

DSPL - 175



Government of Odisha



BIJU SWASTHYA KALYAN YOJANA HEALTH COVERAGE FOR ALL

COMPONENT - I

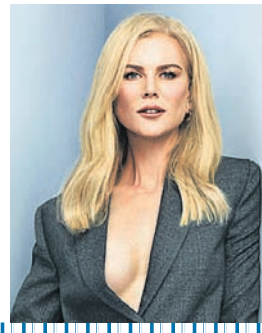
Free Health Care Services For All
in public health institutions upto medical
college level

COMPONENT - II

**Annual Cashless Health Coverage of
Rs.5 lakh per family** on floater basis **and**
upto **Rs. 10 lakh** for women members of the family

TOLL FREE NUMBER - **104**





NICOLE KIDMAN FEELS HER BEST IS YET TO COME

After over three decades in films, actress Nicole Kidman feels she still has a lot to do and hopes her best is yet to come. "I'm hoping I haven't done my best work. I'm hoping I get to experience more extraordinary creative alliances and times with people," *variety.com* quoted Kidman as saying.

PAMELA ANDERSON GETS HITCHED AGAIN AT 53

At 53, actress Pamela Anderson has tied the knot again. She has married her bodyguard Dan Hayhurst in a secret ceremony. The former Baywatch star fell in love with Hayhurst during Covid lockdown, reports *dailymail.co.uk*. The website said this was her fourth wedding.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
Your day is packed full. There are negotiations, commitments, plans and decisions to wade through. You may feel low on energy and swamped due to lack of information and inputs from others. But clarity will return gradually as matters conclude, says Ganesha.

TAURUS
Today is a day of closure. You may find yourself on the winning side of things, says Ganesha. Pending projects will reach completion and you will achieve satisfaction and success in education. With a little extra effort, you can build a castle from stone. Ganesha wishes you a cheerful and colourful day.

GEMINI
Today, you will do an amazing job in dividing your time between work and family. Despite your preoccupation with work, you will take time off for your family, and even plan out a small outing, leaving them pleasantly surprised. Also, your dreams are about to come true. Now, how many times does that happen in a lifetime?

CANCER
There is something different about today. It is unlike any other day. Just when you will start believing that there is nothing great about the day, it will spring a surprise. There have been days where life has thrown carrots at you; then there have been days when it has hurled brickbats. Today, you will be on the receiving end of countless kisses.

LEO
You will be confused with issues relating to the work-place today. You need to accept your present circumstances for what they are, and work towards resolving your immediate concerns to find your way ahead in life. This period of doubt will pass very soon, says Ganesha.

VIRGO
Your beloved will not only give you a surprise today but also demand one, says Ganesha. There may be some good news on the business front. Ganesha says own up to your old mistakes so that you don't repeat them, and chalk out the plans for the future. There is no need to shy from taking the advice of a loved one, as it will only benefit you, and later in the day, you may spend some good time together.

LIBRA
Ganesha says you will get the answers to all your questions. You will tend to worry about small things and issues. You will be able to earn from different sources today. Ganesha assures that if you keep your mind balanced you will achieve amazing results in your work.

SCORPIO
You may bump into people with different tastes and temperaments, says Ganesha. Some may surprise you, while some may just shock you. Sometimes, it is difficult to understand when people react indifferently to your success. Handle it with smartness and diplomacy.

SAGITTARIUS
The winds of fortune will usher in your dreams and make them come true. Be careful not to go overboard with your foresightedness, lest they be marked delusions, warns Ganesha. You must realise that the only thing permanent is change, and hence, you must overcome any disappointment with strong will and determination.

CAPRICORN
Today, you'll like to hold a cup of hot coffee in one hand, relax and go down the memory lane to cherish some golden moments. You may want to give another chance to your romantic relationship as you develop likings for your ex-boyfriend/girlfriend. Ganesha finds you to be busy in a lot of social gatherings today.

AQUARIUS
Eat, drink, and make merry. But watch out: don't empty your pockets in one go. Also, guard your reputation. A lot depends on your behaviour, and the big daddies may be watching you. You have a lot at stake, and there should be no regrets later. Let success be your priority for now, says Ganesha. All else will follow.

PISCES
Now is the time when the inner circle of friends that you have nurtured over the years will prove their worth, says Ganesha. It is good to know that in times of need you can bank on their support and count on their cooperation. You will be able to luxuriate in the benefits of their friendship today.

Iconic Kala Ghoda Arts Festival goes virtual

A film festival will also be held during the event showcasing cinematic works of both Indian as well as international filmmakers

Kala Ghoda Arts Festival, an iconic annual arts and crafts festival of Asia held in Mumbai, has taken on a digital avatar from February 6-14 in 2021.

Organised by the Kala Ghoda Association (KGA), a non-profit organisation, the festival will reach out to embrace global audiences with discussions, workshops and demonstrations about dance and music, visual arts, theatre, cinema, literature, book launches, tributes to famous personalities.

For the first time ever, the festival is also set to take its stalls (a huge attraction at the festival every year), online. The Marketplace will open February 6, but will go till the end of the month. A showcase of an eclectic collection of handicrafts and other products, the Marketplace can be accessed at the website www.kgaf2021.com, said organisers.

Brinda Miller, KGA's Honorary Chairperson said: "Kala Ghoda Arts Festivals has kept its date with Mumbai for the past 21 years. This 22nd year again, we are celebrating art and culture through a different medium that has spurred us on to 'unlock' the entire festival and make it virtual, including the much sought after KGAF stalls. What is encouraging is that we have well-wishers from around the world who are excited to be part of our festival this year."

The Kala Ghoda Spotlight shines light on some scintillating performances and talks by Leslee Lewis, TM Krishna, Usha Uthup,

Ankur Tewari, Rahul Mehrotra, among many biggies.

Key Conversations promises engaging talks with luminaries including Ruth Padel, Devdutt Patnaik, Ranjit Hoskote, Prem Chandavarkar, Swiss-Romanian novelist Dana Grigoreca, TM Krishna, Perumal Murugan, Pankaj Udhav with Kavita Krishnamoorthy, Tahira Kashyap, Neena Gupta and Vikas Khanna, Padma Shri Shubha Mudgal, Shilpa Rao, Dia Mirza with Licpriya Kangujam, and Talat Aziz with Pratibha Singh Baghel, Vikas Khanna and Neena Gupta.

Kashish International Film Festival will also be showcasing cinematic works, both Indian as well as International, and will also be hosting a panel of trans artists in the cinema world.

Funlocked, the children's section, includes an exciting workshop by Harun Robert, storytime with Kahaani Online, Anand Neelakantan and Shabnam Minwalla, celebrated authors both. Meera Warriar's

While the festival itself is a blocked date on the calendars of art lovers across the country, not many know that funds raised through the festival are used towards restoration projects in the Kala Ghoda precinct.



A piece of craft on display in 2020



A file photo of the festival venue



Vaani hopes 2021 to be year of big-screen entertainers

MUMBAI: Actress Vaani Kapoor was last seen on screen in the 2019 blockbuster *War*, and is all set to be seen in upcoming biggies *Shamshera*, *BellBottom*, and *Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui*. She feels lucky that all three films are theatrical releases.

"I hope this will be the year of big-screen entertainers! People are waiting for the virus to be under control and with the vaccines, the confidence of people will slowly build. They would want to go

back to doing things they used to," Vaani said. She added: "Community celebrations will come back in a big way, and for Indians going to a theatre to watch a movie with friends and family is a huge thing. That's going to make a big comeback. They would want to come back to soak in an experience."

Vaani feels new content will play an important role in bringing people back to the theatres, as she expects the taste of the audience to have changed during the pandemic.

'Pressure brings out the best in me'

MUMBAI: Actress Taapsee Pannu has started training for her upcoming sports biopic, *Shabaash Mithu*, which will bring alive the story of ace Indian woman cricketer Mithali Raj alive on the screen.

The actress feels the role will be a huge challenge and, to get every nuance of the role right, Taapsee will be training with former cricketer and Mithali's friend, Nooshin Al khadeer.

"I've never played the game before, have just been a spectator and a hyper ventilating fan of the game," Taapsee said while talking about her training regimen. "Being on the other side is going to be a huge challenge I've thrown at myself. But I feel pressure brings out the best in me. This is probably that one common trait I can identify between me and Mithali," she added.

Directed by Rahul Dholakia and Written by Priya Aven, *Shabaash Mithu* is being described as an "inspiring tale of the captain of the Indian Women's Cricket Team, Mithali Raj".



Glad that streaming platforms exist: Bobby

NEW DELHI: Actor Bobby Deol has been in Hindi film industry for over 25 years, and his career got a big push recently when he bagged the lead role in the 2020 web series *Aashram*. He feels glad that streaming platforms exist.

Last year, the actor starred in the digital film, *Class Of '83*. Then, he played a conman dis-

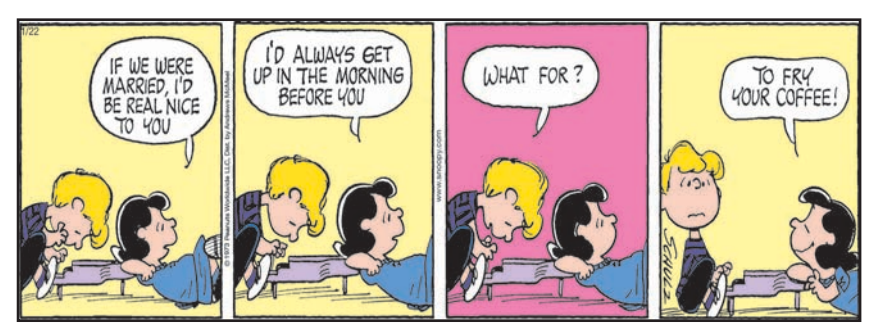
guised as a godman in Prakash Jha's *Aashram*, which will soon return with season two.

"I think the emergence of OTT platforms is the best thing that has happened to the entertainment industry. It has given a great opportunity to a lot of talent and it is amazing we have seen the emergence of brilliant actors. It surely

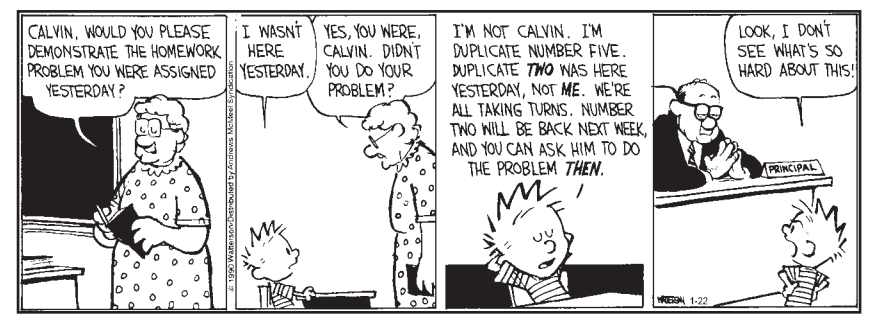
gave me the chance to step out of my comfort zone and try my hand at something challenging. I am so glad that these streaming platforms exist," Bobby acknowledged.



PEANUTS



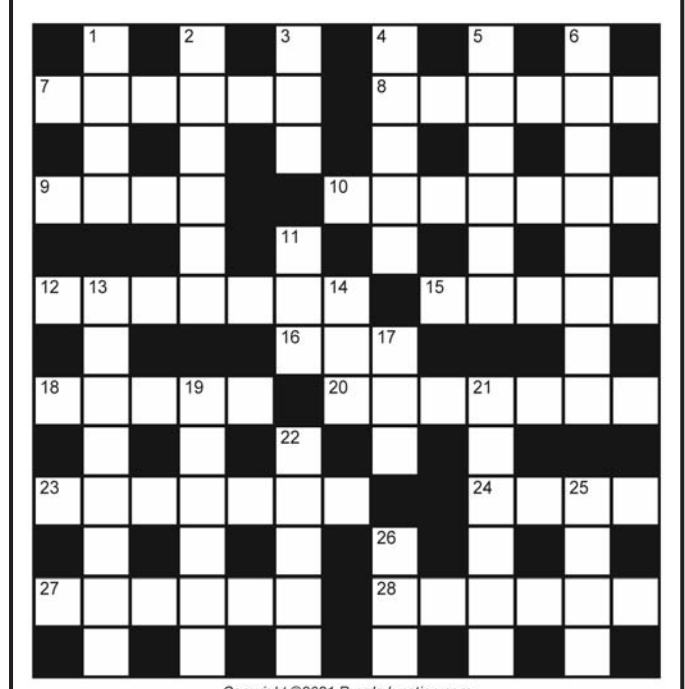
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



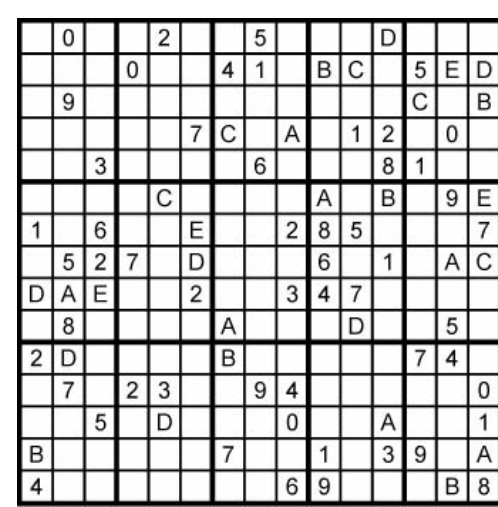
FUN post CROSSWORD



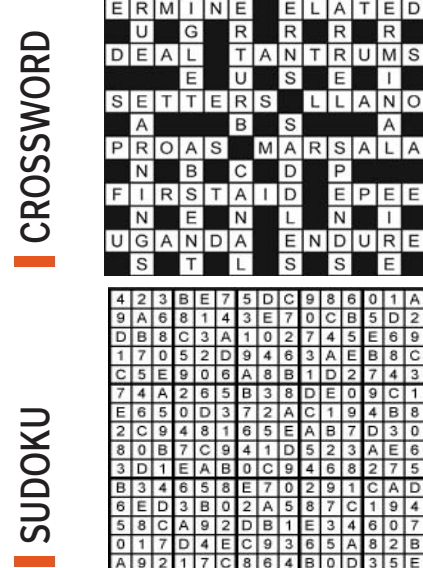
- Across**
- 7 Spice rack item
 - 8 Before clock or bomb
 - 9 Small stream
 - 10 Strange
 - 12 Police weapon (4,3)
 - 15 Turn sour
 - 16 Pro's opposite
 - 18 Kind of nerve
 - 20 Australian parakeets
 - 23 Troglodyte (4,3)
 - 24 Spinning toys
 - 27 Edward Teach's forte
 - 28 Spotted wildcat
- Down**
- 1 Himalayan legend
 - 2 Fisherman
 - 3 Like a fox
 - 4 House coat
 - 5 Chew the fat
 - 6 Put the finishing touches on
 - 11 Fluid container
 - 13 Stress
 - 14 Kind of story
 - 17 Protein source
 - 19 Medicinal syrup
 - 21 Round up
 - 22 Flower part
 - 25 Billiards relative
 - 26 Constrictor

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



CANDID TALK

Actor Tapsee Pannu reveals a common characteristic she shares with Indian cricketer Mithali Raj

LEISURE



GOA AWAITS SC NOD

Goa CM says his govt can only take a call on auctioning of mining leases after the matter is decided by SC

TWO STATES P5



DANIEL PEARL CASE

Pak SC orders release of Omar Sheikh, other convicts in the 2002 kidnap and murder of the American journalist

INTERNATIONAL P8

www.orissapost.com

BHUBANESWAR | FRIDAY, JANUARY 29 | 2021

P1

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



I'll welcome any change in income tax slabs provided I get a job first

Baby girl sold for ₹50K in Cuttack

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Jan 28: In a bizarre incident, a two-month-old girl was allegedly sold by her parents for ₹50,000. The incident occurred Wednesday at a slum near Kathajodi Vihar area in Cuttack.

The infant was later rescued by a team from Childline Cuttack, which also lodged an FIR with the Markat Nagar police station in the city.

Police swung into action and arrested six persons in this connection. According to sources, Childline members received a tip-off that a well-to-do family of Saanta Sahi area in Cuttack had come to the slum in a car to buy the baby girl for ₹50,000.

By the time the Childline team reached the slum, the buyers had already left the place. Immediately, the team chased the car and intercepted it.

Int'l passenger flights banned till February 28

New Delhi: The ban on international flight operations has been extended till February 28, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation informed Thursday. "The restrictions shall not apply to international all-cargo operations and flights specifically approved by DGCA," the aviation regulator said in a circular.

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VAIATION
SENSEX	46874.36 ↓ 535.57
NIFTY	13133.90 ↓ 150.00
DOLLAR	73.96 ↑ ₹0.14
EURO	88.68 ↓ ₹0.07
GOLD	₹49,196 ↑ ₹331
SILVER	₹69,555 ↑ ₹3019

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP MAX	29.4°C	29.4°C
TEMP MIN	16.5°C	14.0°C
Humidity	84%	70%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Mainly clear sky	

Lookout notices issued against farmer leaders



AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 28: Delhi Police Thursday issued lookout notices against farmer leaders named in an FIR in connection with the violence during the farmers' tractor parade on Republic Day and invoked sedition charges in a case of the Red Fort incident as the force intensified its investigation.

It also asked the farmer leaders to submit their response within three days, explaining why legal action should not be taken against them as they did not follow conditions set for the parade.

Sources said that around nine crack teams have been formed to locate all the culprits, even as there was no official confirmation from the police yet.

The move comes a day after Police Commissioner SN Shrivastava said that no culprit would be spared.

The farmer unions protesting against the three farm laws alleged that there was a conspiracy behind the violence, which left 394 police personnel injured and one protestor dead.

Thousands of protesting farmers, who reached ITO from the Ghazipur border, had clashed with the police

DELHI VIOLENCE

Delhi Police has registered a sedition case in connection with the violence at Red Fort during a tractor parade by farmers on Republic Day, officials said

Police have named 37 farmer leaders, including Rakesh Tikait, Yogendra Yadav and Medha Patkar, in the FIR that mentioned charges of attempt to murder, rioting and criminal conspiracy

January 26. Many of them, driving tractors, reached the Red Fort and entered the monument. Some protestors even hoisted flags on the domes and placed the flagstaff at the ramparts of the national monument, where the national flag is unfurled by the Prime Minister on Independence Day.

"The Delhi Police has issued lookout notices against farmer leaders named in an FIR in connection with the violence during the tractor parade," the police commissioner told the media.

Police have named 37 farmer leaders, including Rakesh Tikait, Yogendra Yadav and Medha Patkar, in the FIR that mentioned charges of attempt to

Deep Sidhu, main accused, goes missing



CHANDIGARH: Punjabi actor-turned-activist Deep Sidhu, who has been named in connection with violence in Delhi on Republic Day, has reportedly gone missing. He was last seen amidst the January 26 crowd that reached the iconic Red Fort by violating the planned route of the tractor march and was accused of provoking the protesters for installing a Nishan Sahib, a symbol of Sikh religion, on its ramparts. In a Facebook live video from the Red Fort, Sidhu, who was once known for his proximity with actor and BJP MP Sunny Deol, was heard saying: "We have only hoisted the Nishan Sahib flag on the Red Fort while exercising our democratic right to protest." In another video, Sidhu was seen fleeing from Red Fort on a bike. Sidhu, along with gangster-turned-social activist Lakha Sidhana, has been named the main accused in the Delhi violence. Sidhana is a gangster-turned-politician and was acquitted in several cases before contesting the 2012 Assembly polls as a candidate of the People's Party of Punjab.

murder, rioting and criminal conspiracy.

