



## AAHANA GETS INSPIRED

Actor Aahana Kumra meets sprint legend PT Usha, and gets inspired by her to work extensively for an athletic built

LEISURE P2



## INDIA US 'EMINENT PARTNER'

Secy of State Tony Blinken underscores India's role as a pre-eminent US partner in the Indo-Pacific region

INTERNATIONAL P10



## NO RANJI TROPHY

BCCI not to conduct Ranji Trophy for the first time in 87 years, instead it opts for the Vijay Hazare Trophy

SPORTS P12



## SHORT TAKES

### House surgeons' stipend is hiked

**Bhubaneswar:** The Odisha government Saturday hiked the monthly stipend of house surgeons in various state-run medical colleges and hospitals by ₹8,000, an official notification said. The house surgeons will now get ₹28,000 as a stipend, it said. They had been wearing black badges at work since January 22 to press for their demand. The hike will remain in effect from January 1 this year for the next 3 years.

### SII's 'Covovax' by June, says its CEO

**Pune:** In what could be a mega boost to the ongoing Covid-19 vaccination drive in India, the Serum Institute of India (SII) has announced its plan to launch its new vaccine, Covovax, by June this year. SII CEO Adar Poonawalla said Saturday that its partnership for a Covid-19 vaccine with Novavax has shown excellent efficacy results. "We have applied for starting trials in India. Hope to launch Covovax by June 2021," Poonawalla said in a tweet.

### Biden seeks upping minimum wages

**Washington:** The Democratic push to raise the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour has emerged as an early flashpoint in the fight for a \$1.9 trillion Covid-19 relief package, testing President Joe Biden's ability to bridge Washington's partisan divides as he pursues his first major legislative victory. Biden called for a \$15 hourly minimum wage during his campaign and has followed through by hitching it to a measure that, among other things,

WEATHER		BHUB	CTK
TEMP		29.6°C	28.8°C
MAX		29.6°C	28.8°C
MIN		17.8°C	16.5°C
Humidity		82%	78%
Rainfall		Nil	Nil
Forecast		Mainly clear sky	

# Govt 'still ready' to suspend farm laws

The PM says the govt is approaching farmers' issue with an open mind

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Jan 30:** During the all-party meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi Saturday, ahead of the Budget session of Parliament, the PM said the government still stands by the proposal given to the protesting farmers of suspending the three contentious farm laws for 18 months.

The PM assured that the government is approaching the farmers' issue with an open mind.

He said, "The government's stand is the same as it was during the meeting January 22 - the proposal made by the Union Agriculture Minister still stands."

The Prime Minister stressed that Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar had said that he is just a phone call away for talks.

Modi referred to the violence January 26 and said that the law will take its own course.

He reaffirmed the importance of smooth functioning of Parliament and comprehensive debates on the floor of the House. He added that frequent disruptions mean smaller parties suffer as they cannot express themselves adequately. He said it is for the bigger parties to ensure Parliament functions smoothly, there are no disruptions and thus, the smaller parties are able to voice their views in Parliament.

The Prime Minister's all-party meet was conducted a day after 18 Opposition parties boycotted the Presidential address Friday on the commencement of the Budget session of Parliament.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has been repeating that the government should find solutions regarding the farmers' agitation. Along with the

**“Frequent disruptions (in the House) mean smaller parties suffer as they can't express themselves adequately. It is for the bigger parties to ensure Parliament functions smoothly, there are no disruptions and thus, the smaller parties are able to voice their views”**

NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER

Congress, 17 Opposition parties had announced a boycott of President Ram Nath Kovind's address to express solidarity with farmers who have been protesting since November 26 on Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur borders along Delhi and other places to press for their demands, including repealing of the three farm laws.

**British MP warns Indian govt against 'intimidating' farmers**

**CHANDIGARH:** A day after violence by a group of miscreants at Singhu on Delhi-Haryana border, British Labour Party MP Tanmanjeet Singh Dhese Saturday warned that "if people in power abuse peaceful protesters, it'll merely make their movement stronger."

"Shocked to see mobs and police trying to intimidate and clear Delhi farmers' protest, after stopping their water, electricity and Internet," Dhese tweeted.

He added, "Violence can't be condoned, but if people in power abuse peaceful protesters, it'll merely make their movement stronger." Earlier, Punjab-origin politician Dhese had sent a letter, signed by over 100 MPs and Lords, to UK PM on the ongoing farmers' protests, asking him to raise this matter with his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi when they next liaise.

According to the poster, the Maoists warned the other informers to surrender within 15 days at Jan Adalat, unless they will suffer the same fate, or else they too will suffer the same fate.

## Maoists kill two villagers for 'informing cops'

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 30:** A group of armed Maoists allegedly killed two villagers in Kandhamal district, accusing them of being police informers.

The incident occurred under the Belaghara police limits of the district Friday night, said police sources.

Their bodies were found in two separate places Saturday morning.

The Maoists belonging to the Bansadhara-Ghumsar-Nagabali division left a handwritten note accusing the two of providing information to police about five of their colleagues, who were killed in a police encounter in September last year.



**WE HAVE COMPLETE KNOWLEDGE OF ALL THOSE WHO ARE PROVIDING INPUTS TO POLICE. ALL INFORMERS SHOULD SURRENDER BEFORE THE JAN ADALAT WITHIN 15 DAYS, OR ELSE THEY TOO WILL SUFFER THE SAME FATE**

READ A POSTER (WRITTEN IN ODISIA)

According to the poster, the Maoists warned the other informers to surrender within 15 days at Jan Adalat, unless they will suffer the same fate, or else they too will suffer the same fate, read the poster written in Odia language. It said that the Naveen Patnaik-government, Odisha Police DG Abhay and IG (Intelligence) RK Sharma will be held responsible for the loss of lives.

Start Strong. Grow Stronger.

1800 266 266 1 (tollfree)

## BJD: Pass Women's Reservation Bill in this Budget session

POST NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi, Jan 30:** Biju Janata Dal (BJD) has demanded that the Women's Reservation Bill be passed in the Budget Session of Parliament.

This was demanded by Pinaki Misra, BJD Parliamentary Party leader in Lok Sabha in the all-party meeting held at New Delhi Saturday for the Budget Session of Parliament.

On behalf of the Biju Janata Dal, senior Lok Sabha MP Pinaki Misra stated that Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has specifically requested the Union Government to have the Women's Reservation Bill passed in this Budget session.

Misra said Biju Janata Dal gave seven out of 21 MP

**“Both the BJP and the Congress have publicly backed this Women's Reservation Bill along with a number of political parties... Therefore, it should be no problem to pass this in LS”**

PINAKI MISRA | BJD PARLIAMENTARY PARTY LEADER IN LOK SABHA

tickets to women in 2019 Lok Sabha elections, being the only political party to have done so. Five of the BJD women MPs won and so did two BJP MPs.

"Therefore, Naveen Patnaik is happy that Odisha is the only state in the country to have 1/3rd women MPs in Lok Sabha," he added. "Rajya Sabha has already passed it almost 10 years back. Therefore, Naveen Patnaik ji feels that the time has come when the Lok Sabha must pass it," Misra concluded.



## RD varsity girl's death remains mystery

JAJPUR POLICE RAIDED THE GUESTHOUSE LOCATED AT KHANDAGIRI IN BHUBANESWAR

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar/ Jajpur, Jan 30:** The unfortunate death of Jharaphula Nayak is still shrouded in mystery despite the lapse of four days to the incident. Police are yet to receive the autopsy report in this case.

Meanwhile, police reportedly have managed to gather vital clues during examination of the video footage collected from the CCTV cameras installed at the brick kiln and a plastic factory near Mulapala Chowk at Kuakhia along the National Highway-16. The investigating officials again examined the CCTV footage Saturday. An eight-member team has been set up to investigate the case.

A team of Jajpur police Saturday

carried out raid at the hotel in Khandagiri area in Bhubaneswar where the deceased Jharaphula and her accused boyfriend Rakesh Kumar Swain stayed January 26 night. The couple stayed in the room number 201 of the Sibasai Guest House at Dharma Vihar on the said night.

If sources are to be believed then the hotel staff has informed the police that they saw the accused Rakesh and his associate carrying the girl while leaving the hotel the next day (January 27). Upon enquiry, the accused Rakesh told the staff that they were taking Jharaphula to a nearby hospital as she had become unwell.

A scientific team accompanying the special squad of the Kuakhia police station examined the room and



Students of RD Women's University hold a condolence meet, Friday

checked the register of the hotel. The police also collected the CCTV footage of the guest house and of one eatery in Bhubaneswar where the couple was spotted having food. Sources claimed that the victim might have fallen sick even before having the food at the eatery. The restaur-

ant owner said, "She vomited while having the food. Then they left." However, the cops refused to share any details regarding the evidences collected from the room. Sources claimed that police collected bed sheets, objectionable elements and finger prints from the scene.

## UNLOCK GUIDELINES FOR FEB

## Max 500 people in gatherings, Anganwadi centres to reopen

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 30:** After a gap of nearly 10 months, the state government has allowed reopening of Anganwadi centres from February 1.

The office of the Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) Saturday issued Unlock guidelines for the month of February.

As per the order, the School & Mass Education, ST & SC Development, and Social Security & Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities departments will take decision on reopening of primary schools with approval of government. The departments have been asked to develop detailed SOPs in this regard. Similarly, the Higher Education and Skill Development & Technical Education departments have been authorised to take decision on reopening of colleges and technical institutions in the state.

Now, maximum 500 persons can gather for marriages and funeral-related functions. Similarly, social, religious, political, sports, entertainment, academic and cultural functions and gatherings have also been allowed with a ceiling of 500 persons. In closed spaces, a maxi-

## PHYSICAL HEARING IN HC TO RESUME FROM FEB 15

**CUTTACK:** Physical mode of hearing in the Orissa High Court and Subordinate Courts/Tribunals will resume from February 15, said a High Court order. The physical mode of hearing in the High Court remained suspended due to the Covid-19 pandemic situation. "The hearing in the High Court in physical mode shall resume on 15.02.2021 in terms of the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) both for the High Court & Subordinate Courts/Tribunals which shall be notified shortly," the HC order said. "Further, the option in every case to appear either physically or virtually shall be given in advance to the Registry by the lawyers concerned. The lawyers are requested to convey their option the previous evening," the order further stated.

imum of 50 per cent of the hall capacity will be allowed subject to the ceiling, the order said.

In open spaces, keeping the size of the ground/open space in view, appropriate number of persons will be allowed, within the ceiling prescribed, so as to ensure maintenance of the physical distancing norms.



A FILE PHOTO

## Motley group of investors kills Wolves of the Wall Street

From \$53,000 to \$48 mn

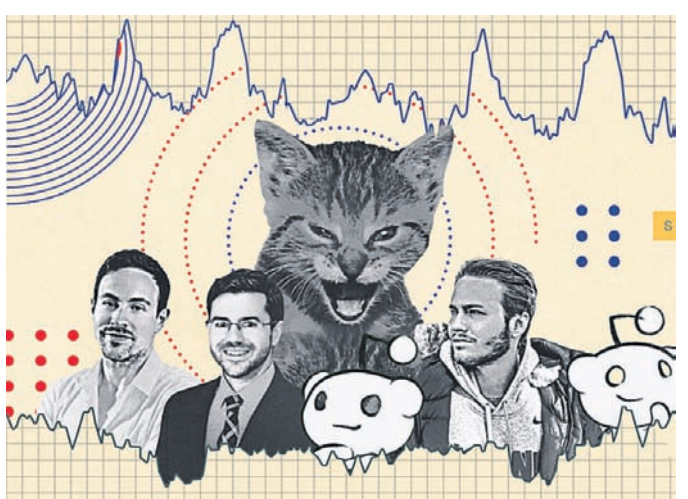
- A Massachusetts man who goes by 'Roaring Kitty' on social media helped fuel the frenzy around GameStop
- On Reddit, an army of retail investors, after coming to know about a hedge fund's short position in the stock decided to pump it up
- What followed was an exponential rally!
- Roaring Kitty's \$53,000 investment in the company briefly reached \$48 million in value
- GameStop shares have soared more than 400 pc in a week alone to \$347.51 apiece, driving its January gains to 685 pc
- The stock was worth just \$6 four months ago

AGENCIES

**Oakland, Jan 30:** Social media services including Facebook Inc and Reddit restrict discussions about weapons, drugs and other illegal activity, but their rules do not specifically mention another lucrative regulated good: stocks.

Some people think they should. Users of a Reddit group, in which five million members exchange investment ideas, generated significant profits by gorging on shares of GameStop Corp and other out-of-favour companies that had been shorted by big hedge funds.

Investors have used social media for years. Anonymous posts have fueled crypto-currency pump and dump schemes, according to studies, but that obscure market generated less scrutiny. The 'Reddit



rally' however, has roiled global stock markets and drawn scrutiny of posts in which thousands of

smaller investors trade tips on platforms from Facebook to Instagram to Telegram and Clubhouse.

Individual investors won praise from elected officials and the general public for jabbing powerful hedge funds with a 'short squeeze'. Yet critics have emerged, accusing social media users of manipulating markets unlawfully by pumping shares of weak companies. The manager of one Facebook trading community said she has turned down requests to tout individual stocks.

Social media companies are generally not liable for user activity under a statute commonly known as Section 230. Still, their rules bar illegal behaviour like facilitating gun and drug transactions or distributing offensive content that could rile advertisers or generate calls for tighter regulation. Section 230 also has some carve-outs that in theory could lead to a tech company being penalised for user-generated content.

# leisure



## ACTRESS ANNA FRIEL RECALLS A 'SUPERNATURAL EXPERIENCE'

Actress Anna Friel claims she had a supernatural experience when she was a child. The actress, now 44, has insisted that she encountered the spiritual world when she was just seven years old.

## JOEL KINNAMAN ROPED IN FOR IN TREATMENT REBOOT

Hollywood actor Joel Kinnaman has been roped in for the upcoming reboot of the series, *In Treatment*. The reimaged series will bring a diverse trio of patients in session with the observant Dr. Brooke Taylor (played by Uzo Aduba), who is wrestling with her own issues.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshSpeaks.com  
accuracy • reliability • trust  
FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

**ARIES**  
You may be alone, but not necessarily lonely. You may want to listen to your inner voice, and express your true self creatively. Spend the evening with a loved one who can hear the music in your silence too, suggests Ganesh.

**TAURUS**  
Today, you may experience the juxtaposition of pleasure and pain. Household tasks may weigh you down around afternoon. Later in the day, you will be able to achieve whatever you desire solely on account of your determination and mental strength.

**GEMINI**  
If you are into retail business, planetary positions indicate today is a day for bumper sales. You will set records in making profits. After work, you may want to take your beloved out shopping. Though it may burn a hole in your pocket, the returns you get once you reach home will be worth every penny!

**CANCER**  
Today, you may focus your entire attention on your relationships - your ties with your parents, spouse, children, siblings and even neighbours. However, all that effort and energy may not get its due, and you may get a cold response from one or more of your relatives.

**LEO**  
The discomfort similar to the fish-out-of-water syndrome will be a thing of the past, as today you will be quite flexible and would want to remain on the move, says Ganesh. So much so that you may even begin to feel bound by the environment in your office.

**VIRGO**  
Razor-sharp and aesthetic to the last cell in your body, entertain and enthrall people with your guile, especially at a social do, says Ganesh. But conserve that zest and save the time to pay due attention to matters of supreme importance, warns Ganesh.

**LIBRA**  
Your instincts are at their peak today. Generally, this means a lot of good, but for you, it may also mean having to put up with the trouble of small things bothering you in a big way. So, it becomes highly important for you to remain balanced and focused.

**SCORPIO**  
Ganesh predicts today will be a day full of focus and a clear thought process. The clarity of thought you have been acquired over a period of time, says Ganesh, and that could make all the difference.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Your friend base is slated to multiply today. At work, additional responsibilities will be thrust upon you, and you will also be given charge of new resources. Ganesh predicts you taking up the challenge and emerging triumphant in all spheres today.

**CAPRICORN**  
It's going to be a day of pleasant surprises. You will try your level best to help people around you, and will find it exceedingly frustrating when the results won't be as expected, says Ganesh. In fact, this may even dampen your spirit and shake your self-confidence.

**AQUARIUS**  
You may huff and puff, but today is not the day when you'll finish what you started. Don't lose heart, the future is promising. Take a break, says Ganesh, you've worked enough. The results are on the way.

**PISCES**  
Major expenses are coming your way, but the good news is a lot of them can be avoided simply by drawing a line between your needs and your wants. Exercising a little restraint now will go a long way in boosting your savings later on, says Ganesh.

## Aahana draws inspiration from PT Usha

Mumbai: Actress Aahana Kumra met sprint legend PT Usha recently, and the meeting has inspired her to work extensively for an athletic build.

"Who knew meeting PT Usha would become an inspiration. It's a great feeling to work so hard on my body and attain that kind of a physical build. I've been running intensively every day for 15 to 18 kilometres and really enjoying the process," Aahana told IANS.

Unconfirmed sources have suggested that she might be in talks to star in a sports film.

The actress was recently seen in Rohan Sippy's sitcom *Sandwich Forever*, opposite Kunal Roy Kapur, and also featuring Atul Kulkarni and Zakir Hussain.

She will be next seen in the quirky slice-of-life film *Bawri Chhori*, and is also set to make her podcast debut with a show titled *I Hear You*. Aahana also has a remake of the popular French television drama *Call My Agent!* lined up.



## Hrithik to star in The Night Manager

Mumbai: Bollywood superstar Hrithik Roshan will lead the Indian adaptation of popular series, *The Night Manager*. Hrithik will play an Indian version of the Jonathan Pine character, essayed by Tom Hiddleston in the original 2016 limited series based on the 1993 novel by John Le Carre.

The Indian version will start shooting in Mumbai in April. The team plans to go to international locations once travel becomes easier, according to *variety.com*.

Sandeep Modi, who co-created and co-directed hit series *Aarya* last year, will direct the series. Executives close to the project shared that an official announcement will be out soon. The Indian version is expected to stream on Disney+ Hotstar. The story follows the night manager of a luxury hotel, a former soldier, who is recruited by a government espionage organisation, to infiltrate the inner circle of an arms dealer.

The original English series starring Hiddleston was adapted by David Farr and directed by Susanne Bier.

## Dia on dealing with social media trolls

Mumbai: Actor and environmentalist Dia Mirza says she has embraced social media wholeheartedly and is utilizing the medium to talk about the work that she does and the causes she supports. Trolls, don't really bother the actress!

"For me, social media has been such a powerful instrument to talk about the things that I want to and for most of the advocacy work that I do. I have never looked at it as something that is harmful. Of course, misinformation is extremely harmful, and there are all kinds of ruthless people who are disrespectful. But for the most parts, I have managed to have extremely positive interactions with people across all platforms," said Dia.

Besides acting career, Dia Mirza has been at the forefront of conversations about climate change. She made her acting debut in 2001 with *Rehnaa Hai Terre Dil Mein*. Today, she is also a producer and UN Environment Goodwill Ambassador and United Nations Secretary-General Advocate for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Talking about dealing with social media trolls and online abuse, Dia Mirza said, "There have been some phases where I have faced my share of trolling, but I don't respond to trolls with disrespect, instead, I choose to not engage with them beyond a point. I feel that when you are clear about what you are doing and are honest, then what people say shouldn't bother you, and it doesn't affect me at all."

A few days ago, filmmaker Zoya Akhtar had shared the experiences that made her leave the social media platform Facebook entirely. She said that because of the extreme levels of trolling and abuse she has faced, she is reluctant to sign into the negative energy on Twitter, and has had to switch off the comments on her Instagram account.



## BIG B: THE WORLD HAS BECOME A 'MASKED WONDER'



Mumbai: The world has become a masked wonder, feels Amitabh Bachchan. His observation comes at a time when masking up before stepping out has become the new normal amid the Covid pandemic.

"The world has become a masked wonder. Each one in the human universe and at times some not so human be reminiscent of Zorro the masked wonder; or the Lone Ranger for the times of the comics," Amitabh Bachchan wrote in a blog post.

