

**As Deputy CM**  
CHANDIGARH, JAN 20  
Senior Congress leader and Punjab's Agriculture Minister, Shri Rajinder Kaur Bhattal, who recently led a revolt against Chief Minister, Shri Amarinder Singh Demanding change in leadership, was today redesignated as deputy chief minister, official sources said here. Governor O P Verma redesignated Bhattal on the recommendation of the Chief Minister with immediate effect, sources said.

The Congress high command had announced the redesignation of Bhattal as part of the package following a series of meetings with the Bhattal and Amarinder Singh factions after the former organised a sit-in at Delhi leading to a virtual split in the 64-member Congress Legislature Party.


#### 13 Dead, 74 Injured In Gas Plant Explosion

ALGIERS, JAN. 20  
At least 13 workers were killed when a tank filled with liquefied natural gas exploded at an Algerian refinery, the North African nation's official news agency said. The blast yesterday in Skikda, a port on the oil- and gas-rich nation's eastern Mediterranean coast, ripped through a refinery belonging to Algeria's state-run Sonatrach.

Some 74 workers were injured, the APS news agency said. Officials opened an inquiry, the agency reported. A refinery official who spoke on condition of anonymity said the blast was most likely accidental.

#### Freedom Fighter Prem Chand Jain Dead

MUZAFFARNAGAR, JAN 20  
Freedom Fighter and Advocate Prem Chand Jain has died here after prolonged illness, family sources said. Jain, 81, is survived by one son and two daughters, sources said adding, he was consigned to flames here with full official honours. Jain, who passed away yesterday, took an active part in the freedom struggle and was jailed a number of times.



### WEATHER

Maximum Temperature: 30.4°C  
Minimum Temperature: 24.1°C  
Relative Humidity 75% at 0830 hrs & 77% at 1730 hrs.  
Sunrise: 0544 hrs IST  
Sunset: 1717 hrs IST  
(21-01-2004)  
Rainfall TRACE up to 0830 hrs & Nil up to 1730 hrs  
On 20-01-2004.  
Total rainfall recorded since 01-01-2004  
Up to 20-01-2004 = TRACE  
**LOCAL WEATHER FORECAST**  
Mainly clear sky becoming partly cloudy sky in the morning or in the evening with very light rain. Maximum and Minimum temperature will be around 30°C and 24°C on Wednesday.

Eastern states to become a economic bridgehead to South-East Asia," Shri Vajpayee said.

He was addressing the

## Advani Backs Simultaneous LS And Assembly Polls

BHOPAL, JAN 20  
Strongly advocating simultaneous polls for Lok Sabha and state assemblies, Deputy Prime Minister Shri L K Advani has asserted that for the first time in India, incumbency has become the 'biggest asset and strength' and not a liability for BJP-led government at the Centre for the works done for poor.

"Every year there is one election or the other. It will be good to again synchronise elections for Lok Sabha and assemblies. Simultaneous polls may not be easy but a serious thought should be given," he said after laying the foundation stone for All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) named after Rajmata Vijayaraje Scindia in Bhopal.

The Deputy Prime Minister said the late Indira Gandhi broke the tradition of simultaneous elections for the first time in 1971. He also asked the election officials and

appeal to the state governments in the region saying "the Centre has taken a conscious decision to provide more resources and

others to study the proposal deeply as it would save considerable amount of money besides being convenient. Narrating NDA government's 'pro-poor' activities, Shri Advani said "Generally, anti-establishment factor works against governments when they complete their tenure. But in case of Vajpayee government, incumbency is not a liability or a cause of worry. It is our biggest asset and strength."

Advani said it is because from the day one, the Vajpayee government has been endeavoring to work for the welfare of all, particularly poor and downtrodden, and not the affluent. He said the AIIMS at Bhopal being built at a cost of Rs 30 crore funded by the Centre would remove the hardship of poor and tribal people of Madhya Pradesh and provide super specialty and cheap medical services to them.