Other farmer leaders who have been listed in the FIR are Darshan Pal, Gurnam Singh Chanduni, Kulwant Singh Sandhu, Satnam Singh Pannu, Joginder Singh Ugraha, Surjeet Singh Phool, Jagjeet Singh Dalewal, Balbir Singh Rajewal and Harinder Singh Lakhoyal.

RED FORT DAMAGE

Structures on minar missing: Union minister

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 28: The violence at Delhi's Red Fort by protesting farmers during a tractor rally on Republic Day caused much damage to the 400-year-old monument, a Union minister said Thursday.

On Tuesday, a mob of protesters drove their tractors into the Red Fort complex, many armed with swords and sticks, and ran amok. They planted the "Nishan Sahib" or Sikh religious flag and chased and assaulted policemen, who were outnumbered.

Prahlad Patel, the central minister for Culture and Tourism, said a report on the damage had been handed over to the Home Ministry and the Archeological Survey of India (ASI) would file a First Information Report on the damage. Patel said the ticket counter had been destroyed, the Lahori Gate was vandalized and lights were broken.

"The biggest loss is at the most high security area, where the Prime Minister unfurls the national flag, where some structures on a minar are missing," he said. "Three finials or curved structures on a gable were missing; one was found later."

"We can assess the financial damage of lights and the ticket counter but you cannot put a price on archeological remains. Those are priceless."

Videos of the clashes show protesters running wild in the complex, striking objects with sticks and even throwing stones at the police.

CCTV cameras, metal detectors, glass windows and security equipment at the entrance of the Red Fort were also smashed.

One video showed farmers breaking down a boundary wall at the complex.



16 Oppn parties to boycott President's address today

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 28: Sixteen political parties have decided to boycott President Ram Nath Kovind's address to a joint session of Parliament January 29 on the issue of farm laws. However, Biju Janata Dal (BJD) has said it would attend the President's address.

Leader of Opposition Ghulam Nabi Azad Thursday said, "The only issue of the boycott is farm laws and 16 parties have decided to jointly boycott the Address."

The joint statement said, "India's farmers have been collectively fighting against the three farm laws, arbitrarily imposed by the BJP government that threatens the future of the Indian Agriculture which sustains over 60 per cent of India's population and the livelihood of crores of farmers, sharecroppers and farm labour."

"Lakhs of farmers have been agitating at the gates of the National Capital of Delhi braving biting cold and heavy rain for the last 64 days for their rights and justice. Over 155 farmers

Biju Janata Dal (BJD), the ruling party in Odisha, has said it would attend President's address

have lost their lives. The Government remains unmoved and has responded with water cannons, tear gas and lathi-charges," the statement said.

It added, "Every effort has been made to discredit a legitimate mass movement through a government sponsored disinformation campaign. The protest and the agitation have been largely peaceful."

"We also express our sadness over the injuries sustained by Delhi Police personnel while handling the difficult situation. But, we believe that an impartial investigation will reveal the Central government's nefarious role in orchestrating those events. The three farm laws are an assault on the rights of the states and violate the federal spirit of the Constitution."

BJD gears up for Pipli by-poll

LATE MLA PRADEEP MAHARATHY'S WIFE AND SON BOTH DESIRE TO CONTEST THE BY-POLL ON A BJD TICKET

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 28: After winning the by-polls to Balasore and Tirtol Assembly seats, the ruling Biju Janata Dal (BJD) is now gearing up for the Pipli by-poll.

BJD president and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik appointed senior party leader Pratap Keshari Deb as the observer for Pipli by-poll. He has been entrusted with the selection of candidate and conduct of the election, which is being held following the demise of seven-time MLA and former minister Pradeep Maharathy, October 4 last year.

Though the Election Commission of India (ECI) is yet to notify the date for the Pipli by-poll, Odisha's Chief Electoral Officer SK Lohani had said that the state machinery is ready for the by-election anytime. Party sources said that the BJD

may field either Maharathy's wife Pratibha or his son Rudra as its candidate for Pipli by-poll. Both Pratibha and Rudra have separately said that they would not hesitate to contest the by-poll if given a chance.

"My mother or I, whoever gets the ticket, will contest and work to fulfil the dreams of my father. My father always wanted to work for the betterment of Pipli and Delanga areas. We will also follow his footprints," Rudra told reporters here Thursday. Rudra claimed he has worked along with his father and has experience of election management. "My mother too has experience of political affairs," Rudra said.

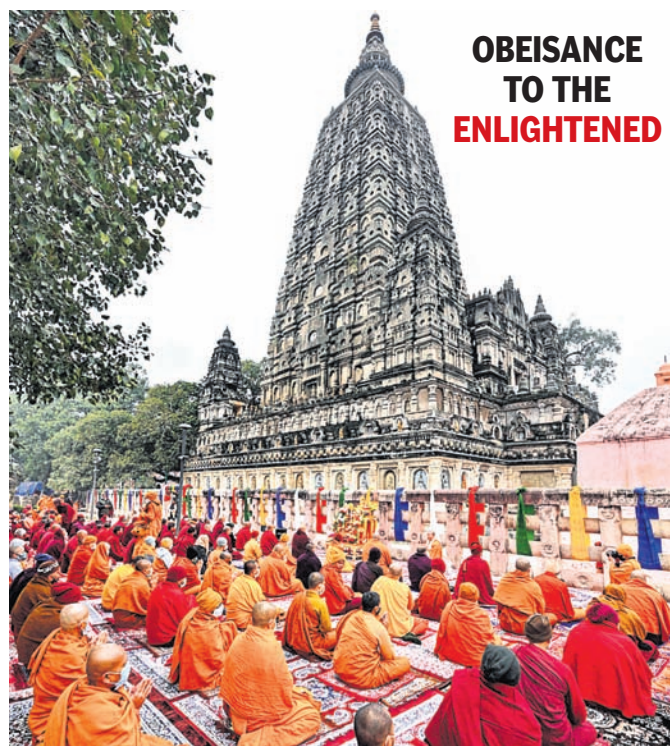
Few days ago, Pratibha, a college teacher by profession, had expressed her willingness to contest the Pipli Assembly by-poll. "It does not matter who wants what. The de-

cision regarding candidate selection depends on BJD president Naveen Patnaik. I will accept whatever decision is taken by the party president," she had said.

As the Chief Minister is now focusing on women's empowerment and 33 per cent reservation of seats for women in Parliament and Assemblies, the party may field Pratibha in Pipli.

Meanwhile, BJP and Congress too claimed that they will win the by-poll. "The party has started preparations for the by-poll. Dynastic politics will not work now. It was proved at the Balasore Sadar election. Why can't the same thing happen in Pipli?" asked BJP legislator Jayant Sarangi.

Congress leader Suresh Routray said a seven-member committee has been formed to elect the party's candidate for the by-election.



Buddhist monks offer special prayers on the occasion of Paush Purnima at Mahabodhi temple in Bodhi Gaya, Thursday

OBEISANCE TO THE ENLIGHTENED

India ranks 10th in Asia-Pacific Personalised Health Index

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 28: India ranked 10th out of 11 Asia Pacific countries in a newly-launched health index to measure the progress towards personalised healthcare.

The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) report 'Asia-Pacific Personalised Health Index' measures the readiness of 11 health systems across the region - Australia, China, Japan, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand and New Zealand - in adopting personalised healthcare, enabling the right care to be tailored to the right person at the right time.

The 'Personalised Health Index' measures performance against 27 different indicators of personalised health care across four categories called 'Vital Signs'. These include Policy Context, Health



Information, Personalised Technologies and Health Services, the report said.

In the health information indicator, India ranked 10th with a score of 41. It takes into account data, infrastructure and technical expertise driving personalised healthcare. In health services, India ranked 11th with a score of 24. The indicator takes into account planning, organisation and delivery of services with respect to personalised healthcare.

Holding minor's hands, unzipping pants not sexual assault: HC

ANOTHER JUDGMENT PASSED BY JUSTICE GANEDIWALA ACQUITTING A MAN FOR GROPING A MINOR GIRL, NOTING THAT THERE WAS NO 'SKIN-TO-SKIN CONTACT WITH SEXUAL INTENT' HAS FACED SEVERE FLAK

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Nagpur, Jan 28: A Bombay High Court judge, who faced flak for acquitting a man for groping a 12-year-old girl's breast because he did not make skin-to-skin contact, had ruled four days earlier that holding the hands of a five-year-old girl and unzipping his pants do not amount to 'sexual assault' under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

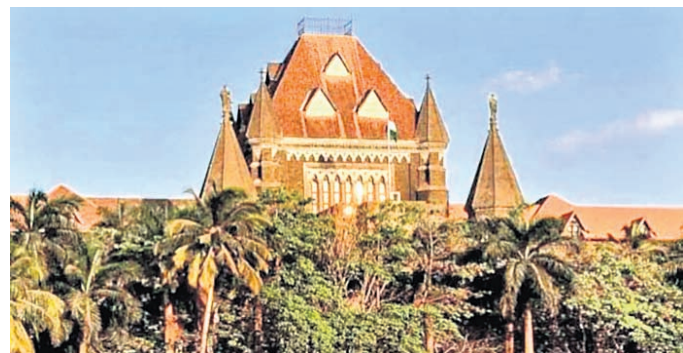
A single bench of Justice Pushpa Ganediwala made the observation January 15 while ruling on an appeal by a 50-year-old man challenging a Sessions court order convicting him for sexually assaulting

and molesting the 5-year-old girl.

Another judgment passed by Justice Ganediwala January 19 acquitting a 39-year-old man for groping a minor girl, noting that there was no "skin-to-skin contact with sexual intent" has faced severe flak.

The Supreme Court had Wednesday stayed operation of that order after Attorney General KK Venugopal mentioned the matter submitting that it was a very disturbing conclusion by the Bombay High Court.

The 50-year-old Libnus Kujur was convicted under Sections 354-A (1)(i) (outraging modesty) and 448 (house trespass) of the IPC and Sections 8 (sexual assault), 10 (ag-



gravated sexual assault) and 12 (sexual harassment) of the POCSO Act in October 2020 and sentenced to 4 years in jail. In her order, Justice Ganediwala noted that while the prosecution has established that the accused entered the house of the victim with an intention to outrage her modesty or sexually harass her, it

has not been able to prove the charge of 'sexual assault' or 'aggravated sexual assault'.

She noted that the definition of "sexual assault" under the POCSO Act says that there has to be "physical contact with sexual intent without penetration".

"The acts of 'holding the hands of the prosecutrix (victim)', or 'opened zip of the pant' as has been allegedly witnessed by the prosecution witness (mother of the victim), in the opinion of this court, does not fit in the definition of 'sexual assault'," Justice Ganediwala said.

The court said the case facts are insufficient to fix the criminal

liability on the accused for the alleged offence of aggravated sexual assault.

"At the most, the minor offence punishable under Section 354-A(1)(i) of the IPC read with Section 12 of the POCSO Act is proved against the appellant (Kujur)," the court said.

The prosecution's case is that Kujur had February 12, 2018 entered the house of the victim when her mother had gone to work and on her return found the accused holding the hand of her daughter and his pants unzipped. While recording evidence in the lower court, she had also said that her daughter claimed the accused asked her to sleep with him.

Family discord leading cause of suicides


ODISHA IS AMONG THE TOP STATES IN THE COUNTRY WHERE MAXIMUM NUMBER OF SUICIDES TAKE PLACE DUE TO FAMILY ISSUES

Bhubaneswar, Jan 28: Family is considered as a vital institution in India which plays a significant role in society. However, with changing times, the institution is crumbling fast leaving huge repercussions on the common citizens. Many hapless individuals are unfortunately ending their lives after failing to cope with marital or family discord. Analysis of available data has revealed that disputes in family life have become a humungous problem in Odisha. Odisha is among the top states in the country where maximum number of suicides take place due to family problems. According to information, as

many as 3904 persons committed suicide in Odisha in 2016. The suicide cases in the state rose to 4582 in 2019. The state witnessed a rise of almost 17.50 per cent increase in the suicides during the last four years. However, the most disturbing part of the data has been the rising percentage of family problems among all other causes for the suicides in Odisha. As many as 651 persons ended their lives for family problems constituting around 24.50 per cent of the total 3904 suicides that took place in 2016. The serious deterioration in family as an institution can be gauged from the fact that suicides due to family disturbances has increased from 651 in 2016 to 2779

ALARMING TREND
As many as 651 persons ended their lives due to family problems. The stat constitutes 24.50% of the total 3904 suicides in 2016

The percentage rose to 60.7% in 2019. Uttarakhand (76.4%) has a higher percentage of family problem related suicides



in 2019. Meanwhile, family problems were the reason behind 60.7 per cent of the total suicide cases in Odisha in 2019. Only Uttarakhand with 76.4 has higher percentage of family problem related suicides in 2019. However,

total cases of suicides in the state was a lowly 394. Odisha recorded a slight decline in number of suicides in 2019 as against 4592 in 2018. However, the percentage of suicides for family related issues rose around 30 percent

Helpline for senior citizens on cards

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 28: The state government will launch a dedicated toll-free helpline number soon to provide handholding support to the senior citizens. The Social Security and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (SSEPD) department is setting up the necessary infrastructure and technical support to launch the helpline which will work round the clock. The helpline number is likely to be 14567, sources said. The senior citizens will be able to get all sorts of information on old age homes, schemes and services provided by the government for them in Odia language. A dedi-

cated call centre is being set up at State Institute of Rural Development campus in Capital Hospital for this purpose, said SSEPD secretary Bhaskar Sarma here Thursday. Support under the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act will also be provided to the elderly persons, he said. The call centre will work as a connect centre and will provide interventions through field staff of concern government agencies. Sources said there has been a steady rise in the population of the elderly in Odisha. The number of elderly persons has increased from 22.81 lakh in 1991 to 30.38 lakh in 2001 and 39.8 lakh in 2011. The number is likely to rise to 62.69 lakh in 2026.

BGU launches BSc Data Science Course

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 28: Birla Global University launched a new course BSc, Data Science, Thursday. The course was launched by the university's Vice-Chancellor PP Mathur in the presence of Registrar BK Das, Dean of Birla School of Management Parameswar Nayak and faculty members. This is a four-year programme and designed as per the guidelines of National Education Policy, 2020. The Vice Chancellor emphasised on the inter-disciplinary approach of the course which is in alignment with the New Education Policy, 2020.

First Amrita Patel memorial lecture delivered

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 28: Council of Social Development director Kalpana Kannabiran Wednesday delivered the first Amrita Patel memorial lecture virtually, said a release issued by Lenin Mohanty, general secretary of gender resource centre Sansristi. Patel was the advisor to the Gender Resource Centre of government of Odisha. The lecture titled as "The constitution and fundamental freedoms in times of Covid-19" was chaired by Vibhuti Patel, former professor at the Advanced Centre for Women's Studies, TISS and department of economics at SNDT University. Kannabiran highlighted various issues of India, including the health emergency, during the pandemic-induced lockdown and beyond that till the farmers' agitation. Kannabiran also threw lights on issues related to Jammu and Kashmir and disension in India. The virtual meeting was organised by Sansristi, which had been founded by Amrita Patel in 2005. The event was attended by around a hundred leading feminists from India and abroad.

BJD not to support Opposition boycott call to Prez address

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Jan 28: The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) would not support the call given by Congress and 15 other opposition parties to boycott the President's address to joint sitting of Parliament for the Budget Session Friday. Speaking about the party's stand on the boycott call, Senior BJD MP Prasanna Acharya said that President's address is a constitutional procedure and his party would not boycott that. Acharya also said that BJD maintains equidistance from both the national parties and they would not support any of the national parties. The parliamentarian also main-

tained that the BJD supports farmers' demands and that the party MPs had raised the issue of the minimum support price (MSP) during the discussion on agriculture laws in both houses of the Parliament. According to sources, senior Congress MP Ghulam Nabi Azad had asked the BJD to join the boycott. However, the party refused to support the boycott and said it would take a call this aspect later. Significantly, besides Congress, the 15 other parties are NCP, Shiv Sena, AITC, DMK, JKNC, SP, RJD, CPI(M), CPI, IUML, RSP, PDP, MDMK, Kerala Congress and AIUDF. Congress MP Ghulam Nabi Azad said that the major reason behind this decision is that the farm laws were passed forcibly in the Rajya Sabha, without Opposition.

President's address is a constitutional procedure and our party would not boycott that

PRASANNA ACHARYA
BJD MP

MUSICAL PLAY FEST



Artists of Sanskruti Vihar, Cuttack, stage musical play 'Karna Baddha' at the state-level Gitanaty Utsav organised by Odia Language, Literature & Culture department at Rabindra Mandap in Bhubaneswar, Thursday

BJP memo to Guv over PMAY

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 28: The state leadership of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Thursday met Governor Ganeshi Lal and sought his intervention in the BJD government's alleged act of hijacking Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY). Leader of Opposition in Odisha Assembly Pradipta Naik targeted Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik for taking credit for the central scheme. He also said that as per norms, the nomenclature of a central scheme cannot be changed even if the state pumps in more funds into a centrally sponsored scheme. "The Chief Minister of Odisha Naveen Patnaik has been working towards claiming large portion of credit of a centrally sponsored scheme. We condemn such attempts of the government in Odisha. Even if a state government gives 90 per cent of funding in a flagship programme of a centrally sponsored scheme its nomenclature cannot be changed," he

CONG RAKES UP PADDY PROCUREMENT ISSUE

Bhubaneswar: A delegation of farmer wing of state Congress Thursday submitted a memorandum to Governor Ganeshi Lal demanding immediate procurement of paddy from farmers lying in mandis and agriculture fields across the state. The delegation led by its president Amiya Kumar Patnaik requested the Governor to intervene in the matter and direct the state government to immediately procure the surplus paddy from the farmers. As the government is not lifting the paddy from market yards and mandis, poor farmers are facing a harrowing time. Unable to sell their produce to government, they are being forced to sell paddy to middleman at prices as low as Rs 1,200 or Rs 1,300 per quintal, Patnaik said. The production cost of per quintal paddy is calculated to be around Rs 2,400 while the government has fixed the MSP at Rs 1,868, he said. The Congress leader said the Centre had promised to double farmers' income by implementing MS Swaminathan Commission recommendations. But, now they have forgotten it. If the government does not resolve the problems of farmers, the Congress party will hit the streets, warned Patnaik.

said. He also added, "But it is a matter of shame that the state, which has 40 per cent share in PMAY, has been claiming that benefits are from state exchequer. The posters show Biju Pucca Ghar texts in bigger fonts than that of PMAY. Despite having the funding from the state government the state is not entitled to sabotage a centrally

sponsored scheme." The BJP leader said that they had already raised the issue in the Odisha Assembly. "Today we met the Governor and apprised him of the situation. We want to urge the state government to make adequate budgetary allocation for Biju Pucca Ghar Scheme and not snatch the credit out of the PMAY scheme," he said.

NCC holds webinar on nat'l integration

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Jan 28: NCC Group Cuttack unveiled a webinar titled 'Ek Bharat Shreshth Bharat Phase V' under the aegis of NCC Directorate Odisha here Thursday. The webinar will be conducted till February 4. A total of 200 NCC cadets from Odisha, Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh attended the six-day webinar. Commodore Somen Bannerjee, Dy DG, Odisha Directorate, opened the webinar and addressed the participants. As a part of the initiative to conduct training of NCC cadets during the pandemic, the event will be conducted through a webinar using Google meet G suite platform. The theme of the webinar will be 'Anti-Corruption' which will be conducted via presentations, discussions and interactions to showcase the history,



geography, tourism, cuisines and cultural heritage of the state and the two Union Territories (UTs). The aim of the webinar is to foster the spirit of national integration and solidarity by overcoming cultural, religious, geographical, environmental and linguistic barriers. The cadets will also be participating in on-line declamation, learning new languages, 'Dekho Apna Desh', learning about cuisines, food habits, culture, heritage, festivals, customs and traditions among others.