Big B took to his blog to further express how difficult it has become these days to

recognise faces of people or understand facial expressions when they are wearing a mask.

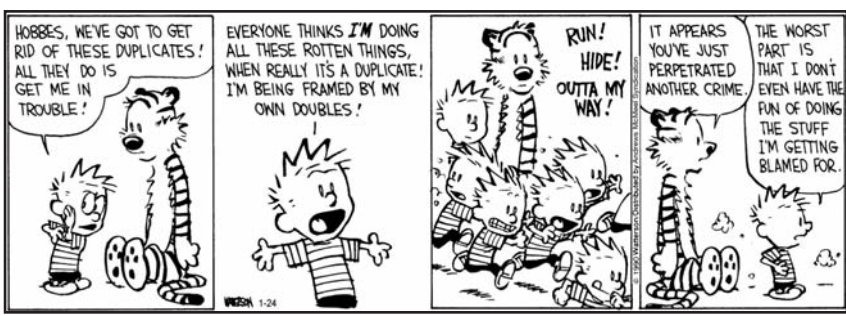
He wrote: "The recognition of the friends all gone... there is an undisclosed distance between us all... and unless it is work orientated, the distinction of recognition remains a mystery... not knowing what the one conversing with you is in fact having the right expression or not... barring of course the give away from the lighted mask of mine in my recent acquisition."

Talking about his "recent acquisition", the veteran actor flaunted his new mask on social media on Republic Day.

### PEANUTS



### CALVIN AND HOBBS

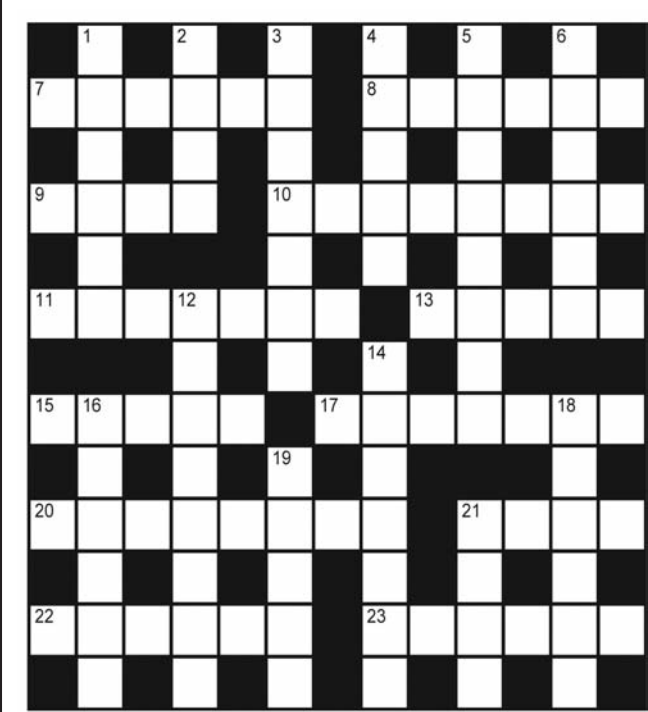


### BREVITY



### FUN post

### CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 7 Chinese temple
  - 8 Göteborg locale
  - 9 Grizzly
  - 10 Ottoman
  - 11 Moved quickly
  - 13 Shade of green
  - 15 Plato's plaza
  - 17 Protest
  - 20 Enduring
- Down**
- 1 Black Forest cake
  - 2 Impoverished
  - 3 Confuses decisively
  - 4 Fancy tie
  - 5 Intrepid
  - 6 Cardigan
  - 12 Hare's rival?
  - 14 Kind of crisis
  - 16 Chess move
  - 18 Zero
  - 19 Winter warmer
  - 21 Police action

### SUDOKU

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

5		E		2			8	9		1
			4	A	6		2		0	9
4	8	6		0		B		7	C	
7			D		4					
B	2			5	1	3				
		6	3	9			0	7	A	
		C	E		4			5	3	
	4					D		6		9
A	9	1		6	C	2			D	4
1		C	2							
	0						5			1
			A	B						8
3	E	6		7	1			C	A	2
	A			1	9				8	
		2	8			4	C	D	9	

### SOLUTIONS

**CROSSWORD**

N	W	O	S	H
J	O	Y	O	F
V	M	T	T	R
J	A	B	O	R
A	I	N	E	B
T	A	C	T	I
C	H	D	R	I
F	A	T	A	L
D	P	G	A	L
F	E	T	A	C
M	T	E	H	U
R	I	C	H	E
C	Y	E	A	S

**SUDOKU**

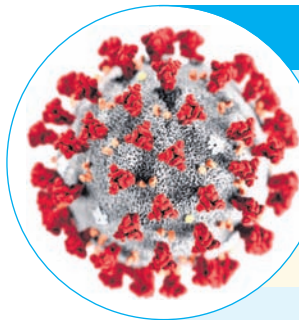
D	0	E	7	C	5	2	8	9	3	B	6	A	4	1
8	6	4	D	1	E	0	5	A	C	7	2	9	B	3
A	3	9	6	2	4	E	B	1	8	5	D	7	C	0
C	7	5	9	8	B	3	6	4	0	A	1	D	E	2
1	2	B	0	A	3	D	C	7	9	E	4	8	5	6
9	D	0	3	5	C	7	1	8	E	4	B	6	2	A
6	E	A	B	1	9	2	C	5	8	0	4	3	7	1
B	8	7	E	4	9	A	0	6	2	1	3	C	D	5
3	4	2	8	0	A	5	D	E	6	C	7	1	9	B
5	6	1	2	7	8	4	A	0	9	3	8	E	6	5
7	9	4	8	B	8	E	2	1	0	3	6	A	9	5
4	1	C	5	9	2	8	7	0	B	3	A	E	6	D
0	5	3	C	E	D	1	A	B	4	6	8	2	7	9
E	6	A	3	0	4	9	D	7	2	C	5	1	8	1
2	A	8	1	6	7	C	3	5	D	9	E	B	0	4

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



## MARTYRS' DAY

Girls present a cultural event during the observance of Martyrs' Day at Swaraj Ashram in Cuttack, Saturday



## COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	10,27,95,487	7,44,79,540	22,20,618
India	1,07,33,131	1,04,09,160	1,54,147
Odisha	3,34,958	3,31,962	1,906

# State sets target to eliminate NTDs by 2030

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 30:** The state government has decided to take steps to eliminate the neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) by the end of 2030.

The decision was taken as part of the commitment of the country to eliminate the NTDs in alignment with World Health Organisation (WHO) NTD Roadmap 2021-2030. NTDs include a group of preventable diseases like Lymphatic Filariasis, Visceral Leishmaniasis (Kala-Azar), leprosy, dengue, chikungunya, disease caused due to snakebite and rabies.

The government, in a statement, said, "We remain committed to ensure that India meets its NTD elimination target much before 2030. In view of elimination drive we will be doing mass drug administration activities in 17 Filaria endemic districts in two phases in February 2021."

During the first phase, the gov-



## PREVENTABLE AILMENTS

**N**eglected tropical diseases (NTDs) include a group of preventable diseases like Lymphatic Filariasis, Visceral Leishmaniasis (Kala-Azar), leprosy, dengue, chikungunya, disease caused due to snakebite and rabies

**D**uring the first phase, the government plans to cover eight districts- Balasore, Bhadrak, Cuttack, Dhenkanal, Jharsuguda, Nuapada, Khurda and Nayagarh where mass drug administration will be undertaken February 10 while the other nine districts will be covered in the second phase during the last week of February

**T**he nine districts which will be covered under the scheme include Ganjam, Angul, Bargarh, Keonjhar, Kandhamal, Mayurbhanj, Sonepur, Sundargarh and Sambalpur

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in the second phase during the last week of February.

The nine districts which will be covered under the scheme include Ganjam, Angul, Bargarh, Keonjhar, Kandhamal, Mayurbhanj, Sonepur, Sundargarh and Sambalpur.

The state Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department claimed that morbidity management clinics would now be opened at high endemic areas for providing demonstration to the affected about self care.

## PMJJBY covers 40 inmates of Jharpada jail

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 30:** As many as 40 prisoners lodged in Jharpada Special Jail here have been covered under Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojna (PMJJBY), an insurance scheme of the Union government.

The state directorate of Prisons & Correctional Services has recently enrolled the prisoners under the central scheme.

The relatives of the inmates would get ₹2 lakh for which ₹330 will be deducted from the accounts of the prisoners every year.

The prisoners selected to be covered under the scheme are engaged in different vocational jobs like brick making, incense stick manufacturing and laundry work. They also have accounts in different banks through which they receive their daily and monthly wages. The insurance coverage will greatly help the family members of the inmates, said sources.

Sources in the Jharpada jail revealed that more inmates will be enrolled under similar insurance schemes in future as well.

## OPTCL-IIT pact for power sector devt

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 30:** State public sector undertaking Odisha Power Transmission Corporation Limited (OPTCL) has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Bhubaneswar for the establishment of OPTCL Chair in the premier engineering institute.

It is indeed a historic moment for Odisha to collaborate with a premier institute like IIT for development of power sector in the state, Energy Minister DS Mishra said.

"We are happy to know that IIT is not only confined to academic service but also extended its arm for the development of the state. This industry-institute interface will be a win-win situation for both with regards to research and development," Mishra said.

The MoU was signed Friday. He said this cooperation will enhance the technical knowhow. OPTCL chairman Sourav Garg

said that IIT would be a troubleshooter for various technical issues surfacing in the power sector. It is a dream come true and we feel proud to collaborate with the best brains of the nation.

The students from IIT will have practical exposure on the real-time projects, at the same time OPTCL engineers will have an opportunity to interact with IITians and enhance their knowledge in the process, Garg said.

"Apart from education, IIT-Bhubaneswar is committed to the local area and social development through structured intervention. This Chair will act as an extended arm of the R & D wing for the Odisha power sector," IIT Bhubaneswar Director Prof R V Raja Kumar said.

Ragunath Pratihar, Director (HRD) OPTCL, emphasised on the importance of collaboration in modern development scenarios. "This OPTCL Chair will enable a common platform to address issues with regard to both academics and industry," he said.

## Vaccine coverage drops to 62%

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 30:** The Health department Saturday said the state achieved 62.2 per cent Covid-19 vaccination coverage. Out of the 1,967 vaccination target, the department saw participation of 1,224 healthcare professionals.

Even after government's instructions to Collectors and municipal commissioners to increase the coverage of the vaccines, the healthcare professionals are not showing any eagerness to get the shots. The vaccination coverage came down to 62.2 per cent Saturday from 71 per cent reported Friday.

As per government data, healthcare workers from the Capital city of Bhubaneswar are showing less interest to take the vaccine. The vaccination drive was conducted in Sambalpur, Nuapada and Bhubaneswar, Saturday. In Sambalpur and Nuapada, the achievement was 92.5 per cent and 81 per cent, respectively.

However, the coverage in Bhubaneswar was only 56.7 per cent. The government has targeted to vaccinate 1,644 healthcare workers in Bhubaneswar, of which 992 persons turned down to the vaccination centres.

# Tigress Sundari's relocation likely in Feb

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 30:** The Odisha and Madhya Pradesh governments have discussed the modalities for shifting tigress Sundari from Sankosia Tiger Reserve to Kanha National Park in MP.

The Principal Chief Conservator of Forest (PCCF) of both the states Saturday held discussions over the matter. According to sources, the PCCF of Madhya Pradesh informed



**The process of the reverse relocation has now started and it might see completion in February**

his Odisha counterpart that instructions have been given to the authorities of Kanha National Park to bring back tigress Sundari.

However, no decision has been taken as of now on the dates. The Odisha government can take a decision only after getting a confir-

mation letter from MP government. "The process of reverse relocation has now started and it might see completion in February," said sources.

Earlier, in 2018 a tiger couple was relocated to the state for boosting the tiger population in Odisha. However, the plan got a setback when tiger Mahavir was killed in an alleged poaching incident and tigress Sundari was caged after she killed some villagers.

## Fake ghee-making unit busted

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Cuttack, Jan 30:** Market Nagar police Saturday claimed to have busted a fake ghee producing unit in CDA Sector-9 area of the Silver city here.

Police detained the owner of the unit, Deepak Agrawal, on charges of food adulteration. "Agrawal was selling ghee in Dhenkanal for the last several years. He has been selling fake ghee under Binayak brand since last one year. We are interrogating Agrawal," said a police officer.

Police have also seized fake ghee worth ₹4 lakh from the unit. "Agrawal was using vanaspati, palmolein oil, chemicals and some aromatic substances to produce the fake ghee. Samples of the fake ghee and the raw materials have been sent for laboratory test," added the police officer.

Agrawal, meanwhile, claimed that the ghee produced at his factory was being used for puja purposes. It is worth mentioning here that the Commissionerate Police has



Seized fake ghee bottles OP PHOTO

busted several fake ghee making units in Cuttack and on its outskirts in the recent past. The police had busted fake ghee producing units at Jagatpur, Nuabazar and in Cuttack Sadar recently. These units were producing fake ghee under Subhas, Balajee, Srikrushna and Gopal brands, sources said.

## S&ME dept plans to reopen Class IX, XI

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 30:** After reopening of Class X and XII, the state government is planning to reopen Classes IX and XI, School and Mass Education Minister said here Saturday.

"The special relief commissioner (SRC) in its today's order authorised our department to take decision of reopening schools for all the students. However, we are planning to reopen Class IX and XI in next phase," said Dash.

The department is holding discussion and consultation to take decision on beginning of Class IX and XI, he said.

The government will take appropriate decision on the reopening of classes for students from Class I to VIII later. The government has reopened Class X and XII from January 8.

# SABAI GRASS PRODUCTS AT ADIVASI MELA A BIG DRAW



A stall selling Sabai grass products at the Tribal Fair in Bhubaneswar OP PHOTO

## ADVANTAGE ORGANIC ITEMS

**A**part from eco-friendly products made of sabai grass, herbs, spices, tribal clothes and other items were also selling like hot cakes

Items like flower baskets, bags as well as sabai grass furniture were seen enticing the people from all walks of life

The fair, which has around 90 stalls, will conclude February 9

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 30:** The fifth day of Adivasi Mela being organised at Adivasi Exhibition Ground in Unit-I here saw an impressive footfall Saturday even as many were seen buying sabai grass products.

Apart from the eco-friendly products made of sabai grass, herbs, spices, tribal clothes and other items were also selling like hot cakes. Items like flower baskets, bags as well as sabai grass furniture were seen enticing the people from all walks of life.

Interacting with **Orissa POST**, Jalkhush Ma, a sabai grass artisan, said, "Earlier, women of Moroda and Suliapada were facing financial problems, but after making sabai grass products and selling them in this tribal fair now they are in a much good position financially. Even various women self-help groups (SHGs) are making trays, mats, shopping bags, pen stands, file covers and earrings by using this grass which are pretty admirable. We sold half of our sabai products on the 5th day."

Srujani Mohanty, a homemaker and resident of Unit-VIII, said, "These prod-

ucts are of very good quality and last long. Moreover, it's organic and nowadays there is craze for organic products."

The absence of a food court and arrangement for entertainment programmes might have dulled the fair, but the organic products of the fair is definitely alluring all, said a visitor.

The fair, which has around 90 stalls, will conclude February 9. The aim of the fair is to introduce people from all over the world to the indigenous culture of the region, food, attire and myriad traditions of the tribes.

## WALK-IN-INTERVIEW

Opening for Airport Commercial and Driver for Janus Aviation Pvt. Ltd. at Bhubaneswar Airport. Janus Aviation Pvt. Ltd. is engaged in providing aviation services at various airports in the country. Eligibility criteria Airport commercials - Fluent in English, Hindi and Preferably local languages. Good communication skills and grooming. Commercial Qualification - Min. Class XII, University degree or equivalent preferred. Driver Qualification - Min. Class 10th and heavy driving licence require. Work Experience: Fresher / Experience in Aviation.

Walk-In Interview will be held for Airport Commercials & Driver from 13:00 hrs on 3rd Feb 2021 (Wednesday) Venue - Hotel Sutripti, Unit 4, Bhubaneswar.

## DECLARATION

I Prof. Anadi Charan Gan, former Prof. of Odia, North Odisha University, Sriram Vihar, Baripada, S/o- Late Sankarshan Gan, At/PO/PS.- Udala, Dist-Mayurbhanj do declare herewith that the Odia Book entitled "Bharatiya Darshana-O-Manojnka Upanyasa" and published by Sri Raj Kishor Das's "Sahitya Swetapadma", Bhubaneswar in 2016 is not authored by me. With a different title this book is the printed form of the Odia Ph.D. thesis entitled "Manojnka Upanyasare Darshanik Chetana" of Dr. Chandra Sekhar Das, who was awarded the Degree under the Supervision of Prof. Kailash Patanaik, Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan in 2013. By mistake my name has been reflected as author of this book and I regret the inconvenience caused. All copies of this book available in the market are withdrawn and damaged forthwith. I undertake the sole responsibility that this book will not be available in the market in future.

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Sl. No.	Existing Branch Address	Shifting to and Merged with Branch Address	w.e.f
1	e-UBI: Dhenkanal Branch (D. No.: 093520). Main Road, Dhenkanal-759001	PNB: Dhenkanal Branch (D. No.: 498100) Sasan Chowk, Chandan Bazar, Dhenkanal-759001	01.03.2021

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**CHIEF MANAGER**

# BMC, UU launch campaign to make campus plastic-free

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 30:** Observing the 73rd death anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) and the Alumni Association of Utkal University, Saturday, launched an awareness campaign and a mass cleaning activity against single-use plastic to make the university campus clean, green and plastic-free.

The campaign was flagged off by BK Patnaik, President of Utkal University Alumni Association in presence of Suvendu Sahoo, Deputy Commissioner (sanitation), BMC, along with several dignitaries at Ahimsa Sthal in the varsity campus with a mass pledge to keep the university campus clean and free of plastic waste.

"This campaign would be an ongoing programme in the campus with an object of freeing it of single-use plastic involving all stakeholders such as students, faculty members, shopkeepers, staff and residents of the university. It will be spearheaded by the alumni association along with university authorities and the BMC," Patnaik said.

The BMC, under its 'Mu Safaiwala' campaign, observed the day by conducting mass cleaning by engaging its 'safaikarmis' and mechanical sweepers cleaned the entire campus.



The BMC, under its 'Mu Safaiwala' campaign, observed the day by conducting mass cleaning by engaging its 'safaikarmis' and mechanical sweepers cleaned the entire campus.

Assuring all possible support and assistance from the BMC to the university, Sahoo said, "Students should refrain from the use of plastic on their campuses, canteens, hostels and shopping complexes in the institution's premises and replace it with environment friendly substitutes

sweepers cleaned the entire campus. Moreover, the civic body donated 10 large dustbins, cloth bags to the university authority which will be put up at different places on the campus of the varsity.

Aiming to spread awareness, the BMC also distributed leaflets, pamphlets to make students know disadvantages of the single use plastic such as water bottles, bags, cups, plates, jugs, plastic straws, and certain types of sachets or pencil boxes. It also asked them to abolish the plastic from their routine life on the campus. Students were also given jute bags to use in their daily life instead of plastic bags.

Assuring all possible support and assistance from the BMC to the university, Sahoo said, "Students should refrain from the use of plastic on their campuses, canteens, hostels and shopping complexes in the institution's premises and replace it with environment friendly substitutes. They must encourage their friends to adopt habits and practices towards cleaner and plastic-free campus."

# Congress faction camps in Delhi for change of guard

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 30:** Internecine squabbles have reemerged within Congress as a faction of the party is camping in New Delhi to meet the high command for a change of guard in Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) including president Niranjana Patnaik.

Congress leaders including Rabintra Sathy, Radhakant Diga, Debendra Sharma, Chinmay Beuria and Kumar Chiranjeev are now in New Delhi and waiting to meet Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi to put forth their demands and appraise the party's situation in Odisha.