## Rajasthan Oil Discovery A New Year Gift For The Nation - Ram Naik

NEW DELHI, JAN. 20  
Congratulating M/s Cairn Energy on its announcement of a significant new oil discovery in the Block RJ-ON 90/1 in Rajasthan, Shri Naik described it as a New Year's gift to the nation. Shri Naik said that the initial estimates by M/s. Cairn Energy for the oil in place of this discovery range from 450 to 1,100 million barrels and their preliminary reserve estimates are in the range of 50 to 200 million barrel. He said that in the years to come Rajasthan would be third largest State after Gujarat and Assam on India's oil map. Shri Naik added that this discovery following the discovery with estimated recoverable reserves of 4-6 TCF of gas by Indo-Korean Consortium in Myanmar Offshore, augurs

well for our on-going efforts in E&P sector in India and abroad.

M/s Cairn Energy had earlier informed DGH that the N-B-I exploration well, which is currently under drilling in the northern part of the block RJ-ON-90/1 block in the Rajasthan Basin, has made a significant oil discovery in a large simple structure at shallow depths. The well is located 60 kilometers north of the previous discovery named Saraswati in the block RJ-ON90/1 in Barmer District and is presently at a depth of 1,250 meters and has not yet reached the planned total depth. An intermediate log has been run and evaluated and oil samples have been recovered from the Fatehgarh sands.

strategy to speed up strategic initiatives and as a result, the peace process has moved forward considerably in some of the troubled states.

## India, Russia Sign Deal For Purchase Of Gorshkov

NEW DELHI, JAN. 20  
India and Russia on Tuesday signed the much awaited over \$1.5 billion deal for the purchase of 45,000 tonne aircraft carrier 'Admiral Gorshkov'. According to a Defence Ministry statement, the deal also covers the related purchase of equipment and systems for the carrier which was approved by the Cabinet Committee of Security on January 17, 2004. The agreement was signed by Defence Minister, Shri George Fernandes and his visiting Russian counterpart Sergei Ivanov in New Delhi.

It will have 28 MiG-29K aircraft and six Kamov anti-submarine helicopters. Its squadron of MiG-29Ks is capable of operating in a 1000-km radius and can serve as a floating airfield capable of taking on enemy air force on its own. It'll have destroyers armed with Brahmos missiles.

## Kisan TV Channel To Be Launched Today

NEW DELHI, JAN. 20  
Kisan TV Channel and Kisan Call Centres will become operational from tomorrow. The Prime Minister, Shri Atal Behari Vajpayee will launch the schemes here at a function. The Kisan TV Channel aims at leveraging the vast mass media infrastructure available in the country to deliver agriculture-related extension services. The cable-satellite channel for national broadcast will use the available transponder with the IGNOU. It is planned to have a one-hour broadcast, repeated four times a day during the current year. This would be enhanced up to two hours, repeated four times a day in the last year of the tenth Plan. Low power transmitters and high power

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festival which brings together the performing arts of islands across the world, will be held from tomorrow to Jan. 26, 2004 at Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Auditorium. The cultural festival is being organized by the A&N Administration in association with Indian Council for Cultural Relations, (ICCR) New Delhi. The Secretary (Culture), Shri Uddipta Ray

The festival is meant to promote cultural relations and mutual understanding between India and other countries of the world. Cultural troupes from six island nations viz. Seychelles, Trinidad & Tobago, Maldives, Mauritius, Reunion Island and Sri Lanka will perform during the six-day festival. The local classical dance troupes and Nicobari

# SBI Network In Isles Completely Computerized

PORT BLAIR, JAN. 20  
The State Bank of India has achieved the distinction of being the only Nationalized Bank in the archipelago to have computerized all its branches. The SBI has a network of 18 branches spread over different parts of this island territory.

Addressing a press conference in its Regional Office premises today, the Assistant General Manager,

Shri Sujit Guha said the core banking solution which envisages interconnecting operations of all SBI branches may become possible here by the end of this year. Once this is done, customers will have the facility of banking at will at any time which, he said, is the main objective of the bank.