Leave office by 5.30pm: EIC to lady staffers

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 28: The office of Engineer-in-Chief (EIC) has issued an order asking its female staffers to leave office by 5.30pm on working days. "All lady officials/workers are hereby directed to leave office by 5.30pm positively on all working days. They are also requested to work sincerely during office hour and ensure that there shall not be any pending work on their seat," read an order issued by Superintendent Engineer (P&D), Goutam Kumar Pal, Wednesday. Pal said the order was issued as a preventive measure to ensure safety of women staff in the of-

fice. "What would happen as a consequence of this is they will not face any issues at workplace or encounter any problems when they are on way home, as there is a possibility of troubles emerging if they return late," he said. "I have children and family. If we will leave the office early, we will get time for them," said Smita Satpathy, a female employee of the organisation. However, social activist Rutuparna Mohanty said, "If a female employee is asked to leave office by 5.30pm even she has some pending work, I think this is a way of treating women as second class citizens."

Suna Besha delayed

PURI: The Suna Besha ritual of Lord Jagannath and his siblings was reportedly delayed for around five hours Thursday due to some dispute between two servitor groups. Devotees could not get Mahaprasad till the last report came in at 8pm. "The Sakala Dhoopta ritual of the presiding deities was completed by 9.40am. It was expected that the Suna Besha ritual would be performed by 11:30am. However, the ritual was performed at 5pm due to some dispute between two groups of servitors," said a source in the SJTA. According to sources, the servitors decorated the presiding deities with the golden attire only after several rounds of discussions with the Puri Collector and SJTA administrator (rituals). "There was a dispute between Singhari Puspalak and Bhandar Mekap servitors. Temple officials intervened into the issue," said SJTA chief administrator Krishan Kumar. The SJTA chief further revealed that the temple authorities would seek reports from the two groups of servitors on the ritual delay.

Dashboard to up quality of teacher training

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 28: The Directorate of Teacher Education and SCERT in collaboration with UNICEF Odisha and with technical support from SDRC, has launched the Teacher Education Dashboard for Teacher Education Institutes (TEIs) to monitor the progress against the annual academic calendar and improve the quality of teacher training. It is a unique platform that aggregates information on HR, infrastructure and academic indicators across TEIs. The dashboard is developed as a one stop monitoring solution for all TEIs and follows uniformity in implementing the unified academic calendar. The dashboard enables to publish the unified training and academic calendar for all the TEIs. Apart from the above purpose, the dashboard has



the common repository that allows the TEIs equipped with network to share own knowledge products with peer TEIs. The content management system captures success stories, guidelines and relevant knowledge products on TEIs. The state and district level factsheet/dashboard generated on key performance indicators like laboratories and other resources, access to toilets and drinking water, enrolment disaggregated through intake capacity, gender, social category etc. There are possible options to tie to other chart type, download the

chart as image file for further use as well as tracking the attendance of teachers and staff by each institute, aggregated daily and monthly. Faculties would be able to login to the dashboard through a given user ID and password to access information, post queries and upload institution wise academic and HR information. Similarly, faculties from the directorate can login to access information, provide guidance and address the queries of faculties and student teachers. In this manner, faculties can interact with the directorate and seek their guid-

ance on the best academic performance. Gangadhar Sahoo, Director, TE and SCERT said, the dashboard creates a common repository that provide decision makers with qualitative and reliable data for effective decision making and planning, rolling out training programs as well as linking the training inputs to performance-based incentives. Training of faculties is planned as the next step, so that they are able to fully navigate and use the dashboard. Minister of School and Mass Education Samir Ranjan Dash said, "The most impressive aspect about this dashboard is that it is a GIS based interactive dashboard with alert and notification system to enable real time tracking of the institutions and aggregated data disseminated through tabular form, Bar, Pie, cards to represent trends."

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Scam in free rice distribution post Covid outbreak in Sambalpur

STIR FOR JOBS

Civil supplies dept sits on probe

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, Jan 28: The central and state governments had made provisions for distribution of free PDS items for five months for the beneficiaries after the outbreak of the Covid-19. However, irregularities to the tune of crores of rupees were allegedly committed in the free distribution of PDS rice in Sambalpur. Orissa Post and Dharitri had reported the alleged scam based on the allegations of many beneficiaries. Following media reports, the district civil supplies officer had directed civil supplies inspectors and marketing inspectors to look into the matter and submit a report. "Even though two months have passed since then, no investigation report has been submitted to the office," said district civil supplies officer Subodh Malik. On the other hand, some officials are allegedly extorting money from supplies assistants and deal-



ers on the plea of investigation. It was alleged that two supplies assistants in Jujumara block have paid Rs 10,000 each to an official. Similar allegations have been reported from other blocks too. Various outfits have demanded

According to the civil supplies department, the district had received about 32,500 quintals of rice for free distribution every month during Covid. For five months, the district got nearly 1.60 lakh quintals of rice.

Besides, 1.5 lakh quintals of rice came under regular quota in five months. Every month, each ration card holder was entitled to get his regular quota and free quota of rice for five months. During Covid, use of biometric machines had been stopped, which actually facilitated a big scam, amounting to over Rs 32 crore.

that the department is trying to shield some civil supplies officials and assistants who are involved in the scam.

As regards the delay in the probe, the district civil supplies officer said the scam had allegedly been committed well before he joined in

Smabapur. "Investigation report has not been submitted till date. Steps will be taken in the matter of delayed investigation," he noted.

Notably, Orissa Post carried the news about the PDS scam December 1, 2020. According to the civil supplies department, the district had received about 32,500 quintals of rice for free distribution every month during Covid. For five months, the district got nearly 1.60 lakh quintals of rice.

Besides, 1.5 lakh quintals of rice came under regular quota in five months. Every month, each ration card holder was entitled to get his regular quota and free quota of rice for five months. During Covid, use of biometric machines had been stopped, which actually facilitated a big scam, amounting to over Rs 32 crore.

Manual receipts were not issued to beneficiaries after rice delivery while the beneficiaries had not put their signatures in sales registers.



Displaced people of 32 Mouza stage protests near the ADM office in Rourkela demanding jobs Thursday OP PHOTO

Woman, MLA file cases over marriage

POST NEWS NETWORK

Pallahara, Jan 28: In a bizarre incident, a woman allegedly barged into the house of Pallahara BJD MLA Mukesh Kumar Pal with a marriage proposal in Angul district Monday night. The matter came to the fore after two separate cases were filed by both the legislator and the woman against each other at Pallahara police station in the district Wednesday afternoon. According to a source, the woman, Ahuti Mohanty from Bayalmara village in Keonjhar district, reached Pal's ancestral house at Baliposi village. She identified herself as a friend of the Pallahara legislator. Ahuti managed to enter into Pal's house. The woman then told his family members that three months back he had promised to marry her.

She also accused the MLA of not keeping his words.

Following the drama, Pal went to his native village and sought the help of Pallahara police.

Ahuti threatened the legislator that she would ruin his political career if he does not marry her, the MLA alleged in his FIR with the police.

Pal had earlier received a marriage proposal from Ahuti. However, he had later rejected the proposal. The woman has allegedly been playing foul and pressuring him for marriage since then.

Pallahara police have registered a case against Ahuti under Section 20 of IPC 448/506. Similarly, the woman also lodged a counter FIR accusing the legislator of repeatedly establishing sexual relationship with her on the pretext of marriage.

Notably, Ahuti has been sent to Keonjhar amid police security.

RD girl's murder: Father alleges boyfriend's hand; suspect held

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar/Jajpur, Jan 28: In a new twist to the Ramadevi Women's University girl's murder case, the father of the deceased claimed that a youth who was the alleged boyfriend of the girl was involved in the murder case.

Meanwhile, Airfield police detained the suspect Rakesh Swain and is interrogating him.

Jharaphula Nayak's, 21, father Ramakant Nayak in his FIR said, "Rakesh Swain, who was engaged in pipeline work in our village, developed an affair with my daughter during the time when she had returned home from the university due to the lockdown. Both were having conversations through WhatsApp and video call."

He also alleged involvement of Rakesh in murdering Jharaphula.

"She had gone to Bhubaneswar January 24 to attend birthday func-



tion of Chakradhar Sir's daughter. The event was held January 25. Around 11 am January 26, Chakradhar Sir dropped her at Jaydev Vihar square, where she boarded a private bus to return to the village. However, she alighted from the vehicle near Vani Vihar after complaining of stomach ache and informed me that she would board the next bus. Later around 3 pm, she told me that she stayed at her friend's house due to the ailment. However, she didn't answer any phone call during the whole night," the father said. Notably, Jharaphula's body was

found at Mulapala under Kuakhia police limits in Jajpur district January 27. According to eyewitnesses, two youths carried the body dumped it on the roadside. Jharaphula, who hailed from Marundeipasi village under Jashipur police limits in Mayurbhanj district, had gone to Bhubaneswar January 24 and attended classes the next day.

Meanwhile, Jajpur police Thursday claimed that the accused have been identified.

The Superintendent of Police (SP), Jajpur, said that a special team of police which carried out raids at different locations, has identified the accused.

The cops said the police have got various important clues from CCTV footage that captured the scene of two youths carrying the body on a scooter.

Notably, two youths Wednesday carried the body of Jharaphula and dumped it near Kuakhia in Jajpur.

Miscreants slit throat of minor girl in Berhampur

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, Jan 28: Two miscreants Thursday attempted to kill a five-year-old girl by slitting her throat. The incident took place at Sorala village under Golanthara police limits in Ganjam district.

The girl has been battling for her life at MKCG Medical College and Hospital in Berhampur. Sources said, the girl was

found lying in a pool of blood in a closed room of her house. Family members alleged that two persons attempted to kill her by slitting her throat. The exact reason behind the murder attempt is still unclear.

Meanwhile, the child was shifted to MKCG hospital where she is under treatment. Her condition is said to be critical. Police detained one person based on the family's allegations.

Purunapani dam cries for renovation

POST NEWS NETWORK

Khajuripada/Balaskumpa, Jan 28: Purunapani dam once was a lifeline for farmers under Khajuripada block in Kandhamal district. However, after years of neglect, the dam has lost its water retaining capacity, thus reducing its irrigational coverage. Hundreds of farmers, who are deprived of irrigation, have resented irrigational deprivation, a report.

According to the report, the dam was built to store water draining out from a nearby hill and to be used for irrigation later at Khajuripada. The water is being supplied to farmlands through canals. Earlier, the dam was full of water throughout the year.

As a result, farmers in the region used to get enough water for paddy and vegetables. The dam is just 15 km from Phulbani. Locals alleged that the administration had failed to renovate it for irrigational use.

They added that the dam has become shallow with deposits of silts over

CHOKED WITH SILT



year. No step has been taken to dredge the silts, they lamented. In summer, its water level hits the rock-bottom, leaving the farmland deprived of water.

"The government has been spending crores of rupees for renovation of dams and irrigation facilities. But this dam has become a victim of the government's apathy. Water coming with earth and rocks has got deposited.

In summer, there is little water for farming," the local farmers lamented.

On the other hand, Purunapani dam is in scenic setting. It has been a draw for picnickers. It has a lot of tourism potential which the government can make use of.

Tourists need connectivity, platforms, drinking water and toilets. "If basic facilities for tourists are put in

THE DAM WAS BUILT TO STORE WATER DRAINING OUT FROM A NEARBY HILL AND TO BE USED FOR IRRIGATION LATER AT KHAJURIPADA. THE WATER IS BEING SUPPLIED TO FARMLANDS THROUGH CANALS. EARLIER, THE DAM WAS FULL OF WATER THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

AS A RESULT, FARMERS IN THE REGION USED TO GET ENOUGH WATER FOR PADDY AND VEGETABLES. THE DAM IS JUST 15 KM FROM PHULBANI. LOCALS ALLEGED THAT THE ADMINISTRATION HAD FAILED TO RENOVATE IT FOR IRRIGATIONAL USE

place, it will create income opportunities for residents living around the dam.

Farmers demanded that the local leaders take up renovation of the dam with the government, apart from immediate steps for dredging of the dam.

EAST COAST RAILWAY

Tender Notice No. eT-M-KUR-CM-BBS-129-21
Name of Work : OUTSOURCING THE ACTIVITY OF COACH MITRA CONSISTING OF OBHS AND LINEN DISTRIBUTION IN BHUBANESWAR BASED TRAINS AS PER SBD GUIDELINES FOR A PERIOD OF FOUR YEARS.
Advertised Value (₹) : 38,41,69,998.55, Cost of Tender Document: ₹ 11,800/-, Period of Completion: 48 Months.
Bidding Start Date : 04.02.2021, Date and time of closing of tender : 1530 hrs of 18.02.2021.
Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored.
Complete details including e-tender documents are available at <http://www.irps.gov.in>.
Sr. Divisional Mechanical Engineer/ Khurda Road
PR-513/L/20-21

SHORT TENDER NOTICE
NIT Ref. No.:KO/AHC/02/2021 Date: 29.01.2021
KOSISH, Plot No. 496/3023, Jagannath Math Marg, Hatasaahi, Old Town, Bhubaneswar-751002, Odisha, invites Tender bids from eligible suppliers for Supply, Erection & Commissioning of Machineries, Equipments and its Accessories for Common Facility Centre of "Athmalik Handloom Cluster" at Kaladhuni, Kampil, Athmalik, Angul-759125, Odisha for SAKSHYAM (SPV). Detailed Bid Documents may be downloaded from website: www.kosish.org.in, and the bids can be submitted by 18.02.2021 (5.00 PM).
Sd./- Secretary

No. A-516
GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, DRAINAGE DIVISION, JAJPUR
"e" PROCUREMENT NOTICE No. DDJPR-01/2020-21

1	Name of Works	Drainage Works (Under FDR Scheme)
2	Total No. of Project	7 Nos. of Individual Work
3	Estimated Cost of Individual Works	Varies from Rs.8,46,379/- to 23,79,196/- (Excluding GST)
4	Period of Completion	1 (One) Calendar Month
5	Bid Identification Number	DDJPR-02/2020-21
6	Date & time of availability of Bid document in the portal	From Dt.29.01.2021 at 10.00 hours to Dt.04.02.2021 at 17.00 hours
7	Date of Opening of Bid	Dt.05.02.2021 at 11.30 hrs. in the O/o. the Executive Engineer, Drainage Division, Jajpur
8	Procurement Officer/Name & address of the Officer Inviting Bids	Executive Engineer, Drainage Division, Jajpur

Further details can be seen from the Govt. website www.tendersorissa.gov.in.
Sd./- Executive Engineer, Drainage Division, Jajpur
OIPR-32360/11/0002/2021

NOTIFIED AREA COUNCIL PURUSHOTTAMPUR (GM)

E-mail- purushottampurnac@gmail.com, Ph.No.06811-275333
Letter No.156 Date 28.01.2021

QUOTATION CALL NOTICE

Sealed quotations are invited from the intending Electrical Contractors having L.T./H.T. Licence, Labour Licence, EPF, ESI, GST clearance certificate, PAN Number, for the work of "3 Phase Internal Electrical Installation at MCC and MRF Center of NAC, Purushottampur, Ganjam district pertaining in the table as below: All documents should have validity/up-to-date. Invalid documents will not be entertained & the quotation will be automatically rejected.

Sl. No.	Name of the work	EMD in Rs.	Estimated cost	Cost of tender paper + GST @ 12%	Time of completion
1	3 Phase Internal Electrical Installation at Madhusudan Nagar newly constructed MCC Center, Ward No.8, NAC, Purushottampur, Ganjam district.	3748.00	374817.00	1000+120	30 days
2	3 Phase Internal Electrical Installation at Madhusudan Nagar newly constructed MRF Center, Ward No.8, NAC, Purushottampur, Ganjam district.	2511.00	251102.00	1000+120	30 days

The quotation papers with above documents should be submitted to the undersigned on or before 07.02.2021 upto 11.00 A.M. and the quotations will be opened on 08.02.2021 at 11.30 A.M. in the presence of the quotationers or their authorized agents. The DQCNS with terms and conditions will be available in the office of the undersigned with the cost & GST @ 12% per each work individual and 1% EMD of total estimated cost is also to be deposited along with the quotation paper in shape of DD in favour of "Executive Officer, N.A.C., Purushottampur" payable at Purushottampur in any Nationalized Bank. The quotation paper will be available from 29.01.2021 to 06.02.2021 in the office hour except Govt. holiday. The authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all quotations without assigning any reason thereof.

Sd./- Executive Officer
N.A.C., Purushottampur (Gm.)

WORKER FALLS INTO DEEP PIT IN MAYURBHANJ, DIES

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada, Jan 28: A worker engaged at the construction site of a bridge being built under the Biju Setu Yojana died Thursday after falling into a deep pit. The incident took place at Badasahi area under Betanati police station limits in Mayurbhanj district.

According to sources, the deceased was identified as Deepak Singh from Rasagobindpur area in the

district. Singh accidentally fell into the water-filled pit which was dug for erecting a pillar of the bridge.

Singh got stuck in a machine being used in the excavation work. His co-workers at the construction site tried to rescue him but failed.

The incident, meanwhile, triggered tension in the area and locals vandalised machines at the construction site. They also thrashed an official of the construction company.

Kanpur oustees, PCC chief urge admin for early solution of issues

CHAMPUA: People displaced by Kanpur major irrigation project, led by PCC president Niranjana Patnaik, took up the issues of the oustees with the district administration Thursday. He alleged that he had visited villages affected by the irrigation project, but various problems including the rehabilitation problem have not been resolved as yet. "As per the R&R policy of the state government, people in 16 villages have not got justice," he said. The PCC president held talks with Champua sub-collector in this regard. Oustees demanded drinking water in their colonies and playground.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA No. O-975
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER RURAL WORKS DIVISION - II, BALASORE
e-Procurement Notice for Road Works
Bid Identification No. Online Tender/12/RWD II BLS/2020-21

- Name of the Work : Road Works
- Total No. of Works : 02 (Two) Nos.
- Estimated Cost : Rs.17.84 lakh & Rs.17.71 lakhs
- Class of Contractor : "C", "D" and "B"
- Time of Completion : As per TCN
- Other Details

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of tender Online for Bidding		Last date & time of seeking tender clarification	Date & time of Opening of Tender in O/o. E.E. RW Divn.-II, Balasore (Single Cover)
		From	To		
Executive Engineer, R.W. Division-II, Balasore	12 of 2020-21	01.02.2021 at 5.00 P.M.	10.02.2021 upto 5.00 P.M.	09.02.2021 upto 5.00 P.M.	12.02.2021 at 11.00 A.M.

Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersorissa.gov.in.
Sd./- Executive Engineer, R.W. Division-II, Balasore
OIPR-25052/11/0009/2021

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA No. A-515
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, NABARANGPUR IRRIGATION DIVISION, NABARANGPUR
DIST.-NABARANGPUR (ODISHA)
NOTICE INVITATION FOR BIDS (NIFB) Dated: 27.01.2021
e-Procurement Notice No. EE-NID-03/2020-21 (01-02)

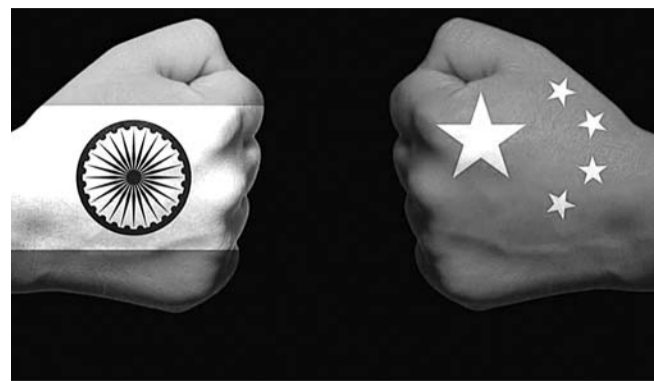
- Nature of the Work : Canal Service Road Work & Removal of Deposited earth
- Total No. of works : 02 (Two) Nos.
- Tender Cost of the Works : Rs.17.84 lakh & Rs.17.71 lakhs
- Bid Security : 1% of the amount put to tender
- Class of Contractor : 'D' & 'C'
- Period of Completion : 02 (Two) Months to 01 (One) Month
- Other details as follows

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Bid Online	Last date & time of seeking tender clarification	Date & Time & Place of Opening of Tender
Executive Engineer, Nabarangpur Irrigation Division, Nabarangpur	EE-NID-03/2020-21 (01-02)	01.02.2021 (10.00 A.M.)	10.02.2021 (upto 05.00 P.M.)	11.02.2021 at 11.00 A.M. in the O/o. the EE, Nabarangpur Irrigation Division, Nabarangpur

Further details can be seen from the Government website: www.tendersodisha.gov.in.
Sd./- Executive Engineer
Nabarangpur Irrigation Division, Nabarangpur
OIPR-32361/11/0003/2021

FOCUS SINO-INDIAN RELATION

DECEITFUL NEIGHBOUR



While the United States and its allies were opposing the replacement of 'Republic of China' at the United Nations until 1971, India advocated the admission of 'People's Republic of China' to the UN and supported its membership in the Security Council (at the cost of India's membership to the UNSC)

Commanding Officer Colonel Santosh Babu. The whole world was shocked as China violated the three key bilateral agreements of 1993, 1996, 2013 regarding maintenance of peace and status quo on the disputed Line of Actual Control.

There was an intelligence warning from Indian side that China is using academics, scholars, businessmen, professionals and even journalists to mount intelligence operations in India. The warnings were proved true when the Delhi Police nabbed journalist Rajeev Sharma with a Chinese woman, Qing Shi, and a Nepalese man, Sher Singh, who were arrested on charges of spying and for passing on sensitive information to Chinese intelligence agencies in the in September 2020. Sharma was being paid around \$500 for each assignment and had received around Rs3 million since 2019.

In India, China has made about 40,300 cyber attacks in 2020 itself. Those were mainly aimed at denial of service, hijacking of Internet protocol and phishing. The Government of India banned several apps of China in 2020 as hacker groups in China were targeting Indian institutions like ministries, large businesses, media organisations and IT infrastructure. India topped the list of countries that were on the radar of Chinese hackers.

In another story, in 2017, Indian Air Force (IAF) made the details of its preliminary inquiry on the crash of its Sukhoi 30 Fighter. The investigation of IAF revealed that Sukhoi jet was downed by cyber weapons by China.

China is also driving a wedge between centuries-old Indo-Nepal relations to quietly colonise the Himalayan country and is insisting Nepal to take back the Gorkhas from India so that the Gorkha Regiment can be demolished. In this way, China has always proved to be treacherous as against the good will of India.

The writer is the Additional Sub-Collector, Cuttack-Sadar, Odisha. The views are personal.

Cultural and economic relations between China and India date back to ancient times – more than 2,000 years ago through the Silk Road. Using this route, Fa Hien had also come to India to study Buddhism.

India was among the first countries to recognise Communist China April 1, 1950 taking the People's Republic of China as the legitimate government of mainland and stating that Tibet was an inalienable part of it.

While the United States and its allies were opposing the replacement of 'Republic of China' at the United Nations until 1971, India advocated the admission of 'People's Republic of China' to the UN and its membership in the Security Council (at the cost of India's membership to the UNSC), despite the fact that the then Super Powers and other nations supported India's inclusion as the permanent member of the UNSC. India and China enunciated the 'Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence' known as 'Panchasheel' in 1954. On the other hand China has been quashing India's bid to brand terrorists, frequently terrorising the lives and properties of civilians of India, as global terrorists.

The objective of China had been always to annex northern part of India as Mao was considering Tibet to be the palm of China's right hand with Ladakh, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, and the North-East Frontier Agency (now known as Arunachal Pradesh) being its five fingers.

The most important issues of the conflict between both the countries are based on Aksai Chin and Mac Mohan Line. While Aksai Chin is a virtually uninhabited high-altitude wasteland crossed by the Xinjiang-Tibet Highway, the McMahon Line was related to the North East Frontier Agency.

Besides, Pakistan also helped China in its expansionist activity. The Shaksgam Valley or the Trans Karakoram Tract, a part of Hunza-Gilgit region of POK, is a disputed territory claimed by

India but controlled by Pakistan. The Valley was ceded to China by Pakistan in 1963 with the motive of making the issue of Jammu and Kashmir no more a bilateral one.

The irony is that no Chinese map showed Aksai Chin as its territory before 1920s. Historically, it was a part of Ladakh and British India since mid-19th century. China did not object to Ladakh or Aksai Chin being part of India until a couple of years after 1950, when Indian Constitution adopted the whole of Jammu and Kashmir as its integral territory. During the 1962 war, the Chinese militarily captured Aksai Chin. Even before that China had built a road across Aksai Chin by 1958, while India was busy with its noble ideas of "Non-Alliance" movement, "Panchsheel" and "Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai" concepts.

The disputed McMahon Line was part of the 1914 Simla Convention signed between British India and Tibet, the border country of British India then. China has never accepted that border. The irony is that at the same time it recognised the McMahon Line in the case of Burma but not when it came to the Indian border.

In Nathu La pass and Chao La pass, alongside the border of the Himalayan Kingdom of Sikkim, an Indian protectorate at that time. During the Indo-Pakistan War of 1965 China issued an ultimatum to India to vacate the Nathu La pass and encouraged Sikkim's population to break away from India decisively and declare independence. Eventually, in 1975, Sikkim did the opposite and voted in a referendum to join India as a state.

Doklam, a territory near Bhutan, claimed by both China as well as India's ally Bhutan, is strategically located close to the Siliguri Corridor. In 2017 the Chinese tried extending an existing road southwards in Doklam. Indian troops, with the help of their Bhutanese counterparts, objected to the move, resulting in stand-off. Road construction would have brought the Chinese military closer to the Indian border in West Bengal and exposed the Jamphri ridge to the possibility of Chinese presence, creating serious security vulnerability for the Siliguri Corridor.

On June 15 2020, China had planned an attack on Indian troops in eastern Ladakh's Galwan. India lost 20 soldiers, including



Dr Sujata Subhadarshini Nayak

INDIA WAS AMONG THE FIRST COUNTRIES TO RECOGNISE COMMUNIST CHINA APRIL 1, 1950 TAKING THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA AS THE LEGITIMATE GOVERNMENT OF MAINLAND AND STATING THAT TIBET WAS AN INALIENABLE PART OF IT

Be grateful for all ordeals, they are the shortest way to the Divine.

THE MOTHER



Corrections in order

The stock markets are into a tailspin these days after a whirlwind surge over last one month or so. Extending its losing streak for the fifth day in a row, equity benchmark Sensex plunged 536 points Thursday. From lows of 25,639 on March 24 last year when the Centre announced the world's strictest lockdown, to an all time high of 50,181 on January 21 – it had been a phenomenal jump for the Sensex. The markets had rallied ahead of vaccinations and the surge held out as vaccinations expanded in phases. The rallies had even shrugged off sporadic news of adverse side-effects of the COVID-19 shots from across the country that included even fatalities. It was anticipated that the markets will hold ground right through the vaccinations. However, it was not to be. In the last five days, the Sensex has lost nearly 2,950 points – giving up all the gains of this year. Out of this, the last two days alone have seen a loss of 1500 points. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) putting out an impressive 11.5 per cent growth for India in 2021 – the highest for any major economy globally – did not support the markets.

The fall was due to heavy profit-booking by foreign funds (FIIs). Also, the market is overvalued from the perspective of PE multiple ratio and market cap to GDP ratio. In such situation, profit-booking is inevitable. The rally was not based on fundamentals, but grew on sentimental factors only. But, the more important factor leading to the sharp corrections is the anxieties building up before the Union Budget on Monday (February 1). It is feared that the government may affect a sharp hike in taxations to generate resources for the projected larger expenses for boosting healthcare and infrastructure. A rise in taxes will have a negative shadow on consumption and would eventually retard growth. Weak global cues have also impinged on Indian markets. New coronavirus variants forcing many countries to go for lockdowns and the frustrations over vaccine distribution must have spooked the global equity markets. Lack of clarity on President Biden's policy is also working negatively on investors' sentiments. The December quarter earnings have already been factored in the current surge in the equities. A poor performance by the market heavyweight Reliance Industries may have let down the investors – leading to a 2 per cent fall in the company's shares. Going ahead analysts are concerned about the third quarter margins of companies.

The Union Budget coming on the heels of the debilitating pandemic will be a highly anticipated affair. Massive spend to be canalised for healthcare and allied sectors will force the government to think out of box to generate revenues. Thus the general belief is that the government will raise both direct and indirect taxes. The Centre has very little elbow room. It may choose to be conservative on the fiscal front and will target a lower deficit. However, the huge asking rate will skew the GDP projections. This must have prompted investors to hit the exit button before it becomes too late. Problems like massive joblessness and tepid consumption are the challenges facing the Indian economy. As per a CMIE survey, about 1.5 crore jobs were lost in the manufacturing sector during the first quarter of the lockdown (April-June). The service sector also took a hit which is yet to go back to the pre-COVID levels. The resilient farming sector is seeing disruptions. The government is yet to find a solution to the raging farmer protests that have bugged the Centre for over two months now. All this and some more will weigh heavily on the government ahead of the Union Budget.

WISDOM CORNER

I wake up every morning and think to myself, 'how far can I push this company in the next 24 hours.'
LEAH BUSQUE

If people doubt how far you can go, go so far that you can't hear them anymore.
MICHELE RUIZ

We need to accept that we won't always make the right decisions, that we'll screw up royally sometimes – understanding that failure is not the opposite of success, it's part of success.
ARIANNA HUFFINGTON

WORDSWORTH

■ Brobdingnagian

It is given to only a limited number of people to add a word to the language, or at least to have been given the credit for doing so. But Jonathan Swift originated eight in his most famous and enduring book, Gulliver's Travels, of 1726. The second part of the book, in which Lemuel Gulliver meets the huge inhabitants of Brobdingnag, has bequeathed us this awkward adjective that refers to a gigantic person or thing; these days it can be used for anything huge, not just people. Here's a typical example of its use, from The Warlord of Mars by Edgar Rice Burroughs: "When compared to the relatively small red man and his breed of thoats they assume Brobdingnagian proportions that are truly appalling". His satirical descriptions of the political vices and follies of the miniature people of Lilliput suggested Lilliputian for people who may be small either in stature or in mind. That race's tedious and irrelevant arguments over which is the right end from which to eat an egg have led to big-endian and little-endian for controversies over nothing at all; both terms have been taken up in recent decades by computer scientists to describe ways of organising digital data. One of the more common of all his invented words from the book is yahoo for the race of brutes in the shape of men in a later part of the book, which has survived as an abusive term for any person considered uncivilised. The race of intelligent horses in the same section also gave us the rare word houyhnhnm, which Swift invented to echo the sound of a neigh. Yet another unusual term is Struldbrug (with its even less common adjective Struldbruggian), for the race of people, unable to die, who survived in a state of senseless decrepitude, a fate which has become one of the great fears of modern life.

■ Bromopnea

You might instead call it malodor, halitosis or fetor ex ore (which is just Latin for "bad smell from the mouth"), but bromopnea is the most technically arcane term for the condition. If it reminds you of the element bromine that's appropriate, since both words come from Greek bromos, a stink (the element was given that name because it has an irritating smell). A closely similar medical term is bromidrosis for strong-smelling sweat. In our case, the second element is from Greek pneo, breathing, which also turns up in words such as apnoea, temporary cessation of breathing, often while asleep, and tachypnoea, abnormally rapid breathing (pneumonia is a closely related word, from pneumon, lung). In the UK, the spellings ending in -pnoea are still usual, but the US forms in -pnea are increasingly common, and bromopnea never seems to be spelled any other way.

LOL GENIUS VS STUPID

A proud and confident genius makes a bet with an idiot. The genius says, "Hey idiot, every question I ask you that you don't know the answer, you have to give me \$5. And if you ask me a question and I can't answer yours I will give you \$5,000." The idiot says, "Okay." The genius then asks, "How many continents are there in the world?"



The idiot doesn't know and hands over the \$5. The idiot says, "Now me ask: what animal stands with two legs but sleeps with three?" The genius tries and searches very hard for the answer but gives up and hands over the \$5000. The genius says, "Dang it, I lost. By the way, what was the answer to your question?" The idiot hands over \$5.

SPECTRUM FIGHTING PANDEMICS

Promise and peril of bio-revolution

Matthias Evers & Michael Chui

AS A RECENT REPORT FROM THE MCKINSEY GLOBAL INSTITUTE MAKES CLEAR, CURRENT BREAKTHROUGHS IN BIOLOGICAL SCIENCE AND ADVANCED DATA ANALYTICS COULD HELP US SOLVE MAJOR HUMAN CHALLENGES

Last November, the world cheered the news that three gene-based COVID-19 vaccines – one developed by German biotech company BioNTech in collaboration with Pfizer; another by US-based biotech firm Moderna, and a third by the University of Oxford and AstraZeneca – had proved effective in clinical trials. But in October, researchers revealed that off-target effects of the CRISPR-Cas9 gene-editing tool used to repair a blindness-causing gene in the early stages of human embryo development often eliminated an entire chromosome or a large part of it.

The two announcements, coming just a month apart, illustrate the promise and peril of biological engineering.

As a recent report from the McKinsey Global Institute makes clear, current breakthroughs in biological science and advanced data analytics could help us solve major human challenges, from reducing climate risk and strengthening food security to fighting pandemics. But realising the revolution's potentially huge benefits will require us to think carefully about how to mitigate the potentially severe risks.

The scope of today's bio-innovation wave is large. Some 60% of physical inputs to the world economy are either already biological, or could be produced using biological processes in the future. Nylon, for example, can already be made using genetically-engineered yeast, rather than petrochemicals. Many such "biouroutes" to production potentially will use less energy and water, and generate fewer greenhouse-gas (GHG) emissions. Just 400 biological applications currently in the pipeline could reduce annual average GHG emissions by as much as 9% by 2050.

CRISPR-Cas9 stands out as an increasingly accessible technology for manipulating genetic material, and is complemented by rapid and low-cost genetic sequencing and advances in data analytics that enable scientists to understand biological processes better. Our deepening knowledge of biology – genes, microbiomes, and neural signals – is making it increasingly possible to "engineer life."

But modifying biology is inherently risky. With CRISPR kits now available for sale on the internet, anyone with some degree of biological knowledge could potentially create and release a new living entity, including harmful bacteria or viruses.

Biological organisms are self-replicating, self-sustaining, and interrelated. Moreover, as the rapid global spread of COVID-19 has demonstrated, they do not respect political borders. For example, so-called gene drives applied to infectious-disease vectors could save many lives, but we may not be able to control them. The next generation of genetically-edited mosquitoes in one field experiment in Brazil were supposed to die, but are still breeding five years later.

Another concern is data privacy. The rapid spread of digital technologies has triggered an intense debate about technology companies' use of personal data, such as that relating to purchasing habits and social-media activity. But access to biological data from our bodies and brains represents another level of intimate knowledge.

Moreover, the bio-revolution could entrench inequality, at least while applications such as breakthrough therapies, performance enhancements, and reproductive selection remain expensive and thus accessible only to the well-off. MGI estimates that about 70% of the reduction in disease in the next 10-20 years could be in high-income countries, despite the fact

that they collectively account for only around 30% of the global disease burden.

Thus, unless managed carefully, the risks of some new biological applications may outweigh the potential benefits. Scientists cannot pursue innovation in a vacuum: society's concerns matter, and innovators must exercise consistent and effective oversight. Fortunately, they have a track record of doing so.

Back in 1975, for example, prominent scientists, lawyers, and medical professionals gathered at the Asilomar Conference in California to draw up voluntary guidelines to ensure the safety of recombinant DNA technology. More recently, the American biochemist Jennifer Doudna, who, together with French microbiologist Emmanuelle Charpentier, was awarded the 2020 Nobel Prize in Chemistry for inventing CRISPR, responded to the tool's use to gene-edit twin human embryos by calling for stricter regulation of the technology.

Matthias Evers is a senior partner in McKinsey's Hamburg office and Michael Chui is a partner at the McKinsey Global Institute.

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Road rage

Sir, A film director was in the news recently for road rage. The infamous murder case involving a cricketer-turned-politician that happened many years ago still rankles. There is not a single motorist in India who is unfamiliar with the dangerous 'road rage'. The 'powerful', the 'rich' and the hooligans are the worst types of road rage perpetrators. One cannot win an argument with them; better to ignore and march ahead. Studies have indicated almost sixty five per cent of Indian drivers are stressed out. Most of them lose their temper at least once per day. Anger is a powerful emotion, but not to be used in a negative way. The National Crime Bureau (NCB) has said approximately forty thousand Indians are subjected to road rage every year. Road rage may injure a fellow-driver or, in the extreme, snatch the latter's life away. A lot of concerned citizens have demanded road rage be included as a punishable offence under the Motor Vehicle Act. However, it is true that most road rage cases do not reach the police. This may embolden a habitual offender.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

Wither zero tolerance

Sir, Persons cheating tax agencies are nothing new but when government department cheats a tax department than it is certainly a horrendous affair. The government agencies spend tribal development fund worth crores. Recently, officials found themselves in rough times for passing bills worth crores of 'fake, non-existing firms'. Work files with such huge number of fake vouchers, bills, and invoices of non-existing firms were disbursed in collusion with department engineers. How such grave cheating didn't catch the attention of the higher-ups needs to be inquired. Such practices are rampant in all the 21 ITDAs spread over the tribal districts to accelerate tribal development work as the GST enforcement wing has assessed tax evasion worth Rs50 lakh during the last three years. This speaks forgery and cheating which are punishable under different Sections of IPC for misusing funds meant for tribal development. Now the GST enforcement wing has detected that several work bills that were passed were on fake bill and vouchers. This puts a big question mark on the role of the top officials steering tribal development in districts. It also raises fingers at the zero tolerance to corruption and transparency in administering tribal development fund pumped by Centre. Over and above the complete silence of our tribal leaders on this issue is surprising.

Janaki Ballav Dash, MAYURBHANJ

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

B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

Goa mines' auction awaits SC decision

THE MINING ISSUE HAS BEEN HANGING FIRE IN GOA EVER SINCE THE SUPREME COURT, IN 2018, CITED IRREGULARITIES IN THE PROCESSES ADOPTED BY THE STATE GOVT TO RENEW 88 MINING LEASES

AGENCIES

Panaji, Jan 28: Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant Thursday said that the state government could only take a call on the auctioning of mining leases after the matter is decided by the Supreme Court.

"The decision on auctioning of mining blocks could only be taken after the finalisation of the matter before the Supreme Court," Sawant said in a written reply to a question by independent MLA Prasad Gaonkar, at the ongoing winter session of the Legislative Assembly.

The Chief Minister, who also holds the mines portfolio, said that the state government in consultation with the Centre has already filed review petitions in the Apex court urging it to take a relook at its 2018 order which had quashed 88 mining leases in Goa, citing irregularities in the lease renewal process. "The same are pending before the Supreme Court," Sawant told the Assembly. The Chief Minister said that his government was not in a position to give a timeframe to the state's beleaguered mining industry because the matter was in the



domain of the apex court.

The mining issue has been hanging fire in Goa, ever since the Supreme Court in 2018, citing irregularities in the processes adopted by the state government to renew 88 mining leases scrapped the leases. As a result of the order all fresh ore extraction activity has stopped, bringing the industry to a standstill. The stoppage in 2018 is the second time in less than a decade that all mining in the state has come to a standstill. It was banned the first time in 2012 after a judicial commission exposed a Rs 35,000 crore mining scam, indicting top min-

ing companies as well as politicians and bureaucrats.

