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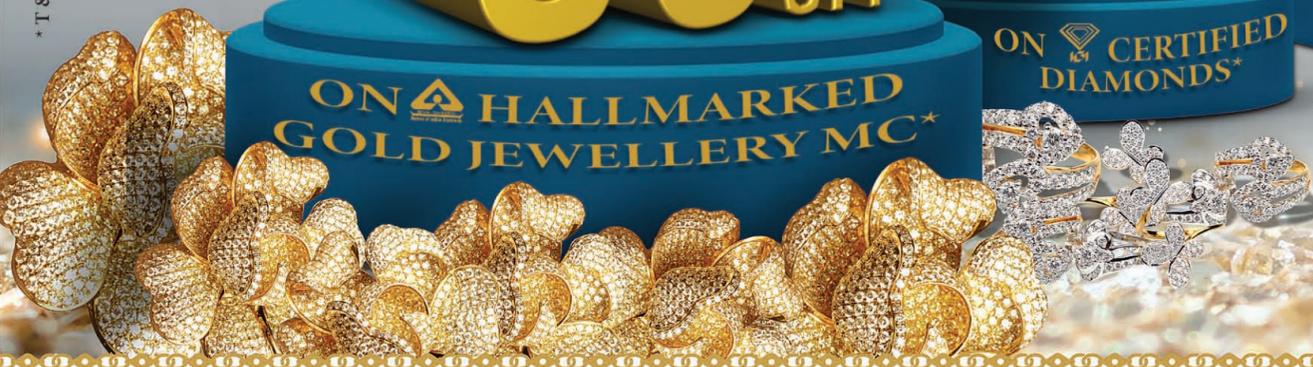
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REDKNAPP REGRETS NOT TRYING TO SAVE MARRIAGE

Singer Louise Redknapp feels she should have worked harder to save her 21-year marriage with her ex-husband, former Liverpool and England football star Jamie Redknapp. "I should have paused for a minute. I wish I'd tried (to save the marriage?)," Louise said in an interview with *You Magazine*.

SNYDER'S ARMY OF THE DEAD TO RELEASE ON NETFLIX IN MAY

Filmmaker Zack Snyder's zombie heist movie *Army of the Dead* is set for a May 21 premiere on streaming platform Netflix. The director shared the news on Twitter along with the film's official poster. "Survivors take all. #ArmyOfTheDead on @Netflix May 21," Snyder tweeted.



FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshSpeaks.com
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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

ARIES
Interactive sessions with people who think like you are on the cards. At last you may have an intimate talk with your beloved and you will get a chance to confide your commitment to the relationship, says Ganesh. You may even express your long-term dreams.

TAURUS
This is one of those days when not goes well, warns Ganesh. No matter how hard you try you may not be able to keep problems and difficulties at bay. You may not be pleased or comfortable doing what has been assigned, or required, and could simply sit sullenly, doing nothing.

GEMINI
Your mind will be uneasy and anxious due to some reason today. You will be unable to express your anxieties. You will be able to secure the love of your partner by sharing your feelings. You need to let go of the past and strive to keep on moving forward with confidence, says Ganesh.

CANCER
Today is a day for taking things slowly, especially on the business front. This applies the most to the stockbrokers and also others who invest in stocks or shares on the side. Stars are not so bright today and haste will only worsen the matters.

LEO
You will seek the opinion of others in a lot of matters today. You need to patiently listen to others and keep your lips sealed during the course of conversations today. Your self-confidence may take a beating today, hence do not take any important decisions.

VIRGO
Professionalism will be overshadowed by personal preoccupations. Drill your way out of problems today by meeting them head-on. Don't get stuck up on the emotional front, especially in the evening, cautions Ganesh.

LIBRA
Ganesh says that any pending legal issues will be sorted out today either in court or through an out of court settlement. Your workload will get eased today and you will be able to find your way out from certain problematic situations.

SCORPIO
You can be fondly called as 'the perfectionist' today. Right from being punctual to following a systematic method for your work, you do it all. All in all, you set an ideal example for the people around you, says Ganesh.

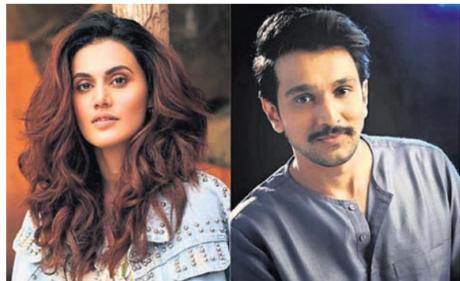
SAGITTARIUS
Ganesh predicts a day full of romantic developments today. Mushy talks and whispering sweet nothings in your beloved's ears may give you little joys of life. However, brace yourselves as there are times when relationships do not workout, and you may experience this soon.

CAPRICORN
It has become difficult for you to bear the heavy weight of responsibilities on your shoulders. But, be prepared for some more; the weight is about to get heavier as more responsibilities are going to be added.

AQUARIUS
Academically, you have performed exceptionally well, and Ganesh congratulates you for that. You will inspire and motivate a number of people, and may create a fan following, too. This, however, doesn't mean that you throw your weight around. Keep a humane and humble approach towards others.

PISCES
Your planetary configuration is not being favorable, you are advised not to start any new projects today. The benefits accrued by any project you take up today might not justify the risks associated with it. Businessmen need to be extra careful in all their dealings.

Taapsee, Pratik team up for *Woh Ladki Hai Kahaan*



Mumbai: Actress Taapsee Pannu is all set to team up with Scam 1992 fame actor Pratik Gandhi in a new film titled *Woh Ladki Hai Kahaan*. This is the first collaboration between the two actors. The film will be directed by Arshad Syed and backed by Siddharth Roy Kapur. Confirming the news, trade analyst Taran Adarsh tweeted Monday: "TAAPSEE - PRATIK GANDHI: NEW

FILM ANNOUNCEMENT... #TaapseePannu and #PratikGandhi [won accolades for his act in #Scam1992] to star in #WohLadkiHaiKahaan?... Starts 2021-end... Directed by Arshad Syed... Produced by Siddharth Roy Kapur." Meanwhile, Taapsee Pannu has her kitty full with upcoming projects like *Rashmi Rocket*, *Loop Lapeta*, *Hasene Dillruba*, *Dobaaraa*

and *Shabaash Mithu*. Pratik on the other hand has started shooting for his upcoming romantic comedy film *Atithi Bhooto Bhava* in Mathura. The film also features Jackie Shroff in a pivotal role, and actress Sharmin Segal in the female lead. Helmed by Hardik Gajjar, the film is slated to release later this year. IANS

When Mahie Gill 'got emotional'

Mumbai: Reuniting with Abhay Deol on screen 12 years after *Dev.D* was an emotional moment for her, reveals Mahie Gill. The actress shares screen space with Deol in the upcoming war-drama web series *1962: The War In The Hills*.

The *Socha Na Tha* actor plays an Indian Army officer Major Suraj Singh, Mahie plays his wife Shagun. "I have always wanted to work with him but unfortunately there was nothing coming our way. Abhay Deol is my first hero and he is an extremely talented actor. I really got very emotional after I learned that Abhay is playing the character of Major Suraj Singh. At the same time I was very excited also," Mahie said.

"Working with him again was a wonderful experience and we have a good understanding. He is not only a good actor but also helpful towards co-actors and makes them feel comfortable," she added. IANS



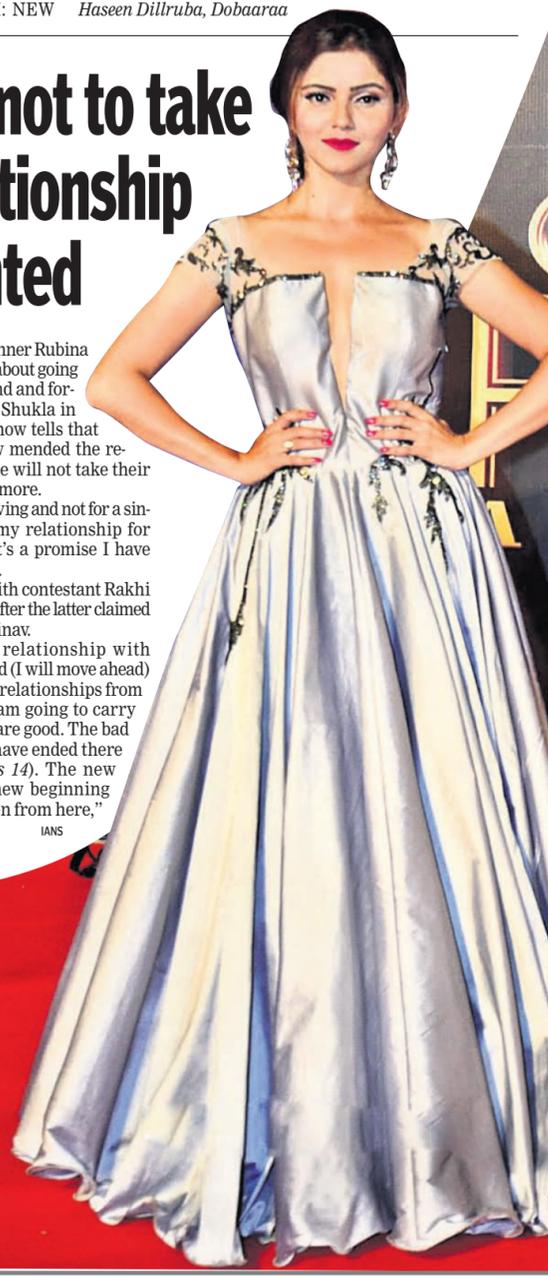
Rubina not to take her relationship for granted

Mumbai: *Bigg Boss 14* winner Rubina Dilaik had openly spoken about going for a divorce with husband and former contestant Abhinav Shukla in the show. However, she now tells that their stint on the show mended the relationship and that she will not take their bond for granted anymore.

"It will be ever evolving and not for a single day will I take my relationship for granted again. That's a promise I have made," Rubina said.

She had a clash with contestant Rakhi Sawant on the show, after the latter claimed 'crazy love' for Abhinav.

Will she fix her relationship with Rakhi? "Yes, like I said (I will move ahead) with a clean slate. All relationships from here will evolve and I am going to carry forward the ones that are good. The bad relationships, I have ended there (in *Bigg Boss 14*). The new story and new beginning will happen from here," she said. IANS



MULTILINGUAL THEATRE FEST

Odia social drama *Eka Jidkhor Jhia* enthral audience



Artistes of Satabdira Kalakar perform on the second day of 23rd Kalinga Natya Mahatsoav

Bhubaneswar: Odia social drama *Eka Jidkhor Jhia* was staged at Rabindra Mandap Monday, on the second day of five-day theatre festival Kalinga Natya Mahatsoav, organised by the prominent drama troupe of the state Satabdira Kalakar.

While the play was adapted by Ramakanta Banerjee from a famous work of leading Indian playwright Vijay Tendulkar, troupe's secretary Dhira Mallik directed it for the troupe.

The play is about the trials and tribulations of Mangala, a cultured but stubborn girl. She is also ambitious and promising. However, influenced by uncle, a follower of Gandhian principle, she decides to lead a life based on truth, justice and hard work. Incidentally, she ends up marrying a person with a criminal background. Now, her motto in life is to bring her husband and rest of his family on the right track. Going against her principles, she even seeks help from her uncle. At the beginning, she gets support from her in-laws. But ultimately, she is deserted by everyone. Santosh Mohanty, Srikanta Mishra, Alok Agnibesh, Apurba Sahoo, Bighnaraj Jena, Subham Sahoo, Minarani Sahoo, Monideepa Mallick, and Satyaprakash enacted the play on the stage. All the actors looked sincere and the play managed to hold the interest of the audience till end. The guests who graced the occasion included Priyadarshi Mishra, Chairman Odisha State Housing board, journalist Pradosh Patnaik and Jagatsinghpur Collector Sangram Keshari Mohapatra. *Sappho Chirangada*, a play by Dum Dum Sabdomugdho Natyakendra of West Bengal will be staged on the third day of the festival.

PEANUTS



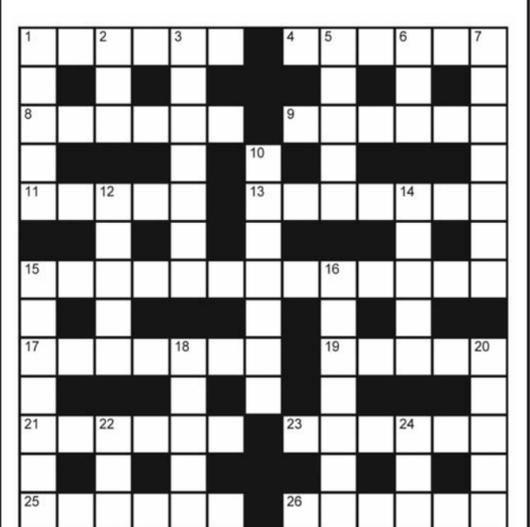
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



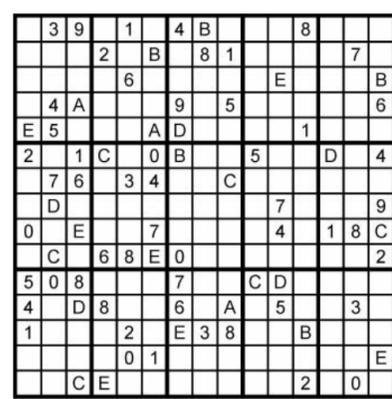
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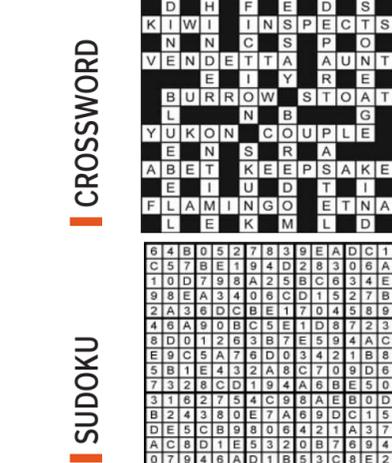
- Across**
- 1 Devil rays
 - 4 Little angel
 - 8 Real
 - 9 Recipe directive
 - 11 Impudent
 - 13 Friendly
 - 15 Disneyland, e.g. (9,4)
 - 17 French country house
 - 19 Key material
 - 21 Materialise
 - 23 Respiratory disorder
 - 25 Small boats
 - 26 Young swan
 - Down**
 - 1 Some castle features
 - 2 Tiny criticism
 - 3 Look at closely
 - 5 Half of Hispaniola
 - 6 Canyon feature
 - 7 Bad way to go
 - 10 Restaurant option (4-3)
 - 12 Spa feature
 - 14 "Good job!"
 - 15 Antediluvian
 - 16 In need of a drink
 - 18 Give the slip
 - 20 Bakery supply
 - 22 Corral
 - 24 Lady lobster

SUDOKU

To solve the Sudoku puzzle, each row, column and box must contain the numbers 0 to 9 and the letters A to E.



SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



HONEST COMMITMENT

Bigg Boss 14 winner Rubina Dilaik says she will never take her relationship with husband Abhinav Shukla for granted

LEISURE



COLLECTOR PULLED UP

Jaipur Collector draws flak from Lokayukta following fraud allegation in demarcation of black stone quarries

STATE P3



CONG GOVT IN PONDY FALLS

The Congress government in Pondicherry fell Monday after CM V Narayanasamy resigned ahead of a confidence vote

NATIONAL P6

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BHUBANESWAR | TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 23 | 2021

P1

State ups spend at ₹1.7L cr

TOTAL DEBTS ₹1,25,005 cr	REVENUE RECEIPTS ₹1,25,600 cr	BORROWING & OTHER RECEIPTS ₹44,400 cr
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POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 22: With an aim to realise the vision of 'New Odisha - Empowered Odisha', Finance Minister Niranjan Pujari Monday presented the annual state budget for 2021-22 with an outlay of ₹1.70 lakh crore, a rise of 13.33 per cent over previous fiscal.

While ₹85,000 crore has been allocated as administrative expenditure, ₹75,000 crore is meant for programme expenditure, ₹3,050 crore for disaster response fund and ₹6,950 crore towards transfers from the state, Pujari said while presenting the budget in the Assembly. He has proposed to invest about ₹8,000 crore from off-budget resources like Odisha Mineral Bearing Areas Development Corporation District Mineral Foundation, PSUs, among others to supplement the outlay.

Compared to last year, additional allocation of ₹19,345 crore was provided for administrative expenditure and ₹1,000 crore for programme expenditure. Disaster response fund and transfers from the state allocation dropped by ₹150 crore and ₹195 crore, respectively. The capital outlay for 2021-22 is ₹25,788 crore -- 4.4% of GSDP. Additionally, loans & advances, grants for the creation of capital assets and other expenditure for capital formation together accounted for ₹8,379 crore, which is 1.43% of GSDP, Pujari said.

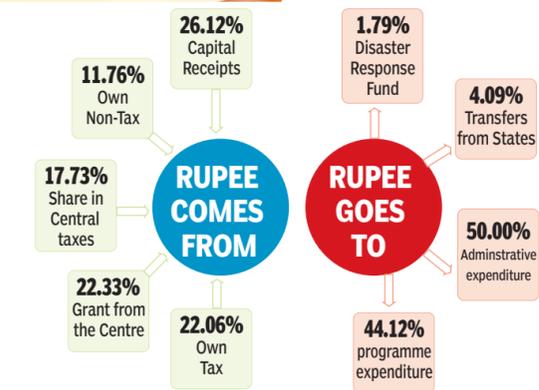
The total investment for capital asset creation would be of the order of 5.83 per cent of GSDP, which will help boost the economy, he said. The outlay is proposed to be financed mainly through revenue receipts of ₹1,25,600 crore and gross borrowing & other receipts of ₹44,400 crore. However, the net borrowing would be ₹18,465 crore. Further, the total revenue receipts for the year 2021-22 include state's own tax revenue of ₹37,500 crore, own non-tax revenue of ₹20,000 crore, state's share in central



Finance Minister Niranjan Pujari handing over a copy of the e-budget to CM.

taxes—Rs 30,137 crore, and grants from the Centre including GST compensation to the tune of ₹37,963 crore. "The state economy is now showing signs of recovery after pandemic induced slowdown. Time has come to revert to our growth trajectory and aspire for a transformative New Odisha once again," the minister said.

