



## ALIA NOT FOR SOLO TRIP

Actor Alia Bhatt made a confession she wants to go on a vacation, but not on a solo trip

LEISURE P2



## HC STAY ON BUS TERMINAL

The Orissa HC Tuesday stayed the construction of Cuttack Netaji Bus Terminal to come up at Khannagar locality

DOWNTOWN P3



## 'RELEASE SHEIKH'

The Supreme Court of Pakistan ordered immediate release of Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh

INTERNATIONAL P10

# CAPITAL FORTIFIED

Iron nails, barbed wires turn farmers' protest sites on Delhi borders into fortresses

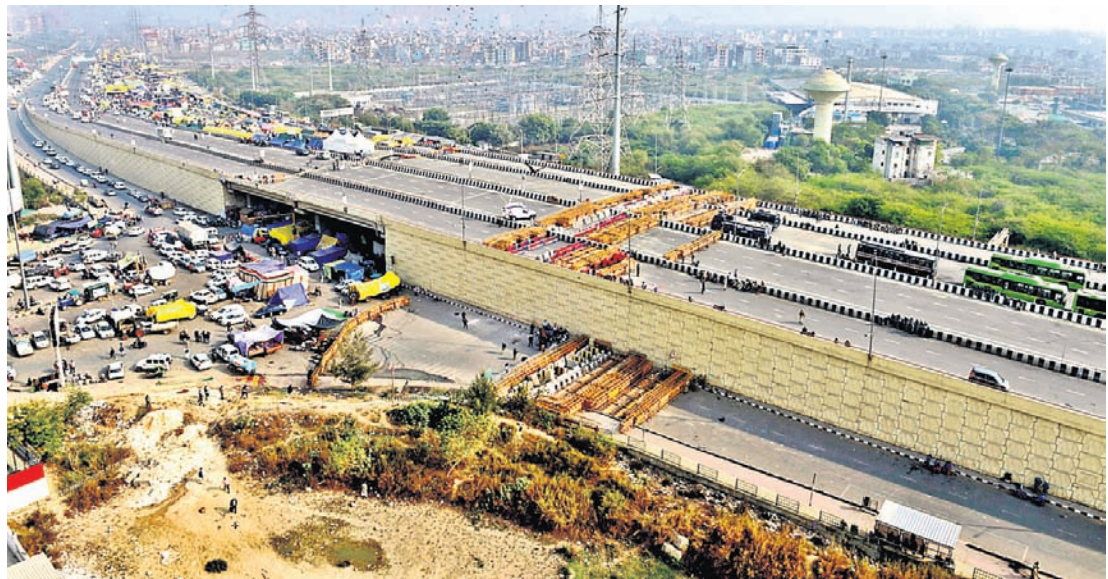
AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Feb 2:** With multi-layered barricading, iron nails on road, barbed wires, iron rods between cemented barriers and deployment of DTC buses and extra personnel on ground, the tremendous security cover at and near the farmers' protest locations have now become sites of unusual attraction.

The strengthened security measures at the agitation sites across the borders come after the violence during the Republic Day tractor parade by protesting farmers in which 394 security personnel were injured.

Even media persons covering the agitation manage to reach the protest sites with difficulty as they first have to pass through checking and then cross multiple layers of barricading. A BKU office-bearer at Ghazipur border, which now resembles a highly-secured fortress, said despite the odds, supporters from far-off places are reaching the site to express solidarity with farmers.

"Andolan to hata hi hai mushqil mein, aaram se kaun sa andolan hota hai (A movement happens in adverse conditions only, it never happens in comfort)," BKU's Uttar Pradesh unit spokesperson Pawan Khatana told PTI. He said so far supporters from Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab,



Barricades set up at the Delhi-UP Ghazipur border to stop farmers from marching towards the national capital, during their ongoing agitation against Centre's farm reform laws in New Delhi, Tuesday

Rajasthan, Uttarakhand have come to Ghazipur, while small groups of people from states like Maharashtra, Karnataka and Bihar too have reached here. "But what does this security arrangement by the government mean? Layers of barricading, iron nails on road, barbed wires all around us. Forget humans, nobody keeps even

animals in this manner," Khatana, also the BKU's Meerut Zone chief, said. At Singhu border, Delhi Police, along with paramilitary forces, are stationed in large numbers along with multilayered barricades. Palwinder Singh, a protesting farmer from Amritsar district in Punjab said the Internet ban was to disconnect the

farmers from the public.