A BRIEF INSIGHT

Mining has been an important part of Goa's economy. The local names involved in mining, Sesa Goa, the Timblo, the Chowgules, the Dempos, the Salgaocars, today own and run a lot of businesses and enterprises in Goa. Ranging from football clubs to schools and colleges to real estate and construction, nearly every industry in Goa has the stamp of the mining families.

The state's political system is not untouched by mining either. It is deeply entwined with the mining

industry. Goa's first chief minister, Dayanand Balkrishna Bhandodkar, fondly known as Bhausaheb Bhandodkar, was also a wealthy mine owner. According to media reports, investigations have revealed that mining companies donated many a time to BJP as well as Congress in the last 15 years.

But decades of iron ore mining took a toll on the state's local ecology and threw up numerous instances of mining-related laws being violated. The 2013 report of the Justice MB Shah Commission, which was formed to look into illegal mining across India, revealed in

its report for Goa a number of illegalities carried out by the mining companies, including mines, being operational even after their leases had expired and mines extracting ore beyond permissible limits.

This caused pollution and accidents, destroyed farming land and water supply of villages in the surrounding area. The report held that there was a scam of Rs 350 billion in Goa's mining business. This report formed the bedrock of subsequent litigations in the Supreme Court.

Between, 2012 and 2018, the case saw many ups and downs before the apex court in February 2018 quashed 88 mining leases in violation of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 (the MMDR Act), the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.

Later, in August 2019, Vedanta Limited, which is one of the largest mining leaseholders in Goa approached the Bombay High Court demanding a declaration that its mining lease, as per the provisions of the amended MMDR Act 2015, was valid for 50 years and sought extension of mining leases till 2037.

Draft rules to ban locals' entry in Goa casinos are under study



The Goa Gambling Act governs casinos

An amendment is required in the legislation to ban entry of local residents in casinos, which are popular with tourists

Goa has seven off-shore casinos in the Mandovi and a dozen on-shore gambling outlets operating in different five-star hotels in the tourist state

AGENCIES

Panaji, Jan 28: Draft rules banning entry of Goa residents in casinos are under consideration of the state government, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant told the assembly Thursday.

The Goa Gambling Act governs casinos and an amendment is required in the legislation to ban entry of local residents in casinos, which are popular with tourists.

Sanguem MLA Prasad Gaonkar sought to know from the government whether rules banning Goans in casinos are in place.

Draft rules banning Goans in casinos are under consideration of the government, the Chief Minister said in a written reply.

The then Chief Minister

Manohar Parrikar had assured that Goans would be banned from entering casinos by amending the Gambling Act.

In another question, Gaonkar sought to know the status of government's decision to shift off-shore casinos (operating from vessels) away from the Mandovi river near Panaji. Sawant said the home department has allowed the off-shore casinos to operate in the river Mandovi till March 31, 2021, or till an alternate site is notified by the Government, whichever is earlier, subject to condition that such license is in force during such period.

Goa has seven off-shore casinos in the Mandovi and a dozen on-shore gambling outlets operating in different five-star hotels.

A MILLION-DOLLAR SMILE



THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan with the Minister for Local Self Governments AC Moideen (right) and Devaswom Minister Kadakampally Surendran (left) during the house warming ceremony of a house, constructed under Life Mission project, in Thiruvananthapuram, Thursday. A total of 2.5 lakh houses have been completed through this project by the LDF government.

'LIFE Mission' (Livelihood, Inclusion, Financial Empowerment) envisages not just giving a roof for those who do not have houses, but also a complete rehabilitation package for the homeless and landless in the state, said the government.

Declaring the completion of 2,50,547 houses across the state, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said it was a matter of pride for his government and their objective was to provide a home for all

deserved people.

The government has also plans to construct additional 1.5 lakh new houses this year itself and the state is confidently marching towards the goal of zero homeless Kerala, he said in a Facebook post.

"Owning a home by his or her own is a dream of any human being. One of the most significant goals of this government was to stand with people to make this dream a reality," he said.

Termining LIFE Mission as an "unparalleled housing development project," the CM said it was an example of the government's vision of how development should be done. The government was paying great attention to the third phase of the ambitious initiative, he said adding that land has been identified for the construction of 85 complexes at this time.

Of this, the construction of five building complexes would be completed within two months, Vijayan said.

One or two corporates 'controlling' the nation

AGENCIES

Thiruvananthapuram, Jan 28: Congress leader and Wayanad MP Rahul Gandhi Thursday alleged that "one or two corporates" are controlling the country and added that this is not good for democracy.

Gandhi said the farmers of the country have still not got a clear picture on the farm laws and the agitation could flare up again.

He was speaking at a public function in Wayanad.

The former Congress chief said that the Congress and UDF would sweep the upcoming Assembly polls in the Kerala and added that several new faces will be contesting the election.

Gandhi, who is in the state for the past couple of days, had interacted



with girl students Wednesday and even asked a schoolgirl to translate his speech. He had called upon the girls students to be independent and equal to boys and asked them to be active in all walks of life.

Gandhi was also involved in a series of discussions with senior state Congress leaders and its ally the Indian Union Muslim League regarding the sharing of seats. He is keen that a large number of women and youth contest the next election on Congress tickets.

Oppn trains gun on CM, uproar in Goa Assembly

AGENCIES

Panaji, Jan 28: Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant Thursday said if required, an all-party delegation from the state can meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi to discuss the Mahadayi river dispute.

The Chief Minister was responding to a calling attention motion raised by the Opposition over the issue of diversion of Mahadayi river water by neighbouring Karnataka.

The House witnessed a heated discussion on the issue, with Leader of Opposition Digambar Kamat, Goa Forward Party MLA Vijai Sardesai and Independent MLA



MAHADAYI DISPUTE

Rohan Khaunte questioning the state government's seriousness in the matter.

To this, Sawant said, "The interest of state is not above the party or any other aspects. We will not compromise on the issue."

If required, the state government is ready to take an all-party delegation to meet the Prime Minister to seek his intervention, he said.

Sawant appealed to members of the Opposition and the ruling party to maintain unanimity on the issue cutting across the party ideologies.

The Chief Minister admitted that Karnataka had started diverting water from the river, despite the fact that Special Leave Petitions (SLPs) filed by Goa, Karnataka and Maharashtra are pending before the Supreme Court.

Earlier, State Water Resources Department Minister Filipe Neri Rodrigues said, "Goa has lost the water but not the case."

The coastal state will successfully fight the case before the Apex Court, he said.

Sardesai demanded that the lawyers representing Goa in the SC should be changed, as they allowed the notification of award of Mahadayi Water Dispute Tribunal on their own without consulting the state.

Khaunte further claimed the diversion of water will not only increase the salinity of the river in Goa, it will also adversely impact the state's flora and fauna.

During lockdown, 6K stranded Goans contacted NRI Commissioner's office

AGENCIES

Panaji, Jan 28: Over 6,000 Goans, who were stranded abroad during the coronavirus-induced lockdown, had contacted the office of NRI Commissioner in Goa, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant told the state Legislative Assembly Thursday.

Sawant was responding to a question tabled by Goa Forward Party MLA Vijai Sardesai seeking to know how many people from abroad (NRI, OCI, other Indians stuck in foreign countries) had contacted the NRI Commissioner's office during



COVID-19 pandemic (from March 2020 till date).

As many as 6,544 persons from abroad had contacted through reg-

istration, the Chief Minister said. Most of these people sought assistance with procedure for repatriation amid the travel restrictions imposed by the Centre in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, he said. "Some expected the Goa government to arrange for chartered flights for repatriation," he said.

The office of the Commissioner for NRI Affairs guided people on the procedure to be followed and updated them about the guidelines issued by the Central and the state governments amid the pandemic, Sawant added.

Kerala's intervention results in 'jumbo' miracles

CAPTIVE ELEPHANTS' DEATHS IN KERALA HAVE HALVED DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS

AGENCIES

Thiruvananthapuram, Jan 28: The elephant lovers in Kerala are elated as the number of deaths of captive jumbos have halved in the past two years as compared to the earlier periods.

While 34 captive elephants died in 2018, the figures came down to 19 in 2020. With the state banning the sale and trafficking of captive elephants, statistically there had to be a slight increase in the number of deaths of the pachyderms. However, a dip has been witnessed in the number of captive elephant deaths.

The statistical figures of elephant deaths in the state in 2018, 2019 and 2020 are 34, 19 and 19, respectively.

It is to be noted that the state forest department has stringently en-

forced the provisions of the Kerala Captive Elephants (Management and Maintenance) Rules 2012, which include field visits by forest officials and recording the movement of elephants by introducing a movement register.

However, experts in the field of elephant studies are of the opinion that there has to be a more healthy intervention from the forest and district administrations as the death statistics during the lockdown period had raised some alarms.

Venkitachalam of Heritage Animal Task Force told IANS, "After the state banned the parade of elephants on March 16, 2020 following the Covid-19 outbreak, as many as 16 elephants have died and most of them were in the prime of age as compared to the older pachyderms which had died earlier. An



After the state banned the parade of elephants March 16, 2020 following the Covid-19 outbreak, as many as 16 elephants have died and most of them were in the prime of age as compared to the older pachyderms which had died earlier. An urgent intervention of officials is required to reduce the number of deaths

urgent intervention of officials is required to reduce the number of deaths." Veterinary doctors are of

the opinion that during the Covid lockdown period, captive elephants were idle, leading to a reduction in

their walking habits.

Prafulla Chandran, a veterinary doctor based out of Wayanad and a specialist in captive elephants, said, "An elephant needs to walk a minimum of 4 km per day or for an hour. If they don't walk at least this much, it may lead to diseases like arthritis which can become a major cause of worry, even leading to fatalities."

"Walk and eat is the basis of elephant life and if the elephants are not getting proper exercise, it will lead to the failure of vital systems," he added. However, the elephant lovers in Kerala are happy with the dip in the number of elephant deaths. Ramesh Menon, who owns several captive elephants, said, "There is indeed a fall in the number of deaths of captive elephants and it is the result of the care undertaken by us."

11K Kerala govt offices have turned green: CM

AGENCIES

Thiruvananthapuram, Jan 28: Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has said that 11,163 government offices in the state have attained total cleanliness and green status. He said that while the target of the Haritha mission of the state government was for making 10,000 government offices green, 11,163 turned green following the active campaign by the department.

Vijayan said that the advantage of clean and green offices is a deposit for the future of the people of the state and added that the model created by the government offices will have a major impact on the people.

The 'Clean Kerala Company' under the state government had collected 336 ton of non degradable

waste while 152 ton of non-degradable waste was collected from 62 local bodies with the support of a private company

Minister for Local Bodies, AC Moideen said that the plan of the state government is to convert all the local bodies into zero waste institutions.

Around 14,473 offices were subjected to grading based on the zero waste in these institutions and 11,163 got a green office certificate. 3410 offices got 'A' grade, 3925 offices 'B' grade and 3828 offices got 'C' grade.

Haritha Kerala mission executive vice-chairperson, Dr TN Seema while speaking to media persons said, "It's been a great development and our mission is actively working for achieving the state turn totally green and clean."

national

of the day quote

Republic Day is a day of celebration of the Constitution. When you make laws and when these laws are against the fundamentals of the Constitution. For the farm bills, farmers were never consulted

The A P J Abdul Kalam Study Centre at IIM-Shillong, which is supported by the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER), will help in the implementation of the new National Education Policy (NEP) in the Northeast

After 6 hours of talks, I was again given a written assurance about the decision. But no concrete action has been taken on it till date. Assurance is a promise. If the government does not keep it (promise) then how will the country and society get a bright future

SHORT TAKES

Police deployment at Ghazipur site

New Delhi: There was heavy deployment of security personnel at the Delhi-Uttar Pradesh's Ghazipur border, where farmers from Uttar Pradesh have been protesting against the three farm laws for last two months. Meanwhile, Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) spokesperson Rakesh Tikait, who has been named in the Delhi Police FIR for the January 26 violence during the 'Kisan Gantantra parade' also made his appearance at the site and said that he will raise the issue of snapping of water and electricity supply at the site with the administration.

Two burnt alive

Amaravati: Two persons were burnt alive Thursday when the car in which they were travelling hit an electric pole and caught fire in Jaggampet mandal in East Godavari district, police said. Jaggampet Police Inspector V Suresh said three others who were sitting in the back seat managed to escape from the vehicle before it caught fire.

JeM militant held

Srinagar: Security forces Thursday arrested a militant of Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) outfit in Bandipora district of Jammu and Kashmir, police said. The militant, identified as Imtiaz Ahmad Khan from Bandipora's Panzjigam area, was apprehended at a special checkpoint established by security forces following a tip-off, a police spokesman said.

Meghalaya to reopen colleges Feb 1

Shillong: Colleges in Meghalaya, closed since the lockdown in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, will reopen on February 1, state Education Minister Lakhmen Rymbui said Thursday.

Dalit family attacked

Balia (UP): Members of a Dalit family were allegedly attacked and a statue of B R Ambedkar was damaged in the Nagra area here, police said. One Suresh Ram filed a complaint with the police alleging that on Wednesday night when he and his family members were sitting around a bonfire, four people belonging to an upper caste attacked them and also damaged the statue of B R Ambedkar installed at the Ambedkar Park, Assistant Superintendent of Police Sanjay Yadav said.



The schedule for class 10 and 12 board exams will be announced February 2 RAMESH POKHRIYAL 'NISHANK' | EDUCATION MINISTER

SHAURYA AWARDEE KILLING: POLICE NAB SECOND SHOOTER

In a major breakthrough, the Punjab Police Thursday said it has arrested the second shooter, Inderjeet Singh, involved in the sensational killing of Shaurya Chakra awardee, Comrade Balwinder Singh on October 16 last year



China's hegemony in Asia unacceptable: India

AGENCIES New Delhi, Jan 28: In a clear warning to China, India Thursday said that Chinese hegemony in Asia is unacceptable.

Addressing scholars at the 13th All India Conference of China Studies, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said, "The India-China relationship is today truly at a crossroads. Choices that are made will have profound repercussions, not just for the two nations but for the entire world."

The minister said India-China relations were dependent on three 'mutuals' and eight principles. One of the principles, he said was that while both nations are committed to a multi-polar world, "there should be a recognition that a multi-polar Asia is one of its essential constituents."

Among other principles, he said the agreements already reached must be adhered to in their entirety, both in letter and spirit. Where the handling of the border areas are concerned, the LAC must be strictly observed and respected, any attempt to unilaterally change the status quo is completely unacceptable, he said.

Also, peace and tranquillity in the border areas is the basis for development of relations in other domains. "If they are disturbed, so inevitably will the rest of the relationship. This is quite apart from the issue of progress in the boundary negotiations," he said.

The fifth principle he said that is obviously that each state will have its own interests, concerns and priorities, but sensitivity to them cannot be one-sided. At the end of the day, relationships between major states are reciprocal in nature. Sixth, as rising powers, each will



have their own set of aspirations and their pursuit too cannot be ignored. Seventh, there will always be divergences and differences but their management is essential to the ties. And eighth, civilisational states like India and China must always take the long view.

Whether it is India's immediate concerns or more distant prospects, the fact is that the development of our ties can only be based on the three 'mutuals' - mutual respect, mutual sensitivity and mutual interests, Jaishankar said.

"Any expectation that they can be brushed aside, and that life can carry on undisturbed despite the situation at the border, that is simply not realistic. There are discussions underway through various mechanisms on disengagement at the border areas. But if ties are to be steady and progress, policies must take into account the learnings of the last three decades," he added.

Recalling the factors that led to the deterioration in bilateral relations, Jaishankar said, "For all the differences and disagreements that we may have had on the boundary, the central fact was that border areas still remained fundamentally peaceful. The last loss of life be-

fore 2020 was, in fact, as far back as 1975."

"That is why the events in eastern Ladakh last year have profoundly disturbed the relationship because they not only signalled a disregard for commitments about minimising troop levels, but also showed a willingness to breach peace and tranquillity."

Arguing that the ability of India and China to work together will determine the Asian century, Jaishankar said, "At this time, it is equally important to recognise that their difficulties in doing so may well undermine it."

Given the "gravity" of India's situation with China, he did not have a definitive answer to offer at this point in time.

"Significantly, to date, we have yet to receive a credible explanation for the change in China's stance or reasons for massing of troops in the border areas. It is a different matter that our own forces have responded appropriately and held their own in very challenging circumstances. The issue before us is what the Chinese posture signals, how it evolves, and what implications it may have for the future of our ties," he said.

Comedian Munawar Faruqui's bail plea rejected

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Indore, Jan 28: The Madhya Pradesh High Court on Thursday refused bail to comedian Munawar Faruqui who is accused of passing "indecent" remarks about Hindu deities during a show, and noted that to "promote harmony" is one of the constitutional duties.

Liberty of a person has to be "balanced" with his duties towards other citizens, Justice Rohit Arya of the Indore bench of the high court said, citing a Supreme Court ruling. The court also turned down the bail plea of Nalin Yadav, another accused in the case.

Faruqui and four others were arrested on January 1 following a complaint by a BJP MLA's son that objectionable remarks about Hindu deities and Union Home Minister Amit Shah were passed during a comedy show at a cafe in Indore on New Year's day. One more person was arrested subsequently.

Faruqui and Yadav are in judicial remand and lodged in Indore Central Jail. A magistrate's court and a sessions court rejected their bail pleas, following which they moved the high court.

In its order, the high court said it would not comment on merits of the case, but based on the material seized, the witnesses' statements and considering the fact that probe was going on, no case is made out for grant of bail. "Our country is a beautiful country and sets an example of coexistence amid diversities, be it religion,



BUDGET SESSION SET TO BE STORMY



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 28: The Budget session of Parliament beginning Friday is poised to be stormy with the Opposition set to attack the government over the three new farm legislations, amid an ongoing agitation by farmers.

The session will begin with the address of the President to the joint sitting of the two Houses Friday morning followed by the presentation of the Union Budget February 1. A total of 16 Opposition parties have announced a boycott of the President's address in solidarity with the farmers protesting the new farm laws, senior Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad said Thursday.

The 16 Opposition parties have also demanded a probe into the violence on Republic Day in Delhi. Opposition parties include the Congress, the NCP, Shiv Sena, DMK, Trinamool Congress, CPI, CPI-M and RJD. With a view to have a paperless Budget, all the documents and the Economic Survey would be made available online soon after the authenticated copies are laid on the Table of the House, the Lok Sabha Secretariat has said.

Like the last time, in this session too COVID-19 protocols will be in place and Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha will meet in shifts of five

hours each - with the upper house meeting in the morning and the lower house in the evening. Due to the pandemic, the Winter session was not held.

The Question Hour also makes a comeback in this session. Due to paucity of time, there was no Question Hour in the previous session. The Monsoon session also saw the two Houses working on Saturdays and Sundays. But this time, Parliament will not sit on weekends. Private Members' business which usually takes place on Friday afternoons has also made a comeback in the Budget session, according to Lok Sabha secretariat. In the previous session, the Private Members' business was not taken up. Members introduce their own bills and resolutions during this period which are debated by the House. During the session the government will also push to convert ordinances issued recently into laws. An ordinance has to be converted into a law within 42 days of the beginning of the session, else it lapses. The ordinances issued recently include The Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas Ordinance 2020, The Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Ordinance, 2020 and The Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation (Amendment) Ordinance, 2021.

Bengal govt passes resolution against new farm laws

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Jan 28: The West Bengal Thursday became the sixth state to pass a resolution against the three contentious farm laws enacted by the Centre, even as the opposition BJP staged a walkout from the assembly amid "Jai Shri Ram" slogans.