Presenting a separate farm budget with an outlay of ₹17,468 crore, Pujari said, "Odisha remains by and large a rural and agrarian economy. The agriculture and allied sector form the single largest employment sector engaging 50 per cent of the total workforce. This contributes 21% to the Gross State Value Added as per 2020-21 advance estimates." Organic farming has been promoted in more than 20,800 hectares. For accelerating the growth in organic farming, ₹35 crore



is proposed under the Paramparagat Krishi Vikash Yojana. The state government has decided to convert SCB Medical

College into an AIIMS Plus institute by spending around ₹3500 crore over three years. The government has made a provision of ₹500 crore for the year 2021-22. Similarly, ₹542 crore was allotted under ABADHA scheme for the development of Puri and ₹200 crore each for Ekamra Kshetra and Samaleswari temple. ₹90 crore was allocated for construction of world-class hockey stadium at Rourkela while ₹1,353 crore was provided for Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana "We propose to implement a new scheme Free Treatment for Trauma Fund with an outlay of ₹40 crore for providing emergency healthcare and trauma care facilities to the victims of road accidents," he said. Besides, ₹600 crore was allocated under Niramaya for free medicine, ₹229

MAJOR ALLOCATIONS

Agri and allied activities ₹17,468 cr	Piped drinking water ₹12,000 cr
Disaster management ₹3,050 cr	Rural housing scheme ₹3,000 cr
MGNREGA ₹2,001 cr	KALIA scheme ₹1,800 cr
Fisheries & animal resources ₹1,415 cr	ABADHA scheme ₹542 cr
AIBP projects ₹2,258 cr	Biju Krushak Vikas Yojana ₹400 cr
Distribution of rice @ Re1 per kg ₹969 cr	Supplementary Nutrition Programme ₹1,113 cr
Madhubabu Pension Yojana ₹1,509 cr	Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana ₹500 cr
Scholarships for ST and SC students ₹903 cr	WODC ₹180 cr
MLALAD ₹441 cr	

people, the government proposed to invest ₹12,000 crore in 2021-22 from budget and off-budget sources. ₹2,419 crore will be spent under BASUDHA.

FINALLY, JUSTICE FOR ANJANA



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 22: The prime accused in one of the most infamous rape incidents in India was finally arrested by the commissionerate police 22 years after the incident. The case related to the gangrape of Anjana Mishra, the estranged wife of an Odia IFS officer that created a furor in the state that led to the ouster of then Chief Minister Janaki Ballabh Patnaik and the subsequent downfall of the Congress party government in the state.

The commissionerate police in a secret operation named 'Operation Silent Viper' nabbed the prime accused, Bibekananda Biswal, alias Biban, from Aamby Valley at Lonavala on Pune-Mumbai highway February 20. Speaking to media, Commissioner of Police, Sudhanshu Sarangi, revealed that his absence was an enigma for all during last 22 years. Many claimed Biban dead while some suspected that he left the country.

On January 9, 1999, Anjana was returning to Bhubaneswar along with her journalist friend when three bike-borne people, Biban and his two associates, Pradeep Sahoo alias Padia and Dharendra Mohanty alias Tunia, intercepted their vehicle. The trio waylaid the car and took it to an isolated place near Baranga and gangraped Anjana before her journalist friend.

One of the accused took her to nearby Bhaluka jungle and raped her there once again. A case (3/1999) was registered at the Mahila police station in Cuttack the next day. Later, police arrested Padia and Tunia while Biban managed to flee. The case was handed over to CBI.

The sessions court of Khurda sentenced Tunia and Padia to life on 29 April, 2002. Padia had recently died in Jharpada jail while Tunia has been serving the jail term at Chaudwar jail. A chance meeting of the commissioner with Tunia led to the arrest of Biban. Meanwhile, Anjana thanked Commissioner Sarangi and his team for the feat. Explaining her ordeal, she said, "I stood firm to get justice despite all threats to me over past decades." She requested the CBI to unearth the conspirators behind the ghastly gangrape. **More-P2**

The petitioner submitted that the preliminary investigation undertaken by the police, the crime branch and the SIT illustrates that all of them have made attempts to sabotage the investigation process into the alleged incident and attempted all kinds of subversion tactics to influence the complainant and her relatives to discard the aforesaid allegations as false and frivolous.

The petitioner also contended that the SIT has not investigated the role of local inspector in-charge who was hand in glove with the accused and was shielding the real culprit and the local MLA has also not been interrogated by the SIT.

It is a pro-people, pro-growth and transformative budget in our journey towards 'New Odisha - Empowered Odisha'. This is a holistic and fiscally prudent budget of Rs 1.76 lakh crore. Congratulations to everyone involved

NAVEEN PATNAIK | CHIEF MINISTER

The Budget is not meant to realize the vision of 'Sustha Odisha Sukhi Odisha' (Healthy Odisha, Happy Odisha). It is just a magic of statistics. The govt has failed to make any attractive scheme to bind the Odia youths inside the state

PK NAIK | LEADER OF OPPOSITION

The allocation has been slightly increased, but, the state doesn't have money to meet it. Though special agriculture budget was presented, nothing is there for the farmers and agriculture

SANTOSH SINGH SALUJA | CONGRESS MLA

DEBTS BALLOON

The debt burden of the state government by the end of financial year 2021-22 is estimated to reach ₹1,25,005 crore which is 21.3 per cent of the GSDP. The debt stock at the end of December, 2020 was ₹1,02,593 crore which was 20.1 per cent of GSDP. By end of 2020-21 fiscal, the debt load is estimated to reach ₹1,06,540 crore which is 20.9 per cent of GSDP.

SAVING TREES

As part of a green initiative, the government presented the annual budget 2021-22 on an online mode. The state has done away with the printing of budget documents by introducing the e-budget. The budget was presented in a complete electronic form through the National e-Vidhan Application. "This initiative would cut printing of about 1.5 crore pages of paper and save about 2000 large trees," Pujari said.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Don't mention lockdown, scar them instead. Say if cases keep rising you will address them twice a day!

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	SENSX	49744.32	↓	1145.44
	NIFTY	14675.70	↓	306.10
CURRENCY	DOLLAR	72.78	↓	₹0.16
	EURO	87.91	↑	₹0.22
BULLION	GOLD	₹46,915	↑	₹718
	SILVER	₹70,192	↑	₹1180

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP	MAX 36.5°C	35.2°C
	MIN 16.2°C	15.4°C
Humidity	78%	55%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

Forecast: Fog or Mist in the morning

VARAVARA RAO GETS 6-MONTH INTERIM BAIL

AGENCIES

Mumbai, Feb 22: The Bombay High Court Monday granted interim bail for six months to ailing poet Varavara Rao on medical grounds. Rao, 82, an accused in the Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case being probed by the National Investigation Agency (NIA), is currently undergoing treatment in the Mumbai-based Nanavati Hospital where he had been admitted by the Maharashtra government following the high court's intervention. Rao has been in custody since

August 28, 2018, awaiting trial in the case. A bench of Justices SS Shinde and Manish Pitale ordered that Rao be discharged from the hospital, depending on his current health condition, and released on bail immediately after his discharge.

The HC said if it did not grant Rao medical bail, it would be abdicating its duty to protect the principles of human rights, and a citizen's fundamental rights to life and health. The bench also imposed stringent conditions in Rao's bail, including a direction to him to stay within the jurisdiction of the Mumbai NIA.

SC grants 4 weeks to state to file counter

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Feb 22: The Supreme Court Monday granted four weeks time to the state government to file a counter affidavit in a petition filed by Saudamini Sahu, the mother of the 5-year-old girl who was allegedly kidnapped, raped and murdered in July last year, seeking a CBI inquiry into her daughter's death.

The case was heard by Registrar Rajesh Kumar Goel through video conferencing mode and posted for hearing April 5. Advocate Swastik Dalai, who appeared for the petitioner in the court, said the matter will be heard by the judges after plead-

ings, the filing of counter affidavit and rejoinder are completed in the registrar's court.

Earlier, a three-judge bench of the apex court comprising Justices AM Khanwilkar, BR Gavai and Krishna Murari January 13 had sought the response of the CBI and the state government.

Significantly, the mother of Pari pleaded before the court to order an independent inquiry into the alleged rape and murder of Pari in July last year at Jadupur in Nayagarh district. The petitioner also sought a direction to the CBI to investigate all cases related to missing children in the state. Pari's mother accused Babuli



Nayak for the alleged murder of her daughter and contended that rampant organ smuggling is behind the murder. The petitioner also contended that the state police is treating the parents of Pari as criminals. The police are completely insensitive towards the fam-

ily members of Pari, she alleged. The petitioner submitted that the preliminary investigation undertaken by the police, the crime branch and the SIT illustrates that all of them have made attempts to sabotage the investigation process into the alleged incident and attempted all kinds of subversion tactics to influence the complainant and her relatives to discard the aforesaid allegations as false and frivolous.

The petitioner also contended that the SIT has not investigated the role of local inspector in-charge who was hand in glove with the accused and was shielding the real culprit and the local MLA has also not been interrogated by the SIT.

IMA 'shocked' over Coronil, seeks reply from Harsh Vardhan

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 22: The IMA Monday expressed shock over the "blatant lie of WHO certification" for Patanjali's Coronil tablet, which the company claims is an evidence-based medicine to fight COVID-19, and demanded an explanation from Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan in whose presence the medicine was launched.

This comes in the wake of global health body, WHO, clarifying that it has not reviewed or certified the effectiveness of any traditional medicine for the treatment of COVID-19.



Yoga guru Ramdev's Patanjali Ayurved had February 19 said that the Coronil tablet had received certification from the Ayush Ministry as a medicine supporting COVID-19 treatment as per the World Health Organization's certification scheme. However, Patanjali's managing

director Acharya Balkrishna later made a clarification about the certification through a tweet saying, "We want to clarify to avoid confusion that our WHO GMP compliant COPP certificate to Coronil is issued by DCGI, Government of India. It is clear that WHO do not approve or

disapprove any drugs. WHO works for building a better, healthier future for people all over the world (sic)."

In a statement issued on Monday, the Indian Medical Association (IMA) said, "Being Health Minister of the country, how justified is it to release such falsely fabricated unscientific product to people of the whole country... Can you clarify the time frame, time line for the so-called clinical trial of this said anti-corona product?"

"The country needs an explanation from the minister. The Indian Medical Association will also write to National Medical Commission for

seeking suo moto explanation for his blatant disrespect to the code of conduct of Medical Council of India," the IMA said.

"Indian Medical Association is shocked to note the blatant lie of WHO certification..." it said. Haridwar-based Patanjali Ayurved had also released what it claimed was research work supporting Coronil's efficacy in COVID-19 treatment.

The announcement regarding the Ayush certification for Coronil and release of a research paper calling it the "first evidence-based medicine for COVID-19 by Patanjali" was done at an event here attended

by Vardhan. In a statement, Patanjali had said: "Coronil has received the Certificate of Pharmaceutical Product (CoPP) from the Ayush section of Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation as per the WHO certification scheme."

However, WHO South-East Asia in a tweet said: "@WHO has not reviewed or certified the effectiveness of any traditional medicine for the treatment #COVID19." Patanjali had introduced ayurveda-based Coronil on June 23 last year, when the pandemic was at its peak. It had to face severe criticism as it lacked scientific evidence regarding its efficacy.

How Commissionerate Police pinned down the 'silent viper'

The team examined the old files and found that Biban was staying at Lonavala impersonating Jalandhar Swain with new Aadhaar card, voter ID card and bank account

Bhubaneswar, Feb 22: A chance visit to Choudhury central jail by the twin city Police Commissioner Sudhanshu Sarangi led to the arrest of prime accused Bibekananda Biswal alias Biban in infamous Anjana Mishra gangrape case. The idea to reopen the 1999 gangrape case struck to Commissioner's mind during a conversation with another accused Dharendra Mohanty alias Tunia in the jail. Speaking to media persons at Cuttack DCP office, Sarangi revealed that Biban's absence was a mystery for the last 22 years. Many

claimed Biban dead while some others suspected that he had left the country, he said. "However, we opened the file once again three months back to find him from his hibernation. We named the top secret mission as 'Operation Silent Viper'. We wanted to know where the viper (Biban) is lying silent. I was personally supervising the operation while only four officers including DCP Prateek Singh, Additional DCP Pramod Rath, Inspector Special Branch, Ajay Dash and IIC Barang police station were in the team which labored extremely hard and achieved what the CBI failed to do," said the police commissioner.



Police commissioner Sudhanshu Sarangi addresses the media in Cuttack. The team examined the old files and came to know that Biban has been staying at Lonavala impersonating Jalandhar Swain with

new Aadhaar card, voter ID card and bank account. Biban was working as a plumber at Aamby Valley in Pune. The team found the permanent address of Biban in the documents as Naranpur on Bhubaneswar outskirts. He was also found to be in regular touch with his family members and was sending money to his sons. He was also visiting his village Naranpur on several occasions. Later, Sarangi contacted his batch mate and friend Bipin Singh, the Commissioner of Navi Mumbai, seeking his help in arresting Biban. Subsequently, a CP team headed by the IIC of Badambadi, Rashmi Ranjan Mohapatra, left for Navi

Mumbai February 18, 2021. The Maharashtra police also created a team under DCP (CID) Praveen Kumar Patil that accompanied the CP team to Aamby Valley in Lonavala February 20. Both the teams with the help of SP (rural) Abhinav Desmukh and ASP Navneet Kanwal carried out a raid at Aamby Valley Staff accommodation and arrested Biban, who was trying to give police a slip. Commissionerate police later informed the CBI officials about the arrest of Biban. The commissioner requested the CBI authorities to pay the monetary reward announced in this regard to the officers involved in 'Operation Silent Viper'.

Health minister warns of lockdown

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 22: Health Minister Naba Kishore Das Monday said that if the threat perception from Covid-19 rises and citizens continue to ignore Covid-19 safety protocol, the state government might impose lockdown in the days to come. The health minister said, "We had fought a long war to prevent Covid-19. I want to urge the people to follow the safety protocols. If people will not abide by the rules, we will be forced to impose lockdown. Instructions have been given to officials to tighten the compliance and increase testing too."

₹389Cr spent on Covid treatment

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 22: Health Minister Naba Kishore Das Monday informed the Assembly that the state government has incurred an expenditure of ₹389 crore for providing treatment to Covid-19 patients at 32 dedicated Covid hospitals.

The minister also gave a breakup of the funds provided to each of the dedicated Covid hospitals. Das made the statement in the House after the Leader of Opposition Narasingha Mishra raised the issue Monday.

Mishra had asked about the expenditure the government has incurred in treatment, setting up of Covid hospitals and procuring equipment. The government however declined to give information on the purchase of equipment saying the process of calculating the same is underway.

The Health minister also said that no Covid hospital was set up in the state in PPP mode but agreements were made with private players for the same. In a written reply to the House, the minister said, "No Covid hospital had been established in the state in PPP mode, but 32 Covid facilities have been established by the government with the support from private partners."



As per details, Salandi Hospital in Bhubaneswar treated the maximum of 4,330 Covid patients followed by Hi Tech Medical College, Bhubaneswar (3258), Hi Tech Medical College, Rourkela (3591 patients) and KIMS Campus, Baripada (2321).

The documents as furnished by the government claimed that a mechanism was approved by the empowered group of ministers March 26, 2020 for a tripartite agreement between the state government, reputed hospital operators and corporate partners to set up exclusive Covid hospitals and MoUs were signed accordingly.

As per the list given by the minister, the state incurred an expenditure of ₹389,59,66,466 (Rs 389 crore) till date. The minister claimed that the 32 designated Covid hospitals treated a total of 47,055 persons between March 1, 2020 and Feb 11, 2021.

No Covid hospital had been established in the state in PPP mode, but 32 Covid facilities have been established by the government with the support from private partners

NABA KISHORE DAS | HEALTH MINISTER

State got ₹48.49 crore as nCoV penalties: Min

The state government Monday told the Odisha Assembly that it collected revenue of around ₹48.49 crore as fines from erring citizens who were caught flouting Covid-19 safety norms during the pandemic.

In a written statement, the state Home Minister Dibya Shankar Mishra told the House that the government took several stern steps to punish defaulters.

The minister said that between March 1, 2020 and February 11, 2021, the government has filed 24,685 cases against persons/institutions and arrested 20,693 persons. The penalties collected from them during the period went up to ₹48,49,48,370.

A close analysis of district-wise fine collection and arrests made revealed that Ganjam administration led the state with 17,055 cases registered against defaulters. It

also arrested 4,123 persons for flouting the norms. Moreover, ₹2.21-crore fine was also collected from the unruly denizens. Ganjam was followed by Jajpur which saw 712 cases and 1,414 arrests while it was able to collect fines to the tune of ₹4.3 crore.

Other districts which showed good scrutiny included Bolangir which saw filing of 407 cases and 1,884 arrests. It collected ₹52.69 lakh as fines.

Notably, the state government had amended epidemic act rules and imposed penalty for spitting in public, not wearing masks and not following social distancing during the pandemic.

TOP 5 DISTRICTS WITH MAX CASES			
DISTRICTS	CASES FILED	ARRESTS MADE	PENALTY IMPOSED
Ganjam	17,055	4,123	₹2.21 crore
Jajpur	712	1,414	₹4.3 crore
Mayurbhanj	421	3,764	₹1.6 crore
Bolangir	407	1,884	₹5.2 crore
Angul	402	57	₹36 lakh
Puri	325	324	₹20 lakh

Lift paddy from mandis, Oppn tells govt; stages walkout

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 22: Opposition BJP and Congress members in the Assembly Monday demanded lifting of paddy lying in various market yards and mandis across the state. They also staged walkout while Food Supplies & Consumer Welfare and Cooperation Minister

Ranendra Pratap Swain was making a statement in the House.

As per the announcement made by Speaker SN Patro, a two-hour long debate was conducted in the House over the matter related to paddy procurement.

BJP MLA from Sambalpur Jayanarayan Mishra said district-level procurement committees should be activated and power given to the panel to take decision on paddy procurement. "The government should either abolish the token system or the primary societies should be entrusted with the job of issuing tokens," Mishra said.

Alleging that the state government has failed to deliver its responsibility the BJP leader said in

Minister and BJD members attack Centre for not releasing the food subsidy

A record 55.97 lakh tonne paddy has been procured from 10.13 lakh farmers by Monday morning, says F&CW Minister RP Swain

the name of FAQ, the authorities are cutting down 5 to 12 kg paddy in every quintal.

Congress Legislator Party Leader Narasingha Mishra said it is the responsibility of Food Corporation of India (FCI) to procure paddy from the farmers. However, it has shifted its responsibility to the state government and allowed corruption, he said.

Stating that a registered farmer has the right to sell his/her paddy, Mishra urged the minister to assure the House that the paddy of registered farmers would be lifted.

The Congress MLA also demanded criminal action against the persons found guilty in mismanagement in paddy procurement.

"Both the state and the Central governments are responsible if farmers' paddy is not being lifted from the mandis. We are not happy with the minister's reply in the House," said Congress MLA Tara Prasad Bahinipati. Admitting that there are some is-

issues in the process of paddy procurement, senior BJD member PK Deb said, as per norms, the Centre should procure paddy from farmers and release the amount to them through concerned agency. In Odisha, the state government is procuring the paddy on behalf of FCI.

However, the FCI is not releasing the food subsidy to the state government. As a result, the state is forced to raise loan to make payment to the farmers, Deb said.