"The government banned Internet and blocked the roads with concrete dividers so that the public would not get any information regarding the protest and no one would turn up here. We are facing issue of interest, however, food and water supply is as fine as earlier. The sanitation facility is also nor-

mal," he said.

Workers under the watch of police personnel on Monday were seen hooking iron rods between two rows of cement barriers on a flank of the main highway at the Singhu border to further restrict the movement of protesters agitating against the Centre's new farm laws at the site. Another portion of the highway at the Delhi-Haryana border is practically blocked now as a makeshift cement wall has come up there. Taking to Twitter, the Delhi Traffic Police alerted commuters about the closure of borders and suggested alternative roads for travel. Security has also been tightened at the Delhi-Ghazipur border, where protesting farmers are also camping for over two months.

"Ghazipur border is closed. Traffic diverted from NH 24, NH 9, Road no 56, 57 A, Kondli, Paper market, Telco T point, EDM Mall, Akshardham & Nizamuddin Khatta. Traffic is heavy on Vikas Marg, IP Extension, NH 24. Pl(ease) commute from other borders," the Delhi Traffic Police tweeted.

According to the police, Delhi-Ghazipur border remains closed for traffic due to the farmers' protests. The commuters are suggested to take alternate routes via Anand Vihar, Chilla, DND, Apsara, Bhopra and Loni borders, it added.

## CBSE Board exam dates announced

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Feb 2:** The schedule for the Class 10 and Class 12 Board exams has been finalised with the issue of the datesheet by the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) Tuesday. The exams will begin May 4 and culminate June 10. Results for both the classes will be declared by July 15. According to the datesheet, exams for some of the main subjects for Class 10 will begin with the English exam May 6, followed by Hindi May 10, Urdu May 11, Science May 15, Home Science May 20, Maths May 21 and Social Science May 27.

Similarly, Class 12 students will appear for the English exam May 4, the Taxation exam May 5, the Physical Education exam

May 8, Engineering Graphic May 10, Business Studies May 12, Accountancy May 17, Chemistry May 18, Political Science May 19, Biology May 24, Economics May 25, Hindi May 31 and Mathematics June 1.

For details and the complete datesheet, students can log on to the CBSE web site, where the entire schedule will be uploaded Tuesday evening.

Speaking on the occasion, Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank said: "While fixing the datesheet, we have tried that students get a lot of time between exams of important subjects. Students must remain relaxed. We have tried to get connected with students so that students can happily prepare for their exams."

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## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



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## State GST mop-up rises by 25 per cent

**Bhubaneswar:** The state saw a 25.30% growth in gross GST collection (CGST, IGST, SGST and cess) in January, 2021 with collections going up to ₹3137.45 crore against ₹2503.97 crore in the corresponding period last year. This is the highest collection and highest growth in gross GST mop-up in the current fiscal. The state posted 71.88% growth in IGST, 8.17% growth in CGST, 4.48% in OGST and 13.31% in cess. It collected ₹1158.77 crore of IGST in January against ₹674.18 crore in January last year. The collection of OGST during the same month was ₹777.71 crore against ₹744.33 crore in January 2020. Total VAT collection of ₹831.78 crore during the month is also the highest during the current FY.

| MARKET WATCH |                    |
|--------------|--------------------|
| INDEX        | VARIATION          |
| SENSEX       | 49797.72 ↑ 1197.11 |
| NIFTY        | 14647.90 ↑ 366.70  |
| DOLLAR       | 73.50 ↓ ₹0.11      |
| EURO         | 87.75 ↓ ₹0.40      |
| GOLD         | ₹47,835 ↓ ₹559     |
| SILVER       | ₹69,152 ↓ ₹4514    |

| WEATHER  |                            |        |
|----------|----------------------------|--------|
|          | BHUB                       | CTK    |
| TEMP     | MAX 30.7°C                 | 30.5°C |
|          | MIN 13.0°C                 | 11.8°C |
| Humidity | 93%                        | 80%    |
| Rainfall | Nil                        | Nil    |
|          | Forecast: Mainly clear sky |        |

## Acute shortage of stamp papers in City

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 2:** Common people in the city have been put to untold suffering due to a massive shortage of non-judicial stamp papers. Stamp papers are an essential document with varied monetary values that are required to execute various legal deeds like lease agreements, rent agreements, buying and selling of properties, financial agreements, power of attorney, affidavits, articles of association and memorandum of association, among others.