The AGM informed that the SBI proposes to install altogether ten ATMs in the islands, two of which have

## Development Programmes For Farmers Planned

PORT BLAIR, JAN. 20  
The National Cooperative Union of India (NCUI), Port Blair unit in association with NABARD and A&N State Co-operative Bank will be organizing development programme at Rangat, Middle Andaman block for the benefit of poor and weaker sections.

Accordingly, the official launch of Gram Unnayan Farmers Club, Kausalya Nagar, promoted by NCUI will be held tomorrow at

11.00 AM at Kausalya Nagar. While, the meet and match programme of Basanti Farmers Club under NCUI will be held at Bakultala at 10.00 AM on January 22, 2004.

Meanwhile, a Self Help Group orientation training programme for the benefit of newly promoted SHGs will be organized at Kalasi, Middle Andaman at 10.00 AM on January 23, 2004, a communication said here.

## Dug Out Dinghies Seized, Four Arrested

PORT BLAIR, JAN. 20  
Altogether two dug out dinghies made from Tompeing and Thingan logs and another one made with Pynma planks were seized during a combing operation launched by the mobile squad of Diglipur Forest Division. The seizure was made from Bahadur Turkey Creek, Agga Nallah Creek and Milan

Gram Reserve Forest.

In this connection, four persons were apprehended. They are Kishore Mondal, Ananth Uraon, Subhash Mistry and Jothindranath Mondal. Those arrested were later released on bail. The mobile squad team was led by the Range Officer, Sultan Ahmed.

According to a schedule released, the troupe of Seychelles will perform on Jan. 21, the troupe from Trinidad & Tobago on Jan. 22, Sri Lanka on Jan. 23, Reunion Island on Jan. 24, Mauritius on Jan. 25 and troupe from Maldives on Jan. 26. The timing of the performance will be from 6.30 PM at Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Auditorium, a communication said here.

A Primary Health Centre will soon come up at Kishori Nagar, Diglipur the foundation stone for which will be laid by the Lt. Governor, Prof. Ram Kapse at 1545 hrs on Jan. 23, 2004 at the construction site. The Member of Parliament, Shri Bishnu Pada Ray will attend the programme, according to a communication received from APWD here.

## IOC To Donate Ambulances

PORT BLAIR, JAN. 20  
Indian Oil Corporation will donate four Ambulances to different organization of these islands. The ambulances will be donated by Shri P.K. Basu, General Manager/ West Bengal, IOCL (MD) in the presence of Shri Bishnu Pada Ray, Member of Parliament and Senior Officers of the Administration at a function to be held at Hotel Megapode Nest at 1630 hrs on January 25, 2004, a communication from IOC said here.

## Backyard Poultry Management Trng. Gets Underway

PORT BLAIR, JAN. 20  
A three-day in-service training on recent advances in backyard poultry management for para-veterinarians got underway today with its inauguration by the Director, CARI, Dr. R.B. Rai at KVK complex, Sippighat. Altogether 20 trainees comprising staff from Department of AH&VS, KVK, FRI and NGO members are attending the training programme.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Rai stressed on the integrated approach for the holistic development of the farmers and village as a whole in the field of agriculture, horticulture, livestock, fisheries and other allied sectors.

Dr. B. Mahato, Director, AH&VS in his address narrated the practical benefits derived from backyard poultry to be highest when compared to broiler or layer farming. He urged the para-

veterinarians to acquire the latest technique taught during the training programme and popularize backyard poultry using Vanaraja and Nicobari fowl in farmers field.

Earlier, Dr. N. Sarangi, Principal Scientist and Incharge, KVK welcomed the gathering and emphasized on the need and impact of such training programme, a communication said here.

## NABARD Interest Rate Reduced

PORT BLAIR, JAN. 20  
The National Bank For Agriculture And Rural Development (NABARD) in a communication said that the rate of interest on its refinancing to banks in Andaman & Nicobar Islands has been reduced from 6% to 5.75% for all farm and non-farm investment credit activities, which has become effective from Jan. 9, 2004, its General Manager said in a release here today.