Slamming the BJP for its alleged double standard on farmers' issue, the BJD leader said, "The entire country is boiling over implementation of three farm laws by the Centre."

Minister Swain said a record 55.97 lakh tonne paddy has been procured from 10.13 lakh farmers by Monday morning. Paddy procurement will continue in the state for another 35 days. "As on date, we have procured 21 per cent more paddy as compared to last year", he added.

Swain said action has been taken against those who were allegedly involved in irregularities. He said that the proposal of the Standing Committee for the installation of CCTV is under the active consideration of the government. Some people are trying to push paddy from outside the state in the state procurement system, which will not be allowed, he added.

OSCPCR holds Sishu Sampark Yatra

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 22: The Odisha State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (OSCPCR), in collaboration with Centre for Child and Women Development (CCWD) and ActionAid, Monday reached out to several slums under BMC as part of the 'Sishu Sampark Yatra'.

OSCPCR chairperson Sandhyabati Pradhan said the Covid-19 pandemic has thrown life out of gear. "But the impact has been disproportionately felt by children from vulnerable communities. All aspects of their life—protection, nutrition and education—have taken a hit."



Radha Ballav Mutt in Puri being demolished to give way to the Srimandir Heritage Corridor, Monday. OP PHOTO

City school reopens 2 days after teacher tests +ve

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 22: Amid fear of Covid-19 resurgence, a school in the Capital city reopened Monday only two days after a teacher tested positive for the deadly virus.

Informing about the infected teacher, Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) commissioner Prem Chand Chaudhary Monday said, "A teacher was tested positive for Covid-19 in a school in Bhubaneswar following which we had closed the school for two days after consultation with the school authorities," Chaudhary said.

Briefing media persons, he said that they are in touch with the school's principal and district education officer (DEO) and that they are keeping a close watch on the at IRC Village in Nayapalli area.

He also informed that the infected teacher had come in contact with many students during classroom teaching. If anyone develops any sign of Covid-19, they will be subjected to tests.

The BMC Commissioner also said that five special squads have been formed for enforcement of Covid-19 guidelines in the Capital city.

Bagchi thrust on action plan for edu institutions

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 22: Odisha Skill Development Authority chairman and chief spokesperson, Covid-19 Subroto Bagchi said an action plan is needed on how educational institutions/organisations should combat crisis prevalent in the current scenario.

He emphasised upon 20 different strategies to manage crisis the three things required in the time of crisis—by creating caution, creating urgency and most of all creating hope.

He was speaking at the first chapter of SAI Thought Leadership organised by SAI International Education Group here, Monday.

CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before the Executive Magistrate, Sambalpur, I Subarnalata Nayak, W/o. Pradeep Kumar Nayak, R/o-At/PO. Budharaja, Fatak, Dist. Sambalpur declare that before marriage I was known as Subarnalata Dandia. But after marriage I have changed my surname from Dandia to Nayak and known as Subarnalata Nayak. That Subarnalata Nayak and Subarnalata Dandia is the same and one person.

IIT-KGP researchers turn steel plant dumpsites into greenbelt

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 22: Researchers at Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kharagpur have transformed the dumpsites of Odisha's steel plants into greenbelts using traditional Indian organic components and Japanese afforestation techniques. According to the team, a drive through the Dhenkanal region of Odisha will give one the chance to witness the vast stretches of green canopy and vegetation developed by them on what was once industrial dumpsites.

The transformation to a greenbelt is not a natural reclamation but the 'Midas touch' of the Post Mining Mine Site Restoration group of the Department of Mining Engineering

of IIT-Kharagpur through a project supported by Tata Steel BSL, according to the team that worked on the project.

The researchers afforested over 32,000 square feet in the region following a rapid forest regeneration technique by using a unique mix of the traditional resource of Panchagavya with the Miyawaki plantation technique of ecologist Akira Miyawaki from Japan.

The dumping of blast furnace slag by steel plants has been a perennial challenge in India and even in some of the developed countries in the world, said IIT-Kharagpur professor Khanindra Pathak.

"These steel slag dumps contribute to the generation of airborne particles causing air pollution



and also to groundwater and surface water contamination through different pathways. The slag-covered land is unsuitable for vegetation

"Researchers at IIT-Kharagpur have devised a bioremediation method to reduce the concentration of these polluting slags to an innocuous state. They have turned this slag suitable for plant growth by mixing it with topsoil, cow dung and other organic enhancers. Plants carefully chosen for the Miyawaki technique and 22 native species were grown on the mix with a 30-cm layer of topsoil over it after administering them with Panchagavya," he added.

According to the team, periodic administration of Panchagavya checked the problem of nutrient scarcity while mulching helped retention of water and nutrients.

"In a span of one year, we witnessed the growth of a self-sustaining mini-forest, dominated by

plants belonging to the Fabaceae and Sesbania grandiflora family. The plants with long root systems could utilize the steel slag with their roots penetrating up to a depth of 2m from the ground surface, thus reducing the effects of groundwater contamination and surface runoff of water in the monsoons," said Pathak.

The process turned an unproductive steel slag dump to a self-sustaining primary succession over it.

"Vetiver grass was used as a boundary for the plantation to check migration of nutrients. This grass, if grown over the slopes of the slag dumps, will further check the fugitive emissions and thereby reducing air pollution and erosion of slag onto adjacent habitations," he added.

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Lokayukta pulls up Jajpur Collector

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, Feb 22: The district Collector here has drawn flak from the Lokayukta following allegation of financial fraud in demarcation of the black stone quarries under Dharmasala tehsil in the district and installing boundary pillars on the land, a report said.

Justice Ajit Singh, Chairman of the Lokayukta has expressed his displeasure in this regard in the order sheet of case no-1249/2020. Justice Singh has mentioned in the order sheet that a previous order to the district Collector to file reply in the matter has not been complied with.

The district Collector has been given another chance to file his detailed reply in the matter. Any non-compliance of the order will be viewed seriously if the district Collector fails to file his reply on the matter by March 8, the date scheduled for next hearing.

Moreover, the reply filed by the Dharmasala tehsildar on the matter appears mysterious and vague. All this has been taken on record, Justice Singh has mentioned in his order.

Reports said that in its bid to check black stone theft, Dharmasala tehsil has reportedly spend around ₹1, 80, 180 towards installation of pillars in demarcated quarries and on its transportation. A human rights activist Sarbeshwar Behura alleging severe irregularities in the work filed a case before the Lokayukta November 2, 2020. The Lokayukta



admitted the petition for hearing and directed Jajpur Collector, Sub-collector and Dharmasala tehsildar to file their reply.

The Dharmasala tehsildar in his reply filed February 10, 2020 said that the proprietor of a private firm Gayatri Marbles at Jaraka was assigned the task of installing pillars on the demarcated quarries in 2018. The cost incurred towards installation of pillars was to him in a cheque November 19, 2018.

However, the concerned revenue inspector and revenue supervisor have stated in their probe reports that the pillars have been destroyed. The Lokayukta has termed the report as mysterious.

MLAs Bishnu Charan Sethi, Sukant Nayak, Mukesh Mahaling and Mohan Charan Majhi had brought an adjournment motion in the state Assembly questioning

when the state government will take on the revenue loss arising out of illegal mining of minor minerals from Dankari hill in Jajpur district, November 20, 2019.

The state Revenue minister Sudam Marandi submitted a nine-point answer in reply to the motion in the Assembly. The minister replied that a task force has been formed at district, sub-division, and tehsil levels to check illegal miners and transporters of minor minerals. Penalty to the extent of ₹5 lakh would be collected from them, it was said. Moreover, with the approval of Home Ministry a section of APR police force has been deployed in eight sensitive tehsils and two sub-divisions of eight districts.

Moreover, a budget worth ₹5 crore in 2018-19 and ₹4.63 crore in 2019-20 was approved and released to all dis-

In its bid to check black stone theft, Dharmasala tehsil has spent around ₹1,80,180 towards installation of pillars in demarcated quarries and on its transportation

A human rights activist Sarbeshwar Behura, alleging severe irregularities in the work, filed a case before the Lokayukta November 2, 2020

The Lokayukta admitted the petition for hearing and had directed Jajpur Collector, sub-collector and Dharmasala tehsildar to file their reply

trict Collectors which will be utilised in checking illegal mining. The Steel and Mines department has sanctioned ₹1.86 crore for installation of pillars in the quarries. Plans are also afoot to open directorate of minor minerals in the state, the minister had said. However, none of the steps has been implemented in quarries in Jajpur district, a report said.

Dharmasala tehsildar Prasant Samantray said a reply has been filed before the Lokayukta while necessary steps will be taken on his further order.

Collector Chakraborti Singh Rathore said he is unaware about installation of pillars and has not received any notice from the Lokayukta. He refused to comment "without having any information on the issue."

KALAMANDIR GARNERS LOVE FROM ONE AND ALL

RAJINDER SINGH

Kalamandir is a household brand in Odisha that has garnered love from all across the state. Since its first store in 1977 till date, the brand has never failed to provide best of quality products and services. Despite increasing competition, the family fashion store is committed to satisfying its customers. During an interaction with Orissa POST, Managing Partner of Kalamandir, Rajinder Singh shared the company's journey.



How did Kalamandir become the state's most-loved fashion destination?

With its humble beginning 40 years back, it has now become the favorite fashion destination for most households. We have received maximum affection, support, and trust of our customers spread all over Odisha, particularly Bhubaneswar. We garnered their love because we believe in providing our customers with the finest collections of garments for gents, ladies and children beside an excellent range of sarees and lehngas. Another reason for success is our reasonable price policy.

September. However, with the blessings of Lord Jagannath, sales have substantially improved from the month of October. Now our current sales figures are getting closer to the pre-Covid levels.

What's your opinion on the Budget?

Under difficult circumstances, the Union Finance Minister presented a very good, bold and growth oriented Budget. I believe this Budget will eventually help most seg-

How was the business during Covid-19?

We went through a very difficult situation during the lockdown period. Showrooms were closed from March 15 to May end. After reopening, sales were down by 25-30 per cent between June and



ments of business to revive. I believe it will enhance the confidence of the people and they will start spending more which will lead to growth of businesses.

FUEL ANGER



Members of All India Democratic Women's Association, led by their national secretary Tapasi Praharaj, stage a demonstration over rising fuel prices in Berhampur

Maiden test of VL-SRSAM successful



POST NEWS NETWORK

Balasure, Feb 22: The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) successfully test fired the Vertically Launched-Short Range Surface to Air Missile (VL-SRSAM) from the Launch Pad No-3 of Integrated Test Range (ITR), Chandipur, off the state coast Monday.

The test was carried at 1:28 pm. The indigenously developed VL-SRSAM is an advanced air defense system. The canister-based weapon system can identify, track, engage and destroy its target with high kill probability. It has a strike range of about 40 km. The defense experts are analysing the radar footage to study.

It is observed that the missile will give teeth to the Indian Army. Prior to the test, as a part of the safety measures, about 8,000 people residing within 2.5 kilometre radius of the Launch Pad No-3 were evacuated to temporary shelter homes by 9am.

After Kotia & Kashinagar, AP sets eyes on Gunupur

THE ANDHRA PRADESH ADMINISTRATION WAS FOUND CONSTRUCTING A ROAD AT ERIDI GHAT TO MUNIMKHOL

POST NEWS NETWORK

Gunupur, Feb 22: The government in Andhra Pradesh is trying to seize one after another village in the state after being able to conduct panchayat elections in Kotia of Koraput district.



A team of senior officials led by sub-collector Sonal Jena visit Eridi ghat, about three km from Kataguda in Marama panchayat of Gunpur, and take stock of the situation



Recently, the AP administration tried to grab a road in Badalukuti village under Bairagihalu panchayat of Rayagada block but its efforts were frustrated after the administration intervened.

Similar efforts by the neighbouring state have also been witnessed in this block where the former is trying to construct a road in the area. The matter came to fore a team of senior officials led by sub-collector Sonal Jena visited Eridi ghat, about three km from Kataguda

village under Marama panchayat of Gunpur block and took stock of a road construction work by the government of the neighbouring state. The Andhra Pradesh administration was reportedly found constructing a road at Eridi ghat to Munimkhol in the state.

BDO Shantiprabha Pradhan and tehsildar (in-charge) Ferdinand Ekka accompanied the sub-collector on the visit. During the probe, the Revenue officials were found unaware about

the jurisdiction of the area lying in which state. Later, the forest officials visited the area Sunday and reviewed the situation.

Friday, Andhra Pradesh was carrying out concrete road laying work at Kashinagar in Gajapati. The illegal road laying work was objected by the district administration on the spot. The administration also seized several bags of cement, construction materials and mixer machines being used at the site, an administrative official of the district informed.

Agitating farmers in Padmapur shut down government offices



POST NEWS NETWORK

Padmapur, Feb 22: Farmers here in Bargarh district Monday intensified their agitation against the paddy procurement centres which have affected the sale of their produce. The agitation entered its 12th day Monday.

The agitating farmers have prevented the Sub-Collector and tehsildar offices for carrying out their normal functions. However Monday, they locked all other government offices in Padmapur. Among them were the block, treasury, horticulture and assistant registrar of co-operative societies' office.

According to the farmers, three months have passed since the beginning of paddy procurement in Bargarh district. Even as their paddies are still lying unsold, the paddy procurement centres have been closed. On the other hand, the period of the tokens given to the farm-

Farmers say three months have passed since the beginning of paddy procurement in Bargarh district

Even as their paddy is lying unsold, the paddy procurement centres have been closed

ers has also expired, causing a great deal of mental pressure to them. Over 2,47,000 quintals of paddy are still lying unsold in different centres. And the farmers are undergoing a lot of hardship while guarding them.

Demanding reopening of the centres, the agitating farmers staged a road block at Karsingha Chowk here. The road block was still continuing at the time of filing this report. Hundreds of farmers have joined in the agitation going on under the banner of Rajbodasambar Krushak Sangathan.

FATHER-SON DUO HELD FOR JOB FRAUD IN ANGUL

POST NEWS NETWORK

Angul, Feb 22: In a crackdown, police arrested a man named Ghanashyam Mishra and his son of Similipada area in Angul district Monday for allegedly duping a local youth on the pretext of giving him a job at a multinational company.

According to sources, the accused had duped Pranabandhu Jena of Benagadia area in Angul district of ₹4.50 lakh on promise of helping him to fetch a lucrative job. The accused duo had accepted the money around three years ago and failed to keep their words.

Subsequently, the victim demanded his money back as he got frustrated over the approach of the father and son duo. The accused had earlier paid back ₹80,000 to Pranabandhu in three installments.

However, the duo played mischief with Pranabandhu and did not pay the remaining amount back to him. When the youth approached them for refund of his money, they misbehaved with him. Pranabandhu lodged an FIR with local police leading to the arrest.

"We have received complaint from one person based on which we have registered a case at Colliery Police station and arrested the accused. We will move court seeking their remand for further probe," SP Jagmohan Meena said.

KARLAPAT LIVESTOCK INSPECTOR SUSPENDED

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhawanipatna, Feb 22: The livestock inspector of Karlapat Wildlife Sanctuary in Kalahandi was placed under suspension Monday by the Chief District Veterinary Officer (CDVO) for dereliction of duty.

According to sources, the official Ganesh Pujari allegedly failed to discharge his duty during vaccination of cattle in nearby villages of the sanctuary. The vaccination drive was carried out following consecutive deaths of



seven elephants in the sanctuary owing to hemorrhagic septicemia. Additional Director of state Fisheries and Animal Resources Development (FARD) department Pratap Keshari Khamari informed. "He (Pujari) had not maintained

He (Pujari) hadn't maintained records of vaccination of cattle properly as per guidelines. He has been suspended from the services in order to set an example for others

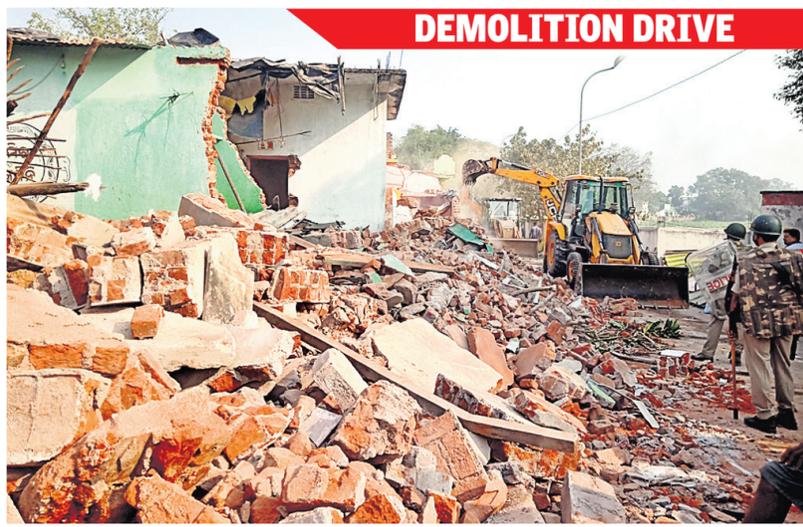
PRATAP KESHARI KHAMARI | ADDITIONAL DIRECTOR, FARD DEPT

records of vaccination of cattle properly as per guidelines. He has been suspended from the services

in order to set an example for others," Khamari expressed.

Notably, the Forest Department took measures including disinfection of water bodies, vaccination and sanitisation works in order to prevent any probable spread of the deadly bacteria in the region.

A three-member Central team had visited the sanctuary to find out the cause of jumbo deaths. The team collected samples and sent them to the Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI), Bareilly for testing.



A demolition drive underway in Bolangir, Monday

DEMOLITION DRIVE

Each victory gained over oneself means new strength to gain more victories.

SRI AUROBINDO



Political Fuel

This government, claiming to be the strongest ever, now seems to be lurching from one crisis to another and it seeks remedies not by looking within itself but by blaming everyone else. The blame game happening now, in the seventh straight year of being in government, does not seem to wash any more with citizens who were earlier vehement supporters of the ruling political party, the BJP.

The government is still trying the same tactic of Congress-bashing when the runaway fuel prices are soaring record high, burning holes in the pockets of the common man. These continuous increases have taken place in spite of the international prices of crude having been on the lower side. Now, however, the world seems to be steadily revving up, indicating a possible upward spurt in global demand for petroleum. The pandemic had forced a dull season for crude. Market for petroleum had drastically shrunk but things are changing and once this new situation entrenches itself strongly in the normal scenario, the demand for energy could shoot up. Should that happen then barrel prices would also go up.

Ironically, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman now expects the state governments to bail her out by sharing with the Centre the burden of its failure to check fuel prices. It was she who has levied cess on fuel on the ostensible plea of improving agriculture infrastructure. The real purpose of the measure is to deny the states their share of tax on fuel and corner the money accruing from cess for defraying Central expenditure.