"A change of guard in the OPCC is the need of the hour as the condition of the party in the state is worsening," said Debendra Sharma. However, he did not disclose as to whom they want to see as the next PCC chief.

"We want complete revamp of the party in Odisha including the PCC president. We will meet the high command and demand to restructure the state unit of Congress to strengthen its base at grassroots level," Sharma said.

Reacting to this, state Congress in-charge A Chellakumar said, "Anybody can go to Delhi. Everyone has the right to claim."

# JOURNEY ON FOOT



Members of a coastal trekking team leave on an expedition to Balighara in Chilika from Puri beach, Saturday. OP PHOTO

# Body of Jharkhand tourist recovered at Puri beach

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Puri, Jan 30:** The body of a tourist who had gone missing while taking bath at Puri beach Friday was found near Chakratirtha in the holy town Saturday. He and six others were tourists from Bokaro in Jharkhand.

According to an eyewitness, the 17-year-old deceased Deepak Kumar

along with six other tourists from the neighbouring state were swept away by an undercurrent while bathing in the sea Friday afternoon.

Hearing the distress calls, some lifeguards swung into action and promptly rescued six of the youths from drowning. However, Deepak was dragged deep into the sea by strong undercurrents here.

Fire personnel had launched a frantic search to rescue the youth. Notably, 15 tourists had come from Jharkhand and bathing in the sea near Pink House hotel at Penthakata when the mishap occurred.

Another Jharkhand tourist had also drowned in the sea October 27, 2020 while he and his family members were bathing.

# CLASSIFIED LOST

We Sujata Panda, W/o-Late Tirthankar Panda, Parthasarathi Panda & Siddhartha Shankar Panda, S/o-Late Tirthankar Panda, R/o-At- Attabira Main Road, P.O./Thana/Tahasil-Attabira, Dist.-Bargarh. We were having original Sale Deed bearing No. 2292/56 Dt. 18.05.1956, Volume No. 31, Page No. 223 to 227 of SRO, Sambalpur, Hamid Settlement Khatiyana No. 187, Plot No. 1572, Area Ac. 0.20 Dec. has been lost somewhere. The above sale deed is not traceable despite of our sincere effort.

I Aditya Rath, C/o. Himansu Bhusan Rath, At/P.O./P.S.-Tangi, Khurda came from Unit - 6 to Nayapalli on 18.01.2021, Time: 7PM. for my personal work. At this area I lost my original B.H.M. & C.T. Degree Certificate. If anybody will misuse my certificate, so I haven't responsible for that. Aditya Rath.

# AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before Notary, Bhubaneswar, I, Millena Debaprada Jena as per Aadhaar Card No. 750128832386 has declared that my name was wrongly mentioned as Milana Debaprada Jena in Passport No. K0996826. So Millena Debaprada Jena and Milana Debaprada jena is one and same person.

By virtue of an affidavit before Executive Magistrate, Binjharpur on 27.01.2021. I, Manalova Mallick, W/o-Rabinarayan Jena, At/P.O.-Mashra, P.S.-Binjharpur, Dist.-Jajpur, Odisha have changed my surname spelling from Manalova Mallick to Manalova Mallick. Henceforth I shall be known as Manalova Mallick for all purpose.

# Zindagi Foundation

# Sponsorship to medical aspirant for five years

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 30:** Founder of Eastern Drug Bhubaneswar Harshvardhan Bhardwaj offered sponsorship to a student of Zindagi Foundation, a non-governmental organisation, for five years of study in a medical college. Eastern Drug will bear all expenditure of the student named Roshan Paik.

Director of Zindagi Foundation Ajay Bahadur Singh applauded Bhardwaj for his kind gesture to support an underprivileged student.

Roshan was qualified to study in Burla Medical College but due to insufficient money, he did not register for medical examination last year. Roshan hails from Bargarh district. His father is a labourer.

But Roshan gets chance to spread his wings through Zindagi Foundation. Singh said, "We search for underprivileged aspirants across the state and the selected few get a chance to pursue medical free of costs.

Ajay Bahadur Singh, born in Jharkhand, now stays in Odisha with an aim to help poor students to reach their medical goal. The foundation has helped many poor students to qualify medical entrance exams. During 2017 to 2018, about 18 (out of 20) students qualified medical entrance. In 2019, 14 out of 14 and in 2019, 19 out of 19 qualified the entrance examination.

# Dry Brahmani sparks fear of water crisis in Jajpur

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bari, Jan 30:** Even as winter season is yet to go, a sharp decline in the water flow in Brahmani river in Jajpur district has sparked fear of a drinking water crisis in the area, a report said.

The river enters the district at Jenapur under Dharmasala block and flows towards Kaipada under Bari block. At many places along its course, the river has gone dry leading to a sharp decline in water flow. The river getting buried at most places and formation of islets are attributed to the decline in the water flow.

This has sparked resentment among residents as Lokanath Das, president of Brahmani Bancho Abhiyan, Gagan Bihari Jena, former block chairman, Kishan Panda, Dharmasala block chairman, Bishnu Charan Mohanty, Raghunath Jena and Basant Parida wrote to Jajpur MLA Pranab Prakash Das and his Bari coun-



terpart Sunanda Das seeking their intervention in making the river perennial.

Reports said that the riverbed going dry has led to depletion in groundwater level in the area which has sparked fear of drinking water crisis ahead of the summer season. As a result, people are spending from their pockets in digging wells and installing tube wells to meet their drinking water needs.

The decline in water flow has left the farmers and fishermen in the area in a lurch as they are dependent on its water for cultivation and fishing. Farmers in over 22 panchayats like Swainkhand, Sahupada, Mandari, Ishanpur, Sherpur, Bainsria are the worst hit as they have not been getting water

to irrigate their farmlands. The fishermen who earn their livelihood from fishing migrate to other states in search of alternative occupation. The flood in the last season wreaked havoc in the area due to 12 breaches in the right and the left embankments.

Environmentalists fear that the river going dry from the start of the year will seriously affect the availability of drinking water and hit agricultural work.

Government officials at the last District Development Coordination and Monitoring Committee (DISHA) meeting had claimed that the water resources department was taking steps to make the river perennial, January 18, this year. However, their tall claims are yet to materialize.

# BMC relieves doctors, ASOs as cases drop

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 30:** Observing a drop in COVID cases in the state capital, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) stated that it has decided to relieve officers and doctors involved in COVID management and asked them to join their respective departments.

The capital city which reported only one positive case, Friday, has observed a significant drop in the COVID cases as compared to the situations in recent past. Taking cognizance of this, the civic authority said that it has relieved about 150 doctors, 50 Assistant Section Officers (ASOs), and 50 data entry operators till date.

"We had deployed about 160 doctors under the BMC area since April. Similarly, 365 Anganwadi, 185 Asha workers and about 77 Auxiliary Nurse Midwife (ANM) workers were operating in the state capital for COVID management. However, with lesser cases being reported, we have decided to decrease the workload. About 40 doctors in

three phases and 30 in another phase have been relieved till date," said a senior BMC official.

Moreover, while about six out of the 10 remaining doctors were reported to have left others are reported to work with under the BMC until end of January. Meanwhile, all ASOs and data entry operators have also been relieved.

# 108 new cases push state's Covid tally to 3,34,958

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 30:** Odisha's Covid-19 tally mounted to 3,34,958 on Saturday as 108 more people tested positive for the infection, a health official said. The state's coronavirus death toll remained unchanged at 1,906 as no fresh fatality was reported in the last five days, he said.

Sixty-three new cases were reported in quarantine centres and 45 infections were detected during contact tracing, the official said. Sundargarh district reported the highest number of new cases at 12, followed by 10 each in Balasore and Sambalpur, he said.

Khurda district has so far reported the highest number of coronavirus fatalities at 335, followed by Ganjam (248) and Sundargarh (173). Fifty-three coronavirus patients have died due to comorbidities so far.

The state now has 1,175 active cases, while 3,31,824 people have recovered from the disease so far, the official said. Odisha has so far tested over 76.85 lakh samples for COVID-19, including 25,213 on Friday, he said. As many as 2,07,200 health workers have been vaccinated in the state till Friday.

# Send ASI team to study 'Ekamra Kshetra': Pradhan

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 30:** Union minister Dharmendra Pradhan Saturday urged the Centre to send an expert team of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) to carry out a detailed study and a scientific excavation exercise at the 'Ekamra Kshetra' here to unearth ancient structures.

He wrote to Prahlad Singh Patel, Union minister of state (independent charge) for culture and tourism, seeking his intervention to protect old Odisha architecture, two days after the ASI had unearthed a stone structure during the excavation works under the development project of the 'Ekamra Kshetra', the old town of Bhubaneswar.

The structure was believed to be remains of an ancient temple. "Keeping in mind the immense archaeological, artistic, socio-cultural



Remains of the ancient temple in Bhubaneswar. OP PHOTO

and religious importance of ancient Odisha's temples, I request your personal intervention in directing ASI to send an expert team to Bhubaneswar for carrying out a detailed study and thorough scientific excavation of the 'Ekamra

Kshetra' area in Bhubaneswar..." Pradhan said in the letter.

The ASI team found some invaluable remains of a 10th-11th Somavamsi period temple floor on the north-west corner of the Sari temple while carrying out scientific

The minister wrote to Prahlad Singh Patel, Union minister of state (independent charge) for culture and tourism, seeking his intervention to protect old Odisha architecture, two days after the ASI had unearthed a stone structure during the excavation of Ekamra Kshetra

The ASI team found some invaluable remains of a 10th-11th Somavamsi period temple floor on the north-west corner of the Sari temple while carrying out the two-acre land adjacent to the complex, Pradhan said

tific cleaning of the two-acre land adjacent to the complex, he said.

The ASI also discovered two other structures, believed to be the remains of small shrines and a portion of the

Sari temple, the Union petroleum and natural gas minister said in the letter. These findings have led ASI experts to believe that the Sari temple complex was built on the "Panchayatana" model where the main structure is surrounded by four subsidiary shrines, Pradhan said.

"This means that there is a high chance of additional heritage structures lying buried under encroachments in the 'Ekamra Kshetra'," he said. The minister also mentioned that Lord Lingaraj and Suka-Sari temples in Bhubaneswar are protected by the ASI under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act (AMASR Act).

"There is an urgent need to act quickly in order to salvage and preserve what remains of this priceless ancient Odisha architecture," Pradhan added.

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## REMINISCING THE MARTYRS



**OBSERVATION OF MARTYRS DAY & NATIONAL CLEANLINESS DAY**  
Dt: 30 Jan, 2021  
**SUNDARGARH NCC TRAINING NODE**  
Organised by:  
9 (0) BN. NCC, ROURKELA

OP PHOTO

9(0) Battalion of NCC, Rourkela, takes out an awareness rally to mark the Martyrs' Day and National Cleanliness Day

# Poor network leaves Kandhamal villages in communication limbo

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Phulbani/Chakapada, Jan 29:** The Central and state government have laid stress on promoting Digital India so as to push efficient administration in almost all sectors, but there are many remote areas in Kandhamal district where accessing mobile network is a dream. People climbing on trees in search of mobile network is a common sight in some pockets of almost all blocks, a report said.

The report added that there are scores of villages under Chakapada block where people have been facing difficulties in accessing mobile network. In case of medical emergency, people often climb on suitable treetops to contact ambulance services.

After outbreak of Covid pandemic, the government has laid stress on online classes for students. In these areas, students are always in search for convenient places to access network. They either end up climbing a tree or an elevated ground.

According to the report, people of five panchayats under this block are deprived of mobile network. They have been suffering a lot whenever they have to seek emergency services like ambulance, healthcare and fire.

People in all these panchayats have long been demanding for setting up of mobile towers in their remote areas. "But out demand has been neglected. The administration is doing nothing in this regard. People's representatives are pathetic towards this problem. Online studies of the students are badly affected due to poor network.



There are scores of villages under Chakapada block where people have been facing difficulties in accessing mobile network. In case of medical emergency, people often climb on suitable treetops to contact ambulance services

People in the villages like Ghatiguda, Bandhakhaman, Budukakhola, Tokeijhola, Mahaguda, under Kakharujhola panchayat; Andirigada, Gasama, Nidhiaberena under Bahali panchayat; Nandini, Burupoli, Gochhabadi under Pasara panchayat; Subaliya, Tataguda, Arbangi under Bramanapada panchayat; Ranagaon, Rupagaon and Rangamatia under Chakapada panchayat have no way out but to cope with a communication nightmare

Most students are found on treetops or elevated places most of the time," locals lamented.

The villagers are forced to climb on top of the trees in search of mobile network to talk to their near and dear ones.

"There is a risk of falling, losing life or inviting fractures, especially during the monsoon. But there is no other way," said villagers.

Locals rued, "We are being cheated by the big mobile service providers. They are ignoring the rural areas and are not installing towers here. Everyday is a struggle for us."

There is a tower in Chakapada, but still no network is available in its periphery. One tower is at Badangi in Ganjam district, 20 km

from Ckakapada. The other tower is at Tikabali, 16 km away.

People in the villages like Ghatiguda, Bandhakhaman, Budukakhola, Tokeijhola, Mahaguda, under Kakharujhola panchayat; Andirigada, Gasama, Nidhiaberena under Bahali panchayat; Nandini, Burupoli, Gochhabadi under Pasara panchayat; Subaliya, Tataguda, Arbangi under Bramanapada panchayat; Ranagaon, Rupagaon and Rangamatia under Chakapada panchayat have no way out but to cope with a communication nightmare.

The villagers said that all service provider companies should take note of their issues while the administration should take immediate step to resolve the issue.

## 5 wagons of goods train derail for 2nd time

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Keonjhar, Jan 30:** A major tragedy was averted on the railway line near Keonjhar railway station in Keonjhar district as five wagons of a goods train derailed Saturday afternoon.

Sources said, the train carrying iron ores was heading towards Paradip from Nayagarh in Keonjhar district. Since the train was puffing into the Keonjhar station, its speed was relatively less otherwise



the derailment could have resulted in a major mishap. But the traffic on the route got affected.

On being informed, GRP, RPF

and Railway department officials have reached the spot and launched a restoration work. They are also on the job to find out the cause of the accident.

Notably, a goods train carrying iron ores heading towards Paradip from Jurudi had also met similar fate near the same spot January 28, resulting in derailment of four bogies. Locals alleged the tracks at the particular spot may have some defect that caused accident for the second time.

## Same house displays PMAY, BPGY posters

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Hindol, Jan 30:** Irregularities in implementation of 'Awas Yojana' are galore in Hindol block of Dhenkanal district. In the latest case of irregularity, two posters - one of the Centre and the second of the state government - are seen pasted on the wall of a beneficiary. The two posters have created confusion among the villagers. Some alleged that it was a ploy by officials to siphon off the money.

Krupasindhu Panda, a resident of Gulugundi village of Kalinga panchayat under Hindol block, has recently got his house constructed under the Awas Yojana scheme.

However, the newly-built house displays two posters mentioning about the schemes. The Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Gramin) sticker shows Rs 1,20,000 has been sanctioned in the financial year 2020-21 and Rs 18,630 towards assistance under MGNREGS to him.

The second poster belonging to the state government mentions that the house has been constructed under Biju Pucca Ghar Yojana in the same financial year of 2020-21. The poster also says that the beneficiary received the same amount of Rs 1,20,000.

The two different posters displayed on a single house has become



The second poster mentions that the house was built under Biju Pucca Ghar Yojana in the same year

the point of discussion here.

In this regard, gram rojgar sevak (GRS) Minarva Pati said putting up two posters on a single house is an administrative error. "The beneficiary has received work order under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana and accordingly the money was provided to him," she said.

When contacted, block development officer (BDO) Debadutta Mahunta said he did not have any clue regarding the matter. He said that if there is any mistake, a probe will be conducted and suitable action would be taken against those responsible for the error.

## Phone call leads cops to arrest killer of lady love

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Purusottampur, Jan 30:** The body of a woman who was missing since January 27 morning when she was out to pluck greens was recovered from an abandoned well at Sargunapalli village under Purusottampur police limits in Ganjam district Saturday. A mobile phone helped the police solve the case.

Informing about the case at a press meet Saturday, Purusottampur SDPO Seema Swain said, the woman was murdered over an extramarital affair. Police arrested accused Buddhia Das (45) from Bhabandha village for committing the crime.

## Man turns out to be wife's killer

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Rayagada, Jan 30:** A man who had earlier lodged a report with the police that his wife was murdered by burglars turned out to be the murderer of his wife. The incident was reported from Hulukatunda village under Kumbhikota panchayat in Rayagada district. Police arrested the man Saturday.

The accused has been identified as Bijay Huluka and the victim as Kasai Huluka.

While informing about the incident and the investigation that fol-

lowed, Rayagada SP Vivekanand Sharma said he was personally supervising the case.

According to police, Bijay came to Rayagada police station to lodge a report that his wife was murdered by a gang of burglars. He had also alleged in his report that the burglars decamped with her gold ornaments.

Police launched an investigation, but the needle of suspicion pointed at Bijay. Police connected the dots and found Bijay the murderer of his wife. The police said Bijay hacked his wife to death her suspected extra-marital affair.

According to the report, the state government has set up 25 such tents with five star hotel facilities at Daringbadi as part of its eco-treat programme.

There are scores of such traditional wood houses in Daringbadi area. "These houses have special

qualities. In winter, one can't feel chill inside while in summer, one can't feel the sultry weather," said Sanjit Kumar Pradhan, a resident of Karmala village.

He says naturally built wood houses have automatic cooling system. "My family has been staying in a wood house for many years. Now, the thatched roof has been replaced with asbestos, because wild creepers and grass are not available in forest in abundance," he pointed out.



workers. Buddhia decided to eliminate her following the fight. Two days later, January 27, he called her to the farmland near the village. There they spent some intimate moments and then the woman repeated the same demand to take her to his house.

As he had already planned for her elimination, he murdered her ruth-

lessly with a sharp weapon and subsequently dumped the body in a well before going back to his house.

With the recovery of her body, the police registered a case (Case No-26/21) on basis of the deceased's brother's report.

The police had quizzed some of the deceased's female co-workers and found out the woman who would lend her phone to the deceased to talk with Buddhia. This mobile phone led the police to Buddhia. Then he narrated the entire episode before the police, took the police to the crime spot where he had hidden the deceased's pair of slippers and the murder weapon.

Notably, the leopard found stuck in the trap Thursday morning was rescued, but died later.

## ODISHA-WB BORDER ROW

### Satellite survey begins in Balasore

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Jaleswar, Jan 30:** Odisha government Friday started a satellite survey in Balasore district to resolve the prolonged border dispute with West Bengal.

Acting on the directives of Balasore District Collector K Sudarshan Chakravarty, 36 points were identified by Jaleswar tehsil officials after thoroughly verifying land measurements of bordering areas.

"Satellite surveys of these 36 points are being conducted now. A 10-member team of scientists from Oscar Satellite have been carrying out DGP and ETS high-tech satellite surveys here. The demarcated points in riverbeds can be reestablished in future in cases when washed away by river water," said Jaleswar tehsildar Khirod Kumar Panda. The survey work will continue till February 2, the tehsildar added. Notably, illegal sand quarrying activities are going on rampantly in the district. Many sand mafias from West Bengal have been earning handsomely by lifting sands from areas coming within Odisha.

The illegal activities have posed serious threats to riverside villages like Bilaspur, Gopalpur, Kuanpur, Makidia, Totapada, Behera Sahi, Praharajpur and Makarampur under Jaleswar block in Balasore.

## RCCF orders probe into leopard's death

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Buguda, Jan 30:** Regional Chief Conservator of Forests (RCCF) Prashant Kumar Mishra has ordered an investigation into the death of a leopard that was rescued from a trap laid to capture wild boars in Buguda forest range in Ganjam district. The carcass of the big cat was cremated after its post mortem as per the guidelines, Friday.

The RCCF said the leopard died of suffocation and cardiac arrest. He added that a steel wire of the trap had pierced into the chest of the 10-year old big cat.

The DFO and the intelligence wing of the forest department have been asked to investigate who are responsible for laying a trap for boars, which led to death of the leopard.