State Parliamentary Affairs Minister Partha Chatterjee moved the resolution under rule 169 urging the centre that the three laws-the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020; the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020; and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020-be repealed.

West Bengal assembly is the sixth to pass such a resolution after Punjab, Rajasthan, Chattisgarh, Delhi and Kerala.

While the first three are ruled by the Congress, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) is in power in Delhi and the Left Front is ruling Kerala.

While speaking on the resolution, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said that the centre should

either take back the new laws or step down. The CPI(M) and the Congress supported the resolution, but demanded that the state government withdraw similar laws it had passed a few years back. Rule 169 of the assembly empowers the state government to pilot a resolution in the house. BJP MLAs led by its legislature party leader Manoj Tigga opposed the resolution and staged a walkout shouting "Jai Shri Ram" slogans.

Speaking on the resolution amid vociferous protests by the BJP lawmakers, Banerjee demanded that Prime Minister Narendra Modi convene an all-party meeting to discuss the process of withdrawal of the new agri laws.

The assembly witnessed unruly scenes after the resolution was moved, with BJP MLAs rushing to the well of the house, claiming the TMC government has launched a "misinformation" campaign against the farm legislations. "We oppose the anti-farmer laws. We demand their immediate withdrawal. Either the centre should withdraw the laws or step down," the chief minister said.

MATTER OF FAITH



Devotees perform rituals at Sangam on the occasion of Paush Purnima, during the annual 'Magh Mela', in Prayagraj PTI PHOTO

'Own up if your data is hacked'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 28: The hacker behind some of the biggest breaches in India in the recent times, including grocery delivery platform Bigbasket and photo-editing app Pixlr, has come out of the woods and for ShinyHunters, the companies in India need to take full responsibility if their data is hacked for the users to maintain their trust in them.

In a chat with independent cyber security researcher Rajshikhar Rajaharia, a copy of which has been shared with IANS, ShinyHunters said taking responsibility must be the first thing Indian firms should do when a data breach takes place.

"They have no choice but to take responsibility (about data breaches) when their database is hacked. No one cares about data breaches unless the data is yours,"

said the hacker who goes by the name of ShinyHunters.

ShinyHunters has been involved in several data breaches recently, including allegedly leaking sensitive data of nearly 3.25 lakh users of Delhi-NCR based global cryptocurrency exchange and wallet, BuyUcoin, on the Dark Web. The hacker has also leaked 19 lakh user records stolen from free online photo editing application Pixlr.

India's Covid-19 vaccinations to stretch to late 2022

WHILE VACCINATION PROGRAMME CURRENTLY UNDERWAY HAVE RAISED HOPE OF BEATING THE PANDEMIC, UNEQUAL DISTRIBUTION OF VACCINES, ALONG WITH PRODUCTION ISSUES, HAS BECOME A MAJOR PAIN POINT

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 28: While India has already given Covid-19 vaccine doses to over 20 lakh people as the first phase of the drive continues, a new study has said that the vaccination programme against the pandemic will stretch to late 2022.

Similar will be the scenario for most middle-income countries, including China, said the report by the Economist Intelligence Unit, the research division of the Economist Group.

While vaccination programme currently underway have raised hope of beating the pandemic, unequal distribution of vaccines, along

with production issues, has become a major pain point.

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres on Wednesday reiterated his call for equitable access to Covid-19 vaccines as the global caseload has surpassed the 100 million mark, another grim milestone as the pandemic rages on.

"Most developing countries will not have widespread access to the shots before 2023 at the earliest," Agathe Demarais, Director of the Economist Intelligence Unit, said in its study on Wednesday.

"Some of these countries - particularly poorer ones with a young demographic profile - may well lose the motivation to distribute vac-



cines, especially if the disease has spread widely or if the associated costs prove too high." The study showed that more than

85 poor countries will not have widespread access to Covid-19 vaccines before 2023.

The research noted that Russia and China are trying to bolster their global status through vaccine diplomacy.

While the UK, the US and most countries in the European Union are likely to achieve the goal of vaccinating their priority groups by end of March, other rich countries are expected to achieve the same by end of June.

For the past 21 days, the country has been recording less than 20,000 new infections daily. Also, the death toll remained below the 300-mark for the past 31 days.

On January 19, India had reported 10,064 new cases, the lowest so far this year. Last year, the lowest was recorded on June 3 at 9,633 cases.

The nationwide immunisation drive began on January 16 after the approval of two Covid vaccines - Covaxin and Covishield - in the country. As many as 23,55,979 beneficiaries have received the first dose of Covid vaccine in the first phase so far.

Therefore, the global economic recovery is expected to gain more momentum from the middle of this year. However, vaccination programme for most of the population will continue until mid-2022, said the study.



The farmers of the country have still not got a clear picture on the farm laws and the agitation could flare up again
RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

INTENSE COLD GRIPS KASHMIR VALLEY

The mercury plunged by several degrees across Kashmir as the valley was gripped by intense cold wave conditions Thursday, officials said



of the day quote

Workers and supporters of BJP and AAP, and not the Congress, have been caught on camera waving the Nishan Sahib at the Red Fort

AMARINDER SINGH | PUNJAB CHIEF MINISTER

In the context of public health, clear transparent and timely sharing of crucial information on public health emergencies by undertaking rapid risk assessment is the key to striking a balance between public health and trade and also travel

HARSH VARDHAN | HEALTH MINISTER

India will soon make available many more COVID-19 vaccines to other countries after two Made-In-India jabs have already been introduced to the world

NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER

India fastest to reach 1mn Covid vaccinations



AGECNIUS

New Delhi, Jan 28: India is the fastest country to reach the one million vaccination mark, the government said Thursday while also commending 11 states and Union Territories for the speed of their coverage.

More than 25 lakh (2.5 million) people, including healthcare workers, have been vaccinated in the last 13 days, Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan, noting that India crossed one million mark in merely six days, the fastest amongst all the countries.

The US had crossed the crucial milestone in 10 days, followed by Spain in 12 days, Israel in 14 days, the UK in 18 days, Italy in 19 days, Germany in 20 days, and the UAE in 27 days. Bhushan said that 11 states have performed better in

vaccination coverage of the healthcare workers and have covered more than 30 per cent of the targeted beneficiaries.

This includes Lakshadweep, which has covered 83.4 per cent of the targeted beneficiaries, followed by Odisha (50.7 per cent), Haryana (50 per cent), and Andaman and Nicobar (48.3 per cent). "This is a commendable achievement," he said. Besides this, the Ministry pulled up six states who need to improve and speed up their vaccination drive. This includes Jharkhand which has only covered 14.7 per cent of the target and Delhi (15.7 per cent). The nationwide vaccination drive had started on January 16 with the help of two vaccines - Covaxin and Covishield. Initially, the government aims to vaccinate one crore healthcare workers and two crore frontline workers.

No new nCoV cases in one-fifth of country: Govt

Reviewing the novel coronavirus pandemic situation in the country, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan on Thursday said that India has flattened its COVID-19 graph and 146 districts have reported no new case of the viral disease in the last seven days. He said 146 of India's 718 districts have had no new cases for a week, 18 districts since 14 days, 6 districts since 21 days and 21 districts since the last 28 days.

INDIA RANKS 86

With more than 11 million Covid-19 cases, India has ranked 86 in a performance index of 98 countries for their handling of the Covid-19 pandemic, a report said Thursday. According to the performance index compiled by the Sydney-based Lowy Institute, neighbouring Sri Lanka was in the 10th position in handling the Covid-19 outbreak. The performance index showed that New Zealand handled the pandemic more effectively than any other country in the world, while Brazil sits at the bottom of the list. New Zealand was closely followed by Vietnam, Taiwan, Thailand and Cyprus, while the US was the fifth-worst performing country, The Sydney Morning Herald reported on Thursday.

SHOWING CREATIVITY



NCC cadets perform during their rally at Cariappa Parade Ground in Delhi Cantt

PTI PHOTO

India's rank slips in global corruption index

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 28: India's rank has slipped six places to 86th among 180 countries in a corruption perception index (CPI) in 2020.

For 2020, Transparency International (TI)'s corruption perception index was released Thursday.

The index, which ranks 180 countries and territories by their perceived levels of public sector corruption according to experts and business people, uses a scale of 0 to 100, where 0 is highly corrupt and 100 is very

This year, New Zealand and Denmark were ranked at first position with scores of 88. Somalia and South Sudan were ranked lowest at 179th position with scores of 12

clean. India's rank is 86 out of 180 nations with a score of 40.

"India was ranked at 80th position out of 180 countries in 2019. The CPI score for India is

constant this year as well as the previous year's score," the index said.

India is still very low on corruption Index, the report said, noting that experts feel the CPI does not reflect the actual corruption level in any country.

The integrity score determines the corruption situation of a country. This year, New Zealand and Denmark were ranked at first position with scores of 88. Somalia and South Sudan were ranked lowest at 179th position with scores of 12.

SHORT TAKES

Four killed in road mishap

Rajgarh (MP): Four labourers were killed and seven injured when the vehicle they were travelling in collided with a container truck on Agra-Mumbai National Highway in Madhya Pradesh's Rajgarh district Thursday, police said. The victims hailing from Uttar Pradesh were on their way to Malegaon in Maharashtra for work, when the accident took place near Udankhedhi village amid poor visibility due to fog, Pachore police station in-charge D P Lohia said.

Cold wave prevails in MP

Bhopal: Large parts of Madhya Pradesh are reeling under a cold wave, with Khajuraho, a popular tourist destination in Chhatarpur district recording the lowest minimum temperature of three degrees Celsius, the IMD said Thursday. It said that 24 weather stations in the state recorded minimum temperature in the range of three to 10 degrees Celsius in the last 24 hours ending 8.30 am. The India Meteorological Department's (IMD) forecast Thursday said that severe cold wave conditions are likely to continue at isolated places in Chhatarpur and Datia districts till Friday morning.

Ex-Pondy Cong president joins BJP

New Delhi: Former Puducherry Congress president A Namassivayam and another party leader E Theppainthan, who recently resigned as MLA from the assembly, joined the BJP on Thursday, in a boost to the saffron party in the poll-bound union territory. The two leaders joined the BJP here in the presence of its national general secretary Arun Singh.

Quake hits Delhi

New Delhi: A low intensity earthquake measuring 2.8 on the Richter scale hit the national capital Thursday morning. According to the Ministry of Earth Sciences' National Centre for Seismology, the earthquake, with a depth of 15 kilometres, had the epicentre near West Delhi and struck at 9.17 a.m. No casualties or damage to properties have been reported so far.

AAP to contest polls in six states in 2022

KEJRIWAL URGED AAP MEMBERS TO STRENGTHEN THE PARTY AT GRASSROOT LEVEL



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 28: Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said Thursday that his Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) will contest elections in six states in 2022.

"In the next two years, AAP will contest elections in Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Goa, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, and Gujarat," the AAP national convener said while addressing party

leaders and workers after a National Council meeting at Kapashera here.

He asserted that people supported the AAP because they had realised that both the BJP and the Congress had ruled for years but did nothing to change the lives of the common man.

"People outside Delhi are fed up with both the BJP and the Congress' policy of divide and rule and have now started looking at the AAP as an alternative. People in other states too want free water and free electricity and they know that only AAP can deliver this. As party workers or leaders, you have to reach out to the people," Kejriwal said.

"Earlier, the people used to say that AAP is a Delhi-centric party with no footprint outside the national capital. But, now people have changed their views towards AAP. We have worked hard and proved that the AAP has a vision for the country. In the last six years, our work in Delhi has been noticed by the people," the Chief Minister added.

Kejriwal reiterated that Delhi's health services had proved to be a success in handling the coronavirus pandemic.

WhatsApp adds new biometric security layer for desktop users

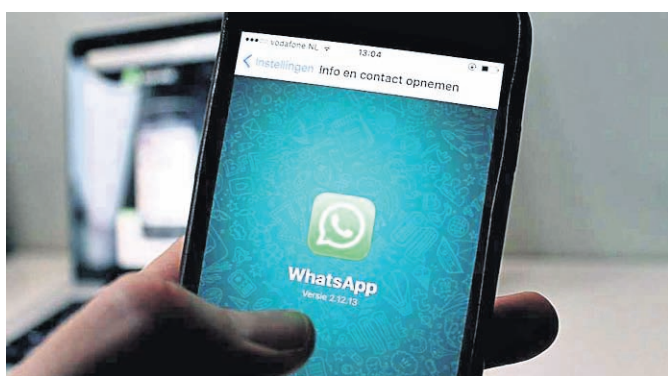
The move comes at a time when WhatsApp is facing immense backlash in India over its upcoming privacy policy

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 28: As millions of people now access WhatsApp on their PCs and laptops, the Facebook-owned platform Thursday announced to add an additional layer of security where users will be able to link their WhatsApp account on mobile phones to their computers.

In order to link WhatsApp Web or Desktop to your WhatsApp account, you will now be asked to use your face or fingerprint unlock on your phone, before scanning a QR code from the phone to link your device. The new security update for linking devices will be rolling out, alongside a visual redesign to the WhatsApp Web page on phones, to users with compatible devices over the coming weeks.

"We're putting even more security into WhatsApp Web and desktop, adding an additional layer of protection when you want to link your WhatsApp account to your computer," the company said in a statement. The move, said WhatsApp, will limit the chance that a housemate or office colleague can link devices to your WhatsApp account without you.



"This builds on our existing security measures today, which pop up a notice in your phone whenever a Web/Desktop login occurs, and the ability to unlink devices from your phone at any time," the company noted. WhatsApp said the face and fingerprint authentication takes place on your device in a privacy preserving manner - by design. "WhatsApp cannot access the biometric information stored by your device's operating system."

The move comes at a time when WhatsApp is facing immense backlash in India over its upcoming privacy policy. In mid-January, it was found that WhatsApp on Desktop (Web) application was al-

legedly exposing personal mobile numbers via indexing on Google Search. Independent cybersecurity researcher Rajshekhhar Rajaharia had shared some screenshots with IANS showing indexing of personal mobile numbers of WhatsApp users via Web version on Google Search.

Concerned at private group chat links being available on Google Search, WhatsApp had earlier said that it asked Google not to index such chats and advised users not to share group chat links on publicly accessible websites. The indexed WhatsApp group chat links have now been removed from Google.

UPROAR IN BIHAR POLICE FORCE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Patna, Jan 28: There has been a huge uproar in the Bihar police force after the home ministry constituted a committee to review the performance of police personnel above 50 years of age.

The home department constituted a committee headed by a principal secretary level officer to analyse the work of each police personnel and officers above 50 years, except IPS officers.

The committee is empowered to recommend VRS for inefficient cops. The state government had taken the decision in July 2020.

The Bihar Police Men's Association (BPMA) has asked the Nitish Kumar government to disband this committee and said that this move amounts to mass murder.

"At the time when police men/women reach the age of 50, they generally have so many family responsibilities. At this stage, if anyone forcibly removes you from the job it is similar to a death penalty."

"The selection of police personnel is based on physical and medical tests. Hence, it is unimaginable why anyone would take such a decision. If anyone is not fit enough for field duty, they can easily be deployed for clerical jobs in offices of police departments instead of forcing them to retire," Dhiraj said.

'Curbing hate content on TV as good as using lathis in riots'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 28: The Supreme Court Thursday held that stopping content having attributes of hate on television is as vital as arming policemen with lathis and installing barricades to contain the spread of violence during riots.

A bench headed by Chief Justice S.A. Bobde and comprising Justices A.S. Bopanna and V. Ramasubramanian told Solicitor General Tushar Mehta said control over certain kind of news, which agitate people and may lead to violence or may trigger riots, is essential.

The Chief Justice stressed: "Preventing it (reporting hateful content) as powerful as putting bar-

ricades. Preventing instigation is as important as providing lathis to the policemen."

He cited that on January 26, the government shut down internet, as a preventive measure, amid the raging violence in Delhi, during the farmer unions tractor rally.

"You shut down mobile internet due to farmers' visit to Delhi," the Chief Justice said. As Mehta objected to the term, saying that the incident can hardly be termed as a visit, the Chief Justice emphasised he was highlighting the issue by using a non-controversial word.

After this oblique reference to the Republic Day violence on Delhi's streets, the bench continued with the hearing on a batch of pleas, including one filed by Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind,



alleging bad reporting by some media houses demonising the Muslim community against the backdrop of Tablighi Jamaat congregation at Nizamuddin Markaz in Delhi.

The bench added that there are programmes which instigated or impact a community, but the gov-

ernment does not do anything. However, it added government control cannot be equated with measures to curb free speech.

"That is why government's power to control some news becomes very important," it observed. The bench cited that people are free to adopt

any tone on TV, but it should not trigger violence or incite hatred. "We are only interested with people instigating inciting violence and riots... these situations lead to loss of life and property," the Chief Justice said, stressing that it is an issue which worries the top court.

Mehta replied that if such situations are created, then it is very unfortunate. "Fair and truthful reporting is not a problem, but reporting become a problem, when it is projected in a way to agitate others," the Chief Justice elaborated. At this stage, he drew an analogy between taking preventive measures to stop hate on television and the use of lathis and barricades by policemen as a measure amid riots.

"Control over some news is as important as some preventive measure and check law and order situation. I don't know why you are blind to this. I don't mean anything offensive, but you are doing nothing about it," he added.

CJI Bobde said that there are broadcasts and programmes, which play a role in instigating people and not just one community, but any community. "You don't do anything about it," he said.

During the hearing in the matter, the top court deliberated on the efficacy of certain laws including Cable TV Networks Act of 1995, which come into force in these situations. The top court has scheduled the matter for further hearing after three weeks.

international



Equality is a fresh, moral and serious framework, and crucial for fighting climate breakdown. We are paying for the failure of governments to address inequality. We've seen the greatest rise in inequality since records began

GABRIELA BUCHER | EXEC DIR, OXFAM INTERNATIONAL

JOHNSON FACES CRITICISM
British PM Boris Johnson faced accusations Thursday that he is not abiding by the country's lockdown rules as he visited Scotland to laud the rapid rollout of coronavirus vaccines across the UK



of the day quote

India's recently enacted agricultural laws have the potential to increase farmers' income, but there is a need to provide a social safety net to the vulnerable cultivators

GITA GOPINATH | CHIEF ECONOMIST, IMF

When you remove top predators of the ocean, it impacts every part of the marine food web. Sharks are like the lions, tigers and bears of the ocean world, and they help keep the rest of the ecosystem in balance

STUART PIMM | ECOLOGIST, DUKE UNIVERSITY

The pandemic has exacerbated the problems and imbalances that have been accumulating. International institutions are weakening, regional conflicts are multiplying and the global security is degrading

VLADIMIR PUTIN | PRESIDENT, RUSSIA

SHORT TAKES

Abortion ban takes effect

Warsaw: A near-total ban on abortion has taken effect in Poland and triggered a new round of nationwide protests three months after a top court ruled that the abortion of congenitally damaged fetuses is unconstitutional. Led by a women's rights group, Women's Strike, people poured onto the streets of Warsaw and other cities late Wednesday. Poland's top human rights official denounced the further restriction of what was already one of the most restrictive abortion laws in Europe, calling it a tragedy for women.

Queensland to reopen borders

Brisbane: Queensland Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk announced Thursday that the Australian state will welcome travellers from all other parts of the country from February as recent Covid-19 outbreaks in the neighboring New South Wales (NSW) have subsided. Addressing the media here, Palaszczuk said the state would allow visitors from Greater Sydney to enter without having to quarantine after NSW recorded zero locally acquired Covid-19 cases for 11 consecutive days, reports Xinhua news agency.

UK opens formal inquiry

London: The UK's competition watchdog launched a formal investigation on Thursday into Facebook's purchase of Giphy over concerns it will stifle competition for animated images. The Competition and Markets Authority said the investigation's first stage has a deadline of March 25 to decide whether to trigger a more in-depth probe. The watchdog started examining the deal last year, shortly after Facebook announced its plan to acquire Giphy in a deal reportedly worth \$400 million.