Many economists have written articles reminding the Centre of the rationale behind the fuel cess. Since cess is not given back to the states, the Centre is deducting a major amount under that head. In taxes, states get back 42 per cent as devolution and hence the Centre is acquiring a major portion as fuel cess instead of tax.

When the NDA came to power in 2014 the total aggregate cess was eight per cent of gross tax collections and now it has increased to 14.5 per cent. That is why the CAG has questioned the central government on why they are increasing cess and not tax. This, many observe, is an attack on the federal structure of the country.

The Union Finance Minister is smart to go on the defensive and admit that the common man would like only to see the Centre reduce the fuel prices and won't listen to any arguments of decrease of international crude production or the pricing matrix. The fact remains that people owning personal vehicles are already hit hard, while the continuing hike in the fuel prices will have cascading effects on almost all items of daily consumption due to the rise in transportation costs.

The Prime Minister's attempt to deflect criticism by squarely blaming previous Congress-led governments' huge oil import bills sounds as poor politics and poorer economics. The Congress may not be wrong when the party's interim president charged that the NDA has been in government for seven long years which is time enough to fix the problems and formulate its own fuel policies. It, of course, is time the government stops passing the buck to its predecessors and especially the Nehruvian economic model.

The PM recently said the middle class is being burdened because India follows a mechanism where it imports almost 85 per cent of its fuel needs. He also shared a plan about reducing India's import dependency. But, that is too futuristic. People are paying today and living now and so one hears the desperate clamour for immediate course correction. The need of the hour is not government publicity patting its own back, but solid, tangible actions and policy initiatives exclusively aimed at benefitting the common man.

WISDOM CORNER

- The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing. **EDMUND BURKE**
- Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try Again. Fail again. Fail better. **SAMUEL BECKETT**
- Knowing your own darkness is the best method for dealing with the darkness of other people. **CARL JUNG**

WORDSWORTH

Mansuetude

The word — meaning gentleness or mildness — comes from Latin mansuetus, tamed or made gentle. It contains manus, hand (from which English got manure, manufacture, command, manual and other words), and suetus, accustomed (which is from the verb suescere, the source of a few words, of which the best known is desuetude). The idea behind mansuetus is that if an animal has become accustomed to the hand, it has been tamed. An example of the English word appears in The Letter of Marque by Patrick O'Brian, in which Dr Stephen Maturin is extolling the virtues of laudanum: "Presently, with the blessing, you will see Padeen's face return to its usual benevolent mansuetude; and a few minutes later you will see him glide insensibly to the verge of an opiate coma." This is a more recent example: While her voice may have an air of mansuetude, she proved that she could easily cut above the din of the boys in her band (Boston Globe, 24 Jun. 2004). The word is not entirely obsolete, though it is rare to the point of being marked as archaic in most dictionaries and is definitely literary even when it does appear. To use it may be to gratify the ego of the writer rather than communicate with the reader.

Mari-fuel

So far as online records show, this word burst upon the world for the first time on 17 December 2008, in a press release announcing that European Union funding of €6m (£5m or \$8.5m) had been won for the BioMara project. This is a cross-border project involving researchers from Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The aim is to find ways to convert seaweeds and marine algae into fuels. One hope is that it will help rural communities in these countries, who may be able to use fast-growing seaweeds such as kelp to make a locally produced and cheap fuel that won't take up valuable agricultural land. Mari-fuel is an obvious parallel to the better-known agri-fuel, for fuels derived from agricultural products. The development of mari-fuels could have a lasting impact on remote and rural communities by providing locally produced, relatively cheap, low impact fuel as well as serving the local public transport infrastructure (Daily Telegraph, 18 Dec. 2008). Motorists may soon be driving cars powered by kelp and algae after scientists in Scotland and Ireland won European funding today for a new research project to create "mari-fuels" — the marine equivalent to plant-based biofuels (Guardian, 18 Dec. 2008).

LOL

How you made money

A young man asked an old rich man how he made his money. The old guy said, "Well, son, it was 1932. The depth of the Great Depression. I was down to my last nickel." "I invested that nickel in an apple. I spent the entire day polishing the apple and, at the end of the day, I sold the apple for ten cents. The next morning, I invested those ten cents in

two apples. I spent the entire day polishing them and sold them at 5:00 pm for 20 cents. I continued this system for a month, by the end of which I'd accumulated a fortune of \$1.37." "And that's how you built an empire?" the boy asked. "Heavens, no!" the man replied. "Then my wife's father died and left us two million dollars."



PRIVATISATION NO SOLUTION

FOCUS BANKING

The country is in a quandary about the privatisation of public sector banks. Amendments to the Banking Companies (Acquisition and Transfer of Undertakings) 1970 and 1980 are on the cards. The two laws led to bank nationalisation in two phases.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has announced privatisation of PSBs as part of investment drive to garner ₹1.75 lakh crore, in reality not a very large sum. That has raised another question whether for such small gains, the nation should sell the family silver. Or why should it go back to 1969 when these were taken over? The banks were in the hands of large houses. They have been defying regulations and many unsavoury practices were in use, including taking out funds risking the banks and quietly refunding causing immense interest and operation cost losses. This apart, the small lenders had little space in the controlled practices. Some banks were off and on in the news of facing liquidation throughout the 1960s.

The takeover was then considered a bold step as now the announcement of selling off is being projected as a bold decision. The Modi government is in a financial crisis and wants the nation to steer out of it. All of it though is not the doing of this government. The bank crisis has built up with the changes in Basel recapitalisation norms as well as the growing NPAs.

As of March 31, 2010, gross PSB NPAs were ₹8.06 lakh crore. A 2020 JC Review study by four academicians — Sunita Sharma, Rajesh Kothari, DS Rathore and Jagdish Prasad — says that the private sector banks were not doing well post 2012 (as also were many PSBs) and the NPAs have been growing. They say that the economic performance had not declined in 2012-2019 but sharp rise in NPAs raise questions on transparency in showing correct picture of their health.



Banks in general have witnessed a decline in profitability during the last about eight years. That raises a question whether the PSBs should be singled out in a choppy market particularly when some private sector banks indulged in major malpractices

The banks, they note had been concealing facts particularly about high value accounts, which in their opinion, had come under NPA even before 2010-13. "Increasing NPAs suggest that high number of credit defaults affect profitability, liquidity and solvency positions of (all) banks," they say.

They found Axis Bank profitability since 2017 has continuously been falling due to rise in NPAs till partly checked in 2019. Similarly, ICICI Bank NPAs continuously increased since 2015 and reached a peak of 8.85 per cent in 2018. Though in 2019 it reduced to 6.7 per cent the net profit further came down due to higher provisioning.

Banks in general have witnessed a decline in profitability during the last about eight years. That raises a question whether the PSBs should be singled out in a choppy market particularly when some private sector banks indulged in major malpractices. Does it mean that privatisation is not a panacea? This is a critical question that the government and the society need to have a review. Privatisation

cannot be a mantra. It seems the problems lie in practices and those in the country need severe corrections.

The study is almost in tune with the 2018 report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance where it observed that the capacity to lend has been severely affected due to NPAs. It says, "A lot of the loans currently classified as NPAs originated in mid-2000s, at a time when the economy was booming and business outlook was very positive. Large corporations were granted loans for projects based on extrapolation of their recent growth and performance. With loans being available more easily than before, corporations grew highly leveraged, implying that most financing was through external borrowings rather than internal promoter equity. But as economic growth stagnated following the global financial crisis of 2008, the repayment capability of these corporations decreased. This contributed to what is now known as India's Twin Balance Sheet problem, wherein both the banking sector (that gives loans) and the cor-

porate sector (that takes and has to repay these loans) have come under financial stress."

So, the prescription of privatising PSBs needs a review and a new approach to curing the disease than shifting it from one clinic to another. Poor regulatory frameworks and related problems are some of the pitfalls. Additionally profit-centric and shareholder wealth maximising monopolies by banks will not cater to the needy individuals.

The government would also be losing out on potential dividends that give significant budgetary support. In 2014, ₹88,188 crore was paid by PSEs, including ₹43,996 crore from PSBs. Since, however, the PSB dividend contribution has been dwindling though RBI has paid about ₹2 lakh crore during the past two years.

A problem the government faces is of continuous recapitalisation — pumping in funds as per Basel norms. This is natural if the profitability of banks comes down. But so it has happened to private banks as well. It means there is a basic flaw in the banking operations. The PSB losses mounted to ₹85,000 crore in FY2018 and came down to ₹50,000 crore in 2019.

Suggesting a solution is not easy. The deposits with PSBs are rising. In FY2018, it rose to ₹128 lakh crore from ₹117 lakh crore. Savings bank deposits also rose by ₹4 lakh crore between FY2018 and FY2019 from ₹35.9 lakh crore to ₹39.1 lakh crore.

But liabilities are rising due to defaults, increase in operational costs of larger low-quality accounts like Jandhan, digital and other populist operations.

The faults are for extra-banking causes. Privatisation is not likely to solve these. Even in their dwindling health, the PSBs have enormous wealth and before these are sold to a select group of eager large corporate buyers, the country needs to wait and reconsider massive revamping of the system and through that how to strengthen the economy.

SPECTRUM NATION

Farmers' protest holds key to India's future



Jagdish Rattanani

THE TRIUMPH OF THE PROTESTERS IN SETTING THE AGENDA AND PUSHING THEIR POINT AT LEAST IN THE IMMEDIATE IS EVIDENT

From all accounts, the Prime Minister and his team have been unable thus far to meet the challenge posed by the clean and clear opposition to the farm laws from ordinary farmers and their quickly emerging and evolving leadership. Unlike the establishment, the farmers do not have access to unlimited resources, superior organisation skills or communications reach of officialdom. Yet, they have been able to present their case in a language and with stories that hit back hard at the makers of these laws, ridiculing in particular the Prime Minister and his party, but also raising serious issues that have got many in India rethinking the merits of not only these laws but a lot else about the Modi style and manner of working.

So much has been written about the so-called legendary communication skills of the Prime Minister, yet he pales in front of the roaring rhetoric and upbeat imagery emerging from protest camps that are alive with ideas and imagination. Irrespective of the merits or demerits of the case, or the eventual outcome of the protests, the triumph of the protesters in setting the agenda and pushing their point at least in the immediate is evident. Police has been used to try and tame the protests and charges of sedition are being thrown around

in attempts to use administrative guile and power to secure political process. As Yogendra Yadav put it: "The government is adopting all the repressive measures, mischief and manipulation including arrests, detentions and registration of cases against the protesters. The Singhu border has been fortified and appears to be an international border."

Yet, the agitation has grown and sustained over a long enough period of time to become the most potent and powerful challenge to the leadership of Modi and his brute majority in Parliament. Protests have now continued for over 100 days, have led to the loss of several lives from among the protesters and this has only increased the resolve of the farmers and got more people and groups over to their side as newer alliances are tested and built.

This celebrates the idea of active resistance against an overbearing authority, particularly in these times when the brute majority is prone to excesses and does not hesitate to push any and every button to make its point and get its way. At another level, we can despair at the ease with which this force is being used and the lack of any pushback from among our institutions or even within the BJP that is known to talk so much about inner party democracy. The BJP is now and has been for

some time almost a one-man party, or one-and-a-half man party (to count both the Prime Minister and his Home minister) that has no dissent in its ranks. They all speak in one voice.

The latest was over the weekend, which offered dramatic contrasts at play in an India that is increasingly being divided at multiple levels. Barnala in Punjab witnessed the biggest rally yet against the farm laws with some dramatic pictures indicating the size of the protest. In New Delhi, a meeting of the newly-appointed national office bearers of the BJP thanked the Prime Minister for the farm reforms and also for steering the nation successfully in the midst of a pandemic. The farmers cheered and agreed to intensify their protests. The BJP behind closed doors apparently clapped and patted itself. It was a picture of the Orwellian classic 'Animal Farm' at work.

The power centres of New Delhi are today occupied by a new Lutyens' class that appears wedded to the idea of breaking India and rebuilding it in a mould that is steeped in a convoluted ideology, a misunderstood sense of India's past and its glory and a vision that excels in bulk buying of prejudice. These shape today's idea of performance and governance, and its one big idea is showmanship for

the sake of showmanship. Modi shaped this idea of India even before 2014 when he said at a meeting in Mumbai that India must have the bullet train not because people will travel in it but because we can show the world what a great power we are. To boot, he added, China does it, too. They show us their Shanghai and not the rest of China, don't they?

A world view arising from these ways of thinking was always going to be disastrous. We are seeing only bits and parts of this at work. When blind ideology of the extremes, be it Left or Right, socialism or capitalism, license Raj or free markets, becomes an end in itself, disconnected from the needs and mood of our times and the reality on the ground, policy gets reduced to pushing propaganda. Views are turned to extreme. Positions get rigid. Divisions are created. Breakdowns will follow.

We don't know where the farmers' agitation will take us. The government is unlikely to give in. The farmers are standing their ground. In this confrontation, a lot else that will have a longer-term impact on the future of India is at stake and will be decided.

The writer is a journalist and a faculty member at Bhavan's SPJIMR. Views are personal.

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Battling depression

Sir, Discussion on some matters related to health is still considered a taboo in India. Nevertheless when their "idols" come out with their agonies of the past or present, people are inspired to follow suit. Having said that, it is not easy for celebrities themselves to shed their inhibitions to detail the sickening stint of theirs with health disorders like depression. Indian cricket captain Virat Kohli is the latest addition to a reasonably long list of celebrities who did not care about their 'image' to talk about mental health disorders. Kohli said he was battling depression in 2014 during the England tour and that was a transient phase in his life. Approximately, five crore Indians suffer from depression, and thirty six percent of the population has symptoms of depression at any point in time. When a famous personality like Kohli openly announces his past battle with depression, it is significant on many counts. Since cricket connoisseurs adore cricketers and consider them as 'gods', it helps them to know that mental problems are not confined to the common man alone. The Indian skipper has said the inability to "talk" to people around him compounded his problem. Therefore, the basic tenet of management of depression — pulling the patients out of self-created shells — should dawn upon every stakeholder. Admittedly, Kohli was down in 2014. But following that lean patch, he has proved why he is a batting maestro. Any disorder or disease is totally curable, and both anxiety and depression are no exceptions. So, in more ways than one, Kohli has sent a strong message to the society on issues that haunt the mind.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

Conserve nature

Sir, It is welcome to note that the Himachal Pradesh government is involving school students in planting saplings and ensuring their survival to build awareness. The Forest Department has set up the 'Vidarthi Van Mitra Yojana' under which eco clubs have been set up in schools to identify open or degraded forest areas for carrying out a plantation of indigenous species. The students and school administration play a vital role in identifying the site for the plantation of saplings. The school administration prepares a micro plan for the plantation, and the Divisional Forest Officer gives approval to it. The students are not only responsible for the plantation of saplings, but also maintain the area on a long-term basis. This is a commendable move.

Amit Singh Kushwaha, SATNA (MP)

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

Readers of Orissa POST are most welcome to contribute letters (200 words), articles and columns (between 750-1250 words). Contributors are requested to send their contact numbers and full postal address/email ID. They may also send in their valuable comments, opinion and suggestions, preferably by email, to: edit@orissapost.com

OrissaPOST

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Under fire from Oppn, Kerala govt to scrap MoU with US firm

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram, Feb 22: The Kerala government Monday decided to cancel the controversial MoU signed between US-based EMCC International and the Kerala Shipping and Inland Navigation Corporation, against which the Opposition has levelled serious charges, drawing a strong reaction from EMCC.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan directed the officials concerned to cancel the deal and probe the circumstances under which such an MoU was signed, government sources told PTI.

The step was taken reportedly to avoid further controversies, with the opposition levelling fresh charges and bringing out what they term as 'evidence' almost every day.

Meanwhile, EMCC International India Private Limited president Shiju Varghese came out against the cancellation of the agreement.

"On what basis is the government cancelling the MoU? We are

'FISHING' IN TROUBLED WATERS



KSINC recently inked a Rs 2,950 crore pact to build 400 deep sea fishing trawlers and new harbours and for the port development activities

Opposition leader Ramesh Chennithala had alleged that this particular MoU was part of a ₹5,000 crore mammoth project promoting deep sea fishing in the state waters

IT WAS DECIDED TO CANCEL THE MOU TO AVOID FURTHER CONTROVERSIES, WITH THE OPPOSITION LEVELLING FRESH CHARGES AND BRINGING OUT WHAT THEY TERM AS 'EVIDENCE' ALMOST EVERY DAY

not any monopoly who are coming to plunder the fish stock of the state. Why did the Fisheries Minister not tell us prior if the project is against the state's Fisheries Policy?" he told a television channel.

KSINC Managing Director N Prasanth and Shiju Varghese recently inked a Rs 2,950 crore pact to build 400 deep sea fishing trawlers and new harbours and for the port development activities.

However, Opposition leader Ramesh Chennithala had alleged that this particular MoU was part

of a Rs 5,000 crore mammoth project promoting deep sea fishing in the state waters.

It was against the proclaimed Fisheries' Policy of the state and would adversely affect the interests of lakhs of fishermen, he alleged. Vijayan had Saturday dismissed the charge that the government entered into an agreement for the deep sea fishing contract with the US-based firm, saying no foreign company would be allowed to engage in deep sea trawling in the state's waters.

Rahul takes dig at PM for ridiculing NREGA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Wayanad, Feb 22: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi Monday said Narendra Modi, who "ridiculed" MGNREGA when he took over as Prime Minister in 2014, was "forced to accept" the fact that the ambitious rural job scheme brought in by the previous UPA government played the role of "saviour" of people of the country during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Inaugurating a Kudumbasree Sangamam at Poothadi Grama Panchayat in his constituency here, the Congress leader said the Congress works for the empowerment of the poor and alleged that the idea of the ruling BJP was to empower the most powerful.

"When Modi became Prime Minister, in the Parliament House, in front of all of us, he ridiculed MGNREGA. He said MGNREGA was an insult to the Indian people," Gandhi alleged, as he began his two-day visit to his constituency in poll-bound Kerala.

He said the Prime Minister was forced to increase the work and money of the scheme during the spread of coronavirus in the country. "And he was forced to accept



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi takes out a tractor rally from Muttill to Kalpetta in Wayanad district in Kerala, Monday. PTI PHOTO

during COVID-19 that only MGNREGA played the role of saviour of our people," Gandhi said.

He noted that the demand for MGNREGA, which provides social protection for the most vulnerable people living in rural India by guaranteeing wage employment opportunities, "skyrocketed" during COVID.

The Wayanad MP said both SHGs and the MGNREGA were

brought in by the UPA government not as a "gift" but as "tools for empowerment for making our people stronger."

He said when the MGNREGA was brought in to provide at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work, lots of people questioned it asking why we are spoiling our people by giving charity.