Notably, the leopard found stuck in the trap Thursday morning was rescued, but died later.

## Transgenders roped in to collect parking fees

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Angul, Jan 30:** Taking a cue from Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC), Angul Municipality has come forward to get the transgender community involved in mainstream society.

The BMC has roped in an NGO of transgenders to collect parking fees in Bhubaneswar. Angul municipality is going to engage transgenders to collect garbage.

Angul municipality sources said in the first phase, four battery-operated vehicles have been procured for the initiative. In the coming days, four more such vehicles will be added up to the fleet.

These vehicles visit door to door to collect wastages. The town dwellers will have to dump dry and wet wastages separately in the containers attached to the vehicles.

Each of these vehicles will have a driver and a helper. While these vehicles will have GPS system, the drivers and helpers will be provided with a route chart. There will be a cell at the municipal office to monitor and manage this project.

The initiative is a part of the civic body's city beautification drive. The proposed e-toilet at



ANGUL MUNICIPALITY

The proposed e-toilet at Medical Square will also be managed by the transgender community. The transgenders have submitted a proposal for opening a shop near the e-toilet in the municipality

The municipality also has a plan to start fish farming at ponds on the premises of Faecal Sludge Treatment Plant (FSTP) located at Panchmahala. Here too the transgenders are to be engaged

For this, 10 transgenders of Saptarang SHG have passbooks opened in the bank. Those who will drive the battery-operated vehicles are being trained

Medical Square will also be managed by the transgender community. The transgenders have submitted a proposal for opening a shop near the e-toilet in the municipality.

The municipality also has a plan to start fish farming at ponds on the premises of Faecal Sludge Treatment Plant (FSTP) located at Panchmahala. Here too the transgenders are to be engaged.

For this, an SHG by the name of Saptarang Self Help Group involving 10 transgenders has already been formed. Their passbooks have also been opened in the bank. Those who will drive the above mentioned battery-operated vehicles are presently undergoing

training. Town dwellers have welcomed the municipality for their steps to empower transgenders. "It is undoubtedly a good step on the part of Angul municipality. This will not only help transgenders improve their financial condition but also give the town a clean look. But things are to be carried out properly," observed Ranjan Barik, a town dweller.

While heaping praise on the municipality, Bhanupriya Samal, supervisor, Saptarang SHG, said, "The initiative will make a huge difference. This will help end the discrimination against the transgender community. They will work with dignity and they will no longer

have to get earfuls from people."

Echoing the same, Suhani Dehury, president, Saptarang SHG added, "The members have been in joy since day one of their training session. They are receiving driving, e-toilet management and fish farming training."

When contacted, Girija Shankar Mallick, executive officer, Angul municipality, said, "Efforts have already started to lift wastages from the town using battery-operated vehicles. The job will be done by transgenders. Now we have four vehicles and four more are to be added soon. This will help keep the town atmosphere neat and clean."

## Farmers hold on to unsold paddy; 8K tokens expire

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Padmapur, Jan 30:** Even as two and a half months have passed since paddy procurement in Padmapur sub-division of Bargarh district started, tokens of 8000 farmers have lapsed. Moreover, 9,00,956 packets of paddy have been stocked in the open at 70 mandis while millers allegedly fail to lift the crop as per the targets set by the civil supplies department, a report said.

On the other hand, the farmers whose tokens have lapsed are worried about their paddy remaining unsold. As paddy sacks are in the open, cloudy weather and possibility of rains have added to their worries. They expressed concern

that if their paddy gets soaked in rains, millers will later cut 10 to 12 kg of paddy per quintal, citing poor FAQ.

According to the report, tokens of 8000 farmers in six blocks have expired while paddy of 1684 farmers affiliated to 7 cooperative societies is stocked in the open at mandis. However, RMC secretary Dharmendra Bhoi said that 11,114 quintals of paddy of 209 farmers were sold Thursday.

In fact, paddy of 15,000 farmers has not yet been sold in the subdivision. On the other hand, the district administration and the civil supplies department have not cleared doubts of farmers if their paddy will be procured or not when

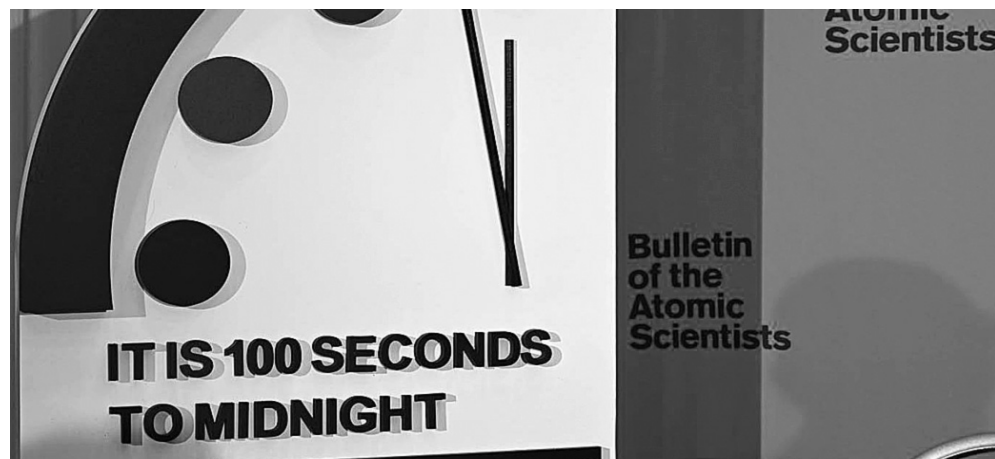
their tokens have expired. In some cases, it is alleged that staff of mandis are asking farmers with tokens not to bring paddy to the mandis, citing lack of space.

Many farmers have their paddy stocked at their houses. If they fail to sell their paddy, it will push distress sale and middlemen will take advantage of it, said Ashok Sahu, the convener of Rajbodasambar Krushak Sangathan.

As regards the lapsed tokens, assistant civil supplies officer Sabhuprasad Haripal said that the higher-ups have been intimidated about the lapsed tokens so that new tokens will be generated. But he didn't make it clear when new tokens will be issued.

FOCUS HUMANITY

# COVID & THE DOOMSDAY CLOCK



In 2021, the Doomsday Clock will remain at just 100 seconds to midnight, indicating an alarmingly high level of existential risk to humanity. Although some promising developments could have moved the clock back from the brink, the COVID-19 pandemic showed that we cannot take stability and competent governance for granted

Last January, my fellow Elders Mary Robinson and Ban Ki-moon participated in the unveiling of the Doomsday Clock, the annual indicator of global catastrophic risk published by the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists. In 2020, the clock's hands moved closer to "midnight" than they have ever been — just 100 seconds away — and they will remain there in 2021.

It is hardly reassuring that we came no closer to midnight this year. The COVID-19 pandemic has served as a stark and deadly demonstration of the precariousness of our way of life. We have made remarkable progress on vaccines, and a new US administration brings hope of renewed multilateral cooperation. But there is no doubt that the future will be rife with existential threats: new pandemics, the climate crisis, nuclear conflict, and other risks that we cannot ignore.

Post-pandemic political leadership will be a crucial test of the world's ability to rise to these challenges. Too many of our leaders have been found wanting. The virus has claimed some two million lives and wrought economic devastation worldwide. While mass vaccine rollouts offer some people a glimmer of hope, most of the world's population will remain unprotected for quite some time.

To be sure, US President Joe Biden's decision to re-engage with the World Health Organisation (WHO) is a welcome signal of America's renewed commitment to multilateralism, as is his signing on to the COVAX scheme for equitable vaccine distribution. But WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has warned that unless we do more to ensure that COVID-19 vaccines are produced and distributed according to the principles of universal health coverage (UHC), the result will be a "catastrophic moral failure."

As a new report by The Elders shows, fully overcoming COVID-19 and equipping ourselves for future health emergencies requires remodeling global public-health policy around three key pillars: preparation for future pandemics;

ensuring UHC at national and global levels; and promoting healthier societies through holistic policies and social development.

No part of this agenda is revolutionary or too complicated to deliver quickly and at scale. Some of the countries that have performed well during the pandemic — including Thailand and Vietnam, which have reported barely 100 COVID-19 deaths between them — are already implementing this type of strategy. The challenge, as ever, is to back words with action, and to ensure that our efforts are properly funded and designed not to overlook the needs of the poor and marginalised.

Nowhere is this more essential than vaccination policy. The rapid development of not just one but several vaccines in less than a year is an incredible achievement and a triumph of human ingenuity, innovation, and cooperation. But it would be unpardonable if these precious vaccines were not equitably distributed around the world. In a pandemic, we cannot hope to re-cure fully or repair our social fabric unless we affirm and apply the principles of multilateralism and solidarity.

One of the most important lessons from the COVID-19 crisis is that short-termism and nationalism have weakened global health policy. It is now clear that national moves toward UHC must go hand in hand with multilateral efforts to strengthen public health systems globally.

To equip these systems for future pandemics, all stakeholders should define pandemic preparedness and response as a "global public good" that necessitates a multilateral approach, with states and global institutions pooling resources, capacity, and expertise. Equally important is support (and respect) for the ongoing work of the WHO and other bodies specifically charged with pandemic preparedness, including the Global Preparedness Monitoring Board (which I co-chair) and the Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response.

In economic terms, investing in preparedness to strengthen health security offers excellent value for money. In the case of the Global Preparedness Monitoring Board, an annual global expenditure of around \$5 per person could avert a repeat of the COVID-19

disaster, which has already cost the world economy more than \$11 trillion. And a similarly high rate of return can be found in UHC reforms, which have been shown to bring countries rapid health, economic, and societal benefits at all income levels.

We must act on the lessons of the COVID-19 crisis to create a new "Bretton Woods moment" of innovation and creativity in the service of global governance. That is the only way to protect our shared planet and its population over the long term.

There is no question that we have the capability to solve the collective challenges we face. But we now need Biden and other global leaders to grasp this opportunity and commit fully to sustained multilateral cooperation. Now, as always, moving the hands of the Doomsday Clock away from midnight is a matter of political will.

*The writer, a former Prime Minister of Norway and a former Director-General of the World Health Organisation, is a member of The Elders.*

PROJECT SYNDICATE



Gro Harlem Brundtland

**AN ANNUAL GLOBAL EXPENDITURE OF AROUND \$5 PER PERSON COULD AVERT A REPEAT OF THE COVID-19 DISASTER, WHICH HAS ALREADY COST THE WORLD ECONOMY MORE THAN \$11 TRILLION**



Aakar Patel

**This coming year the government will again get the chance to claim that India is the "fastest growing economy" because from the minus numbers we will have modest growth of about 2.2 per cent over two years between 2019 and 2022**

## Charisma, charlatanry

This will be the Modi government's eighth budget. We are told that gross domestic product of goods and services this year, meaning from April 2021 to March 2022, will be 11 per cent more than it was in the period between April 2020 and March 2021. The economic survey last year said that growth would be 6 per cent in the current year. It turned out to be minus 7.7 per cent instead. This coming year the government will again get the chance to claim that India is the "fastest growing economy" because from the minus numbers we will have modest growth of about 2.2 per cent over two years between 2019 and 2022. This shift from negative to positive will come with the illusion that there is record shattering growth, which is bogus. The government also said this week that in 2019-20 growth, which it had earlier said was 4.2 per cent, was actually 4 per cent. This is the actual trajectory on which we are today. Indeed, it is lower than that but let us leave that for now.

The point is that this is Modi's eighth budget. Can we discern, whether we are Modi haters or Modi bhakts, any idea of a grand narrative or a master plan? The fact is that we cannot. We have, in the words of a friend who was responding to Modi's national security policy, "some catchphrases, acronyms and advertise-able phrases strung together." Who remembers Make in India? This came with a superb logo of a lion striding boldly forward and a series of events. The logic of Make in India was that India was overly reliant on services, which while it contributed well over half of GDP only contributed 25 per cent to employment. By increasing the share of manufacturing, we would have more employment in the formal sector. Well, manufacturing's share of GDP since the launch of Make in India has actually gone down from 15 per cent to 14 per cent and possibly now 13 per cent after Covid. Unemployment has naturally followed the opposite trajectory, going from about 4 per cent before Modi to 6 per cent and then 9 per cent. And this figure is not really accurate because we are at the lowest historical labour force participation rate. Meaning that the number of people who have no job and are not looking for work, having given up hope, is at the historical highest.

This is the despondency that is resulting in mass movements all over the country as we are seeing in the current time. To return to the original point, eight budgets is a lot. It is more than Narasimha Rao, the great reformer got. It is as many, more or less, as Vajpayee, who was seen as the great liberaliser got. People may not know that the Jana Sangh under Vajpayee promised to cap the salaries of all Indians at ₹2,000 and said that the government would take all income that came over that (details of this are in my last book 'Our Hindu Rashtra'). Vajpayee also said that the party would force Indians to build homes only on 1000 square yards of land or less.

From such a socialist position the same Vajpayee headed a government that was the most privatisation oriented of any that came before it. Vajpayee's 2004 campaign was headlined 'India Shining' because he believed that his economic policies were strong enough and distinct enough for him to run on them. He lost the election, but it was not because he was wrong about his policies. They were of course quite remarkable. Can we say the same about what has happened to India since 2014? Modi's first head of NITI Aayog was a man who has spent his entire life saying that open and unrestricted free trade was the only way for a nation to quickly grow its economy. That man, Arvind Panagariya, was left to lament what is today the policy, which is the opposite of free trade. Aatmanirbharat means import substitution, which in turn means that cheaper foreign imports are taxed at high rates so that Indian companies can sell to Indians at higher prices. Is this good economics? Panagariya says no, but this is what we are now doing, a 180 degree turn from where Modi had started.

Eight budgets is sufficient time, more than sufficient, to at least be able to establish a grand narrative. This is where India was and this is where we are headed and this is how we will do it. Nobody today, including those inside government, can fill in the blanks of this sentence. This is not because the policy and narrative are too complicated to describe. It is because there is no grand policy. It is being made up and shifted and changed and even reversed as we go along.

There is the conviction that THIS particular budget will be the "game changer" that India has always waited for. That is what you will hear again after Nirmala Sitharaman presents a speech that will prove to be meaningless and numbers that will show themselves to be wildly off the mark. But we will continue on, bumbling in this fashion, not mindful of what has happened over the last eight budgets. We will allow this nation's economy to be governed not by competence and demonstrable numbers but by charisma and charlatanry.

### WISDOM CORNER

- The secret of genius is to carry the spirit of the child into old age, which means never losing your enthusiasm.** ALDOUS HUXLEY
- If you're not making mistakes, then you're not doing anything. I'm positive that a doer makes mistakes.** JOHN WOODEN
- The truth is you don't know what is going to happen tomorrow. Life is a crazy ride, and nothing is guaranteed.** EMINEM

### WORDSWORTH

#### Zymurgy

A useful term, zymurgy refers to the art or practice of fermentation. Unsurprisingly, it is best known within the fields of winemaking and brewing. The journal of the American Homebrewers Association has that title and its readers may be called zymurgists. If you need a related adjective, there's zymurgical. The related word zymology (adjective zymologist), is employed for that part of chemistry dealing with the fermentation action of yeasts, especially products that are intended for human consumption. All these words come from Greek zume, meaning a leaven, typically a yeast, that's added to make a substance ferment. It's also the origin of enzyme. Outside the field of fermentation, those who do notice it tend to focus on its being the literal last word. The phrase from aardvark to zymurgy is sometimes used to mean everything, these supposedly being the first and last nouns in the dictionary. However, a check on single-volume dictionaries shows that — apart from the New Oxford American Dictionary — zymurgy is rarely the last word. Some have one of related sense, zythum, a beer that was made by the ancient Egyptians; others prefer to end with Zyrian, another name for the language now usually called Komi; the American Heritage Dictionary has zyzzyva, a genus of tropical American weevils, which is also the last word in The Official Scrabble Players Dictionary (an interesting choice since Scrabble has only one z available, though you can make it if you happen to have the two blank tiles available); you may feel that The Bloomsbury English Dictionary has cheated by including zzz as its last word, "a representation of the sound made by somebody sleeping or snoring, often used in cartoons."

### SPECTRUM SKILLS

## Management lessons from Down Under



Bhaskar Basu

**THE TEST SERIES CAN BE EQUATED WITH A PROJECT, BRINGING TO FORE DIFFERENT MANAGEMENT SKILLS DESIRABLE AT DIFFERENT TIMES IN A JOURNEY OF UNCERTAINTIES**

The recent Test series against Australia was a keenly contested one and by far one of the most enjoyable in recent memory. The unprecedented victory with a rag-tag team is the stuff that fairy tales are made of. Such instances offer food for thought to business school students, young managers, as well as management educators like yours truly to reiterate the ingredients that make up a successful team. The four-Test series can be equated with a project, bringing to the fore different management skills desirable at different times in a journey of uncertainties.

The preparation of the Test series started much before it actually began. The management had identified key players in the opponent: Labuschagne and Smith (batting) and arguably the best bowling quartet of Starc, Hazlewood, Cummins and Lyon for scrutiny. Team analyst Hari Prasad aided head coach Shastri, batting coach Rathore and bowling coach Arun with specific cricketering inputs regarding these players. These were then conveyed to the Indian team during the lockdown so that they could practice the strategised plans in matches leading to the Test (including IPL). The tactics against Labuschagne

and Smith worked wonderfully in the first two Tests, while Lyon and Starc couldn't get going at all against the Indians. With Warner injured, the Australian batting could not dominate as in the past and was one of the big reasons for their debacle. While India dominated majority of the sessions in Adelaide, one bad session was enough to hand victory to the opposition. Following the demoralising defeat, skipper and star batsman Kohli left the shores along with star bowler Shami, who was injured. It was left to Rahane to motivate the boys and lead from the front with a dogged century at Melbourne in the second Test. It was one of the great comeback victories of a team bringing parity to the series. Quarantine policies meant the Test team had to travel early but got the opportunity to acclimatise with the pitches and bond with the teammates. There were a few days break between the second and third Test, but India had lost more players due to injury. For me, this phase of the series underlined the importance of the following management traits: 1) Planning and execution, which enabled India to have the upper hand for most of the playing sessions in Adelaide and Melbourne; 2) Team motivation, manifested in the way

the team bounced back after being written off by media and ex-players; 3) Learning and rectifying mistakes along the way; 4) Leadership skills, evident in the calm way that Rahane led his beleaguered team and 5) No room for complacency, for which the Aussies had to pay at Melbourne, where they probably let their guard down after thrashing India in Adelaide.

Moving to Sydney Australia had bolstered their opening pair with the inclusion of Warner and Pucovski, while India had to bring in young Siraj as replacement for Umesh, while Rohit came in for Mayank. The Test witnessed a gritty rearguard action by injured Vihari and half-fit Ashwin to deny the Aussies victory on the last day against all odds. This gave the Indian team the confidence going into the decider at Brisbane, which was considered a fortress due to the Aussies enviable winning run of thirty-two years in this venue. Moreover, India could barely put up eleven players on the park, as most of the regular players were carrying injuries. It was a fitting way to conclude the series with the winning runs from young Pant, who was a revelation carrying the team home to an unexpected win against all odds with worthwhile contri-

butions from debutants Washington and Shardul. This phase was also characterised by unwanted racist attacks by spectators and confusion over the Test match venue. The takeaways from this phase of the series as a student of management are: 1) Resilience-like the never say die approach of the Indian team on the last day in both Sydney and Brisbane; 2) Backup of resources, the sort that India badly required going into the decider in Brisbane; 3) Ability to withstand stress, the sort that the Indian middle order batsmen and tailenders withstood; 4) Taking risks, like throwing rookies Natarajan, Shardul and Washington into the mix replacing the experienced Bumrah and Ashwin in Brisbane and 5) Trust, which the management had reposed in the squad for this important series.

Summarising, the ten management lessons to take home: strategising, motivated workforce, continuous learning, leadership, guarding against complacency, resilience, backup plans, risk-taking ability, handling stress and trust.