No Covid death in Nepal: Health min

Kathmandu: No Covid-19 related death was reported from Nepal in the past 24 hours for the first time since August last year, the Ministry of Health and Population said Thursday. The country has so far recorded 2,020 deaths due to COVID-19 so far. The ministry had reported three deaths due to complications caused by the coronavirus disease on Wednesday, six on Tuesday and 10 Monday.

DANIEL PEARL CASE

Pak SC orders release of Omar Sheikh, others

The decision comes after the Sindh government decided to challenge the decision of the SHC, which April 2 commuted death sentence of key accused Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh to seven years, while acquitting three others



AGENCIES

Islamabad, Jan 28: The Supreme Court of Pakistan Thursday rejected an appeal filed by the Sindh provincial government against the Sindh High Court's (SHC) decision to acquit and release the accused persons in the 2002 kidnap and murder of American journalist Daniel Pearl, ordering their immediate release.

The short order was announced by a three-member bench of the apex court. The decision comes after the Sindh government decided to challenge the decision of the SHC, which April 2 commuted the death sentence of key accused Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh to seven years, while acquitting three others who were serving life sentences.

However, the Sindh provincial government ordered immediate

detentions of the four men under the West Pakistan Maintenance of Public Order (MPO) Ordinance 1960. The SHC again nullified the detention December 24, 2020, and orders of immediate release of the accused were given.

The US had expressed "deep concern" over the SHC order. The Sindh government however, did not release the accused and challenged the SHC decision in the Supreme Court, maintaining that orders of the latter on September 28, 2020, in the case were still to be taken into reference.

The Sindh government contented that the accused persons fall in the category of the "enemy aliens", referring to the Supreme Court's September. On January 25, a separate bench of the top court maintained: "One of the findings recorded by the SC short order is that the respondents are not in the enemy aliens within the meaning of Article

10(9) of the constitution. Meaning this term is hitherto judicially unexplained." This has led to Thursday's decision of the court to order release of the accused.

The decision holds great importance as the US has kept a close eye on the proceedings and has called on Pakistan to punish the accused. However, the top court order may have an impact on Pakistan's bid to find pathways with the newly elected administration under President Joe Biden.

The 38-year-old South Asia bureau chief of The Wall Street Journal was doing research on religious extremism in Karachi when he was abducted in January 2002.

A graphic video showing his beheading was delivered to the US consulate a month later. Since then, at least 23 suspects were produced in the case while Sheikh being the prime suspect.

Production of enriched uranium exceeds goals: Iran



AGENCIES

Tehran, Jan 28: Iran has exceeded 17 kilograms of 20 per cent enriched uranium within a month's time, state TV reported Thursday, moving its nuclear programme closer to weapons-grade enrichment levels amid heightened tensions with the US.

Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, during a visit to the country's Fordo nuclear facility, said in a televised speech that in less than a month, scientists passed 17 kilograms (37.5 pounds) of 20 per cent enriched uranium.

Uranium enriched to 20 per cent is a short technical step away from weapons-grade 90 per cent enrichment. Western nations have criticised Iran's enrichment activity and called on Tehran to adhere to a 2015 nuclear accord. Iran has said it would produce 120 kilograms (44 pounds) of 20 per cent enriched uranium per year, or 12 kilograms per month on average, so 17 kilograms would exceed that timetable.

Roughly 250 kg (550 pounds) of 20 per cent enriched uranium are needed to convert it into 25 kilograms of the 90 per cent enriched needed for a nuclear weapon.

The development brings Iran closer to crossing the line between nuclear operations with a potential civilian use, such as enriching nuclear fuel for power-generating reactors, and nuclear-weapons work, something Tehran has long denied ever carrying out.

'Independence means war': China warns Taiwan

REUTERS

Beijing, Jan 28: China toughened its language towards Taiwan on Thursday, warning after recent stepped up military activities near the island that "independence means war" and that its armed forces were acting in response to provocation and foreign interference.

Taiwan, claimed by China as its own territory, reported multiple Chinese fighter jets and bombers entering its southwestern air defence identification zone last weekend, prompting Washington to urge Beijing to stop pressuring Taiwan.

China believes that Taiwan's democratically-elected government is moving the island towards a declaration of formal independence, though Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen has repeatedly said it is already an independent country called the Republic of China, its formal name. Asked at a monthly news briefing about the air force's recent activities, Chinese Defence Ministry spokesman Wu Qian said Taiwan is an inseparable part of China.

"The military activities carried out by the Chinese People's Liberation Army in the Taiwan Strait are necessary actions to address the current security situation in the Taiwan Strait and to safeguard national sovereignty and security," he said. "They are a solemn response to external interference and provocations by 'Taiwan independence' forces," he added. Wu said a "handful" of people in Taiwan were seeking the island's independence.

"We warn those 'Taiwan independence' elements: those who play with fire will burn themselves,



TERRITORIAL HEGEMONY

Taiwan, claimed by China as its own territory, reported multiple Chinese fighter jets and bombers entering its southwestern air defence identification zone last weekend

Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council said China should think carefully and not underestimate the island's determination to defend its sovereignty and uphold freedom and democracy

The Chinese incursions coincided with a US carrier battle group entering the disputed South China Sea to promote "freedom of the seas"

and 'Taiwan independence' means war," he added.

Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council said China should think carefully and not underestimate the island's determination to defend its sovereignty and uphold freedom and democracy. The Chinese incursions coincided with a US carrier battle group entering the disputed South China Sea to promote "freedom of the seas".

China routinely describes Taiwan as its most important and sensitive issue in relations with the United States, which under the former Trump administration ramped up support for the island in terms of arms sales and senior officials visiting Taipei.

Indian-origin pediatrician kills lady doctor, shoots self

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Houston, Jan 28: A 43-year-old Indian-American pediatrician diagnosed with terminal cancer shot dead a lady doctor and then killed himself after taking hostages at a medical office in Austin, according to police in the capital city of the US state of Texas.

The armed man was identified as Dr Bharat Narumanchi, who was recently diagnosed with terminal cancer, police said, adding that he had recently been turned down for a volunteer position at the medical facility.

Police received a call Tuesday saying a man walked into the offices of Children's Medical Group (CMG) with a gun and was holding hostages inside the building, the CNN reported, citing Austin Police Department press release.

Initially several hostages were being held, police said, but several escaped and others were allowed to leave, except a pediatrician named

Katherine Dodson.

The hostages who escaped the office told officers on the scene that the man was armed with a pistol and what appeared to be a shotgun, police said. He also had two duffel bags. Dr Narumanchi had visited the CMG office a week prior to the shooting and applied for a volunteer position.

The suspect had terminal cancer and had only been given weeks to live, Austin police Lt. Jeff Greenwalt told reporters on Wednesday. "So we feel like his terminal cancer probably played a large part in whatever it was that occurred in his life and what was happening yesterday," he was quoted as saying by US media reports.

But for now, Greenwalt said, investigators are still trying to unravel what could have led to the hostage situation. He called for any of the doctor's family and friends who might have knowledge about Narumanchi to contact the homicide department.



CHILLING OUT



An elephant enjoys a rare snowstorm at Reid Park Zoo in Tucson, Arizona

Russia rejects Navalny's appeal; detains allies

AGENCIES

Moscow, Jan 28: A Russian court Thursday rejected opposition leader Alexei Navalny's appeal against his arrest while authorities detained several of his allies and issued warnings to social media companies after tens of thousands swarmed the streets in over 100 Russian cities last weekend demanding his release.

Speaking to court via video link from jail, Navalny denounced criminal proceedings against him as part of the government's efforts to intimidate the opposition.

"You won't succeed in scaring



tens of millions of people who have been robbed by that government," he said. The 44-year-old Navalny, the most well-known critic of President Vladimir Putin's government, was arrested January 17 upon his return from Germany, where he spent five months recovering from nerve-agent poisoning that he blames on the Kremlin. Russian authorities have rejected

the accusations.

Navalny was jailed for 30 days on request by Russia's penitentiary service, which charged that he had violated probation terms from a suspended sentence on a 2014 money-laundering conviction, which he rejected as politically driven. He now also faces accusations in two separate criminal probes.

The Moscow Region Court on Thursday rejected his appeal against the arrest. During the court hearing, Navalny's defense argued that he was undergoing rehabilitation in Germany and was unable to register with authorities as required by probation terms during the period.

ENGLAND'S COVID-19 INFECTIONS 'FLATTENING': STUDY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, Jan 28: Coronavirus infections in England have flattened with an indication of a decline but still remain extremely high, according to the latest findings from a UK government-backed study Thursday.

The Imperial College London and Ipsos MORI Real-time Assessment of Community Transmission (REACT) study into the country's Covid-19 infections found that the infections in the general population between January 6 and 22 were at the highest level recorded since last year.

It also found that the National Health Service (NHS) is under significant pressure in England with over 37,000 people in hospital with the virus, twice as many as the first



peak in April 2020, and 4,076 people are on ventilators, more than at any time in the pandemic.

"These findings are a stark reminder of the need to remain vigilant. Infection rates this high will continue to put a strain on our NHS and add to the significant pressures dedicated health and care staff are already facing," said UK Health Secretary Matt Hancock.

"We must bring infections right down so I urge everyone to play their part to help save lives. You must stay at home unless absolutely necessary, follow social distancing rules and minimise contact with others," he said.

The levels of infections recorded by REACT varied across the dif-

ferent parts of England and was highest in London, with one in 35 people infected, and highest nationally among those aged 18 to 24.

It also found that black or Asian people and those living in large households or deprived neigh-

bourhoods were more likely to test positive than others. Healthcare and care-home workers, as well as other key workers, were also more likely to be infected compared with other workers.

The other key findings from the eighth REACT study from this month shows national prevalence of coronavirus at 1.57 per cent, or 157 per 10,000 people infected. The national R rate, or the rate at which the infection is transmitted by any one infected individual, is estimated at 0.98 with a range of 0.92 to 1.04 and, therefore, still very high.

"The number of people infected with the virus is at the highest level that we've recorded since we began testing last May," said Professor Paul Elliott, director of the programme at Imperial College London.

"We're not seeing the sharp drop

in infections that happened under the first lockdown and if infections aren't brought down significantly, hospitals won't be able to cope with the number of people that need critical care. We all need to stay at home wherever possible and help bring the virus under control and protect our already over-stretched health system," he said.

The scientists say that while the vaccine programme continues to expand to protect as many people as possible, with over 6.8 million people currently vaccinated in the UK, it still remains unknown whether being vaccinated stops someone from passing the virus on to others. It will also be some time before the impact of the vaccination programme reduces pressures on hospitals, which makes continued lockdown restrictions critical.

business

of the day quote

The disruption over the past year has reiterated the need for building a robust pool of employable and skilled talent, who are better prepared for the future of work. Companies have realised the need to invest in apprentices to build a steady talent pool

SUMIT KUMAR | VICE-PRESIDENT, NETAP

Our state-of-the-art plant is a modern facility that will leverage the infrastructural and supply chain advantages of our strategic location

PUNEET JAIN | CO-FOUNDER, GRINTECH

It is necessary to dedicate the coming years to rigorous R&D of such (indigenous) alternative battery technologies with the support of Institutions of Eminence, industry, scientists, engineers and the government

NTIN GADKARI | UNION MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

RBL Bank's net profit doubles

Mumbai: Small-sized private sector lender RBL Bank Thursday reported almost doubling of its consolidated net profit to ₹147 crore for the December 2020 quarter, but also posted a rise in asset quality stress from the retail segment. The bank had shown a consolidated net profit of ₹66.49 crore in the year-ago period, as provisions for corporate bets impacted the bottomline. Its core net interest income de-grew 2% to ₹908 crore on the back of a 5% dip in the overall advances.

NALCO to buy back ₹749cr shares

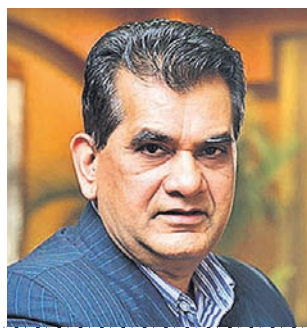
New Delhi: State-owned NALCO will buy back ₹749 crore worth of shares, DIPAM Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey said Thursday. The government currently holds 51.50 per cent stake in the company and would tender shares proportionate to its holding. "NALCO has made an offer for buyback of its equity shares for an amount up to ₹749 crore. As the promoter, Gol has decided to participate in the buyback to the extent that Gol equity remains at least 51 per cent," Pandey tweeted.

Panasonic aims to double AC biz

New Delhi: Consumer electronics major Panasonic India is aiming to double its residential air conditioning business in the next three years as it is betting big on new cutting age technologies along with growing demand, a top company official said. The company, which on Thursday introduced HU series of ACs with the recently-announced nanoEX technology, is eyeing about 35% sales growth in the segment this year on the back of pent-up demand.

FDI in Nov 2020 rises to \$8.51bn

New Delhi: Foreign direct investment (FDI) into the country jumped to \$8.51 billion in November 2020 from \$2.8 billion in the same month of 2019, according to the Commerce and Industry Ministry data. Total FDI, including re-invested earnings and other capital, during the month under review grew by 81% to \$10.15 billion. The data also showed that FDI grew by 37% to \$43.85 billion during April-November 2020.



The government is committed to work with young entrepreneurs to establish India as a global tech garage. Indian industries need to get into sunrise areas of growth

AMITABH KANT | CEO, NITI AAYOG

STARTUPS TO HIRE TIKTOK EMPLOYEES

With TikTok announcing the decision to scale down the size of its workforce constituting over 2,000 employees in the country, Indian short video platforms like Bolo Indya and Chingari have expressed willingness to hire some of the affected employees



'Updated Play Store policy to provide more clarity'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 28: Google India Thursday said it has updated its Play Store policy guidance on gamified loyalty programs to provide more clarity around the rules, while safeguarding users and optimising developer experience.

The tech giant also emphasised that while it does not allow real money gambling apps on the Play Store in India, it remains committed to engage with industry and government bodies as they deliberate on measures that will best support this industry.

The move comes months after the company faced backlash from developers over alleged monopolistic practices.

"Based on feedback from developers globally, we have updated our policy guidance on gamified loyalty programs that are based on a qualified monetary transaction in the app and offer prizes of cash



or other real-world value," Google said in a blogpost.

The update provides more clarity on policy requirements for loyalty program disclosures and features. The update has been "designed to safeguard users and optimise the developer experience", it added.

While we do not allow Real Money Gambling apps on the Play Store in India, we remain committed to engaging with industry and government bodies as they deliberate on measures that will best support this industry

SUZANNE FREY | VP, PRODUCT, ANDROID SECURITY AND PRIVACY, GOOGLE

Vision 2030: JSPL to set up world's largest steel plant in Angul

THE PLANT'S TOTAL CAPACITY TO REACH 25.2 MTPA WITH AN ADDITIONAL INVESTMENT OF ₹1.20 LAKH CRORE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 28: Steel and energy major Jindal Steel and Power Limited (JSPL) Thursday unveiled its 'Vision 2030' for Odisha in which the company will focus on enhancing the capacity of its 6 MTPA Angul integrated steel plant.

"The Angul steel plant will be expanded its total capacity to 25.2 MTPA through clean energy resources with an additional investment of ₹1.20 lakh crore by 2030," a company's release said.

As per the vision statement, JSPL would make its Angul Steel Plant the world's largest and greenest single-location steel plant, putting Odisha on the global steel map.

At the existing steel plant, JSPL is producing steel through one-of-its-kind technology wherein 'Swadeshi Coal' is being used to produce Synthesis Gas which is utilised for production of DRI.

JSPL Angul will see an expansion of substantial green steel manufacturing capacity through



The State will remain our preferred destination for investments and expansions. Substantial part of this investment will come from our internal accruals/equity infusions

NAVEEN JINDAL | CHAIRMAN, JSPL

Hydrogen-based DRI and EAF route. The complex will also house a 12.5 MTPA cement plant to utilise the Blast Furnace Slag and Fly Ash to produce environment-friendly, Green cement.

JSPL's Vision 2030 for 25.2 MTPA steel capacity at Angul also entails substantial investments to develop

the iron ore and coal mineral industry and build a world-class logistics infrastructure. The company plans to invest in a state-of-the-art Port and a dedicated Railway Line to connect the Port, the Angul facility, the Barbil Pellet Plant and its Raigarh plant in Chhattisgarh. The company is focussing on the robust supply chain mechanism and raw material transportation. JSPL initiatives, thus, are expected to create 60,000 plus direct job opportunities and around 3,00,000 indirect employment opportunities in Odisha.

The company's operations in Odisha are likely to generate economic activity to the tune of nearly ₹1.5 Lakh crore annually, with the state exchequer getting richer by potential revenues of around ₹7500 crore per annum. "The State will remain our preferred destination for investments and expansions. Substantial part of this investment will come from our internal accruals/equity infusions," said JSPL Chairman Naveen Jindal.

BUDGET 2021

Realtors seek tax sops, industry & infra status for sector

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 28: Real estate developers expect the government to provide industry as well as infrastructure status for the sector, increase the corpus of ₹25,000-crore stress fund, and more tax sops for both homebuyers and builders in the upcoming Budget to boost property demand.

They also hope for single-window clearance for projects, measures to boost liquidity, reduction in the GST rates and availability of input tax credit on the GST paid in the Budget 2021-22, which will be presented February 1.

"We sincerely hope that Budget 2021 brings some much-needed relief to homebuyers as well as developers," Tata Realty and Infrastructure MD & CEO Sanjay Dutt said.

As the sector's growth relies heavily on the upcoming financial amendments, he said the government should grant industry status to the real estate sector and a single-window clearance mechanism for faster completion of proj-

ect. "One GST, one or no stamp duty regime and reduction in registration charges across states are some of the other recommendations which will make a significant difference to the cost of a project and will definitely encourage home buyers to invest," Dutt said.

Anshuman Magazine, chairman and CEO (India, South East Asia, Middle East and Africa) of CBRE, said, "Budget 2021 could go a long way towards meeting this goal by way of introducing tax reforms such as enhancing the principal deduction limit on home loans under Section 80C of the IT Act, 1961."

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ED initiates FEMA probe against Amazon

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 28: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has initiated a probe against e-commerce giant Amazon for alleged violation of the foreign exchange law and rules of the country, official sources said Thursday.

The probe is being conducted under various sections of the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) after the central probe agency recently received a communication from the Commerce Ministry seeking "necessary action" against e-commerce players like Amazon and Flipkart pertaining to certain multi-brand retail businesses and an observation made by the Delhi High Court in relation to Amazon.

The HC had said that said the attempt made by the US-based firm

to control Future Retail through a conflation of agreements it has with an unlisted unit of the Indian company will be considered as violative of the FEMA and FDI rules.

When contacted, an Amazon spokesperson said it was "not aware of any new case by the ED against Amazon India". Sources said the agency is looking to "investigate into the entire issue and will seek details from Amazon and other stakeholders". In the first instance under the ED scanner is a recent communication sent to it by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) that functions under the Commerce Ministry.

It had forwarded a representation made by the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) alleging that major e-commerce players like Flipkart and Amazon violated FEMA and FDI rules.

RENAULT KIGER MAKES GLOBAL DEBUT IN INDIA

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 28: Renault has finally unveiled the production version of the Kiger in India, Thursday. A brand-new compact SUV designed and developed for India was globally premiered, to be launched in India soon.

Renault KIGER is the latest in the line of revolutionary products to be launched by Renault in India. Also, Kiger's smart cabin combines technology, functionality and roominess. New model is powered by a new turbocharged 1.0L petrol engine for more performance.

The interior has been designed to perfectly combine the sturdiness of an SUV with a focus on sophistication and technology. With a high centre console, 20.32cm floating display link and wireless smart



phone replication, KIGER interiors have been specially designed to encourage sharing and convenience.