WHEN MODI BECAME PRIME MINISTER, IN THE PARLIAMENT HOUSE, IN FRONT OF ALL OF US, HE RIDICULED MGNREGA. HE SAID MGNREGA WAS AN INSULT TO THE INDIAN PEOPLE... AND HE WAS FORCED TO ACCEPT DURING COVID-19 THAT ONLY MGNREGA PLAYED THE ROLE OF SAVIOUR OF OUR PEOPLE

RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

Thermal screening for people coming to MP from Maha

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhopal, Feb 22: With coronavirus cases showing an upward trend in Maharashtra, people coming to Madhya Pradesh from the neighbouring state will be subjected to thermal screening, government officials said Monday.

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan issued directives in this regard while reviewing the coronavirus situation in Madhya Pradesh at a meeting in the state secretariat here.

"Start health examination of persons coming in Madhya Pradesh through districts bordering Maharashtra," Chouhan told officials at the meeting.

After the Chief Minister's order, the Home Department issued directives for authorities of districts bordering Maharashtra.

Madhya Pradesh, too, is witnessing a steady rise in new COVID-19 cases in the last few days.

One of the directives asked district collectors to ensure temperature-based screening of people coming from Maharashtra, where 6,971 new coronavirus cases were recorded Sunday, the highest single-day count in nearly four months.

Thermal screening involves checking the body temperature of a person to ascertain if he/she has symptoms of viral infections.

The Home Department asked districts bordering Maharashtra to hold meeting of their crisis management group Tuesday and take appropriate decisions in view of the



After registering a drop in COVID-19 cases for some weeks, the viral disease is again showing an upward trend in Madhya Pradesh, especially in its industrial hub of Indore

prevailing coronavirus situation.

It said a large number of devotees from Maharashtra visit fairs in the central state organised on the occasion of Mahashivratri (which falls on March 11 this year).

Hence, the district-based crisis management groups should dis-

cuss essential measures during such religious fairs, the department said.

The department asked the district authorities to take action against those not wearing face masks and violating social distancing norms.

Earlier at the meeting, the CM said government staff should start an immediate campaign to create awareness about COVID-19 in rural areas of districts bordering Maharashtra, the officials said.

Chouhan directed the officials to ensure mask mandate is strictly implemented in Indore and Bhopal, the districts affected the most by COVID-19 in Madhya Pradesh, they said.

After registering a drop in COVID-19 cases for some weeks, the viral

disease is again showing an upward trend in Madhya Pradesh, especially its industrial hub Indore, with health experts blaming people for lowering their guard against the pandemic.

Since the past one week, more than 200 COVID-19 cases are being reported daily in MP, prompting the state government to send some samples of patients to labs in Delhi and Pune to check whether a new variant of the virus has found its way into the state, a government official said.

In September 2020, Madhya Pradesh witnessed a daily count of more than 2,000 cases for 10 consecutive days, but the graph started going down by the year-end.

Earlier this month, the daily COVID-19 cases were below 200 in the state, but crossed the mark February 14. Till Sunday evening, the state had reported a total of 2,59,427 COVID-19 cases and 3,854 deaths due to the disease.

Sunday, All India Institute of Medical Science (AIIMS), Bhopal, Director Dr Sarman Singh told PTI that the cases were rising as MP shares borders with Maharashtra, which has been badly hit by the pandemic. Besides, people have become complacent against the pandemic, he said. Maharashtra has been reporting a spike in new COVID-19 cases in the last one week.

On Sunday, the state recorded more than 6,000 for the third consecutive day. The western state had recorded over 6,000 cases after a gap of three months Friday.

Fuel price: PIL in MP High Court claims discrepancy in ethanol tax

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jabalpur, Feb 22: A Public Interest Litigation was filed in the Madhya Pradesh High Court Monday seeking reduction in fuel prices, with the petitioner claiming that consumers have to pay high levies for mixing of ethanol in petrol and diesel.

Petitioner Manish Sharma, co-ordinator of NGO Nagrik Upphokta Margdarshak Manch, told PTI tax on ethanol was 5 to 7 per cent but the levy charged from consumers is as high as 25 to 35 per cent per litre of petrol and diesel, which means the buyer ends up paying Rs 4 to Rs 5 extra as tax.

Oil companies blend 6 to 7 per cent of ethanol in petrol and diesel per litre under the National Policy on Biofuels, he said, adding that fuel pumps do not mention the ethanol details in the purchase bill.

He said he had issued legal notices to the Union Minister of



Petroleum and Natural Gas and oil companies to seek information on the policy under which consumers were taxed for ethanol blended in fuel but only one firm responded, after which it was decided that a PIL be filed in HC.

Additive-mixed petrol is retailing at over Rs 102 per litre in Bhopal while the cost of normal petrol and diesel is Rs 98 and Rs 89 respectively.

Amid pressure to check the fuel price rise, oil marketing companies on Monday decided to keep petrol and diesel prices unchanged Monday for the second consecutive day. Across the country as well

the petrol and diesel price remained stable after rising for 12 consecutive days till Saturday. The increase in the previous weeks has taken petrol to cross historic high levels of Rs 100 a litre in several cities across the country. The petrol and diesel prices have increased 24 times in 2021 with the two auto fuels increasing by Rs 6.87 and Rs 7.10 per litre respectively so far this year. Oil companies executives said that petrol and diesel prices may increase further in coming days as retail prices may have to be balanced in line with global developments to prevent OMCs from making losses on sale of auto fuels.

MP MINISTER SITS ON 50-FEET SWING TO GET MOBILE SIGNAL



Many villagers are coming to me with the problems that they face every day. But owing to a bad mobile network, I wasn't able to help them. So, to get a better mobile connectivity, I am sitting on a 50-feet high swing in order to speak to the officers and solve their problems

BRAJENDRA SINGH YADAV | MINISTER

Screenshot of a viral video shows Minister Brajendra Singh Yadav (L) talking over mobile phone atop the swing ride.

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Ashoknagar, Feb 22: Even as most regions of the country have been connected with telecom networks, there are still some areas where one doesn't get a mobile signal.

One such area is the Sural village in Madhya Pradesh's Ashoknagar district.

Madhya Pradesh's minister of state for health and public health engineering Brajendra Singh Yadav needs to climb up on a 50-foot hammock

whenever he wants to talk to officers and fellow ministers.

Yadav is in Sural village of Ashoknagar district these days, participating in a religious ceremony and is committed to spend the next few days here.

People are sharing their problems with him but the minister isn't able to convey the same to the officers.

Since there is a village fair going on, Yadav thought of putting up a hammock on a 50-foot swing bor-

rowed from the fair. He climbs up on the swing at a height of 50 feet and gets the mobile signal easily. His images and videos have gone viral on social media.

Yadav told journalists: "Many villagers are coming to me with the problems that they face every day. But owing to a bad mobile network, I wasn't able to help them. So, to get a better mobile connectivity, I am sitting on a 50-feet high swing in order to speak to the officers and solve their problems."

Phone No. 06621-241026(O)/241079(F) Fax No. 06621-241026/240956 e-mail: ewrws_bj@ori.nic.in; ewrwsb2009@gmail.com

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, RWS&S DIVISION, BHANJANAGAR-761126

1st Corrigendum to Bid Identification No. E.E. RWS&S 60 of 2020-21

1. The class of Contractor in Sl. No. 7 & 8 may be treated as B & A instead of C & B. All other terms and conditions remain unaltered.

Sd./- Executive Engineer, OIPR-25021/11/0042/2021 RWS&S Division, Bhanjanagar

INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB) NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH E-PROCUREMENT

IDENTIFICATION NO: RWS&S DIVN., PURI - 53 OF 2020-21

Ph. (06752) 251276 Fax - (06752) 251276 E-mail - eerws_puri@nic.in

No. O-1128:- The Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Puri on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites Percentage rate price bids through e-procurement in double cover system according to the norms of e-procurement system, in on-line mode from eligible contractors.

Sl. No.	Nature of work:	Installation of Package Water Treatment Plant for Rural Piped Water Supply Schemes
1.	No. of works:	01 (ONE)
2.	Estimated Cost:	Rs 30.00 Lakh (app.)
3.	Time for completion:	03 (Three) Months
4.	Cost of bidding document:	Rs. 6000/- C & B
5.	Class of Contractors eligible:	C & B
6.	Availability of bids on-line:	From 11.00 hour of 19.02.2021 to 17.00 hours of 28.02.2021
7.	Last date and time for seeking clarification:	17.00 hours of 24.02.2021
8.	Date & time of opening of technical bids:	On dt 01.03.2021 at 11.30 hours in the office of the Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Puri (All documents should be submitted in online only. No original documents should be dropped in dropping box before opening of technical bid in Division Office).
9.	Date and time of opening of financial bids:	To be decided.

Further details can be seen from the website <https://www.tendersorissa.gov.in>. Subsequent corrigendum if any shall appear in the web site.

Sd./- Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Puri OIPR-25017/11/0031/2021

Government of Odisha Department of Agriculture & Farmers' Empowerment Directorate of Horticulture, Odisha Office of the Executive Engineer (Agril.), Southern Zone, Horticulture, Berhampur

Email: executiveengineerhortsouthern@gmail.com

No. L-69- (e-Procurement Notice)

Bid Identification No. E.E. (A).SZ.HORTICULTURE-04 of 2020-21

1.	Name of the Work:	Construction of Boundary Wall, Ramagiri Farm, R.Udayagiri, Dist.: Gajapati
2.	Approximate Estimated Cost:	Rs.16.00 lakh
3.	Period of Completion:	30 days
4.	Date and Time of availability of Bid documents in the Portal:	24.02.2021 from 11.00 A.M. to 06.03.2021 up to 5.00 P.M.
5.	Date of Submission of hard copies of tender documents:	08.03.2021 from 11.00 A.M. to 09.03.2021 up to 5.00 P.M.
6.	Date of opening of Tenders:	10.03.2021 at 11.00 A.M.
7.	Name & Address of the Office Inviting Bid:	Executive Engineer (Agril.), Southern Zone Horticulture, Berhampur

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal <http://www.tendersodisha.gov.in>

Sd./- Executive Engineer (Agril.), OIPR-01043/11/0007/2021 Southern Zone, Horticulture, Berhampur

No. B-769-

ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସରକାର GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER SUNDARGARH (R&B) DIVISION, SUNDARGARH

E-mail ID: pwd_sng@yahoo.co.in, Tel./Fax - (06622) 272230

"e- Procurement Notice"

Bid Identification No. EE-R&B-SNG-73 OF 2020-21

Letter No. 966/WE Date: 13.02.21

1.	The Executive Engineer, Sundargarh (R&B) Division on behalf of Governor of Odisha inviting percentage rate bid in single cover system on ONLINE mode from eligible contractors with valid licenses for Construction of Building works as detailed in DTCN.
2.	Nature of Works :- Building Works
3.	No. of work :- 02 (Two) Nos.
4.	Tender Cost :- Rs. 6,000/-
5.	Class of Contractor :- "C" & "B" Class Contractor
6.	Availability of Bid Document in the website :- From 10.00 A.M. of date-22.02.2021 to 05.00 P.M. of date 03.03.2021
7.	Date of opening of Bid :- 11.00 A.M. on Dt.04.03.2021
8.	The bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website (https://tendersodisha.gov.in). Any addendum/corrigendum/cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website only.

Sd./- Executive Engineer, Sundargarh (R&B) Division OIPR-34043/11/0037/2021

national



Petrol is at ₹100 a litre. The Modi government is doing the great work of emptying your pockets and filling the pockets of its friends

RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

of the day quote

You flatly say you revoke the laws...it doesn't happen that crowd gathers and the laws get revoked

NARENDRA SINGH TOMAR | UNION AGRICULTURE MINISTER

Let the work related to delimitation get completed, the Election Commission will definitely conduct elections in Jammu and Kashmir

MANOJ SINHA | J&K LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

The BJP government's Budget presented in the UP Assembly today is extremely disappointing to the state

MAYAWATI | BAHUJAN SAMAJWADI PARTY CHIEF

SHORT TAKES

Dalit girl raped in Uttar Pradesh

Mahoba (UP): A 16-year-old Dalit girl was allegedly raped by two men here, following which the accused were arrested, police said Monday. The incident took place Friday night when the minor was standing outside her house. Jai Hind (23) and Ashish Sen (22) forcibly took her to a secluded place and allegedly raped her, SHO Sunil Kumar Tiwari said. The girl later narrated her ordeal to her elder sister who filed a police complaint and on the basis of that, an FIR was registered on Sunday, the SHO said.

Chopper service begins in Vrindavan

Mathura: A private company has started a chopper service for people to have a bird's-eye view of the Vrindavan Kumbh fair and temples in surrounding areas, an official of the company said Monday. The service was started Sunday, he added. "It would facilitate people visiting Vrindavan Kumbh to watch majestic events like 'Shahi Snan' besides camps of saints and 'akharas' with their flags in the Kumbh," said the firm's managing director Vishal Jain.

EC official to visit Bengal Friday

Kolkata: Deputy Election Commissioner Sudip Jain, who is in charge of West Bengal, will be visiting the state Friday to oversee the preparedness for the upcoming assembly elections, officials said. During his visit, Jain is scheduled to hold meetings with district magistrates, police superintendents and other senior officials of the state, they said. Jain is scheduled to come this Friday to have a look at the overall preparedness for the Assembly elections. He will also take stock of the law and order situation in the state.

Blast possibly accidental

Kolkata: West Bengal minister Jakir Hossain, who was seriously injured in an explosion last week in Murshidabad district, might not be the target of the perpetrators and the bomb seemed to have gone off accidentally, an officer of the state Criminal Investigation Department (CID) said Monday. The miscreants who could have links to an international terror group possibly brought the explosive kept in a bag from outside the state and were on their way to take it to Kolkata or somewhere else, the top CID official told PTI on condition of anonymity.

Cong govt in Pondicherry falls

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Pondicherry, Feb 22: The Congress government in Pondicherry fell Monday after Chief Minister V Narayanasamy resigned ahead of the confidence vote sought by him in the Assembly after his government was reduced to a minority due to a spate of resignations of party MLAs and a DMK legislator over the past few days.

Narayanasamy met Lt Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan and submitted the resignation of his Cabinet, even as the ruling side's strength was reduced to 11 as against the 14 of the Opposition.

The Opposition, led by NR Congress chief and Leader of Opposition N Rangasamy said it has no plans to stake claim to form the government as of now and that discussions would be held.

Soundararajan had earlier summoned the one-day special session Monday, mandating that its agenda be confined only to the trust vote, after the Opposition petitioned her last week saying the government had been reduced to a minority due to the resignations.

A fresh bout of resignations Sunday took the tally in the last few days to three and the cumulative since last month to six and further reduced the strength of the Congress-DMK combine in the assembly to 11 after Congress member K Lakshminarayanan and DMK's K Venkatesan quit on Sunday.

Subsequently, the party position in the assembly was: Congress (nine, including Speaker), DMK two, All-India NR Congress seven, AIADMK four and BJP three (all nominated with voting rights) and one independent who has supported the government. There are seven vacancies. Those who had resigned included former ministers A



Chief Minister V Narayanasamy submitting his resignation to Lt Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan, Monday

Chief Minister V Narayanasamy resigned ahead of the confidence vote sought by him in the Assembly after his government was reduced to a minority

Narayanasamy met Lt Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan and submitted the resignation of his Cabinet, even as the ruling side's strength was reduced to 11 as against the 14 of the Opposition

Namassivayam (now in BJP) and Malladi Krishna Rao. On Monday, after mounting an attack on the Narendra Modi-led Centre and former Lt Governor Kiran Bedi with whom he had frequent run-ins on administrative matters, Narayanasamy led his colleagues out of the Assembly after a debate over the rights of nominated members to vote during the floor test.

Subsequently, Speaker VP Sivakolundhu announced that the motion for confidence vote moved

by the Chief Minister in the morning was defeated, even as it was not taken up for either voice vote or division.

"Our view that only the elected members can vote in the House was not accepted by the Speaker. So we walked out of the Assembly and met the Lt Governor and gave resignation letter of my Cabinet," Narayanasamy later told reporters.

Narayanasamy said he was accompanied by his ministers, Congress and DMK MLAs besides the independent legislator who had earlier supported the government.

It was now up to the Lt Governor to decide on their resignation, he added. He, however, did not respond to queries on his next course of action. Earlier, after moving the confidence motion, Narayanasamy made a detailed speech blaming both the NDA government at the Centre and opposition parties including AINRC, AIADMK and BJP as "being responsible for stalling implementation of welfare schemes proposed by the elected government".

COAL THEFT CASE

CBI EXAMINES ABHISHEK'S SISTER-IN-LAW

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Feb 22: A team of CBI visited the residence of TMC MP Abhishek Banerjee's sister-in-law Menaka Gambhir in Kolkata Monday to examine her in connection with the coal pilferage case, officials said.

Two women officers of the CBI are examining Gambhir at her residence after a notice was served to her Sunday, they said.

Gambhir is the sister of Abhishek's wife Rujira Banerjee who told the CBI earlier in the day that she will be available for examination in connection with the case at her residence in Harish Mukherjee Road between 11 am to 3 pm on February 23, they added.

Abhishek, the Trinamooli Congress' Diamond Harbour MP, is the nephew of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

The CBI had registered an FIR in November last year against the alleged kingpin of the pilferage racket Manjhi alias Lala, Eastern Coalfield Ltd General Managers Amit Kumar Dhar (of then Kunustoria area now Pandaveswar area) and Jayesh Chandra Rai (Kajora area), besides ECL Chief of Security Tanmay Das, Area Security Inspector, Kunustoria Dhananjay Rai and SSI and security in-charge Kajora area Debashish Mukherjee.

It is alleged that accused Manjhi Lala is involved in the illegal mining and theft of coal from leasehold mines of ECL in Kunustoria and Kajora areas, sources said.

Modi opens coffers for Assam before polls

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dhemaji, Feb 22: Opening the coffers of his government for election-bound Assam, Prime Minister Narendra Modi Monday slammed the successive Congress dispensations that ruled the country since Independence for the "neglect" of the state and the northeast for decades.

On his third visit to Assam in a month, Modi, who dedicated to the nation three major projects in the petroleum sector worth over ₹ 3,222 crore, enumerated steps taken by the state government led by Sarbananda Sonowal and the centre over the past few years for its balanced growth.

He also inaugurated Dhemaji Engineering College and laid the foundation stone for Sualkuchi Engineering College with initial project cost of ₹45 crore and ₹55 crore respectively in this town on the northern bank of the Brahmaputra. He had unleashed a major development offensive in the run up to the state polls on February 7 when he laid the foundation of and dedicated to the nation infrastructure projects involving ₹9,310 crore.

Again, February 18, he had gifted a bouquet of development projects worth about ₹10,000 crore to the state. "Those who ruled for decades since Independence believed Dispur was too distant from Delhi. 'Dilli ab door nahi aapke darwaaze par hai' (Delhi is not far now, it stands at your doorstep)," he told a massive gathering. The previous governments adopted "step-motherly" approach to the north bank region and neglected connectivity, health, education and industry, he alleged.