*The writer is a Professor at Xavier Institute of Management Bhubaneswar. Views are personal.*

### Technology tremors

Sir, Nowadays we have been witnessing almost every person from children to aged ones addicted to mobile phones. We are so occupied with this addiction that we virtually forgot to enjoy the beautiful nature around us. We forgot to have conversations with family members, lost creative thinking. In a bid to know what's happening around the world, we couldn't see what's happening around us. In the process we are unduly straining our eyes. We want to solve all issues by using mobiles, some of which are no issues at all. The sooner we come out of this malice the better it will be for us. The real world is far more beautiful than the virtual one. Develop the habit of reading books and newspapers and spend quality time with family.

V Nagendra Kumar, HYDERABAD

### The world's pharmacy

Sir, India, even as it prepares to equip its citizens against the virus that has devastated lives and livelihoods, has proactively sent vaccine supplies, as grant, to its neighbours and friends. There are also commercial supplies that have been made available to Brazil and Morocco — even as many other countries have reached out for assistance. India's Vaccine Maitri, as the initiative has come to be known, is one of the most humane and diplomatically astute moves by the government on the foreign policy front in recent times. It fits well into Modi's declared policy of neighbourhood first. Delhi — by providing the most important public good possible at this time — has scored in generating goodwill not just among governments, but most importantly, citizens, both in the immediate vicinity and extended neighbourhood. The message is simple — when there is a crisis, India is there to help. The fact that India has been the first responder also helps it score — in terms of real geopolitical signalling — over China — which has faced issues with its own vaccine, and dispels the impression of New Delhi as a laggard. The praise Delhi has got from others, from the World Health Organization to the State Department of the United States, is further boost to India's soft power. By being a responsible power, empathetic to the needs of people beyond its borders, ready to help even as it faces its own crises, in a tough region, India has served itself well. The government must be applauded for this imaginative diplomacy, aided in no small measure by the structural advantage of being the world's pharmacy.

N Sathasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

## 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](mailto:edit@orissapost.com)

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# Year after first case, Kerala continues to grapple with Covid

There were a lot of accolades, brickbats and suspicions over the state's strategy against the virus



AGENCIES

**It's a year since the first case in the country was reported from the state this day last year. Looking back we feel proud as the state had put up a strong fight against the virus, which had caused far reaching consequences globally**

**KK SHAILAJA | HEALTH MINISTER**

should forget wearing masks, hand washing and social distancing.

There were a lot of accolades, brickbats and suspicions over the state's strategy against the virus, she said, adding "we have taken criticism positively."

With cases continuing to see a sharp rise, Kerala has commenced a 'Back to basics campaign' The state tested 59,759 samples Saturday, a far cry from the 1,00,000 daily samples which the state has been testing since long. Test positivity rate Saturday was 10.51 per cent. As many as 71,469 people are under treatment at various hospitals in the state, the highest number of Covid patients under treatment in the country while 18 deaths were reported Saturday, taking the total death toll to 3,722. As many as 2,17,434 people are under observation in various areas of the state. Of this 2,05,926 people are under home/institutional quarantine while 11,508 are under observation at various hospitals in the state. There are four new hotspots in the state. The total hotspots in the state now stand at 396.

# Can Kashmir Valley draw filmmakers again?

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Srinagar, Jan 30:** Mesmerised by its natural beauty, Hindi film producers, who are on a visit to Kashmir; Friday expressed their desire to shoot their upcoming films in the Valley.

A 24-member delegation representing most of the big banners of the industry arrived here Wednesday and visited Gulmarg to explore locations for film shoots.

Speaking to the media here, the delegates said that Kashmir can easily be an international film shooting destination.

Popular film producer Aashish Singh, who has already shot movies like 'Jab Tak Hai Jaan' in Kashmir, said the Valley provides a perfect backdrop for the filmmakers and has the potential of becoming the shooting destination for the world.



"We have so much potential here for filmmaking that not only Bollywood, but filmmakers from around the globe can shoot here," Singh said. He added that many filmmakers

want to visit Kashmir and capture its breathtaking visuals. Singh also said that the connection between Bollywood and Kashmir is very old and will be long lasting.

The CEO of the Producers Guild, Nitin Ahuja, said they want to revive the old relations with Kashmir when the Valley used to be the favourite backdrop for the filmmakers.

"We visited several locations and found them absolutely stunning. We also got overwhelming responses from the locals. The food is also amazing. The place is a complete package," he said.

The CEO of Ajay Devegan Productions, Meena Ayer, also praised the beauty of Kashmir and said the Valley possesses huge scope for film tourism which needs to be tapped.

Sanjeev Kapoor, popular chef and the host of the famous cooking show 'Khana Khazana', said that Kashmir can also be promoted for food tourism.

He said Kashmir is among the top three exotic food destinations in India. "I have tasted Kashmiri exotic food and will promote it throughout the world. There is a need of having a national campaign to promote Kashmir's delicious food," he said.

**We visited several locations and found them absolutely stunning. We also got overwhelming responses from the locals. The food is also amazing. The place is a complete package**

**NITIN AHUJA | CEO OF THE PRODUCERS GUILD**

# 6,000 ONLINE CLASSES HELD AMID PANDEMIC

*The digital classes commenced from June 1, 2020, as an interim arrangement for regular classes, and are telecast through a government educational channel*

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Thiruvananthapuram, Jan 30:** Kerala, the state with the highest literacy rate in India, has added another feather in its cap amid all challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, conducting over 6,000 online classes in which more than 43 lakh students from pre-primary standard to Class 12 attended.

The digital classes, titled 'First Bell', commenced from June 1, 2020, as an interim arrangement for regular classes, and are telecast through the government-owned KITE



VICTERS educational channel, under the KITE (Kerala Infrastructure and Technology for Education), officials said. The telecast of all classes for Class 10 was complete by January 17, and that of Class 12 by Saturday. To date, the KITE has developed and broadcast 6,200 class videos as part of the First Bell programme - over 3,100 hours of educational content. The focus area for each subject was published by the General Education Department and based on that, the revision classes are being arranged from January 31 onwards. "Initially, we planned the First Bell programme for a period of two months only but the Covid-19 situation demanded it to extend throughout the academic year," said K. Anvar Sadath, CEO, KITE. "It was indeed a daunting task to develop the digital classes for all standards," he said.

# 30K Kashmiri Pandits apply for 2K posts under PM package

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jammu, Jan 30:** Over 30,000 Kashmiri Pandits have applied for the 2,000 re-allocated government jobs under the prime minister's employment package and the selection process would be completed by the end of April, officials said Saturday.

The prime minister's package for Kashmiri Pandit migrants announced in 2008 has two major components - one pertaining to the provision of 6,000 jobs for youth and another pertaining to the provision of 6,000 accommodation units for the recruited employees.

"As regards to the jobs, out of 6,000 posts, 3,841 candidates have already been selected and appointed in various departments. The remaining 2,000-odd posts have been referred to J&K Service Selection Board (JKSSB), a relief and rehabilitation department spokesperson said.

"The JKSSB has already received more than 30,000 applications for these posts and the selection process shall be completed by the end of April. This will ensure completion of the PM package component related to jobs," the official said.

He said there are a few posts which have remained unfilled due to matters which are sub-judice. About the construction of 6,000

accommodation units, the spokesperson said significant progress has been achieved in the last few months.

While 1,000-odd units have already been constructed, another 1,500 were approved for construction in November last year, he said, adding the tenders for these units have either been finalised or will be finalised before the end of March.

"Land identification has been done for another 2,200 units. The Detailed Project Reports for these units are under finalisation and their tenders will be finalised before the end of May," the spokesperson said. Cumulatively, he said the procedural process has substantially been completed for nearly 5,000 accommodation units.

"It is expected that land for the remaining 1,000 units will be identified within a month which will substantially expedite the project. The migrants employees recruited under the PM package will be fully accommodated within the next 18 to 24 months," he said.

Meanwhile, National Conference (NC) Provincial President Defenceer Singh Rana has exhorted Lt Governor Manoj Sinha to take a considerate view with regard to demands of the Kashmiri Pandit migrants residing at Jagti township here who are agitating for the last over four months.

# RTI query with Customs over controversial import

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Thiruvananthapuram, Jan 30:** In an unprecedented move, the LDF government in Kerala has sought to know from the Customs department, through an RTI query, details of cases filed by the agency in connection with the recent import of dates through the UAE consulate here.

The move assumes significance in the wake of the Customs recently registering two cases against the state government for allegedly accepting consignments of the Holy Quran and thousands of kilograms of dates imported by the consulate officials for their personal use through diplomatic channel.

It is perhaps the first time that the state government is seeking details

from a central investigating agency through RTI like this.

Additional state Protocol Officer A P Rajeevan had submitted the RTI application on January 28, asking six questions in connection with the Customs cases and the procedural details of such imports.

The government wanted to know who was responsible for the non-payment of Customs Duty when goods, imported without the payment of duty for use in diplomatic offices like Embassies/Consulates, are otherwise used. A reply was sought on the number of cases in which prosecution has been launched before initiating adjudication proceedings by the Customs Department in the state during the last two years in the matter of evasion of customs duty.

*The Customs recently registered two cases against Kerala government for allegedly accepting consignments of the Holy Quran and thousands of kgs of dates imported by consulate officials*

The government wanted to know how many people had been served with summons under Section 108 of the Customs Act, 1962 in connection with the inquiry in the import of dates by the UAE Consulate here.

The names and designation of such and the names of organisations

in which they belong to were sought through RTI.

The Customs was also requested to furnish details of the procedures the probe agency has to follow to ensure proper usage of the goods for issuing the exemption certificate.

Besides registering two cases against the state government, Customs had also launched a probe into the role of "some powerful persons" who allegedly violated the laws. Customs officials had said the state government had accepted 18,000 kg of dates imported by the UAE consulate officials in Thiruvananthapuram in 2017 for their personal use.

Similarly, consignments of the Holy Quran imported by the consulate were also accepted by state

government officials.

Officials said there were clear cases of violation of the Customs Act as the state government accepted those items brought by the diplomats for their personal use by availing tax exemption certificate.

They said the state government officials very well know that they are forbidden from taking anything from the foreign government.

The UAE consulate officials imported certain items for their personal use and the state government accepted those items for distribution in certain places. So there is a clear case of violation of certain provisions under the Customs Act, Money Laundering Act and Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA), they claimed.



Picture used for representation.

# MIYAWAKI FORESTS ARE THE NEW RAGE IN KERALA

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Thiruvananthapuram, Jan 30:** Prof Akira Miyawaki, the noted botanist from Japan, turned 93 Friday, but his "Miyawaki model", presented in the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), Earth Summit in June 1992, has become a rage in Kerala with the state government and private players developing these forests which could be cultivated even in a small area. In the 1994 Paris climate summit also this proposal was a major hit.

It was MR Hari, Managing Director of Invis Multimedia, who set out to meet Prof Akira Miyawaki of the Yokohama National University in Japan to get a personal feel on this type of forests and to understand about it in person.

Kerala now has 1.6 acre land of "Miyawaki model" in the state spread across 10 districts with minimum of 10 cents and maximum of 20 cents of land.

Miyawaki won the "Blue Planet" award - one of the most prestigious awards in environment conservation. After accepting the award at the age of 78 has said "I want to cultivate plants and trees for 30 more years, I want to create forests of live and nothing else."

The first Miyawaki forest in Kerala became operational three years ago and it was at the property of MR Hari in Puliyyarakonam, a 15-km drive from Thiruvananthapuram. The forest was in 3 cents of plot and in this three cents of land a variety of 500 plants, trees, creepers have formed in this forest.

Hari, while speaking to IANS, said: "The trees touched 30 ft in height in three years and I had to prune these trees as their branches could fall in heavy winds and create problems. This is not in line with the Miyawaki idea of not cutting the branches but I had to make certain changes for practical purposes." He further said, "This forest has slowly started growing with insects and large numbers of birds coming in and finding this as their habitat and it's a great feeling. More than that the environment in the surrounding areas has improved much and we could directly feel it."

Kerala Tourism has now taken up the project of Miyawaki Forests after the success of Hari's project at Puliyyarakonam. A consortium of Natures Green Guardian foundation, Organic Kerala Mission society and Cultural shoppe are promoting Miyawaki forests for state tourism department.



Miyawaki forest is one of the flagship programmes of Kerala Strategic Council (K-DISC), a state government body. The organisation's first project was in Chalai go-

**FLAGSHIP PROGRAMME**

According to the Miyawaki theory, 162 plants can be cultivated in 1 cent of land and these plants will shoot straight up instead of towards side for sunlight

In three years these trees will grow 30 feet, and in 20 years this will have the tone and tenor of a 100-year-old forest

Miyawaki forest is one of the flagship programmes of Kerala Development and Innovation Strategic Council (K-DISC), a state government body

Kerala now has 1.6 acre land of "Miyawaki model" in the state spread across 10 districts

**"I am receiving two to three enquiries per day from people who are interested to implement the project in their lands. State tourism department is also satisfied that the people of the state are taking up the cause and this could be the best tribute to the great plant botanist on his 93rd birthday"**

**MR HARI**

vernment girls high school which was implemented January 29, 2020 commemorating the 92 birthday

of Akira Miyawaki. In a year, the area has grown into a good forest.

Prof Miyawaki's student, Prof Fujiwara, was present during the planting of the seeds and saplings.

K-DISC is now planting Miyawaki forests at 12 places in 10 districts of the state.

Shakeela KT, Miyawaki Project Coordinator and Assistant Programme officer of K-DISC, told IANS that the organisation has implemented the project in 12 places in 10 districts in the past one year: "After this we will be monitoring the environmental and climate changes in the area after these forests have come into being and we will be studying in detail on the quality of air in the atmosphere, quantity of oxygen, ground water situation and pollution in water and air."

Environmental activists are on cloud nine following the success of Miyawaki forests in the state.

Hari, who runs a YouTube channel on Miyawaki Forests, said: "I am receiving two to three enquiries per day from people who are interested to implement the project in their lands. State tourism department is also satisfied that the people of the state are taking up the cause and this could be the best tribute to the great plant botanist on his 93rd birthday."

# 2 militants trapped during encounter with forces surrender

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Srinagar, Jan 30:** Two militants, who were trapped during an encounter with security forces, laid down their arms before the authorities in Jammu and Kashmir's Pulwama district Saturday, officials said.

The security forces had launched a cordon-and-search operation at Lelhaar in the Kakapora area of the district Friday night following information about the presence of militants there, the officials said. They said the search operation turned into an encounter after the hiding militants opened firing. After a night-long lull in the firing, the two militants surrendered before the security forces along with their two AK rifles, the officials said.

The two ultras were identified as Akeel Ahmad Lone and Rouf Ul Islam. Lone had sustained splinter injuries in his right foot and was taken to the police hospital here for treatment, they added. "Both terrorists surrendered along with their AK-47 rifles before senior officers. One who was injured in encounter has been shifted to hospital," police said.



**Time has come to do away with the ritual of President's address to joint sitting of both Houses of Parliament & Governor's address to Vidhan Sabhas**  
**MANISH TEWARI | CONGRESS LEADER**

## GRAND ALLIANCE FORMS HUMAN CHAINS AGAINST NEW FARM LAWS

Supporters of the Opposition Grand Alliance in Bihar Saturday formed human chains across the state as an expression of solidarity with the farmers who have been agitating in the national capital seeking the repeal of the contentious farm laws



## of the day quote

Without disrespecting the President's address, we want to say that when the farming community in the country is up against the farm laws, it was not right on his part to support the laws  
**SAUGATA ROY | TMC MP**

Rahul Gandhi has declared war on the people of India. He said that if his political stand is not supported by the PM of our country, then cities will burn  
**SMRITI IRANI | UNION MINISTER**

Reform is a continuous process and no one would argue against the reforms in the APMCs or mandi system, a positive argument on the same does not mean that it is done to weaken or demolish the system  
**SHARAD PAWAR | NCP CHIEF**

## SHORT TAKES

### Two teenagers charred to death

**Mumbai:** Two teenage boys were charred to death when their motorcycle caught fire after colliding with a speeding pick-up vehicle in Maharashtra's Amravati district, police said Saturday. The incident took place near Paratwada under Aasegaon police station, when a motorcycle ridden by Sarthak Vaidya (17) and Nivrutti Salav (15) collided with a pick-up vehicle Friday evening, an official said. Due to the impact of the collision, the pick-up vehicle pushed the bike along for around 20 to 30 meters, and the resultant friction on the road, triggered a blast in the petrol tank of the two-wheeler, he said.

### Leopard on the prowl trapped

**Coimbatore:** A leopard, which was creating panic in Madukkarai near here, was Saturday trapped in a cage placed by the Forest Department, police said. Following complaints from residents that 20 goats and five dogs had been killed by the leopard which was on the prowl for the last 20 days, the department kept two cages, the police said. Early this morning, some villagers heard a noise, found the animal in one of the traps and alerted the department.

### Pak violates ceasefire along IB

**Jammu:** The Pakistani army has violated the ceasefire along the International Border (IB) in Jammu and Kashmir's Kathua district, officials said Saturday. The firing from across the border started around 10.10 pm Friday in the Bobiyaan border outpost area of Hiranagar sector, prompting an effective retaliation by the Border Security Force.

### Minor girl rescued after 2 months

**Anand (Guj):** A six-year-old girl was rescued from Morbi in Gujarat, nearly two months after she was kidnapped from the state's Anand district, even as the accused, a labourer from Madhya Pradesh, is on the run, police said Saturday. The minor, who was kidnapped December 3 last year, was rescued January 25 from near a factory in Morbi in Saurashtra region, nearly 240 km from Tarapur in Anand, they said. After rescuing the girl, the police made video calls to her parents to confirm her identity.

# Over 100 protesters from Punjab missing, claims NGO

An NGO in Punjab has claimed that over 100 farmer-protesters from the state have gone missing after participating in the tractor rally in Delhi, January 26

AGENCIES

**Chandigarh, Jan 30:** Days after hundreds of protesting farmers marched into New Delhi while participating in the 'Kisan Gantantra Parade' on Republic Day, over 100 protesting farmers have reportedly gone missing from various parts of Punjab, claimed an NGO. The Punjab Human Rights Organisation recently said that over 100 protesters, who had participated in the Republic Day tractor parade, have gone missing. It said that 12 farmers from Tatariewala village of Moga were reported missing January 26.

Various organisations including Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee, Khaira Mission, Panthi Talmel Sangathan besides the Punjab Human Rights Organisation have announced free legal aid to those arrested by the Delhi Police in connection with the violence.

The Delhi Police has arrested 18 protesters so far in connection with the violence at the Red Fort. A case was registered against them with



FILE PHOTO

Paschim Vihar Police station. Seven out of 18 arrested protesters belong to Bangi Nihal Singh village under Talwandi Sabo subdivision of Bathinda district in Punjab.

These arrested farmers had left their village January 23 on two tractors to take part in farmers' tractor march held January 26 on the occasion of Republic Day.

The president of the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee, Manjinder Singh Sirsa, said 11 protesters from Moga were arrested by

Nangloi police. They have been sent to Tihar jail now.

Sources said that arrests were also made in Alipur and Narela areas.

Most of them were booked under the Damage to Public Property Act, the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act and the Epidemic Diseases Act.

Bhartiya Kisan Union (Rajewal) Chief Balbir Singh Rajewal said farmer unions were receiving lists of the people reported missing after the Republic Day parade which was being verified.



An Indian Air Force aircraft performs a sortie as others stand parked, ahead of the AERO INDIA 2021 show at Yelahanka Air Base in Bangalore, Saturday  
**PTI PHOTO**

# SII plans to launch Covovax by June: Poonawalla

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Pune, Jan 30:** In what could be a mega boost to the ongoing COVID-19 vaccination drive in India, the Serum Institute of India (SII) has announced its plan to launch its new vaccine, Covovax, by June this year.

SII CEO Adar Poonawalla said Saturday that its partnership for a COVID-19 vaccine with Novavax has shown excellent efficacy results.

