the Serb held. Fritz then served a love game to close out the match.

Fritz next plays No. 7 seed Andrey Rublev of Russia, who beat Grigor Dimitrov of Bulgaria, 7-5 6-2.

Rublev has won 13 consecutive matches and is coming off back-to-back titles in Marseille and Dubai. He never trailed against Dimitrov and dropped serve just once in the 1 1/2-hour match that paired former world No 1 junior players. Rublev has yet to drop a set in the tournament. "I'm really motivated to be a better player. It's like sometimes I cannot wait to go to play next tournament, you know?," he said. Saturday's other semifinal pits Rafael Nadal against 18-year-old Carlos Alcaraz in an all-Spanish matchup. Nadal is 19-0 this year.

ISL organising body chief Nita Ambani lauds performance of Indian players



MARGAO: Indian Super League organisers Football Sports Development Limited (FDSL) chairperson Nita Ambani on Sunday lauded the performance of domestic players in the current ISL season. Most of the national squad players come from the ISL.

"With every season since inception, we have seen the quality of football getting better and our domestic players shining. The likes of Liston Colaco, Akash Mishra, Prabsukhan Gill, Sahal (Samad) and so many others, have become footballing icons for

the next generation," Ambani said in a statement. Ambani also spoke about welcoming fans back to the stadium for the final, which will be played between Kerala Blasters and Hyderabad FC later on Sunday. "We have missed celebrating the

spirit of fans in the stadiums for two years. But, now this final is the first match in two seasons, when we welcome fans back into the stands. There have been challenges but the spirit of sport, as always, has triumphed over all odds," she added.




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