"I had come earlier to Gogamuk



Modi attacks Mamata over 'cut money'

Chuchura (WB): Launching a frontal attack on the Mamata Banerjee government, Prime Minister Narendra Modi alleged Monday it has perpetuated "syndicate raj" in all spheres of life in West Bengal where no work gets done without common people having to pay "cut money". He accused the TMC government of pursuing "appeasement politics" to protect its vote bank while neglecting its cultural heritage and icons. "The state government's cut money culture has vitiated the atmosphere to such an extent that you cannot even take a house on rent without paying it...You cannot rent a house without the syndicate's permission," he said. He attacked the Banerjee government for not allowing central schemes like the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi and Ayushman Bharat, depriving farmers and the poor of its benefits.

in the state's north bank and said that Assam and the northeast will become the new growth engine of the country and now we see this belief bear fruit," he said.

SASIKALA FACTOR

AIADMK asks cadres to take vow in 'Amma's name'



WARY OF THE VK SASIKALA FACTOR, THE AIADMK MONDAY ASKED ITS CADRES TO TAKE A PLEDGE, IN THE NAME OF J JAYALALITHAA ON THE FORMER CHIEF MINISTER'S BIRTH ANNIVERSARY, FEBRUARY 24

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, Feb 22: Wary of the VK Sasikala factor, the AIADMK Monday asked its cadres to take a pledge, in the name of J Jayalalithaa on the former Chief Minister's birth anniversary February 24 by lighting a lamp in their houses, to guard the party.

While the "test" of Assembly polls is round the corner in about two months, enemies and betrayers have joined hands to defeat the AIADMK, top party leaders O Panneerselvam and K Palaniswami said in a letter to cadres.

Vowing to retain power for the second time in a row, they said such 'anti-people' forces must be taught a lesson again by vanquishing them through hardwork, unity and allegiance to the party.

Palaniswami, co-coordinator and

Chief Minister and Panneerselvam, coordinator and Deputy Chief Minister, however, did not explicitly name anyone.

Their call to cadres assumes significance against the background of the recent return of expelled leader VK Sasikala to Tamil Nadu from Karnataka and her nephew Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam leader T TV Dhinakaran's stand to 'retrieve' the AIADMK.

Panneerselvam and Palaniswami asserted that the loyalty of AIADMK workers cannot be 'purchased' through any manner be it allurements or by hurling accusations.

The cadres' allegiance is only towards late matriarch Jayalalithaa, the AIADMK and people, they added.

By lighting a lamp at 6 pm on February 24, they should offer prayers to Jayalalithaa's 'atma' and

take a vow in her name to protect people and guard the AIADMK till their last breath, they said.

Sasikala is late AIADMK supremo Jayalalithaa's confidante and she returned here recently after serving a four year prison sentence in Bengaluru following conviction in an assets case.

Loyalty is only towards late Jayalalithaa, the AIADMK and the Tamil Nadu people, Palaniswami and Panneerselvam said.

'Amma's soul' would protect the AIADMK and punish through the path of righteousness those trying to work against the party interests they said, which is seen as a reference to Sasikala and Dhinakaran camp.

The benign protection to them from Amma's 'atma' is a matter of faith and it gave them the courage to face challenges, they said.



Members of Indian Youth Congress hold placards during a protest against the arrest of climate activist Disha Ravi, in New Delhi, Monday

K'TAKA CLOSES BORDERS WITH KERALA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kasaragod (Ker), Feb 22: With the Karnataka government reinstating stricter control of transit passengers from Kerala in view of increasing COVID-19 positive cases, people bound to Mangalore and other parts of Dakshina Kannada from here for various purposes, including medical needs and studies, are in a fix again.

Long queues of vehicles could be seen in the border areas since morning as Karnataka authorities sealed many roads, including national highways and restricted entry only for those with COVID-19 negative

certificates. The Dakshina Kannada authorities sealed all borders from Monda, except four to cross over, sources said.

COVID PROTOCOL

According to Karnataka officials at the borders, those who wish to enter the state have to produce COVID-19 negative certificate through an RT-PCR test taken 72 hours prior to their cross over time.

Health and police personnel are on duty at the four borders, viz. Talapady in Mangalore taluk, Saradka in Bantwal, Nettanige-

Mudnuru in Puttur taluk and Jalsour in Sullia, to verify and allow people's entry into Karnataka.

Meanwhile, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said the issue would be brought to the notice of the Centre.

"Karnataka's move closing the border roads and blocking vehicles is against the Central government's guidelines that no state should impose any restriction on the inter-state travel," he said.

Speaking at the COVID-19 review meeting, he also said state DGP Loknath Behera had already brought the matter to the notice of his counterpart in Karnataka.

Death row convict Shabnam meets son, urges him to study

Earlier, a photograph of the boy holding a placard that said, "President uncle, please forgive my mother Shabnam," had gone viral on the social media

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Rampur (UP), Feb 22: The 12-year-old son of Shabnam Ali, a death row convict lodged in Rampur jail, has met his mother.

The boy, accompanied by his guardian, Usman, met his mother for about 45 minutes Sunday. He later told the media his mother has urged him to focus on his studies.

"My mother asked me to focus on my studies. I am requesting 'President uncle' again to forgive her," he said.

Earlier, a photograph of the boy holding a placard that said, "President uncle, please forgive my mother Shabnam," had gone viral on the social media.

Rampur Jail Superintendent PD Salonia said: "After the news arrived that preparations had begun to hang Shabnam at Mathura jail, the mother and son desperately wanted to meet each other."

"The boy, who otherwise visits his mother in Rampur jail along with his guardian every three months, came to visit her here Sunday afternoon. The meeting continued for around 45 minutes following which he left."

Shabnam, now 38, had been convicted of killing seven of her family members - her mother; father; two brothers, sister-in-law, cousin and 10-month-old nephew - after her family opposed her relationship with Salim.



The two of them slit their throats after serving them sedative-laced milk. Shabnam was pregnant at the time.

She gave birth in Moradabad jail in December 2008. When he turned six, the Child Welfare Committee (CWC) in Amroha handed him over to his guardian, a resident of Bulandshahr district.

Shabnam and Salim, meanwhile, were convicted in 2010 and, then, sentenced to death. Shabnam challenged the Amroha sessions court verdict in the Allahabad High Court and the Supreme Court, and also sought mercy from the President after all three did not accept her plea. She went back to the apex court which again rejected her review petition in January last year.

Over the past six years, every three months, the boy is taken to the Amroha CWC and then the Rampur

jail, where his mother is lodged.

Usman, who has been taking care of the boy, told reporters that Shabnam told her son that she is not guilty of the crime she has been convicted of.

"She wants a CBI inquiry because she insists that she has been framed in the matter," he said.

While she has not exhausted her legal options, the Mathura jail is preparing to hang her.

Director General of Prisons Anand Kumar said: "As and when the date is finalized and the death warrant issued, Shabnam will be taken to Mathura jail for hanging."

Shabnam will be the first woman in Independent India to be taken to the gallows.



The British had tried to divide the country by fanning separatist sentiment among the Muslims community. I appeal to all to live with unity and contribute to the development of the country

MOHAN BHAGAWAT | RSS CHIEF

TRAIN SERVICES RESUME IN VALLEY AFTER 11 MONTHS

Train services resumed in the Kashmir Valley Monday after remaining suspended for around 11 months due to the COVID-19 pandemic



of the day quote

MK represents a bad, virulent ideology which is anti-Hindu. Every Tamil is a proud Hindu

TEJASVI SURYA | BJP YUVA MORCHA CHIEF

Incidents like Muzaffarpur and Gopalganj are happening in other states too despite strict ban on liquor due to liquor traders and mafias

NITISH KUMAR | BIHAR CHIEF MINISTER

We did not ask for it (new Parliament building). It is not a necessity now in this pandemic period. If they had constructed a hospital and cut our funds for five years (for such purpose), I would have gladly given it

SUPRIYA SULE | NCP LEADER

Yogi's Budget focuses on religious development

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, Feb 22: Religious development is a major aspect of the budget tabled by the Yogi Adityanath government in its last Budget before Assembly elections.

The Budget focuses on funds for development of religious cities including Ayodhya, Chitrakoot, Varanasi, Naimsharainya and Vindhychal.

Tourist amenities in these places of religious significance will be upgraded in the coming year and air and road connectivity will be upgraded. Talking to reporters, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that the state government would make efforts to take these cities to a global level.

He said that memorial and libraries would be set up to commemorate the memory of freedom fighters like the government had done with the Chaura Chauri incident. The Budget earmarks ₹200 crore for development of tourism in these sectors.

Ayodhya, alone, has been allocated ₹100 crore while another ₹300



Uttar Pradesh Finance Minister Suresh Khanna presents the paperless state Budget 2021-22 in the UP Legislative Assembly in Lucknow, Monday

THE BUDGET FOCUSES ON FUNDS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGIOUS CITIES INCLUDING AYODHYA, CHITRAKOOT, VARANASI, NAIMSHARAINYA AND VINDHYACHAL

AYODHYA, ALONE, HAS BEEN ALLOCATED ₹100 CR WHILE ANOTHER ₹300 CR WILL BE SPENT ON ROAD CONNECTIVITY TO THE HOLY CITY

CHITRAKOOT DEVELOPMENT HAS BEEN ALLOTTED ₹20 CR IN THE BUDGET WHILE VINDHYACHAL AND NAIMSHARAINYA GET ₹30 CR

crore will be spent on road connectivity to the holy city.

The state government has allotted ₹140 crore for development and renovation of the Suryakund temple. Chitrakoot development has been allotted ₹20 crore in the Budget while Vindhychal and Naimsharainya get ₹30 crore.

Varanasi has been given ₹100 crore for beautification and development of tourist amenities.

The state government proposes to set up a tribal museum in Lucknow with ₹8 crore and a freedom fighters' museum in Shahjahanpur with ₹4 crore.

The Chief Minister said that the Budget for 2021-22 was welfare-oriented and focused on all sections of society.

"This will give new wings to development and aspirations of the people. We are aiming at all-round development, electricity for

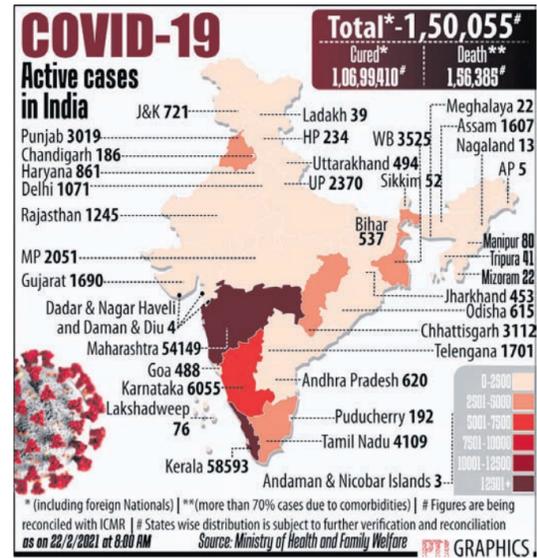
all, drinking water for all and roads for all. There are schemes for farmers, youth, women and we are moving ahead with our promises," he said.

The Chief Minister said that the target for excise revenue was ₹1,500 crore and the government was confident of achieving this.

He said that the state was attracting investments mainly due to ease of doing business and the policies being formulated.

India's COVID cases resurge: Over 14K cases in 24 hours

The recovery rate has remained to 97.22 per cent, while the fatality rate is 1.42 per cent



SHORT TAKES

IED detected on Srinagar highway

Srinagar: A major tragedy was averted Monday when the security forces detected an improvised explosive device (IED) near the railway crossing in the Nowgam area of Jammu and Kashmir's Budgam district on the Srinagar-Jammu national highway. Police said a patrolling party of the security forces detected the IED on the national highway. "Movement of traffic has been halted in the area. Bomb disposal squad has been deployed to defuse the IED," police sources said.

Five killed in car-bus collision

Ahmednagar (Maharashtra): Five persons travelling in a car were killed in a head-on collision with a private travel bus near Devgad, early Monday morning, police officials said. According to an official of Nevasa police station, the accident occurred around 2 a.m. on the Ahmednagar-Aurangabad Highway. "When the car was approaching the Devgad Phata, it was hit by a private tourist bus coming from the opposite direction. All the five occupants of the car were severely injured and are believed to have succumbed on the spot," the official said.

Son held for killing mother

Aligarh (UP): The 24-year-old son of a jeweller allegedly murdered his mother and looted valuables worth over ₹1 crore from her house in the Saroj Nagar Colony of Aligarh. The accused, Yogesh, and his three associates, including two women, were arrested Sunday and the stolen gold, diamond and silver jewellery were recovered from them. Jeweller Kuldeep Verma's son Yogesh, a commerce graduate, was living separately in a rented accommodation for the past six months after he tied a knot with a married woman, Sonam, against his parents' wishes.

5 killed in Bihar road mishap

Katihar (Bihar): Five people were killed and five were critically injured in a truck-auto collision near Pothia police station in Katihar district of Bihar. All the deceased were identified as the members of a band. The incident happened on NH-31 when a truck coming from Bhagalpur lost control near Khaira Mod and collided with an auto coming from the opposite direction, a police official said.

ON POLL DUTY



Paramilitary jawans patrol at Pathar Chapuri village ahead of the upcoming state Assembly polls in Birbhum district of West Bengal, Monday

DADRA AND NAGAR HAVELI MP FOUND DEAD IN HOTEL

AGENCIES

Mumbai, Feb 22: Mohan Delkar, seven-term Lok Sabha member from Dadra and Nagar Haveli, was found dead in a Mumbai hotel Monday, police said.

The body of Delkar (58), Independent MP from Dadra and Nagar Haveli Union Territory, was found at the sea-facing hotel in south Mumbai's Marine Drive area, a police official said.

The official said a suicide note in Gujarati was also found along with the body. The cause of death will be known after autopsy, he added. An accidental death report is being registered based on preliminary information, the official said. Delkar was in May 2019 elected to the 17th Lok Sabha, his seventh term in the House.

He was also a member of the Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice and a member of the Consultative Committee, Ministry of Home Affairs of the Lower House.

FAROOQ ADVOCATES DIALOGUE WITH PAK

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, Feb 22: National Conference (NC) president Farooq Abdullah has advocated dialogue with Pakistan to end terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir, saying friendship holds the key to development in the region.

"Terrorism is still prevalent (in Jammu and Kashmir) contrary to their (BJPs) claim that we have finished it. If we want to finish it, we have to talk with our neighbour," Abdullah said. Talking to reporters during a visit to a market here, the former Chief Minister of the erstwhile state remembered former Prime Minister AB Vajpayee's words "you can change your friends but not your neighbours" and said "either we grow

friendship and prosper or continue the enmity". He was responding to a question about the terrorist attack on police in Bhagal locality of Srinagar February 19, which left two policemen dead.

"This is the reality of the day. I appeal to the government to adopt the same approach as they had with China over the standoff in Ladakh and started withdrawal of its troops. The same is needed here to pull out J&K from this (terrorism)," he said.

Abdullah said the world has shrunk and the country like rest of the world is fighting coronavirus. "We have to solve this issue as well." Asked whether he is hopeful of success of the ongoing Indo-China talks, the NC leader said "the issue is big."

Disha sent to 1-day police custody

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 22: Delhi Police has got a day's custody of Disha Ravi in the 'toolkit' case for interrogation and confrontation with the co-accused. Disha Ravi, an accused in the 'toolkit' case registered by the Delhi Police, was produced before a Delhi court upon the expiry of her extended judicial custody Monday.

A court in Delhi sent 22-year-old environmental activist Disha Ravi to three days' judicial custody on Friday in the 'toolkit' case. Disha Ravi was arrested earlier this month from her residence in Bangalore by the Delhi Police.

The Delhi court Saturday heard Disha Ravi's bail plea and reserved its order till Tuesday. The 22-year-old environmental activist was arrested from Bangalore by the Delhi Police in connection with the toolkit



case earlier this month. Co-accused Shantana Mukul and Nikita Jacob, on the other hand, are out on anticipatory bail.

The Delhi Police Cyber Cell had arrested Disha Ravi from Bangalore claiming that she had sent the toolkit to teen climate activist Greta Thunberg through the Telegram app, and also "coaxed her to act on it". Officials claimed that Disha Ravi was an editor of

the "toolkit Google doc" and "key conspirator" in its formulation and dissemination.

A day ahead of the hearing of the bail plea on Saturday, the Delhi High Court had remanded Disha Ravi to three days' judicial custody after her five-day custodial interrogation ended.

Delhi Police had said her custodial interrogation was not required for the time being and the agency may seek her further interrogation once her co-accused - Shantana Mukul and Nikita Jacob - join the interrogation.

Investigators also said Disha Ravi was evasive during her previous interrogation and tried to shift the blame on the co-accused. Shantana Mukul and Nikita Jacob have been asked to appear before the investigating agency February 22, Delhi Police told the court.

Shivpal-Owaisi pact on the cards in UP

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, Feb 22: Even as Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav dilly-dallies over his pact with his estranged uncle Shivpal Yadav's Pragatishheel Samajwadi Party Lohia (PSP/L), the latter is wasting no time in making new friends in politics.

Shivpal Yadav had a long meeting with All India Majlis-e-Itehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) chief Asaduddin Owaisi in Azamgarh Saturday. The occasion was a wedding in the family of AIMIM Uttar Pradesh chief Shaukat Ali and both leaders were there to attend the wedding. "Shivpal and Owaisi had a lengthy discussion, apparently on the political situation and possible alliances. Shivpal, later, side-tracked queries on what had transpired between them.

Cong adopting 'Ch'garh model' to regain power in Assam

IN 2018, CHHATTISGARH CONGRESS HAD DEFIED ALL EXIT POLLS AND SHOCKED POLITICAL PUNDITS WINNING 68 SEATS OUT OF 90

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, Feb 22: With Assam gearing up for an intense battle of votes in the upcoming Assembly elections, the Opposition Congress has adopted the "Chhattisgarh model of booth management" to reclaim power from the ruling BJP-



led alliance. In 2018, Chhattisgarh Congress had defied all exit polls and shocked political pundits winning 68 seats out of 90, thereby snatching power from BJP after 15 years. Congress currently has 70 MLAs as there as it won two by-elections.

A senior official of the Congress party who came from outside Assam and has been camping here for almost one month, told PTI that a new energy level is seen in the party workers after a team from Chhattisgarh started working on the ground. "Former Chief Minister

Tarun Gogoi's demise affected the morale of the Assam Congress to a large extent as he was a father-figure to all. When we came in early part of January, people were not very enthused against BJP's aggressive campaign," he added.

After Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel was appointed as the observer by the All India Congress Committee for its Assam unit for the upcoming Assembly polls things started moving very fast in a positive direction. "In the last 15-20 days, the entire atmosphere has changed and it is now the rejuvenated Congress carrying out an aggressive campaign against the BJP and its allies. Now, the party is very confident to give a tough fight to the ruling NDA," said the official, who did not wish to be identified.