"We have applied for starting trials in India. Hope to launch Covovax by June 2021," Poonawalla said in a tweet. The new vaccine



shall be launched under the brand name of Covovax, which SII is

manufacturing in partnership with Novovax. The Pune-based global vaccine giant has sought permission from the DCGI to start domestic trials of the new product.

The development comes close on the heels of US-based biotechnology company Novavax announcing that its vaccine is 89.3 per cent effective in preventing Covid-19 in a trial conducted in the UK.

The study assessed the efficacy of the vaccine - NVX-CoV2373 - during a period with high transmission and with a new UK variant strain of the virus emerging and



The government has maintained that appointment of judges in the high courts is a "continuous collaborative process" between the Executive and the Judiciary, as it requires consultation and approval from various constitutional authorities.

As per the procedure for the appointment of judges to the Supreme Court and the 25 high courts, the apex court collegium recommends the names of candidates to the government which, in turn, either accepts the proposal or returns it for reconsideration. The high court collegiums first send their recommendations to the Law Ministry which in turn processes the files by attaching IB reports and forwards it to the SC collegium.

# Centre mulls law to ban cryptocurrencies

The legislation, listed for debate in the current parliamentary session, seeks "to prohibit all private cryptocurrencies in India"



REUTERS

**Mumbai, Jan 30:** India plans to introduce a law to ban private cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin and put in place a framework for an official digital currency to be issued by the central bank, according to a legislative agenda listed by the government.

The law will "create a facilitative framework for creation of the official digital currency to be issued by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI)," said the agenda, published on the Lower House website Friday.

The legislation, listed for debate in the current parliamentary session, seeks "to prohibit all private cryptocurrencies in India, however, it allows for certain exceptions to promote the underlying technology of cryptocurrency and its uses," the agenda said.

In mid-2019, an Indian government panel recommended banning all private cryptocurrencies, with a jail term of up to 10 years and heavy fines for anyone dealing in

digital currencies. The panel has, however, asked the government to consider the launch of an official government-backed digital currency in India, to function like bank notes, through the Reserve Bank of India.

The RBI had in April 2018 ordered financial institutions to break off all ties with individuals or businesses dealing in virtual currency such as Bitcoin within three months.

However, in March 2020, Supreme Court allowed banks to handle cryptocurrency transactions from exchanges and traders, overturning a central bank ban had that dealt the thriving industry a major blow.

Governments around the world have been looking into ways to regulate cryptocurrencies but no major economy has taken the drastic step of placing a blanket ban on owning them, even though concern has been raised about the misuse of consumer data and its possible impact on the financial system.

# Parl panel welcomes revised definition of children, parent

The standing committee evaluated the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens (Amendment) Bill, 2019

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 30:** Expanding the definition of children, parent and relative in a draft Bill will leave no scope for any legal ambiguity, a parliamentary standing committee report said.

The Bill aims to expand the definition of children to include son-in-law, daughter-in-law, biological or adoptive or step son and daughter, minors through legal guardian, parent to include father-in-law, mother-in-law and grandparents, whether or not a senior citizen and relatives to include minor through legal guardian.

The standing committee evaluated the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens (Amendment) Bill, 2019.

"The committee deems it to be a significant measure as maintenance may now be claimed from all admissible relatives/legal heirs of parents and senior citizens. Further, the above change in the definition of "children" has also been con-

comitantly reflected in the definition of "parent" in the Amendment Bill," it said.

They also noted that with the revised definition of "relative" in the Bill, wherein minors have been included in the category of "relative", senior citizens would now be able to claim maintenance from minors, too, through their legal guardians.

"The Committee further note that the definition of "welfare" in the amendment Bill has been expanded to include provision for food, clothing, housing, safety and security, medical attendance, health-care, treatment, recreation and other amenities necessary for physical and mental well-being of parents and senior citizens which has given welfare oriented impetus to it in actual sense," it said.

"Overall the committee opines that the modified definitions in the amendment Bill will impart a practical, holistic and broader orientation to the MWPS Act, 2007, thus leaving no scope for any legal ambiguity," it said.

## 31 BY-POLLS IN 20 YEARS

# Is Rajasthan Assembly building a haunted house

ALL IS NOT WELL WITH THE RAJASTHAN ASSEMBLY SINCE IT SHIFTED ITS PREMISES TO A NEW BUILDING IN 2001

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Jaipur, Jan 30:** A total of 27 by-polls have been held in Rajasthan between 2000 to 2019 while four by-polls are scheduled in the month of March this year after the death of four sitting MLAs of the desert state which makes it 31 by-elections in last 20 years.

Alleging that "all is not well with the Rajasthan Assembly since it shifted its premises to a new building in 2001", former BJP MLA Gyanchand Ahuja has asked Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot to conduct "hawan, kirtan and poojan" in House premises to put a check on the ever rising number of by-polls in the state that have been quite frequent.

The Ramgarh MLA also confirmed that at least 200 MLAs never got to complete their tenure of five

years in the past 20 years. Either a few died, or were jailed, however, some others' fate was better and they became Parliamentarians and the seats were left vacant.

In the last four months, four sitting MLAs have died in Rajasthan.

In October last year, Congress MLA Kailash Trivedi passed away. In November, BJP MLA Kiran Maheshwari also passed away. In December, Congress MLA Master Bhanwarlal Meghwal passed away and in January, Gajendra Singh Shaktawat passed away.

According to Ahuja, "Since the time the assembly has been shifted in the new building in 2001, never ever have all 200 MLAs been able to complete their tenure which was not the case earlier.

"This is not normal. Pooja and kirtan are important for purification of the Rajasthan Assembly. There



is a crematorium right adjacent to the Assembly which has brought in a 'vastu dosh' here," he added.

The BJP MLA further said that earlier the Assembly was running inside the walled city before 2001 and all 200 MLAs had completed their terms "in the pink of their health".

Earlier, a Kalash was kept here

under the BJP rule and no deaths were reported, however, under the Congress' regime that Kalash was removed and the death chain has again started.

He also accused the Chief Minister for all the wrong decisions taken in this matter and not putting proper emphasis on the step to be

taken to manage the vastu.

"The CM starts Assembly sessions mid-week, especially Tuesday, which is not an auspicious day to make fresh beginnings," he added.

The issue of the Rajasthan Assembly being "haunted" was raised earlier in 2018 too, when lawmakers discussed the presence of "ghosts" in the complex. A few lawmakers had even requested the Speaker to complete the proceedings before 12 noon, while others called for a "purification ritual" fearing the worst. At that time, the then Speaker Kailash Meghwal had said that a separate debate should be held on this issue. When this news agency contacted Meghwal on the matter, he, however, said, "No comments."

However, he did not altogether deny the presence of supernatural elements.

"Christians call it ghosts, Muslims

call it saya and we call it bhoot. So there must be some reality in its presence," he said, adding, "I follow Arya Samaj principles and hence stay away from all such discussions." A renowned astrologer from Rajasthan, Deepak Joshi said, "There is a serious vastu dosh in the building. Its northeast part is cut off from the building which consists of a cremation ground. Also there are gates at the southeast, which is not a good sign."

"The building is constructed on a cremation ground which indicates that the king can never have a stable life. Hence a stable tenure of 200 is never completed since the time construction of this building started here."

"If a seat is increased or decreased, this phenomenon can stop as per numerology 2 denotes instability."



## of the day quote

Shocked to see mobs and police trying to intimidate and clear Delhi farmers' protest, after stopping their water, electricity and Internet

The BJP government is publicising the 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' scheme, but the women and girls are facing barbaric atrocities in the BJP ruled states

Once upon a time, the Economic Survey was the vehicle to communicate to the people in simple language the state of the economy and the prospects in the coming year. Now, it has apparently a different purpose, although the purpose is not clear

## SHORT TAKES

### 83 held for Singhu violence

New Delhi: The Delhi police arrested 83 people including the man who attacked SHO Alipur in the violence that broke out Friday afternoon at Singhu border. Criminal case under various sections including attempt to murder has been registered in Alipur police station, Delhi and investigation has been initiated.

### Man kills wife in front of child

Thane: A man from Dombivali in Thane district was arrested Friday for allegedly slitting his wife's throat in the presence of his child after a petty quarrel, police said.

### 2 terrorists surrender in Kashmir

Srinagar: Two armed militants have surrendered during an encounter in Pulwama district of south Kashmir, officials said. The gun battle took place late Friday in Lelhar area. Two AK-47 rifles were recovered from them.

### Woman killed for dowry in UP

Ballia (UP): A 25-year-old woman was allegedly killed for dowry in Athilapur village here, police said Saturday. Ranjana Singh was married to Amlesh Singh of Athilapur village in February last year and ever since, she was allegedly being harassed for dowry.



Government better be on its toes. I have been warning them for a long time that Pakistan is trying to infiltrate the borders. Their weapons are coming in. They have sleeper cells here that they can awaken anytime they want

### TEMPLE DEDICATED TO J JAYALALITHAA, MGR

A temple dedicated to late Tamil Nadu Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa and her mentor MG Ramachandran in Madurai was inaugurated by Chief Minister E Palaniswami Saturday



# BKU digs its heels in Ghazipur border

Support for the farmers' protest swelled Saturday, as more villagers poured in at a key protest site on the Delhi-Meerut highway in Ghazipur

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ghaziabad, Jan 30: Support for the farmers' protest swelled Saturday, as more villagers poured in at a key protest site on the Delhi-Meerut highway in Ghazipur on the border with Uttar Pradesh.

The Bharatiya Kisan Union-led protest against the Centre's new farm laws here looked like it was going slim Thursday but more protestors have joined the stir, following a mahapanchayat of farmers Saturday in Muzaffarnagar, while supporters also joined in from Haryana and Rajasthan districts.

"The movement was and is strong," BKU's Meerut Zone president Pawan Khatana told this news agency.

Khatana, who is at the demonstration site with BKU leader Rakesh Tikait, said there has been continuous support for the "peaceful protest" against the farmers' demand for removal of the new agri laws.

"This is not a political protest. Anybody who shares the ideology of the BKU and Rakesh Tikait are welcome here. But it is our appeal to those who do not wish to support the movement till the end that please do not come only to leave in between," he said.

Asked about estimated crowd size at the site, the farmer leader from western Uttar Pradesh said, "Farmers are coming in to show solidarity and leaving. It is not a stagnant crowd."

On Saturday night, the BKU office-bearers had estimated a crowd of around 10,000 people at Ghazipur; while the Ghaziabad police officials pegged it around 5,000 to 6,000.

Heavy security deployment, including personnel of the Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC), Rapid Action Force (RAF) in anti-riot gears and civil police, was made



Farmers raise slogans at Ghazipur border as they observe a hunger strike on Mahatma Gandhis death anniversary during their ongoing agitation against Centres farm reform laws in New Delhi, Saturday

at the protest site.

Meanwhile, the Delhi Traffic Police said to and fro movement on the National Highway 24 (Delhi-Meerut Expressway) has been closed.

Thousands of farmers have been protesting at Delhi's borders with Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, demanding a rollback of the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020, the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020 and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020.

The protesting farmers have expressed apprehension that these laws would pave the way for the dismantling of the minimum support price (MSP) system, leaving them at the "mercy" of big corporations.

However, the government has maintained that the new laws will bring better opportunities to farmers and introduce new technologies in agriculture.

### Internet suspended in Delhi's border areas

NEW DELHI: The government has suspended Internet connectivity for two days in Singhu and Tikri (Delhi-Haryana) border, and Ghazipur (Delhi-Uttar Pradesh) border for two days at the request of Delhi Police, officials said Saturday. The development has come in the backdrop of two recent incidents of violence within a week-mayhem during the January 26 farmers' tractor rally, and the clash between protesting farmers and local residents at Singhu border Friday.

# Controversial orders cost judge her permanent post

## SEXUAL ASSAULT CASE

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 30: In a rare instance, the Supreme Court Collegium has withdrawn its recommendation to confirm the permanent status of a Bombay High Court judge who had passed two controversial orders on sexual assaults in the past few days. The decision to not grant permanent status has been based on the possible need for "more exposure" in such cases, according to sources in the top court.

"There is nothing personal against her. She needs exposure and may not have dealt with these types of cases when she was a lawyer...She needs exposure and training," a source in the Supreme Court said.

The procedure for appointing permanent judges or making judges permanent involves the Collegium sending its recommendations to the Central government which then approves it. Sometimes, though, the recommendations are returned to the Collegium with queries. On January 20, the Supreme



On January 19 Justice Pushpa Ganeswara ruled that groping a minor's breast without "skin-to-skin contact" wasn't sexual assault

Court Collegium recommended Justice Pushpa Ganeswara's name for confirmation as a permanent judge of the Nagpur bench of the Bombay High Court. The judge, however, recently passed two judgments on sexual assault that sparked a huge furore and possibly jeopardised her chances.

In a January 19 ruling, she ruled that groping a minor's breast without "skin-to-skin contact" cannot be termed as sexual assault as defined under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

The Supreme Court Wednesday put that order on hold, allowing Attorney General KK Venugopal to file a petition against it. The order was "disturbing" and would create a dangerous precedent, the Attorney General had said.

On Thursday, in another case, Justice Ganeswara ruled that "the acts of 'holding the hands of the prosecutrix' (female victim), or 'opened zip of the pant'...does not fit in the definition of 'sexual assault'," and quashed the conviction of a man under POCSO. The victim, in this case, was a five-year-old minor.

Following these judgments, the Collegium reversed its decision to recommend Justice Ganeswara a permanent judge, sources said. The Supreme Court Collegium is rarely known to recall or withdraw the recommendations it makes to the government.

# 16 Naxals surrender in Dantewada

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dantewada, Jan 30: At least 16 Naxals, two of them carrying cash rewards on their heads, surrendered before police and CRPF officials in Chhattisgarh's Dantewada district Saturday, an official said.

The lower-rung cadres, who were active in Bachel and Kirandul areas of the district, surrendered in Kirandul town, citing that they were impressed by the rehabilitation drive 'Lon Varratu' and disappointed with the "hollow" Maoist ideology, Dantewada superintendent of police Abhishhek Pallava said.

With this, 288 Naxals have so far quit violence in the district under the 'Lon Varratu' (return to your

home/village) campaign, launched in June last year, the official said.

According to him, the surrendered cadres also took part in a "Tiranga" (tricolour) rally with the police and planted saplings, while a seminar was held to commemorate the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi on his death anniversary.

Of the 16 Naxals, Madkam Hurra (28), a Maoist militia commander, and Hunga Barsa (35), the head of the local unit of Dandakaranya Adivasi Kisan Majdoor Sanghan (the frontal wing of Maoist), were carrying a reward of ₹1 lakh each on their heads, Pallava said.

As many as 14 surrendered cadres hail from Madkamiras village, he said.

# 10 die, dozens hurt in Moradabad-Agra highway accident



AGENCIES

Moradabad (Uttar Pradesh), Jan 30: Ten people were killed and several others injured in a pile-up of three vehicles on the Moradabad-Agra Highway on Saturday in Uttar Pradesh, said police.

Moradabad Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Prabhakar Chaudhary confirmed that the accident took place near the culvert of Nanpur under Kundarkhi police station area. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath offered his condolences and directed the officials to provide adequate medical care to the injured persons. He also announced a compensation of ₹2 lakh each to the kin of the deceased persons and ₹50,000 each to the injured.

District official Rakesh Kumar Singh and SSP Chaudhary were among other officials who visited the accident site. City Superintendent of Police (SP) Amit Anand also visited the district hospital to check on the injured and said efforts were on to identify the deceased.

There was traffic snarls on the highway following the accident. The damaged vehicles were removed from the highway with the help of a crane to ease movement on the key route.

# Drunken man tries to bomb son, dies in explosion himself

AGENCIES

Kolkata, Jan 30: A 65-year-old man died after the bomb with which he was trying to kill his son exploded near him. The incident took place on Kashipur Road in North Kolkata at around 3.30 pm Friday. Doctors declared the elderly Sheikh Matlab dead when the father and son were taken to RG Kar Hospital in critical condition. His son Sheikh Nazir is undergoing treatment and is in critical condition.

According to local sources, 65-year-old Sheikh Matlab used to often return home drunk. This always caused arguments in the family. His son Sheikh Nazir works in a factory. Neighbours claim that after Sheikh Nazir returned home from work Friday afternoon he got into an argument with his father after he saw him intoxicated.

According to police sources, when the quarrel escalated, Sheikh Matlab attacked his son with a crude bomb. Sheikh Nazir tried stopping his father but the bomb fell on the spot and exploded. The father and son were seriously injured in the blast.

Locals rushed to the scene when they heard the explosion and the father-son duo was taken to a hospital in critical condition and admitted to RG Kar Hospital. Later, the doctors declared Sheikh Matlab dead.

According to police sources, Sheikh Nazir's fingers were blown off due to the bomb blast. He has been shifted to SSKM Hospital, Kolkata for better treatment.

Cossipore police are investigating the incident. Police officials are investigating how Sheikh Matlab got hold of the bomb. Police forces searched the entire slum area to see if there were any more bombs stored there.

# FLORAL TRIBUTES



President Ram Nath Kovind pays floral tribute to Mahatma Gandhi at Rajghat on the occasion of Martyrs' Day, observed to mark the death anniversary of the father of the nation, in New Delhi, Saturday

# Threat to Israel embassy: From 'mischief' to grave alarm

A LETTER FOUND AT THE SITE MENTIONED THE EXPLOSION WAS JUST A "TRAILER" SUGGESTING THE BLAST THAT LOOKED LIKE A MINOR EXPLOSION MIGHT BE A BIGGER SECURITY THREAT INDIA COULD BE DEALING WITH

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 30: On Friday, the Delhi Police issued a statement that said a blast at the Israel Embassy was a 'mischievous attempt to create sensation'. However within 24 hours, the Special Cell was busy writing to the Foreigner Regional Registration Offices (FRRO) asking for details of all Iranians, including those who were visiting the national capital.

High alert was sounded in the country with heightened security at embassy areas, airports and markets.

A letter found at the site mentioned the explosion was just a "trailer" and went ahead with



NIA and crime investigation team of Delhi Police inspect the blast site near Israeli Embassy in New Delhi, Saturday

mentions about Iran's slain General Qasem Soleimani and top nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhri-zadeh as "martyrs" - suggesting the blast that looked like a minor explosion might be a bigger security threat India could be dealing with.

Within hours, Ambassador of Israel to India Ron Malka issued a statement expressing concern. "The incident is under investigation by the authorities in India who are in contact with the relevant Israeli authorities. Authorities from both sides are cooperating in the investigation. We will continue to update as there are developments," Malka said.

Sources said that the forensic team has got evidence of the usage

of ammonium nitrate (NH4NO3) for the blast. A half burnt pink scarf was also found.

Delhi Police Special Cell has obtained a CCTV footage showing a car dropping off two persons who walked towards the spot near the Israel Embassy where a minor explosion took place late Friday. The driver of the vehicle has been traced and sketches of the two people are being prepared. A probe has been initiated to ascertain their involvement in the blast.

A team of investigators from Israel could arrive in New Delhi to assist Indian agencies in the probe over the blast in which some cars were damaged in the

high-security zone of Lutyens' Delhi.

The Delhi Police has roped in its best officers having expertise in blast cases after a case was registered. Besides the Special Cell, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) and Intelligence Bureau are working in close coordination to gather inputs.

The police has intensified security at various strategic markets and malls and issued alerts asking the citizens not to touch unclaimed objects. Banners in this regard have come up in several areas.

Israeli diplomats were attacked in 2012 February 13, when a bomb exploded in a car in New Delhi.