With the modern hands-free card for everyday convenience, doors can be opened and closed automatically, and the engine started without a key. The sensors in the card allow drivers to lock and unlock the doors without having to take the card out of their pocket

or press a button. They can also start the vehicle without having to insert the card.

The KIGER is fitted with a three-cylinder turbocharged 1.0-litre petrol engine, with a power output of 100 Ps and a torque of 160 Nm (available from 3,200 rpm). The engine has been tested for reliability and longevity, and offers the latest technological innovations already featured on the Clio and the Captur in Europe. It boasts the best fuel economy of its category with 20 km/litre consumption.

For riders' safety, Renault has put two front seats and the two rear side seats are fitted with three-point seatbelts, while the rear middle passenger seat features a two-point seatbelt. Both front seats get seat belt reminder alert for enhanced safety.

'Global public debt likely to touch 98% of GDP in 2020'

INDIA'S DEBT IS EXPECTED TO REMAIN ELEVATED, AT 83% OF GDP, HIGHLIGHTING THE NEED FOR A CREDIBLE MEDIUM-TERM FISCAL FRAMEWORK TO ENHANCE CONFIDENCE, ANCHORED ON REVISED FISCAL OBJECTIVES AND REVENUE MOBILISATION

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, Jan 28: Global public debt is estimated to touch 98% of GDP at the end of 2020, International Monetary Fund said Thursday in its latest fiscal monitor update, according to which India's government debt is expected to remain elevated at 83% of GDP.

The Covid-19 pandemic has posed a severe challenge to public finances, the report said noting that the contraction in output and ensuing fall in revenues, along with emergency lifelines, boosted government deficits and debts beyond levels recorded during the global financial crisis.

Vitor Gaspar, Director of the IMF's Fiscal Affairs Department told reporters that the government

revenue declined everywhere, public debt jumped up to 98% compared with 84% before Covid-19.

"From 2021 onwards debt stabilises at the high level, and stays elevated well above pre-Covid-19 levels up to the end of the forecasting horizon," he said.

According to the Fiscal Monitor report, India's government debt is expected to remain elevated, at 83% of GDP, highlighting the need for a credible medium-term fiscal framework to enhance confidence, anchored on revised fiscal objectives and revenue mobilisation.

Noting that global public debt is projected to edge up further — from 98 per cent of GDP in 2020 to almost 100% of GDP in 2021 — driven by advanced and emerging market



economies, Paolo Mauro, Deputy Director of the Fiscal Affairs Department at IMF said, with the pandemic still out of control and economies growing below potential, additional fiscal support will be necessary in 2021, to protect

livelihoods. "High public debt need not raise immediate concerns on debt sustainability, but highly indebted emerging markets and developing economies could find it challenging to borrow more. Overall, the

prospects for market financing are good, but near-term debt vulnerabilities remain high in some developing countries," he said in response to a question.

To address a steep rise in public debt in developing countries, the international community — including the IMF — has provided grants, concessional loans, and debt relief in 2020, including for 38 countries assessed to be "at high risk."

Fiscal adjustment and, in a few cases, debt restructurings are expected to contribute to debt reduction. Nearly everywhere, credible medium-term strategies need to be developed, with the objective of stabilizing and gradually bringing debt to safer levels over time, supported by pro-growth and inclusive

measures, he said.

Gaspar said that low-income developing countries urgently need funding for social services, health and education, Covid-19 control measures and support for food programs in countries that face the risk of malnutrition.

The IMF, he said, is helping and remains committed to providing further support. Since the start of the pandemic, it has provided financing totaling about USD 105 billion to more than 80 countries, of which five are low-income developing countries. More than \$285 billion are committed overall out of a lending capacity of \$1 trillion.

Many poor nations need additional support through grants, concessional lending and debt relief.

Cash circulation in India rises 22% in 2020



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 28: Cash circulation in India increased 22% last year despite the pandemic, with rural areas seeing a resurgence. According the CMS Cash index, currency worth ₹27.78 lakh crore was in circulation as of December 2020, up from ₹22.70 lakh crore reported a year ago.

It attributed the rise in cash circulation, to the printing of fresh currency by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), monetary easing along with government's subsidy distribution plans and spike in demand early pandemic for more cash in the economy to manage demand-supply.

As India moves fast towards a digital economy, cash remains essential in most parts of India and is an integral part of financial inclusion. Rural India is ahead of the curve and is expected to be better in Q4 FY21, CMS said.

The consumption in rural and semi-urban India is finding a way to support the overall economy of the nation. The government's subsidy, disbursement and other benefit programmes have been running seamlessly and cash is getting into the hands of the majority of Indian population without lag, it added.

'India could be next big trade market for Oz exporters'



AGENCIES

Melbourne, Jan 28: India could emerge as the next big trade market for Australian exporters, the country's trade minister has said, after China imposed heavy tariffs and sanctions on several Australian export commodities amidst a strain in relations with Beijing.

Australia's trade relations with its major trading partner China deteriorated last year when Australia supported a call for an international inquiry into China's handling of COVID-19, which was first reported in the Chinese city of Wuhan.

China took several measures that restricted Australian imports, ranging from levying new tariffs to imposing bans. China imposed sanctions and tariffs on several Australian commodities including barley, timber, coal, cotton, wine and lobster.

Australia, for its part, asked the World Trade Organisation to mediate in their dispute over stiff duties on Australian barley in the Chinese market.

Man Utd stunned at home



Manchester United players wear a dejected look after their loss at Old Trafford, Wednesday

ASSOCIATED PRESS

London, Jan 28: Just when Manchester United's players were starting to have the look of potential champions, they threw in their sloppiest performance of the season to lose to the Premier League's worst team.

A 1-2 home loss to last-place Sheffield United not only prevented Man United from returning to first place at the expense of fierce rival Manchester City.

It also undid much of the impressive work Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's team has produced in recent months, exposing its lack of depth and defensive frailties in an alarming 90 minutes at Old Trafford.

Suddenly, it's advantage Man City in a title race that has ebbed and flowed all season. City, which has won its last seven games, leads

by a point from United and has a game in hand over its neighbor around the halfway stage.

A series of defensive blunders led to Sheffield United's deflected 74th-minute winner — scored by Oliver Burke — that also enlivened the battle to avoid relegation.

That's two victories in three league matches for Chris Wilder's team, which was winless until beating Newcastle on Jan. 12 and heading for one of the worst campaigns in the Premier League's 29-year history. Now, the gap to safety is only 10 points and the so-called 'great escape' could be on.

Thomas Tuchel's first game in charge of Chelsea ended in a 0-0 draw at home to Wolves, while Burnley twice came from behind to beat Aston Villa 3-2.

England goalkeeper Jordan Pickford's error allowed third-

place Leicester to restore parity in the second half in a 1-1 draw at Everton, while Brighton and Fulham drew 0-0.

Man United's players have made a habit of coming from behind to win games in the league — they have done so seven times, all away from home — but they came up short this time against Sheffield United, conceding a winning goal Solskjaer described as 'so poor, so sloppy'.

Goalkeeper David De Gea passed the ball out straight to visiting midfielder John Lundstram, who passed for Burke to have a shot that was blocked by Axel Tuanzebe.

Lundstram collected the loose ball and again fed Burke, who was given time and space to send in a shot that struck the outstretched leg of Tuanzebe and went in off the underside of the crossbar.

That gave Sheffield United the

lead for the second time, with Kean Bryan's 23rd-minute header from a corner having been cancelled out by Harry Maguire's header, which also came from a corner in the 64th from left back Alex Telles.

Solskjaer rotated his squad by fielding Tuanzebe, United's fourth-choice center back, and Telles while resting central midfielders Fred and Scott McTominay, who have been instrumental to United's unbeaten three-month run in the league.

Bruno Fernandes and Paul Pogba regularly misplaced passes in midfield and United missed the presence in attack of Edinson Cavani, who was also benched. United next plays away to Arsenal, Saturday.

Chelsea were seen with a new 3-4-2-1 formation. A funky deployment of some players, including two No.10s and a forward in Callum Hudson-Odoi at wing back. A possession-based approach that resulted in more passes made (820) than any other team in a single game this season.

Thomas Tuchel certainly put his tactical stamp on Chelsea in his first match in charge of the team. A win proved elusive for the German coach, however.

In a game that highlighted the size of the job facing Tuchel following his arrival Tuesday as Frank Lampard's replacement, Chelsea labored to a 0-0 draw with Wolves that heralded the start of another era at a club where managerial changes are commonplace.

Tuchel, who took charge of just one training session ahead of the game, said he was 'very happy with what I saw'. "I liked the attitude and energy," he said, "and I just told the team that I will not allow anybody to doubt from here."

Still, Chelsea is languishing in eighth place, five points off the top four, and has just two wins from its last nine games. "I'm absolutely sure we have the capacity to hurt everybody in every league and competition," Tuchel said, "and it's my job to bring evidence of that as fast as possible."

Messi returns as Barca beat Rayo

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Madrid, Jan 28: Lionel Messi returned from suspension to help Barcelona avoid an upset in the Copa del Rey, scoring a goal and setting up another in a 2-1 comeback behind win over second-division club Rayo Vallecano in the round of 16.

Messi, coming off a two-game suspension for hitting an opponent during the Spanish Super Cup final, scored an equalizer in the 69th minute and led the buildup to Frenkie de Jong's 80th-minute winner that put Barcelona into the last eight of the Copa for an 11th straight season.

De Jong also helped set up Messi's goal with a perfect through ball to Antoine Griezmann, who crossed for the Argentine playmaker to score his 18th goal in 11 matches against Rayo. Fran Garcia had put the hosts ahead on a breakaway in the 63rd.

Barcelona needed extra time to advance past third-division club Cornellana in the round of 32. It also played extra time in both Spanish Super Cup matches this year — a

win against Real Sociedad in the semifinals and a loss to Athletic Bilbao in the final.

Messi was sent off in that final against Athletic on Jan. 17. He missed the game against Cornellana and against Elche in the Spanish league. Barcelona won both matches 2-0.

It was the first time Messi played in a Copa match this season. He had been rested in previous games. The last time Barcelona failed to reach the last eight in the Copa was in the 2009-10 season, when it was eliminated by Sevilla in the round of 16.

With a team mixing regular starters and reserves, Barcelona was in control from the start at the Vallecas Stadium in Madrid. The Catalan club was denied by the woodwork three times, twice in the first half with De Jong and Riqui Puig, and once in the second with a free kick taken by Messi.

De Jong had a goal disallowed by offside in the 65th. Rayo were coming off a loss to Mallorca but previously had won six in a row in all competitions. It sits fourth in the second-division standings, in good po-

sition to earn promotion. Barcelona trail Spanish league leaders Atletico Madrid by 10 points and is three points behind second-place Real Madrid entering the second half of the season.

Barcelona's American defender Sergino Dest did not play on Wednesday because of a thigh problem. Real Madrid and Atletico were eliminated before the last 16.

Sevilla cruise Luuk de Jong scored two first-half goals as Sevilla cruised to a 3-0 win over Valencia, reaching the quarterfinals for the second time in three seasons.

Ivan Rakitic also scored in the first half for Sevilla, which also made it to the last eight in 2019. The five-time Copa champion will be trying to reach the semifinals for the first time since 2013. Valencia won their eighth Copa title in 2019 and reached the quarterfinals last season, before losing to Granada.

De Jong scored in the 20th and 33rd minutes at the Ramon Sanchez-Pizjuan Stadium, and Rakitic added the third in the 38th with a neat lob over Valencia goalkeeper Jaume Domenech from inside the area.



Barcelona players, including Lionel Messi (R), celebrate one of their goals against Rayo Vallecano, Wednesday

JUVE, ATALANTA IN ITALIAN CUP SEMIS



Juventus players celebrate a goal against Spal, Wednesday

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Turin, Jan 28: Juventus eased past second-division team Spal 4-0 to reach the Italian Cup semifinals despite resting regulars like Cristiano Ronaldo and Paulo Dybala.

Alvaro Morata and Gianluca Frabotta scored first-half goals for Juventus while Dejan Kulusevski and Federico Chiesa added late strikes. In the two-leg semifinals, Juventus will face Inter Milan, which eliminated AC Milan in a derby Tuesday.

Morata converted a penalty after a foul on Adrien Rabiot before Frabotta added the second in the 33rd minute. Kulusevski scored Juve's third in the 78th on a counterattack after being set up by Chiesa, who completed the rout in

injury time by dribbling around the goalkeeper to deposit the ball into an empty net. Juventus are seeking a record-extending 14th Cup title after losing last season's final to Napoli.

Earlier, 10-man Atalanta beat visiting Lazio 3-2 and will next face either Napoli or Spezia, who play Thursday. Aleksei Miranchuk scored the winner for Atalanta four minutes after teammate Jose Luis Palomino was shown a direct red card for a foul on Manuel Lazzari. Berat Djimsiti and Ruslan Malinovsky also scored for Atalanta in an entertaining match that included Lazio goals from Vedat Muriqi and Francesco Acerbi. Atalanta forward Duvan Zapata could have added a fourth goal but had a penalty kick saved by Pepe Reina.

Sindhu, Srikanth lose again

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangkok, Jan 28: Indian shuttlers PV Sindhu and Kidambi Srikanth were virtually out of contention for the knockout stage after losing their respective second round matches in the BWF World Tour Finals here Thursday.

A week ago Sindhu had suffered a demoralising defeat to Ratchanok Intanon and there was no change of fate for the World Champion this time too as she went down 18-21, 13-21 to the third seeded Thai.

Srikanth enjoyed a 3-0 head-to-head count against Wang Tzu Wei ahead of his match but it mattered little as the Taiwanese World No.12 claimed a come-from-behind 19-21, 21-9, 21-19 win over the Indian.

With only the top two players from each group making it to the semifinals, the twin defeat almost sealed the fate of the Indian duo in the tournament.

Earlier, Srikanth and Wang fought tooth and nail right from the start, moving together 5-5 to 9-9 before Srikanth managed to grab a slender 11-10 lead with a smash. Srikanth opened up a significant 15-11 lead with Wang sending the shuttle wide twice.

Srikanth continued to dominate the rallies with his angled returns to reach 17-12. Wang, however, narrowed it down to 18-19 with Srikanth committing few errors but the Indian managed to grab two game points with a smash. He lost one before converting the next with Wang making a poor judgement at the backline.



Both the shuttlers engaged in some energy-sapping rallies but Wang played some superb shots to open up a 9-5 lead as Srikanth made a poor judgement. The Indian made successive errors at the net to allow Wang grab a healthy 11-5 advantage at the interval.

Wang simply ran away with the game as he led 16-6 and eventually sealed the game when Srikanth found the net. The decider started with attacking rallies with Srikanth leading 4-1 but Wang produced a rear-guard action to make it 8-4 with seven straight points.

Srikanth bounced back to make it 10-10 but Wang again grabbed a lead at 17-13. Srikanth then made Wang run around the court, leaving him flat on the ground in the end. He made it 16-17 before finding the net and going wide. Srikanth again

missed the line as Wang grabbed four match points. The Indian saved three but went down in the end.

In the match involving Sindhu, the reigning World Champion went into the contest against Ratchanok determined to make up for her loss in their last meeting.

The Indian made a positive start, jumping to a 5-2 lead and then grabbed an 11-6 lead at the break. However, Ratchanok caught up with four straight points at 14-14.

Sindhu again move ahead to 18-17 but a burst of four points helped Ratchanok gain the upper hand. The Thai star continued her momentum from the first game to open up an 11-8 lead at the break. Sindhu narrowed it to 11-12 before Ratchanok reeled off six points on the trot to take the match away from the Indian.

WARM-UP GAME IN ENGLAND BEFORE TESTS

IN A FIRST, INDIA TO CLASH WITH INDIA A

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, Jan 28: In an unprecedented build-up schedule for an overseas Test series, India will take on India A in a four-day practice match when the two sides travel to England later this year.

The game will be played at the County Ground in Northamptonshire in July later this year. The exact dates of the match will be unveiled later.

The India cricket team is scheduled to tour England in August and September to play five Test matches, beginning with the opening game at Nottingham, August 4. "Some of the world's finest international cricketers will be on show at The County Ground this summer as we welcome India and India A," Northamptonshire County Cricket Club said in a statement late Wednesday.

"Ahead of India's five-Test series against England in August, Virat Kohli's Indian side take on India A in a four-day warm-up fixture that promises to be a showcase of high-quality cricket."

The second warm-up match is scheduled in Leicestershire July 28. "The Indian tour party will then travel to Leicestershire the following week for a second warm-up fixture beginning the 28th of July," the statement

said. The second (August 12-16) and fourth Tests (September 2-6) will be held in London, while the third (August 25-29) and fifth (September 10-14) Tests are scheduled in Leeds and Manchester.

England is currently in India to play four Tests, beginning in Chennai February 5. It will be followed by five T20Is and three ODIs.



'Breakthrough' reference material launched

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 28: Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju Thursday launched a 'breakthrough' reference material for use during chemical testing in anti-doping laboratories, which was synthesized by National Dope Testing Laboratory (NDTL) in collaboration with National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research (NIPER), Guwahati.

The reference material (RM) was identified by NDTL as a rarely available substance globally and would be used to strengthen anti-doping measures in all World Anti Doping Agency (WADA)-accredited laboratories.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between NDTL and NIPER, Guwahati, was signed in August 2020, which proposes to synthesize 20 rarely

available RMs during a period of three years.

These RMs are used essentially during dope testing for quality control purposes and therefore their availability remains critical in sports dope testing globally, the sports ministry said in a release.

The ministry said the availability of these RMs would help the dope-testing laboratories to strengthen their testing capacity and will ultimately help in the greater cause of promoting fair play in sports.

"This is a special moment for all of us. The substance is small but the impact is big. Sportsmanship means clean sport and no cheating. I congratulate all the scientists in NDTL and NIPER-G for producing one of the 20 Reference Materials," Rijiju said in the release.

It has also been decided to dis-

tribute 5 mg of this indigenously developed RM to all the WADA-accredited dope testing laboratories all around the world free of cost for the first occasion.

"It is a great thing to have the product distributed for free. Lots of goodwill will be generated. We have a moral authority and rightful place in all WADA labs and we are proud of what we are doing in line with our tradition of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' — the whole world is our family," Rijiju said.

The ministry said NDTL has taken several initiatives towards strengthening its research activities in collaboration with premier scientific institutes in India and also initiated collaborations with other WADA accredited laboratories in Cologne, Tokyo and Rome for the furtherance of the anti-doping efforts.

Sandaza, Santana save Hyderabad's day

AGENCIES

Goa, Jan 28: Two late goals by Francisco Sandaza and Aridane Santana helped Hyderabad FC steal a point from Bengaluru FC in their Indian Super League (ISL) encounter at the Tilak Maidan, Thursday.

It was Hyderabad's fourth draw in a row as they remained unbeaten in their last six matches. Bengaluru, on the other hand, are now winless in eight games.

Sunil Chhetri scored a header off a Cleiton Silva free-kick in the ninth minute before Leon Augustine put the Blues 2-0 up in the 61st but the Nizams were able to bounce back in the last five minutes of the game to deny Naushad Moosa's men what looked to be an easy win.



The game changed in the 86th. Hyderabad built up the play on the right flank and Rohit Danu delivered a delightful cross into the box right into the gap between the Bengaluru defence and the custodian. Santana was in perfect position as he calmly guided the ball in to boost the morale of the Nizams.

The goal set the stage for Hyderabad as they finally equalised five minutes later — in the added on time.

Hyderabad got the ball into the box from the right flank again and the Blues defence only managed to clear the ball into the path of Roland Alberg. He hit a first-time pass that split the defence and reached Sandaza who calmly slotted the ball past Gurpreet Singh Sandhu.