Baghel was by the side of party

leader Rahul Gandhi when he kick started Assam campaign with a rally at Sivasagar February 14.

The Chhattisgarh CM is making frequent trips to the poll-bound northeastern state to take stock of the party readiness for the elections. Explaining the strategy the official said, the Chhattisgarh team is focusing on micro-level booth management, which helped them regain power from the BJP there in 2018. "Around 15 specialised trainers have come and they have already conducted nearly 100 training sessions since February 1, covering 100 constituencies. Within next 2-3 days, we will cover all the 126 constituencies in Assam," the official said.

After the first level of training is over, senior party functionaries will visit each constituency to assess the ground situation, followed by second and third level of trainings by

different set of trainers until the elections are over.

"BJP has the concept of 'Prishtha Pramukh' or 'Panna Prabhar' to manage voters in each polling booth. However, we have seen their model failing in Chhattisgarh as it is more of a psychological game plan. We are working on pure science and mathematics," he said without explaining further.

The official, however, clarified that the Chhattisgarh team under Baghel will not have any say in selection of candidates and it will be fully decided by the Assam Congress as local politics are understood better by the leaders from the state.

When contacted, Baghel's political adviser Vinod Verma said, "Our teams are working closely with the Assam Congress. We want to create a system, which is election agnostic and candidate agnostic."

international



I ask everyone who has not been vaccinated - go be vaccinated. You will have the Green Pass and you will also be able to benefit from it

BENJAMIN NETANYAHU | PRIME MINISTER, ISRAEL

BONE CANCER SURVIVOR ON SPACEX FLIGHT

After beating bone cancer, Hayley Arceneaux, a 29-year-old physician assistant and a former patient is all set to join entrepreneur Jared Isaacman in SpaceX's first private spaceflight and become the youngest American in space



of the day quote

The fact that refugees and migrants continue to undertake fatal journeys accentuates the need for immediate and collective regional response to search, rescue and disembarkation

INDRIKA RATWATTE | UNHCR DIRECTOR FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

We are very determined, very committed to rolling out a free and universal vaccination program for the people of Hong Kong so that we could get ourselves out of this epidemic as soon as possible

CARRIE LAM | CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF HONG KONG

I think we're in a key strategic location to be able to deliver these vaccines to the developing countries that really can't get them

JULIAN SUTCH | COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT MANAGER, EMIRATES SKYCARGO

COVID infections drop by 70pc post first Pfizer shot

Data analysed by PHE showed the Pfizer provided high levels of protection against infection and symptomatic disease from a single dose, and that hospitalisation and death from Covid-19 will be reduced by more than 75% in elderly people who have had a first dose

REUTERS

London, Feb 22: England's coronavirus vaccine campaign is significantly reducing cases of Covid-19, with a drop of around 70% in infections among healthcare workers who have had a first dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech shot, British health officials said Monday.

Data analysed by Public Health England (PHE) showed the Pfizer provided high levels of protection against infection and symptomatic disease from a single dose, and that hospitalisation and death from Covid-19 will be reduced by more than 75% in elderly people who have had a first dose.

"Overall, we're seeing a really strong effect to reducing any infection, asymptomatic and symptomatic," PHE's strategic response director Susan Hopkins told a media briefing.

PHE's head of immunisation Mary Ramsay described the data as "strong evidence that the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is stopping people from getting infected, while also protecting cases against hos-



pitalisation and death". "We should be very encouraged by these initial findings," she said. PHE's findings came from two separate analyses - one is an ongoing study in healthcare workers, and the second is an assessment of testing data in people aged 80 and over.

Evidence from the elderly group showed that one dose of the Pfizer shot is 57% effective against symptomatic COVID-19 disease, PHE said, and early data suggest the second dose improves protection to more than 85%.

"Hospitalisation and deaths rates are falling in all age groups, but the oldest age groups are seeing the fastest decline since the peak in mid-January," a PHE statement said.

The vaccine also provides protection against the so-called British variant of the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus, it added.

The PHE data come as preliminary study findings from Scotland on Monday also showed the vaccination drive there is working, markedly reducing the risk of hospitalisation for COVID-19.

Scottish researchers said those findings suggested that both the Pfizer and the Oxford-AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccines are highly effective in preventing severe infections.

SHORT TAKES

Terrorists kill 4 Pak women

Islamabad: Four women were shot dead by terrorists in Pakistan's North Waziristan district, police said Monday. The North Waziristan police said in a statement that unidentified gunmen fired at a vehicle carrying the women near Mir Ali, a major town in the district that borders Afghanistan, Xinhua reported. A search and strike operation is being continued in the Mir Ali area to track down the terrorists. Police said the driver of the car was injured and is undergoing a treatment. No group or individual has so far claimed responsibility for the attack.

Afghan parl okays Budget

Kabul: The Afghan Parliament Monday approved the current fiscal year's Budget with a majority of votes after weeks of tensions between the two state branches over the document. The fiscal year began December 21, 2020, even as the Parliament rejected the Budget draft twice, Tolo news reported. Lawmakers and the Finance Ministry officials agreed on almost all the 19 disputed points Monday.

7 killed in Nigeria crash

Lagos: Seven persons were killed after a military plane crashed in Abuja, Nigeria's capital Sunday, an official said. Ibikunle Daramola, the air force spokesperson, confirmed the crash in a statement in Abuja, saying that "a Nigerian Air Force (NAF) Beechcraft KingAir B350i aircraft crashed while returning to the Abuja Airport after reporting engine failure enroute Minna", capital of the Niger state in the country's central-north region.

Philippines okays China's Sinovac

Manila: The Philippines has officially approved the emergency use of China's Sinovac Covid-19 vaccine, the country's Food and Drug Administration (FDA) said Monday. China's Sinovac Biotech is the third vaccine maker that was given the green light by the FDA, Xinhua reported. The FDA also granted last month emergency authorisation to the coronavirus vaccines made by US pharmaceutical firm Pfizer and its German partner BioNTech, and those by the University of Oxford/AstraZeneca.

ANTIQUE ABODE



A truck pulls a Victorian home built in 1882 which was moved to a new location in San Francisco, Sunday

US Covid death toll nears milestone of 500,000

A YEAR INTO THE PANDEMIC, THE RUNNING TOTAL OF LIVES LOST WAS ABOUT 498,000 - ROUGHLY THE POPULATION OF KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI, AND JUST SHY OF THE SIZE OF ATLANTA

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Washington, Feb 22: The US stood Sunday at the brink of a once-unthinkable tally 500,000 people lost to the coronavirus.

A year into the pandemic, the running total of lives lost was about 498,000—roughly the population of Kansas City, Missouri, and just shy of the size of Atlanta. The figure compiled by Johns Hopkins University surpasses the number of people who died in 2019 of chronic lower respiratory diseases, stroke, Alzheimer's, flu and pneumonia combined.

"It's nothing like we have ever been through in the last 102 years, since the 1918 influenza pandemic,"



the nation's top infectious disease expert, Dr Anthony Fauci, said on CNN's "State of the Union."

The US virus death toll reached 400,000 Jan 19 in the waning hours in office for President Donald Trump, whose handling of the cri-

sis was judged by public health experts to be a singular failure.

The nation could pass this next grim milestone Monday. President Joe Biden will mark the US crossing 500,000 lives lost from Covid-19 with a moment of silence and can-

Italian envoy killed in attack in Congo

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Kinshasa, Feb 22: The Italian ambassador to Congo, an Italian carabinieri police officer and their Congolese driver were killed Monday in an attack on a UN Convoy in an area that is home to myriad rebel groups, the Foreign Ministry and local people said.

The ambush occurred as the convoy was travelling from Goma, Congo's eastern regional capital, to visit a World Food Program school feeding project in Rutshuru, the UN Agency said in a statement.

WFP said it was seeking information from local authorities, as the ambush occurred on a road that had previously been cleared for travel without security escorts.

Luca Attanasio, Italy's ambassador to the country since 2017, carabinieri officer Vittorio Iacovacci and their driver were killed. Other members of the convoy were injured, WFP said.

CHINA CALLS FOR RESET IN SINO-US RELATIONS

REUTERS

Beijing, Feb 22: Senior Chinese diplomat Wang Yi said Monday the United States and China could work together on issues like climate change and the coronavirus pandemic if they repaired their damaged bilateral relationship.

Wang, a Chinese state councilor and foreign minister, said Beijing stood ready to reopen constructive dialogue with Washington after relations between the two countries sank to their lowest in decades under former president Donald Trump.

Wang called on Washington to remove tariffs on Chinese goods and abandon what he said was an irrational suppression of the Chinese tech sector; steps he said would create the "necessary conditions" for cooperation.

Before Wang spoke at a forum sponsored by the foreign ministry, officials played footage of the "ping-



pong diplomacy" of 1972 when an exchange of table tennis players cleared the way for then US President Richard Nixon to visit China.

Wang urged Washington to respect China's core interests, stop "smearing" the ruling Communist Party, stop interfering in Beijing's internal affairs and stop "conniving" with separatist forces for Taiwan's independence.

"Over the past few years, the United States basically cut off bilateral dialogue at all levels," Wang

said in prepared remarks translated into English.

"We stand ready to have candid communication with the U.S. side, and engage in dialogues aimed at solving problems," Wang pointed to a recent call between Chinese President Xi Jinping and U.S. President Joe Biden as a positive step.

Washington and Beijing have clashed on multiple fronts including trade, accusations of human rights crimes against the Uighur Muslim minorities in the Xinjiang region and Beijing's territorial claims in the resources-rich South China Sea.

The Biden administration has, however, signaled it will maintain pressure on Beijing. Biden has voiced concern about Beijing's "coercive and unfair" trade practices and endorsed of a Trump administration determination that China has committed genocide in Xinjiang.

India, Mauritius ink landmark agreement

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Port Louis, Feb 22: India Monday signed a landmark Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement (CECPA) with Mauritius, the first of its kind with an African nation, making the strategically-located country a launch-pad for business expansion into the huge African continent.

Today is indeed a special day in our special relationship, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said while jointly addressing the media with Prime Minister Pravin Jugnauth here after calling on the Indian-origin leader.

India is privileged to have entered into a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and

Partnership Agreement (CECPA) with Mauritius. This agreement is India's first such agreement with an African country, Jaishankar said.

He said it will provide a timely boost for the revival of the post-COVID economies and also enable Indian investors to use Mauritius as a launch-pad for business expansion into continental Africa helping the prospect of Mauritius emerging as a 'hub of Africa'.

Prime Minister Jugnauth also noted that the CECPA is the first of its kind signed by India with an African country.

This landmark agreement is far-reaching and will unleash new and expanded opportunities in trade in goods and services, investment, economic cooperation and technical assistance, he said.

'Earth's microbes could temporarily survive on Mars'

AGENCIES

Berlin, Feb 22: Some microbes found on Earth may temporarily survive on the surface of Mars, according to a study that could be vital for the success of future missions to the Red Planet.

The researchers from NASA and German Aerospace Center tested the endurance of microorganisms to Martian conditions by launching them into stratosphere, the second major layer of Earth's atmosphere which closely represents key conditions on Mars.

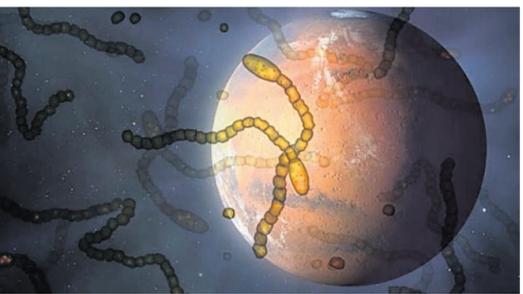
The study, published in the journal Frontiers in Microbiology, paves the way for understanding not only the threat of microbes to space missions, but also the opportunities for resource independence from Earth. "We successfully tested a new way of exposing bacteria and fungi to Mars-like conditions by using a

scientific balloon to fly our experimental equipment up to Earth's stratosphere," said Marta Filipa Cortesao, joint first author of the study from the German Aerospace Center.

"Some microbes, in particular spores from the black mold fungus, were able to survive the trip, even when exposed to very high UV radiation," Cortesao said.

When searching for extra-terrestrial life, the scientists need to be sure that anything that they discover has not just travelled from the Earth.

"With crewed long-term missions to Mars, we need to know how human-associated microorganisms would survive on the Red Planet, as some may pose a health risk to astronauts," said joint first author Katharina Siems, also based at the German Aerospace Center. "In addition, some microbes could



be invaluable for space exploration. They could help us produce food and material supplies independently from Earth, which will be crucial when far away from home," Siems said.

Many key characteristics of the environment at the Martian surface cannot be found or easily replicated at the surface of Earth; how-

ever in middle stratosphere the conditions are remarkably similar.

"We launched the microbes into the stratosphere inside the MARSBOX (Microbes in Mars Atmosphere for Radiation, Survival and Biological Outcomes experiment) payload, which was kept at Martian pressure and filled with artificial Martian atmosphere through-

out the mission," explained Cortesao. "The box carried two sample layers, with the bottom layer shielded from radiation," she said.

This allowed the researchers to separate the effects of radiation from the other tested conditions: desiccation, atmosphere, and temperature fluctuation during the flight.

The top layer samples were exposed to more than a thousand times more ultraviolet (UV) radiation than levels that can cause sunburn on our skin, they said.

"While not all the microbes survived the trip, one previously detected on the International Space Station, the black mold Aspergillus niger, could be revived after it returned home," Siems explained.

"Microorganisms are closely connected to us; our body, our food, our environment, so it is impossible to rule them out of space travel," she said.

FAA orders United to inspect Boeing 777s

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Washington, Feb 22: Federal aviation regulators are ordering United Airlines to step up inspections of all Boeing 777s equipped with the type of engine that suffered a catastrophic failure over Denver Saturday.

United said it is temporarily removing those aircraft from service, as meanwhile Boeing recommended grounding aircraft with that model engine until the Federal Aviation.



The announcements come a day after United Airlines Flight 328 had to make an emergency landing at Denver International Airport after its right engine blew apart just after takeoff. Pieces of the casing of the engine, a Pratt & Whitney PW4000, rained down on suburban neighborhoods.

The plane with 231 passengers and 10 crew members on board landed safely, and nobody aboard or on the ground was reported hurt, authorities said.

The Federal Aviation Administration FAA Administrator Steve Dickson said in a statement Sunday that based on an initial review of safety data, inspectors "concluded that the inspection interval should be stepped up for the hollow fan blades that are unique to this model of engine, used solely on Boeing 777 airplanes."

Boeing said it supported decisions by the Japan Civil Aviation Bureau and FAA to suspend operations of all 777 aircraft powered by Pratt & Whitney 4000-112 engines. It said there were 69 of the engines in service and another 59 in storage.

"We are working with these regulators as they take actions while these planes are on the ground and further inspections are conducted by Pratt & Whitney," it said in a statement issued Sunday



The worst is over for the aviation sector which has successfully transformed its image as an elitist mode of transportation to that of a bare essential one

PRADEEP SINGH KHAROLA
CIVIL AVIATION SECRETARY

LIFE SCIENCES TO BECOME A \$100 BILLION INDUSTRY

Buoyed by the tremendous growth in the life sciences industry in Telangana amidst the pandemic over the last one year, the state government has set the vision to growing the sector to \$100 billion dollars by 2030



of the day quote

We are glad that despite the global pandemic and its adverse impact, Udaan kept the wheels of small businesses across Bharat moving by leveraging the power and scale of e-commerce

KUMAR SAURABH
HEAD (LIFESTYLE BUSINESS), UDAAN

We know that the new US administration is reviewing and assessing its foreign policy. We hope that the policymakers will keep pace with the times, see clearly the trend of the world, abandon biases, give up unwarranted suspicions and ensure a steady development of China-US relations

WANG YI | FOREIGN MINISTER, CHINA

Despite the presence of prevalent challenges like local political hindrances and natural calamities in the microfinance segment, the collections in ICRA-rated microfinance pools saw a healthy recovery after dipping to the lower single digits in April 2020

ABHISHEK DAFRIA | VP AND HEAD (STRUCTURED FINANCE RATINGS), ICRA

Big boost for MSMEs as govt allocates ₹465 cr

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 22: The Odisha government Monday announced the allocation of ₹465 crore, during the presentation of 'State Budget-2021-22' for the promotion of state MSME sector. The allocated amount is a jump of 86 per cent in allocation as compared to the previous year.

State MSMEs representing bodies like OSSIA, OYEA, UCCI, OASME breathed a sigh of relief for state's unexpected budget presentation to support the sector.

Secretary-General of OASME Satwik Swain said, "The MSME

budget has increased like never before. There is a provision for census of MSMEs which is most essential to make the database of MSMEs present in Odisha. All major incentives have been increased. The budget has been made for inclusive growth of the MSME sector."

About ₹125 crore has been allocated to provide financial assistance to the MSME sector, ₹80 crore for promotion of the sector, and ₹27 crore for promotion of Khadi & village industries.

Smarajit Mohanty of OSSIA, said, "Allocation of ₹465 crore for MSME is more than double as com-

STATE BUDGET 2021



pared to 2020's budget allocation. It will boost the sector. Also, the state government has decided to make census to find out total MSMEs in the state, which is a welcome step."

Also, the state has announced an outlay of ₹163 crore for handloom,

handicrafts, sericulture and textile sectors. The associations had urged state government to give special incentive to Fani but no such announcement was made during the budget session, which was disappointing for them.

Also, the state announced ₹155 crore financial support to Idco for the development of industrial infrastructure. Swain said, "The allocated amount is seriously used by Idco. There will be a big exposure in infrastructure."

The impact of the pandemic on the MSME sector was severe. Considering the crisis, the state

government had already announced a special COVID package of around ₹289 crore to support the distressed sector. Over 1 lakh MSME units faced severe loss due to the pandemic last year. The associations claimed that total units faced a loss of over ₹1000 crore.

Reacting to the Odisha State Budget 2021-22, President of the state confederation of Credai SK Routray expressed his happiness over an increase of around 13 per cent in budget spending this time as compared to the previous fiscal, amid the severe impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and decline in the central transfer.

VEDANTA NANDGHAR BAGS CSR AWARD



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 22: Vedanta Limited bagged the CSR Shining Star Award under the category of Child Development for NandGhar, Vedanta Group's flagship corporate social responsibility project. The recognition was given by Governor of Maharashtra, Bhagat Singh Koshiyari in an award ceremony held at the Raj Bhavan, Mumbai.

The award recognises Vedanta's efforts towards the holistic development and growth of children contributing towards building a stronger and healthier nation.

Vedanta Director Priya Agarwal said: "We are committed in a vision of eradicating child malnutrition, providing education and healthcare, and empowering rural women through skill development and NandGhar will be the change agent for the same. NandGhar will continue to create a better tomorrow for the children and their mothers at the grassroots level."