# international



Securing safe vaccines for Europeans is our utmost priority. With the AstraZeneca vaccine now authorized, 400 million additional doses will be available in Europe  
URSULA VON DER LEYEN | PRESIDENT, EUROPEAN COMMISSION

## JOURNOS SOUGHT FOR PERSONAL HELP

Calling a hospital to see if a bed was available for a Covid-19 patient isn't part of Houston television news anchor Chauncy Glover's job description. Neither is guiding a viewer online to find a place to be vaccinated



## of the day quote

The pandemic is the greatest public health emergency in NHS history, but in the past 12 months the NHS has achieved things many would have thought impossible  
SIMON STEVENS | CEO, NHS ENGLAND

The detection (of Covid) does not mean the Australian Capital Territory has new Covid-19 cases, but it was treated with caution. It may represent a person who has recovered from Covid-19 and is no longer infectious but is continuing to shed the virus  
VANESSA JOHNSTON | DEPUTY CHIEF HEALTH OFFICER, ACT

It is necessary to get clinical data on chronic illnesses including HIV because many of these vaccines are tested on people who are generally healthy, which means we take about 3-5 years to learn of side effects related to chronic illnesses  
ANGELIQUE COETZEE | CHAIRMAN, SOUTH AFRICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

# 'India pre-eminent partner of US in Indo-Pacific region'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, Jan 30: Secretary of State Tony Blinken has underscored India's role as a pre-eminent US partner in the Indo-Pacific during his maiden telephonic conversation with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and discussed ways to better seize the new opportunities and combat shared challenges in the region and beyond.

It was Blinken's first telephonic conversation with Jaishankar after he assumed the charge as America's top diplomat early this week.

They discussed issues of mutual concern, including Covid-19 vaccination efforts, regional developments and next steps in expanding bilateral ties, State Department Spokesperson Ned Price said Friday.

Blinken underscored India's role as a pre-eminent US partner in the Indo-Pacific and the importance of working together to expand the regional cooperation, including through the Quad, Price said.

"Both agreed to coordinate closely on global developments and look for-



I was delighted to speak today with my good friend (S Jaishankar) to discuss bilateral priorities. We reaffirmed the importance of US-India relationship and discussed ways we can better seize new opportunities

TONY BLINKEN | SECRETARY OF STATE, US

ward to meeting in person at the earliest opportunity," Price said in a readout of the call, which was the first communication between them after January 20 when Joe Biden was sworn in as the 46th President of the United States.

"I was delighted to speak today with my good friend @DrSJaishankar to discuss US-India priorities. We reaffirmed the importance of the US-India relationship and discussed ways we can better seize new opportunities and combat shared challenges in the Indo-Pacific and beyond," Blinken wrote on Twitter.

In New Delhi, the External Affairs Ministry said Jaishankar and Blinken expressed their commitment to consolidate and expand the multi-faceted strategic partnership.

"They appreciated the robust defence and security ties, growing economic engagement, productive health-care collaboration and strong people-to-people linkages as its important pillars," it said in a press release. Recognising the challenges of a post-Covid world, the two leaders agreed to work together to address global issues, including safe and affordable vaccine supply. They also reiterated their commitment to peace and security, especially in the Indo-Pacific region, the release said.

## Biden, Democrats hit gas on push for \$15 minimum wage

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Washington, Jan 30: The Democratic push to raise the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour has emerged as an early flash-point in the fight for a \$1.9 trillion Covid-19 relief package, testing President Joe Biden's ability to bridge Washington's partisan divides as he pursues his first major legislative victory.

Biden called for a \$15 hourly minimum wage during his campaign and has followed through by hitching it to a measure that, among other things, calls for \$1,400 stimulus checks and \$130 billion to help schools reopen. Biden argues that anyone who holds a full-time job shouldn't live in poverty, echoing progressives in the Democratic Party who are fully on board with the effort.

"With the economic divide, I mean, I want to see a \$15 minimum wage. It should actually be \$20," said Rep Rashida Tlaib, D-Mich.

Some Republicans support exploring an increase but are uneasy with USD 15 an hour. They warn that such an increase could lead to job losses in an economy that has nearly 10 million fewer jobs than it did before the pandemic began.

## ON MARTYRS' DAY Mahatma Gandhi's statue vandalised in US



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington/New Delhi, Jan 30: Unknown miscreants have vandalised, broken and ripped from the base a statue of Mahatma Gandhi in a park in the US state of California, evoking a strong response from India which sought a thorough investigation and appropriate action against those responsible for the "despicable act."

The 6-ft tall, 650-pound (294 kg) bronze statue of Gandhi, in the Central Park of the City of Davis in Northern California, appeared to have been sawed off at the ankles and half its face was severed and missing, local Davis Enterprise daily reported.

The vandalised statue of Mahatma Gandhi was found by a park employee in the early hours of morning of January 27, the police said.

The statue is being removed and will be stored in a safe place until it can be evaluated, said Davis City councilman Lucas Frerichs.

Investigators are still unsure of when exactly the statue was torn down or what the motive may have been. The Sacramento Bee reported. "Seeing as it's a cultural icon to a portion of the people in Davis, we are taking it very seriously," Deputy Chief Paul Doroshov of the Davis Police Department was quoted as saying by the daily.

Meanwhile, in New Delhi, the Ministry of External Affairs said the US Department of State has conveyed that the act of vandal-

ism is unacceptable and expressed the hope that the perpetrators will be brought to justice as quickly as possible.

"The government of India strongly condemns this malicious and despicable act against a universally respected icon of peace and justice," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said in a statement.

It said the Indian embassy in Washington has taken up the matter with the US Department of State for a thorough investigation into the incident and appropriate action against those responsible for it.

The MEA said the Mayor of Davis has deeply regretted the incident and informed them that they have initiated an investigation.

"Local Indian community organisations have condemned the act of vandalism," the ministry said.

The statue of Gandhi, which was donated by the Indian government to the city of Davis, was installed by the city council four years ago amidst protests from anti-Gandhi and anti-India organisations.

Organisation for Minorities in India (OFMI), which spearheaded these protests and opposed the installation of the statue.

The City of Davis had however voted to go ahead with the installation. Since then OFMI had launched a campaign to remove the Gandhi statue.

Indian-Americans have expressed deep anguish and shock at the incident.

## Mandatory quarantine for travellers from Europe, says Iran

REUTERS

Tehran, Jan 30: Travellers to Iran from Europe will be required to self-quarantine for two weeks after testing negative upon arrival, a health official said Saturday. Travellers from other regions, including neighbouring countries, will have to have tested negative before arrival in the country, Alireza Raisi, spokesman for the national coronavirus task force, said on state TV.

Raisi said travellers arriving from Europe should be holding negative test results, will be tested again and will have to self-quarantine even if their test is negative, state media reported.

Previously, people coming from Europe were only required to test negative.

He did not say when exactly the new measures will go into effect, saying only "from now on."



Meanwhile, health officials said the Iranian-manufactured Baretak vaccine was found effective against the highly contagious coronavirus variant that emerged in Britain.

"Tests conducted on the blood plasma of three volunteers of 'COVIran Baretak' vaccine completely neutralized the mutated coronavirus," Hassan Jailli, who is in charge of the team that produces the local vaccine, told state TV.

Iran launched human trials of its first domestic vaccine candidate late last month, saying this could help it defeat the pandemic despite U.S. sanctions that affect its ability to import vaccines.

## CITY SLICKERS



People enjoy their weekend with the view of city skyline and the world's tallest tower, Burj Khalifa, in Dubai, United Arab Emirates

## Portuguese Parliament approves euthanasia

AGENCIES

Lisbon, Jan 30: The Portuguese Parliament has approved the legalisation of euthanasia "practiced or helped by health professionals" in the country with 136 votes of deputies in favour and 78 against, in addition to four abstentions.

According to the Bill approved Friday, a person aged over 18 can be medically assisted in death "whose will is current and reiterated, serious, free and enlightened, in a situation of intolerable suffering, with a definite injury of extreme severity in accordance with scientific consensus or incurable and fatal disease", reports Xinhua news agency.

The Bill, which also guarantees that doctors and nurses can refuse to assist in euthanasia due to "conscientious objection", will now go to President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, who may veto, send it to the Constitutional Court or even promulgate directly.

Portugal will become the fourth country in Europe and the seventh in the world to legalise euthanasia if the President promulgates this law.

Representing the Catholic Church, the largest organised religion in the country, the Portuguese Episcopal Conference protested against the approval in Parliament.

In addition to Catholics, 12 private health care institutions called for an intervention by the President to prevent the legalisation of euthanasia.

## DANIEL PEARL MURDER Pak SC to hear plea against accused

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Islamabad, Jan 30: The Pakistan Supreme Court will hear a petition February 1 filed by the Sindh government against the recent order to release all the accused persons in the murder case of American journalist Daniel Pearl.

The provincial government challenged the Supreme Court's decision on Thursday, maintaining that the Sindh High Court's (SHC) order did not contain detailed reasons.

The petition calls on the court to order a stay on the SHCS December 24, 2020, decision regarding the release of the four convicts, including Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh, the key accused.

A three-judge bench of the apex court, which delivered Thursday's



verdict, will not hear the plea.

"One of the findings recorded by the SHC short order is that the respondents are not 'enemy aliens' within the meaning of Article 10(9) of the Constitution. Meaning of this term is hitherto judicially unexplained," maintained Advocate General Sindh Suleman Talibuddin.

The Sindh government maintains that the accused persons fall in the category of 'enemy aliens', adding that it has placed proof on record of

the SHC, which was rejected. "Now, the Sindh government has requested the bench to pronounce authorities judgment on the law and facts," reads the order-sheet.

The Advocate General also highlighted that the SHC, in its short order, had also barred the Sindh government from exercising its authority Under Article 10 of the Constitution, adding that the same provision authorizes the government to pass preventive detention of an individual.

The SHC ruling in the case has not gone well with the US administration. White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said that the US was "outraged" by the decision. "The decision is an affront to terrorism victims everywhere, including in Pakistan," she said.

# UN urges countries to repatriate 27,000 children from Syria

AGENCIES

United Nations, Jan 30: The UN counterterrorism chief is urging countries to repatriate the 27,000 children stranded in a massive camp in northeastern Syria, many of them sons and daughters of Islamic State extremists who once controlled large swathes of Iraq and Syria.

Vladimir Voronkov told an informal meeting of the UN Security Council on Friday that "the horrific situation of the children in Al Hol (camp) is one of the most pressing issues in the world today." The 27,000 children "remain stranded, abandoned to their fate," vulnerable to be preyed on by Islamic State enforcers, "and at risk of radicalisation within the camp," he said.

Al Hol, the largest camp for refugees and displaced Syrians in the country, is currently home to al-

most 62,000 residents, according to U.N. Humanitarian officials.

More than 80 per cent are women and children, many who fled there after Islamic State militants lost their last Syrian stronghold in 2019. There are a number of other camps in the northeast as well.

Voronkov said there are children from 60 countries in the camps who are the responsibility of their member states, not of Syria or the groups that control the camps. Kurdish fighters are guarding Al-Hol and other camps as well as thousands of Islamic State fighters and boys in prisons.

He said a number of countries - including Russia and Kazakhstan that convened the virtual meeting - "have collectively repatriated nearly 1,000 children and their family members."

Voronkov said the experiences of the returnees are being compiled



"and what we see thus far is that fears of security risks have been unfounded." The executive director of the UN Counterterrorism Center stressed that children "must be

treated primarily as victims" and youngsters under the age of 14 should not be detained or prosecuted.

History has shown that children

The 27,000 children remain stranded, abandoned to their fate, vulnerable to be preyed on by IS enforcers, and at risk of radicalisation within the camp

VLADIMIR VORONKOV | COUNTERTERRORISM CHIEF, UN

are resilient and can recover from violent experiences if they are supported in reintegrating into communities, Voronkov said.

"Every effort should be made to ensure children are not kept in institutions but allowed to reintegrate with family members within their communities," he said.

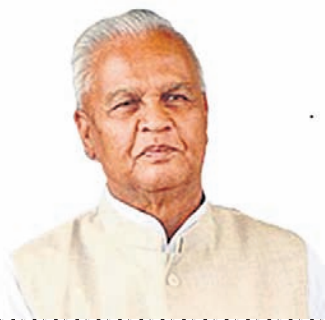
Virginia Gamba, the U.N. Special representative for children and armed conflict, told the Security

Council that children catalogued as being associated with armed groups including the Islamic State and al-Qaida "are the children who have been left adrift by conflict, like flotsam in the sea."

She echoed Voronkov's call that they be treated "primarily as victims, not as security threats, and that detention be used as a measure of last resort and for the shortest possible period." The mental health, safety and overall development of foreign children held for a long time "in dramatic conditions" in camps in northeast Syria and Iraq "are at stake," Gamba said.

"They're exposed to further trauma and stigmatization and are at risk because of their proximity to members of designated terrorist groups," she said.

Children have a right to a nationality and identity and must not remain stateless, Gamba stressed.



**The power sector is facing high aggregate technical and commercial losses and implementation of smart prepaid meters can play a crucial role in addressing these challenges in Bihar**

**BUJENDRA PRASAD YADAV**  
ENERGY MINISTER, BIHAR

## CAIT CRITICISES USIBC

Traders' body CAIT Saturday criticised US-based business lobby group USIBC for reportedly urging the Indian government not to tighten FDI rules for e-commerce as it will limit the e-commerce firms from leveraging their scale



## of the day quote

The timing of launch of REIT will be decided by the two shareholders -- DLF and GIC. The management has taken a decision to be REIT-ready. We have hired banker, legal firm and tax consultant to prepare ourselves for the REIT



**SRIRAM KHATTAR**  
MD (RENTAL BUSINESS), DLF

Engineering exporters are going through one of the most turbulent and trying times. Out of India's total merchandise export of \$320 billion, the sector contributes more than 25% and is one of the biggest employment generator in the country



**SANJAY BUDHIA** | CHAIRMAN (EXPORTS AND IMPORTS), CII

Since its launch in 2016, Tiago has been very successful in its segment and has been appreciated by all. Following the same, the product's BS-VI version was introduced in 2020 which also received a 4 star safety rating by GNCAP at launch



**VIVEK SRIVATSA** | PV BUSINESS UNIT HEAD (MARKETING), TATA MOTORS

## SHORT TAKES

### SpiceJet to add 20 domestic flights

**New Delhi:** Budget airline SpiceJet will add 20 new flights on its domestic network from February. Accordingly, the airline announced the launch of 16 new flights connecting Jaipur with different cities including Dehradun, Amritsar, Udaipur and Delhi among others. Besides, the airline will connect Pakyong with Kolkata under the UDAN scheme. The airline will also add its second frequency between Delhi and Dehradun.

### Merger plan gets approval

**New Delhi:** TVS Motor Company on Saturday said the boards of TVS Holding Companies and TVS Investments and Holdings have approved a composite scheme of amalgamation and arrangement which is to be filed with the NCLT soon. In a letter posted on the BSE, TVS Motor Company Chairman and Managing Director Venu Srinivasan said the scheme will be filed with the Chennai Bench of the NCLT.

### SBI Card gets new MD & CEO

**New Delhi:** SBI Cards and Payment Services (SBI Card) Saturday said Rama Mohan Rao Amara has taken charge as the new MD & CEO of the company. His appointment is with effect from January 30, 2021 for a period of two years subject to all the requisite approvals including that of the shareholders. Amara takes over from Ashwini Kumar Tewari, SBI Card said in a release.

### ICICI's Q3FY21 net profit rises 19%

**Mumbai:** Private lender ICICI Bank Saturday reported a net profit of 19 per cent for the quarter ended December 31, 2020. Accordingly, the company's profit after tax grew to ₹4,940 crore during the quarter under review from ₹4,146 crore in the quarter ended December 31, 2019. According to the lender, its net interest income (NII) increased by 16 per cent year-on-year to ₹9,912 crore in Q3-2021 from ₹8,545 crore in the corresponding quarter of previous quarter.

## FUTURE-RELIANCE DEAL

# Amazon creating confusion; playing dog in the manger: Biyani

The development comes days after Amazon petitioned the Delhi High Court to block the Future Group from selling retail assets to Reliance Industries and sought detention of Biyani and family members



and the bourses.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 30:** Future Group promoter Kishore Biyani has alleged that Amazon is "playing the dog in the manger" and trying to create a confusion about the group's ₹24,713-crore deal with Reliance Industries.

"After all, they (Amazon) are inspired to name their product as Alexa...History tells us that Alexander conquered large parts of the world but failed in India. With you on our side and our relentless service to the Indian consumers, we will serve the best interests of our country and will continue to protect our fundamental right to survive, and to serve the Indian consumer," Biyani said.

Seeking to assuage concerns of employees amid the ongoing tussle with e-commerce giant Amazon, Biyani said the organisation is on firm legal footing and that has been vindicated by the regulatory approvals received for the deal from the Competition Commission of India (CCI), market regulator SEBI

The development comes days after Amazon petitioned the Delhi High Court to block the Future Group from selling retail assets to Reliance Industries and sought detention of Biyani and family members.

In a letter addressed to the Future Group employees, Biyani alleged that Amazon is running a concerted and coordinated media campaign and leaking misleading information.

Biyani said the Future Group was the target of a new form of attack and that a "corporate battle" is being fought for supremacy over Indian customers 70 years after India became a republic and also alleged that immense resources are being deployed on influencing Indian society's mindset and belief systems.

"...Amazon is playing the dog in the manger, going all out to create a ruckus...For reasons we never believed earlier but quite evident today, this battle is about ownership of the Indian customer at any cost," he said in his letter written on Friday.

Meanwhile, Amazon did not respond to emailed query on the matter.

# Covid bonds on the cards for long-term debt mobilisation

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Jan 30:** As the country's fight against Coronavirus reaches the next level with the launch of the world's largest vaccination programme, the government proposes to launch new Covid bonds to finance the rising pandemic relief expenses. Sources privy to the development said that the announcement on Covid bonds may be made in the budget to be presented by finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on February 1.

Though the budget may be used to announce its launch, the bond issue may be made only in the next financial year as government has almost completed its borrowing calendar for FY21 with finance ministry officials indicating no need to scale up already high levels of borrowings this year.

Sources said that though resource mobilisation through debt instruments is not a problem for the government currently, the Covid bond will aim to channelise large proportion of private savings into this long term instrument. The



THE GOVERNMENT IS ALSO EXPLORING LEVYING A NEW CORONAVIRUS CESS OR SURCHARGE TO MOBILISE RESOURCES REQUIRED FINANCE ANTI-COVID VACCINATION PROGRAMME

THE QUANTUM OF RESOURCE MOBILISATION THROUGH THE COVID BOND IS EXPECTED TO DECIDED LATER THOUGH IT MAY BE IN THE RANGE OF ₹40-50,000 CRORE

bond would be made attractive to get participation even from retail investors by offering a coupon rate higher than yield on benchmark 10 year government securities, sources said.

Yield on benchmark 10 year yield now is 5.95 per cent. The new Covid bond may carry coupon rate higher this level.

"Though the idea to mobilise resources from the Covid bond is not bad, government may not be needing it this year as it is flush with cash balances in its account while debt mobilisation has been rela-

tively easy. Also, the country's banking system is full of liquidity and is willing to lend if demand is generated," said a bond market expert with one of the leading global consultancy firms, asking not to be named.

Others, however feel that in a situation where the demand-side continues to be weak, any additional form of taxation is a bad idea, but raising funds through bonds which have attractive conditions is a better idea because that would be a voluntary shift by the people.

# Efforts needed to get rating upgraded: CEA

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Jan 30:** India will have to persistently make efforts for improvement in its sovereign rating by different global agencies in line with its economic fundamentals, Chief Economic Adviser KV Subramanian said Saturday.

The Economic Survey presented in Parliament Friday expressed concern over lower sovereign rating assigned by agencies like Fitch, S&P and Moody's to India despite its strong economic fundamentals.

"We have made the case very very forcefully (to rating agencies)...These

changes happen over time. They don't happen instantaneously, but you have to continue making efforts," he told in an interview.

The Survey said sovereign credit ratings methodology must be amended to reflect economies' ability and willingness to pay their debt obligations, and suggested that developing economies must come together to address this bias and subjectivity inherent in sovereign credit ratings methodology.

"Never in the history of sovereign credit ratings has the fifth largest economy in the world been rated as the lowest rung of the investment-



grade (BBB-/Baa3). While sovereign credit ratings do not reflect the Indian economy's fundamentals, noisy, opaque and biased credit ratings damage FPI flows," the survey said.