The NandGhar journey began in 2015 with a vision to transform the lives of 8.5 crore children and 2 crore women across 13.7 lakh anganwadis. A dream project of Vedanta Chairman, Anil Agarwal, NandGhar is a network of model anganwadis where the thrust is on inclusive development of children, women and local communities.

The NandGhar are set up in collaboration with the Union Ministry of Women & Child Development.

Paradip port handles 100 MMT cargo again



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 22: Paradip Port authorities Monday said that the port handled 100 million metric tonnes (MMT) of cargo, fourth year in row. It once again repeated the feat by crossing the 100 MMT mark in succession and achieved cargo throughput of 100.30 MMT till February 21, 2021 in the current fiscal.

According to the officials, the above achievement of 100 MMT of cargo again by PPT in the current fiscal is despite global COVID-19 crisis and 2 of its existing berths are not available for handling of cargo these are under mechanisation process.

For the above feat, PPT Chairman Vinit Kumar congratulates the user industries, Stevedores, Steamer Agents, Trade Unions to have their continued faith on the ability of the Port to serve them.

Congratulating the employees and officers of the Port for their continued commitment to serve the trade, Chairman, PPT takes the pleasure of appreciating the support of Govt. authorities like Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways (GoI), Govt. of Odisha, Indian Railways, Customs, Immigration Department, Dock Safety, MMD as well as all Service Providers/Terminal Operators for their sustained effort in achieving the above feat.

Growth momentum needs to be strengthened: RBI Guv

Growth, although uneven, is recovering and gathering momentum, and the outlook has improved significantly with the rollout of the vaccine programme in the country

SHAKTIKANTA DAS | GOVERNOR, RBI



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 22: The growth momentum needs to be strengthened for a sustained revival of the economy and quick return to the pre-COVID trajectory, opined RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das while pitching for a status quo on rates at the last meeting of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC).

All the six members of the MPC had voted for keeping the policy repo rate unchanged at 4 per cent at the three-day meeting which began on February 3, citing similar reasons.

Das, according to the minutes of the meeting released by RBI Monday, had said: "Growth, although uneven, is recovering and gathering momentum, and the outlook has improved significantly with the rollout of the vaccine pro-

gramme in the country."

"The growth momentum, however, needs to strengthen further for a sustained revival of the economy and for a quick return of the level of output to the pre-COVID trajectory," he added.

Given the sharp moderation in inflation along with a stable near-term outlook, he said, the monetary policy needs to continue with the accommodative stance to ensure that the recovery gains greater traction and becomes broad-based.

The RBI kept the policy rate unchanged for the third time in a row in its last monetary policy review for 2020-21 February 5.

The MPC, headed by the RBI Governor, also decided to continue with the accommodative stance as long as necessary.

The RBI has been set a medium term target to keep retail inflation

at 4 per cent with a bias of +/- 2 per cent on the either side.

The other members of the committee are Shashanka Bhide, Senior Advisor, National Council of Applied Economic Research, Delhi; Ashima Goyal, Professor, Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research, Mumbai; Jayanth R Varma, Professor, IIM-Ahmedabad; Mridul K Sagar, Executive Director, RBI; and Michael Debabrata Patra, Deputy Governor in charge of monetary policy.

Bhide, said the MPC is committed to continuing with the accommodative stance as long as necessary -- at least during the current financial year and into the next fiscal.

He said the stance is in consonance to revive growth on a durable basis and mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on the economy, while ensuring that inflation remains within the target going forward.

"The current macroeconomic configuration and its expected future evolution as outlined above implies there is space for the MPC to continue to support the revival of the economy with inflation remaining in the target band. Thus, I vote to maintain the status quo in policy rate and stance," Goyal said.

GERMAN BIZ OPTIMISM UP AMID PANDEMIC BURDENS

AGENCIES

Frankfurt, Feb 22: Optimism rose among German businesses in February, according to a closely watched survey - despite a worrisome flattening out in the decline of infections.

The index of business sentiment compiled by the Ifo institute showed that industry continues to hold up better than public-facing services during the pandemic, even as battered tourism businesses expressed cautious optimism about the upcoming vacation season.

The survey index for Europe's largest economy climbed to 92.4 points after a reading of 90.3 points in January, the institute said in a news release Monday.

The results show brightening outlooks among thousands of German businesses, particularly in manufacturing and industry, where the index rose in all important sectors.

Retailers were somewhat less pessimistic than the month before, despite collapsing sales. For hospitality businesses such as hotels and restaurants, "the situation remains difficult," the Munich-



based institute said, while "in the tourism sector there is cautious optimism again regarding the vacation season."

The outlook brightened despite caution from German Health Minister Jens Spahn, who Friday noted that infection numbers have stopped declining in recent days. Elementary schools and kindergartens reopened in 10 of the 16 German federal regions Monday but widespread restrictions on business activity remain in force.

Manufacturing businesses such as the auto industry, a major employer, have been able to cope better with anti-pandemic measures than companies that depend on face to face contact with customers.

Ind-Ra revises outlook on banking sector to 'stable'

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 22: India Ratings and Research Monday revised its outlook on the overall banking sector to stable for the fiscal 2021-2022 from negative even as it sees higher stress emerging in the retail loan segment going ahead.

For public sector banks (PSBs), the outlook has been revised to stable from negative and for private banks, the agency continues to have stable outlook.

It estimates that overall stressed assets (gross non-performing assets (GNPA) + restructured) could increase 30 per cent for the banking system, the increase is almost 1.7

times in the retail segment in the second half of the fiscal 2020-21.

According to the agency's Director (financial institutions) Jindal Haria: "The last nine months have provided banks the opportunity to beef up their provisions even more for legacy stressed assets, which were existing before the pandemic. We expect that by the end of FY21, the provisions will go up to almost 75-90 per cent on those NPAs. This will give banks space to absorb COVID stress."

With the last year's change in accounting norms, which allows public sector banks (PSBs) to offset their profit and loss balance sheets with share premium account, large banks would be able to manage to

SC bars Future Group's RIL deal on Amazon appeal

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 22: The Supreme Court barred Monday a final ruling by a tribunal reviewing Future Group's \$3.4 billion sale of retail assets until the top court hears objections from aggrieved partner Amazon.com Inc, three sources said.

Amazon appealed to the Supreme Court this month against Future Group's sale to market leader Reliance Industries (RIL), accusing its partner of violating contracts by agreeing to the sale.

The outcome of the tussle involving two of the world's richest men, Amazon's Jeff Bezos and Reliance's Mukesh Ambani, could reshape India's pandemic-hit shopping sector and decide if Amazon can blunt Reliance's dominance of retail.

Three people familiar with Monday's proceedings said the Supreme Court ordered that while the tribunal can continue to review the deal and oversee the approval process, it could not pass a



final order while the court hears Amazon's concerns.

"This is a good thing for Amazon," said one of the sources, who has direct knowledge of events.

Indian stock exchanges and the antitrust watchdog have already cleared the deal, which now awaits clearance by the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), in line with regulatory procedures.

A second source said Future had only asked the NCLT to let it to call meetings to seek shareholder approvals of the deal. That process will

continue, and Future will later seek final approval from the tribunal, the source added.

Amazon declined to comment, while Future Group and Reliance did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The sources sought anonymity as they were not authorised to speak to media. In its Supreme Court appeal, Amazon will argue that an arbitration order in October that put the Future-Reliance deal on hold remains valid, Reuters has reported.

SHORT TAKES

CCI approves stake purchase

New Delhi: The Competition Commission of India (CCI) Monday said it has approved acquisition of shares of Tata Communications Ltd (TCL) by Panatone Finvest Ltd. The proposed deal envisages acquisition of shareholding not exceeding 26.12 per cent by Panatone Finvest Ltd in Tata Communications Ltd (erstwhile VSNL). Panatone Finvest Ltd is a non-deposit taking core investment arm of Tata Sons. The Government of India looks to divest its 26.12 per cent equity stake in TCL.

Amazon summit to be held virtually

Bangalore: Amazon India Monday announced that it will host the second edition of 'Amazon Smbhav' during April 15-18, 2021. A company statement said that the event will be held virtually. Smbhav 2021 will bring together industry and thought leaders for invigorating discussions on way ahead towards creating an Aatmanirbhar Bharat by unlocking possibilities for businesses and entrepreneurs through partnership with Amazon, it said.

MediBuddy raises \$20mn funding

New Delhi: Health-tech company MediBuddy Monday said it raised \$20 million (about ₹145 crore) earlier this month from India Life Sciences Fund III, LLC and others. The company had announced an initial funding of \$20 million in June last year under the series B round, a statement said. "The additional infusion of \$20 million led by India Life Sciences Fund III, LLC, with participation from other investors," it added.

OLX Autos get new Global CEO

New Delhi: Prosus-owned OLX Group Monday said it has appointed former Star Sports President and CEO Gautam Thakar as Global CEO of its pre-owned car marketplace OLX Autos effective March 15 of this year. Thakar will lead a worldwide organisation with a workforce of more than 4,000 employees across Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the US.

SWINGING BACK

For PSBs, the outlook has been revised to stable from negative

With the last year's change in accounting norms, large banks would be able to manage to raise additional tier-1 capital on their own

The agency also revised its credit growth estimates to 6.9% in FY21 from earlier 1.8%, and 8.9% in FY22

FY21 from earlier 1.8 per cent, and 8.9 per cent in FY22.

It said that about 1.24 per cent of the total bank book is under in-

cremental proforma NPA and about 1.75 per cent of the total book could be restructured by end-FY21. This is the incremental stress purely on account of the COVID-19 pandemic and does not include the slippages that banks would witness in the normal course of business, it said.

Haria said a lot of the retail stress is coming from unsecured advances and it would be more seen in private sector banks than public sector banks because of the former's higher exposure to unsecured loans.

The stock of stressed retail assets for PSBs could increase to 2.9 per cent in FY22 from 2.1 per cent in FY21, while it could increase from 1.2 per cent to 4.3 per cent for pri-

ivate banks, it said.

Through a bottom-up analysis of stressed corporates using two filters- revenue above ₹100 crore and interest coverage below 1.5x, the agency has assessed that stressed corporate assets as a percentage of gross bank credit declined to 15.3 per cent at end-1HFY21 from 15.7 per cent at end-FY20. "The key reasons for the reduction are low slippages (standstill classification, moratorium etc), write-offs of 0.9 per cent, and no advances growth in the first half of FY21," it said.

The agency expects the deposit rates to rise as credit growth revives as well as capital market flows are enhanced.

ISHANT OPENS UP ON 100-TEST MARK

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, Feb 22: On the cusp of becoming only the second Indian pacer after the legendary Kapil Dev to play 100 Tests, Ishant Sharma on Monday attributed his remarkable longevity in the game to understanding what the 'captain wants from him'.

Ishant made his Test debut as a gangly 18-year-old in Bangladesh when Rahul Dravid was the captain and subsequently was led by Anil Kumble, Mahendra Singh Dhoni, Virat Kohli and Ajinkya Rahane during the last decade and half.

So which captain understood him the best in all these years? "It is difficult to say who understood me the most as all of them understood me really well. But more than the captain understanding me, it was always important as to how I understood the captain," Ishant said during a virtual press conference ahead of the third Test against England, beginning here, Wednesday.

"That's very important. What does the captain want from me specifically? If those things are clear, communication becomes easier," said the man who has 302 wickets from 99 Tests so far.

Does he think that being dropped from white ball squads and also missing out on a couple of seasons of IPL helped him reach the milestone quicker than many others?

"I normally treat this as a blessing in disguise. It's not that I don't want to play white ball as that's what is the job of a sportsman but if he is not playing, what does he do? At best he can train."

For him, it was important that he forgets what's not there and be grateful for what he has. "I didn't want my Test cricket to get affected because of my non-selection in ODIs. I should be grateful that I am at least playing one format," he said.



"May be it helped me in completing 100 Tests. Having said that, I don't think had I played three formats, I couldn't have played 100 Tests. May be it would have taken a bit longer. I am only 32 and not 42."

So does crossing Kapil Dev's 131 Tests cross his mind? "(Crossing) 131 will take a long time. I only want to think about qualifying for the World Test Championship (WTC) final. This is my World Cup where if I win, I can have the same feeling that others had while winning the ODI World Cup."

Ask him about Jimmy Anderson playing at 38 and if he could continue till that age, he laughs. "I will go one game at a time. You never know what comes next. Yes, I am more professional about my recovery now. Earlier, I would train hard but didn't focus on my recovery. As you grow older, you need to recover well to bowl long spells, take care of your body."

He doesn't have a roundabout way of speaking and when a veteran journalist asked him about a whopping 76 wickets in his last 20 games at an average of less than 20, his disarm-

ing answer would floor anyone. "I played more outside India, so I got those wickets. If you don't bowl in India, how would you get wickets? To be very honest, it was just overseas conditions."

On who will be the leader of the pack once he leaves the scene, Ishant picked Jasprit Bumrah. "I think I don't want to take one name. You are good and that's why you play for India. But I think, after me, it is Jasprit Bumrah, who will play most matches for India."

"I think he has to lead the way and also it will depend on how he speaks to youngsters, take them under his wings, grooms them."

For fast bowlers to blossom, one needs to understand their skill sets and plan accordingly. "(Navdeep) Saini has pace, (Mohammed) Siraj has control. You have to understand people's strength. Skill sets are different and if you tell Saini to bowl one area and Siraj to hit 140k, then you are not doing justice to their strengths," he explained.

As a parting shot, Ishant added: "As long as I can maintain the intensity in my game, I will play for India."

Jimmy sure of no-grass wicket in Motera

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, Feb 22: Veteran fast bowler James Anderson is pretty sure that the newly laid track at the Motera Stadium will be devoid of any grass for the upcoming Day/Night Test against India even though there is a nice green cover on it at the moment.

The third Test under lights will start from Wednesday and for England's premier fast bowler, he doesn't expect it to behave much differently from the second Test track at the Chepauk which India won by 317 runs.

"The pitch, it has got grass on it but I am pretty sure it's not going to be there when we turn up on the match day," Anderson said with a wry smile during a virtual conference with British media Sunday.

"So we have to wait and watch. As seam bowlers, we have to be

prepared to bowl as best we can in any given condition. If it swings, it's great and if it does not, we still have a job to do," Anderson said.

He felt that the pink SG Test ball that he bowled with during the net sessions, swung more than its red counterpart. "Look this is the second pink Test in India and first in February so we don't know how it would behave."

He urged critics of the much-debated rotation policy to look at the 'bigger picture', considering the massive amount of cricket to be played by the England team in the coming days.

England did not play Jonny Bairstow and Mark Wood in the first two Tests but have brought them back for the final two games as part of a rotation policy while first-choice keeper Jos Buttler is back home after the opening Test. The idea is to help players cop up

with life inside the bio-bubble.

"You have got to try and look at the bigger picture. The idea was if I missed that one, that would give me the best chance of being fit and firing for the pink-ball Test," Anderson said during virtual press conference.

Former players, especially Kevin Pietersen, have criticised ECB's thought process, saying the board must play its best players in a big series like this against India.

Anderson, 38, himself played the series-opener where he took five wickets in England's victory but was rested for the second where India emerged triumphant by a massive 317-run margin.

"I am feeling good and fresh and ready to go again if called upon. It's frustrating to an extent but I can see the bigger picture with the amount of cricket that we have got."

To make his point, Anderson cited

injuries he had to endure in the last two years when he missed matches in the 2019 Ashes series and also could not play two Tests against South Africa.

"It's the same for all bowlers, not just me. We've got 17 Test matches this year and the best way of getting your best players firing for as many of those as possible is to take little rests every now and then."

"It's not a case of shielding, it's just a case of trying to make sure you're not wearing someone out until they completely break in half."

England have called back pacer Wood but Anderson definitely would not mind bowling in tandem with Stuart Broad. "That has definitely crossed my mind. Ideally, we would get into a position where there will be times - a crucial game potentially - when they want the experience there of both of us and that might get called upon."

Odisha suffer 8-wicket defeat against Railways

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 22: Odisha suffered an eight-wicket loss in their one-dayer of Vijay Hazare Trophy against Railways at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bangalore, Monday. They will next face Karnataka at the Alur Cricket Stadium in Bangalore, Wednesday.

Odisha were bowled out for 231 in 49.3 overs after being invited to bat first as Railways won the toss and opted to field.

Odisha players have got starts, but couldn't convert those scores in to big ones, which resulted them to be bundled out for not-so-challenging total. Ankit Yadav was the

top scorer for Odisha with a 42-ball 48-run knock.

Rajesh Dhuper (36, 46b), Shantanu Mishra (36, 63b) and Gourav Choudhury (24, 27b) also played handy knocks to help Odisha go past 200-run barrier. Pradeep Poojar (3/54) was the pick of Railways bowlers and he was ably supported by Himanshu Sangwan (2/34) and Amit Mishra (1/37).

In reply, Shivam Chaudhary led the run chase with an unbeaten 81 off 84 balls. He was ably supported by Pratham Singh (63, 86b), who also scored a half century, and Mrunal Devdhar (44, 48b). Shantanu (1/36) and Saurabh Kanojia (1/48) bagged a wicket each.

MSSM Open Tennis C'ship from March 3

Bhubaneswar: The Major Sandeep Mahapatra Memorial Open Tennis Championship will be played March 3-7 at the Gurukul Tennis Resort in Mendhasal. There are five event categories - men's singles, men's doubles, women's singles, boys' U-16 & girls U-16. The total prize money in the competition is ₹1,70,000. The men's singles' category carries a prize money of ₹30,000 to the winner and ₹15,000 for the runner-up.

10-man Hyderabad hold ATKMB in ISL

AGENCIES

Goa, Feb 22: Hyderabad FC (HFC) were excellent against ATK Mohun Bagan (ATKMB), but they have to blame themselves only as lack of concentration allowed the Kolkata side to find the equaliser in the added-on time to finish off the match 2-2 in their ISL encounter, Monday.

But credit goes to HFC as they led at the half time by one goal, courtesy Aridane Santana (eighth minute), despite being reduced to 10 men inside opening three minutes of the match. Manvir Singh restored parity for ATKMB in the 57th, but the Nizams restored their lead in the 75th through Roland Alberg. However, Pritam Kotal found the last-gasp equaliser to save the second-placed ATKMB the blushes.

Only five minutes into the game it looked like it would be all ATKMB. As HFC's Chinglensana Singh saw himself go off for an early shower after he pulled down David Williams and



HFC players celebrate Aridane Santana's (C) goal, Monday

denied him a goalscoring opportunity. But to everyone's surprise, it was the Nizams who took the lead.

Three minutes after the sending off, an error from Pritam Kotal saw Santana open the scoring.

ATKMB have attacked and had some half chances but HFC's defense has been top class. The Mariners have not looked very astute at the back and have made a few errors. HFC themselves had a few opportunities to double the lead but have not been able to do so.

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