It is therefore imperative that countries engage with credit rating agencies to make the case that their

## Myntra changes logo after complaint calls signage offensive

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

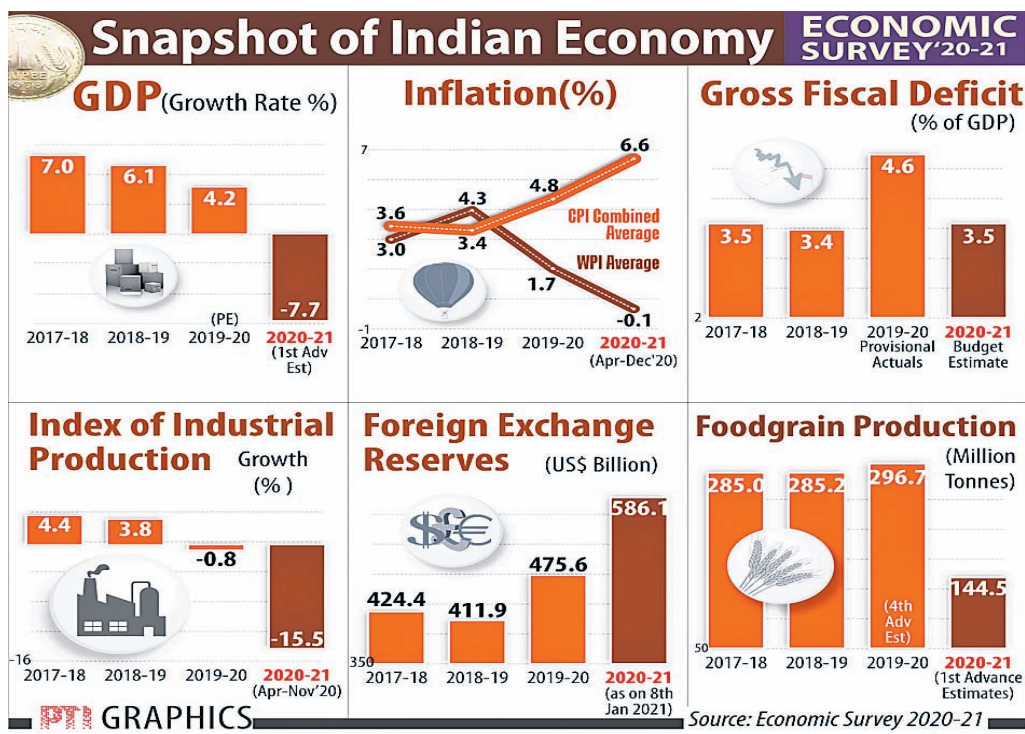
**New Delhi/Mumbai, Jan 30:** Fashion e-tailer Myntra is changing its logo following a complaint by a Mumbai-based activist who alleged that the brand's signage was offensive towards women. When contacted, Myntra confirmed the development. The logo is being changed across Myntra's website, app and packaging material.

The complaint had been lodged last month with the cyber cell in Mumbai by Avesta Foundation's Naaz Patel.



Speaking to PTI, Rashmi Karandikar, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Cyber Crime) said a complainant had approached the cyber crime police station in the matter.

"We called a meeting with Myntra following the complaint, they (Myntra) came and agreed to change the logo. They have sent an e-mail as well on the same," she said.



# GOVERNMENT MAY REVIEW EXPORT DUTY ON IRON ORE

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Jan 30:** The government may put further checks on export of iron ore to allow greater availability of this critical input for the domestic steel industry at competitive prices.

In the wake of a pick up in global steel demand, and Indian iron ore getting exported to countries such as China, the domestic ore prices have also shot up, almost doubling to over ₹4,000 per tonne from levels of ₹2,000 per tonne between June to December, 2020.

Sources said that a proposal to increase export duty on iron ore is being actively considered by the finance ministry that may consider announcing the changed levy in



Budget 2021-22.

A 30 per cent export duty is levied currently on iron ore having Fe (iron) content above 58%. Sources said this may be increased 5-10% or more to prevent its export to markets that are willing to pay more to hoard the ore for future use and maximise their gains.

Though the proposal is to in-

crease the levy, sources said the government may also look to bring all categories of ore under the export duty structure as was available earlier.

A higher levy is expected to prevent the export of iron ore, tame prices and improve availability of this raw material to the domestic steel industry that can supply the material at competitive prices for the growing requirement from the infrastructure sector.

Along with a surge in ore pricing, steel prices have also increased by almost 50% in the last few months. Bench mark Hot-rolled coil prices have increased by 46% to ₹52,000 per tonne in November as compared to ₹37,400 per tonne in July this year.

# BUDGET 2021 Expectations, wishlists of state biz personalities

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, for the first time, will present a paperless Budget 2020-21 February 1. Ahead of the Budget, several sectors that faced ravages in business owing to the coronavirus pandemic expect the upcoming Budget to be a savior for them. Orissa POST spoke with some business personalities and entrepreneurs from the state, who poured out their wishlist and expectations from 'Budget 2021'. Excerpts:

In this budget, we hope that custom duty should not be increased because all cars are imported from outside. If custom duty rises, prices of cars will also increase and it will put a speed breaker to auto sector's growth.

**SWATI KEJRIWAL** | OWNER OF TRINITY SKODA

We import many accessories for electric vehicles (EVs). We are hopeful that the government will lower the custom duty so that the EV industry can grow in India.

**JAY PRAKASH DIDWANIA** | CHAIRMAN, BHARAT'S GROUP

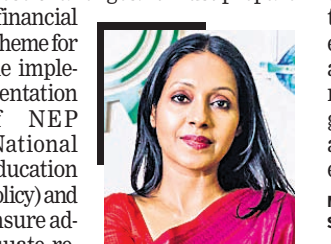
To boost our economy, the government should give relaxation in stamp duty on real estate transactions as other states have already reduced it post-Covid. The stamp duty on Power of Attorney for real estate projects should be reduced to 2-3% as in case of our neighbouring states. This will definitely reduce pricing of apartments so the common buyers will be benefited.

**UMESH PATNAIK** | SECRETARY, CREDAI BHUBANESWAR

Education is one of the primary sectors in any country and there is a huge expectation from Budget 2021 for reviving the sector after the Covid-induced challenges that the industry faced in 2020. When it comes to education, the underprivileged are at a disadvantage due to the lack of proper facilities, to attend online classes. They do not

have enough resources to afford digital education. Covid-19 acted as an eye-opener to reveal that India is still not prepared for 'digital education' and that the upcoming Budget 2021 must mitigate these challenges. It must prepare a financial scheme for the implementation of NEP (National Education Policy) and ensure adequate resources for expanding and strengthening the education system.

**MONA LISA BAL** | CHAIRPERSON, KIS INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL



Budget 2021 has to be allotted in developing digital infrastructure to bridge the gap between rural and urban areas so that there is no inequality. With the world in the thick of the digital age, India has a little catch up to do -- a process that can be expedited by shrewd policy decisions, supported by financial

muscle, a goal that is very much achievable this year. In order to support the farmers, small and medium enterprises (SMEs), the government will have to announce a stimulus package to stabilise the economy.

**MAHADEO JAISWAL** | DIRECTOR, IIM SAMBALPUR

Odisha Jewellers Association urges the Central government to reduce custom duty on gold bullion. If we observe, custom duty was 2% in 2013 but it per cent rapidly went up to 12%. Therefore, our association requests the Union govern-

ment to reduce the duty to be between 4-7%.

**MAHESH VARMA** | GENERAL SECRETARY, ODISHA JEWELLERS ASSOCIATION, CUTTACK

To overcome the damages incurred due to the pandemic, banks offered, (directed by the Central government), loans to MSMEs under the ECLGS scheme. But only the existing loanes received benefits from this scheme and general MSMEs couldn't receive support. The government should come up with an option from which general MSMEs, who have only term loans, can also avail loans from the scheme. We also request that every large industry, operating in Odisha, shall offer raw materials at discounted price.



**SATWIK SWAIN** | SECRETARY GENERAL, OASME

# NO RANJI TROPHY FOR FIRST TIME IN 87 YEARS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 30:** The BCCI will not be conducting its premier first-class domestic tournament Ranji Trophy for the first time in 87 years as the parent body opted for the Vijay Hazare Trophy as per the wishes of majority of the state units.

The BCCI will also host the U-19 National One Day tournament for the Vinoo Mankad Trophy and the Women's national 50-over tournament as per a letter sent by BCCI secretary Jay Shah to the state units. While BCCI president Sourav

Ganguly and secretary Shah were keen to have the blue riband tournament that pays the maximum match fee (Rs 1.5 lakh per game approx) for the players, it is understood that a two-month long bio-bubble even for a truncated two-phased Ranji Trophy in times of the COVID-19 pandemic wasn't feasible.

"I am extremely happy to inform you that we are going to conduct the Senior Women's One Day tournament simultaneously with the Vijay Hazare Trophy and follow it up with Vinoo Mankad Trophy U-19. This has been decided after hav-

ing received your feedback on the domestic season 2020-21," Shah wrote a letter to state units, which is in possession of this agency.

It is understood that BCCI will probably follow the same groupings and bio-bubble for the Hazare Trophy that will start next month.

The BCCI during its AGM had decided that players will be compensated in case there is a truncated season and with players missing out on Ranji Trophy match fees, treasurer Arun Dhumal clarified that the premier domestic cricketers of the country will be taken care of financially.



Saurashtra players pose with the winners' cup for Ranji Trophy 2019-20 season after beating Bengal in the final

Agreeing with his secretary's view, Dhumal said that the decision to cancel Ranji Trophy this season was taken after taking every stakeholder into confidence.

"We took feedback from the players, selection committee, state associations. It was felt that 2020 is already gone and rather than having two Ranji events in the same calendar year, it is better to go for white-ball cricket," Dhumal said.

"That way we could have something for junior cricket and women considering the importance of Women's World Cup and U-19

World Cup next year. Rather than having one tournament, we thought to have events in different categories," said Dhumal, adding that players will be duly compensated for not playing Ranji Trophy this season.

Shah in his letter also spoke about how difficult it was to plan out the domestic calendar for the season in the post COVID world. "As you are aware, we have lost a lot of time and consequently it has been difficult to plan the cricket calendar on account of the precautions that are necessary for the safe conduct of the games" Shah wrote.

## YOU WON'T SEE ALL YOUR BEST PLAYERS IN EVERY SERIES FROM NOW ON: BUTTLER

# Mental well-being a priority



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chennai, Jan 30:** England's dashing wicketkeeper Jos Buttler Saturday said the top players of world cricket won't feature in every series going ahead as they focus on their mental well-being in a world scarred by the COVID-19 pan-

dem.

Playing the game while living in a bio-bubble has forced Buttler to only focus on his 'short-term goals' at the moment. "You want your strongest team out every time, but unfortunately, that doesn't seem possible at the moment," Buttler said during a virtual media con-

ference.

His comments made it clear where the team stands on Jonny Bairstow being rested for the first two Tests of the upcoming four-match series against India.

Buttler supported the England and Wales Cricket Board's (ECB) rotation policy during their twin tours of Sri Lanka and India. While his complete focus is on upcoming series, he may not feature in the last two matches and may come back for the white ball leg, as Bairstow is set to join the team before the third Test.

"It's certainly a challenge but people around the world are going through tough situations. The pandemic has had people whose world has been turned upside down and we are very fortunate to play cricket and do our job that we love," Buttler said.

"Having said that you do find it challenging having to stay away from your families, being in quarantine and locked up in hotels. ECB has been forward thinking in rotating players for this series.

"At times, it's frustrating as you want to have best players on the show all the time but it's not possible with the amount of time that one spends in a bio bubble. You can't expect people to keep doing that," he said during the conference organised by ECB for Indian journalists.

Buttler conceded that short-term goals seems practical to him considering the uncertainty. "You have to try and look after yourself as best as you can. Short term goals I think are really important and when you look ahead there is so much uncertainty in most of the

## STOKES, ARCHER, BURNS HIT TRAINING GROUND



**CHENNAI:** Premier all-rounder Ben Stokes, pacer Jofra Archer and reserve opener Rory Burns Saturday had their first training session at the Chepauk after successfully completing six days of hard quarantine, while other members of the squad cleared their second COVID-19 test. The trio was not a part of the Sri Lanka Test series with Stokes and Archer being rested for workload management purpose while Burns skipped the previous tour due to the birth of his first child. The trio had reached India earlier than their colleagues and having already cleared their three RT-PCR tests could hit the nets Saturday. "The first group of players - Archer, Burns and Stokes - will practice each morning for the next three days. They are limited to a two-hour session," England's media manager Danny Reuben informed. "The entire England touring party received their second PCR COVID-19 test yesterday. All results returned negative results," he added.

things that we are doing. I am looking at this series to start with."

While he agreed that the IPL will be a good preparatory ground for him personally, he said the five T20 Internationals in March will benefit the team, which is not as experienced as England's ODI squad, in the year of the T20 World Cup.

"We had a very settled team during ODI World Cup as guys played for a long period of time, and I think that was a huge plus for us going into the tournament.

"T20 side, we haven't had that time to play together as a group and familiarity with roles, so to play against a brilliant side like India gives us the perfect preparation for that tournament (T20 World Cup)."

Playing the IPL does give him an extra edge as getting used to facing someone as unique as Jasprit Bumrah takes time. "I think the thing what IPL does give you is familiarity of the wickets, and the guy having played against majority of the guys, sort of understanding of their action and how they try and bowl.

"If you haven't faced guys before and somebody like a (Jasprit) Bumrah, who has a bit of unique action it can be bit of problem. It takes some (time) getting used to it. Certainly for the boys who have played international cricket before against India and played against (them) in the IPL, certainly know the angles and what to expect a little bit."

# ISL: Blasters test ahead of ATKMB

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Margao, Jan 30:** Having suffered their third defeat of the season, ATK Mohun Bagan will aim to get their mojo back and close in on leaders Mumbai City when they take on Kerala Blasters in the Indian Super League (ISL) here, Sunday. ATKMB might find themselves in a comfortable spot in the league table, placed second after 14 games. But there's no denying that the former champions have not been at their best lately. Their struggles continued against Northeast United, slumping to their third defeat of the season.

In their last four matches, the Mariners have witnessed a dip in form, notching just one win while losing twice. Their defence has been under the pump, shipping four goals. In their opening nine games, Bagan conceded just thrice, highlighting their defensive struggles.

Upfront, the lack of missed chances has continued to cost them points, with the Kolkata side scoring just thrice in their last four games. They have netted just 13

goals all season, which is the third-worst tally in the league.

Fresh after acquiring the services of Marcelinho, on-loan from Odisha FC, ATKMB coach Antonio Lopez Habas believes his team is improving despite the recent results but has called for his attack to step up.

"We were improving our performance and our creation of chances in the last few matches but we have to continue with the same purpose," Habas said.

"After the first few matches and the first few rounds of the league, the team consolidated the system and the idea. Now we have to increase our attacking performance," he added.

On the other hand, opponents Kerala are unbeaten in their previous five games and still in contention of reaching the playoffs and are just four points away from fourth place.

While form favours Kerala, it was ATKMB who came out on top when the two sides faced each other in the opening game of the ISL season.

However, for Kerala coach Kibu Vicuna, that result won't have any bearing Sunday's match.



# Brown brace lifts NorthEast United

AGENCIES

**Goa, Jan 30:** Deshorn Brown's two goals inside opening 10 minutes were enough for NorthEast United FC (NEUFC) to end Mumbai City FC's (MCFC) 12-game unbeaten run in the ISL, Saturday.

The dream run under the leadership of Khalid Jamil continues for the Highlanders who handed table-topper MCFC a 2-1 defeat, only to move to fourth spot in the 11-team standings.

MCFC, who found the consolation goal through Adam le Fondre late in the game, remain atop the standings with a six-point lead over second-placed ATK Mohun Bagan.

The Highlanders didn't waste any time and put pressure on the Mumbai City defence from the beginning. It took them less than six minutes to draw the first blood at the GMC Stadium in Bambolim.

Luis Machado had the initial go



Deshorn Brown (L) and Luis Machado celebrate a goal against Mumbai City

at the goal, but Amrinder Singh parried it away. However, the danger wasn't cleared and Nim Dorjee Tamang fired a first-time cross into the box. Brown timed his run to perfection to smash it into the net.

Three minutes later, Brown doubled NEUFC's advantage from a corner. Federico Gallego's corner from the left took a few touches before finding Brown at the far post and the Jamaican busted the net with a fantastic finish.

The game saw some nervy moments as well as some sloppy plays from both the sides, before MCFC finally had something to laugh about five minutes from time. Substitute Le Fondre latched on to Bartholomew Ogebe's touch to loop it into the back of the net - his seventh goal of the season, offering his side a ray of hope. However, it was too little too late for the table-toppers, who lost their second match this season and both losses came against NEUFC.

# Kohli steady at 4th, Pujara rises to sixth in Tests

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Dubai, Jan 30:** Virat Kohli remained the highest-placed Indian batsman at fourth position even as Cheteshwar Pujara rose a rung to sixth in the latest ICC Test rankings issued Saturday.

Ajinkya Rahane (748) is the other Indian batsman in the top 10, hanging on to the eighth spot. Pujara moved up one place to sixth, while wicketkeeper-batsman Rishabh Pant and star opener Rohit Sharma remained static on the 13th and 18th spots respectively.

New Zealand captain Kane Williamson (919) continued to lead the batting charts, with the Australian duo of Steve Smith (891) and Marnus Labuschagne (878) rounding up the top three while Joe Root (823) retained the fifth spot.

# Big week of Australian Open, tune-up meets set to start

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Melbourne, Jan 30:** The last group of quarantined players here ahead of the Australian Open and a week of tune-up tournaments was set to leave their hotels at midnight Saturday night, ending a mammoth two-week effort to reduce the chance of any international arrivals bringing the coronavirus Down Under.

More than 1,000 players and officials went into a two-week quarantine from January 14 when the first of 17 flights chartered by Tennis Australia landed in Melbourne and Adelaide.

Three of those charters contained players or entourages with COVID-19, meaning that 72 players had to go into hard quarantine with no opportunity to practice. Other players not in hard quarantine were allowed out of their rooms for up

to five hours a day to train.

Melbourne Park, site of the Australian Open, was busy Saturday with all but 22 players out of hotel quarantine and preparing for the tune-up tournaments which get under way Sunday. Japan's Kei Nishikori and Benoit Paire of France were among those who could exit their hotels at 11.59 pm Saturday.

Two WTA tournaments kick off official proceedings Sunday, and Australia's World No.1 Ash Barty has a first-round bye in one of them. Ajla Tomljanovic, ranked no.69, takes on Alize Cornet of France in the first round to determine who will play 2019 Australian Open champion Naomi Osaka in the second.

There is one other WTA tournament scheduled only for those players who were in hard lockdown. As well, the ATP Cup team event begins Tuesday and there are two other



Nadal (R) and Thiem during their exhibition match in Adelaide, Friday

ATP men's tournaments scheduled in Melbourne ahead of the February 8-21 Australian Open. The first Grand Slam tournament of the year was delayed by three weeks to allow for the 14-day quarantine and a week of warm-up tournaments.

Some of the big stars got their sea-

son started unofficially Friday in an exhibition tournament at Adelaide's Memorial Drive, where Serena Williams beat Osaka. Rafael Nadal defeated US Open champion Dominic Thiem and second-ranked Simona Halep beat Barty.

Australian Open chief executive

Craig Tiley said Saturday the Australian Open will be fair for all players despite differing preparations.

Tiley said the players who were in hard lockdown had been given priority with their schedules and access to training facilities. He said with all players having at least nine days between quarantine and the start of the Open, the tournament would be as fair as it could be.

As contractors put the finishing touches on the stadiums and surrounds at Melbourne Park, Victorian state sports minister Martin Pakula said crowds would be at about 50 per cent of previous years, with 390,000 people expected over the two weeks.

There will be 30,000 allowed through the gates each day for the first eight days, which will be reduced in the finals to crowds of 12,500 during the day session and 12,500 during the night sessions.