However, the city has been witnessing an acute shortage of these papers, especially of lower denominations starting from ₹2 to ₹50. Many alleged that the shortage is leading to black marketing of judicial papers.

Lawyers as well as general people are facing difficulties while trying to buy stamp papers. The lawyers or their clients have no choice but to buy higher-valued stamp papers as they do not get lower-value papers. Advocate Niranjan Kanungo told Orissa

POST, "The government should immediately take steps to address the problem as many legal and important works have been halted due to the shortage."

Many people even alleged black marketing of stamp papers due to its shortage over past few weeks. Those who are unwilling to pay more are postponing their deals and agreements. "I along with my land owner had gone to court to sign a rent agreement but had to return as there were only stamp papers valued ₹500," told Rakesh Kumar Patra, a contractual government employee.

There are around 45 odd vendors who sit on the premises of the court and sub-registrar office here. They buy stamp papers from district treasury office and later make them available for public at the court and sub-registrar's office.

Ashok Sahoo, a stamp vendor, said, "We are feeling bad while sending back hundreds of people everyday due to the shortage. We apprised the authorities of the problem who informed us about non-supply of papers from the government printing press at Nasik. Printing of stamp papers has been severely disturbed due to Covid-19 pandemic." The authorities have assured to supply stamp papers by February 15.

## e-Com cos to pay 2% extra tax now

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Feb 2:** The Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) has welcomed the Budget proposal to impose 2 per cent extra tax on foreign e-commerce companies whether engaged in business of sale of goods or providing services, acceptance of offer for sale, placing of purchase order, acceptance of purchase order, payment of consideration or supply of goods and services partly or wholly.

As per a statement, it has also been clarified in the Budget that the tax will be applicable for consideration of sale of goods, irrespective of whether the provider owns the portal, and consideration of provisions of services irrespective of whether services are provided or facilitated by e-commerce operators.

The provision has been made in the Budget by proposing amendments to Section 163 sub clause (3), Section 164 clause (cb), Section 165 sub section (3) and clause (b) of

The Finance Act, 2016.

The provision will be applicable retrospectively with effect from April 1, 2020. All such foreign companies which are engaged in sale of goods or providing services through any online mode will come under the purview of this provision and will have to pay 2 per cent extra w.e.f. from April 1, 2020.

It's a bold step taken by the government which has been heartily welcomed by the traders across the country, CAIT said.

## Ganja mafia deals in musk deer navel

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Malkangiri, Feb 2:** Smuggling of musk deer's navel from Malkangiri was detected while police were carrying out a raid on ganja smugglers Monday. Musk deer is an endangered species. It is suspected that along with ganja smuggling, the mafia has been hustling with musk deer's navel, a rare and most precious and rare now. A gram of musk deer navel is valued at ₹1 lakh.

It is said that musk deer are in Dandakaranya area. Police have intensified the probe to locate if musk deer navels are stocked anywhere else in the district. The musk deer navel was hidden amid ganja packets. It is suspected that seizure of the musk deer navel points to their survival in the deep forest of Dandakaranya. As ganja odour can suppress the smell of the navel, they traffic it along with this contraband smuggling.

## Maha kids given sanitiser drops instead of polio

AGENCIES

**Nagpur, Feb 2:** The health condition of 12 children, who had been administered hand sanitiser drops instead of oral polio vaccine drops in Maharashtra's Yavatmal district, is stable, an official said Tuesday. An inquiry has been completed into the incident, which took place Sunday. A report will be submitted to the government and appropriate action will be taken at the state-level, Yavatmal Collector MD Singh said.

The incident took place at Bhanbora Primary Health Centre in Kapsikopri village Sunday when the National Pulse Polio vaccination drive for children aged 1-5 years was underway, an official said. Yavatmal Zilla Parishad CEO Shrikishna Panchal Monday said 12 children below 5 years of age were given two drops of sanitiser in place of polio drops. Subsequently, one of the children complained of vomiting and uneasiness, he said.

## Franklin Templeton told to disburse ₹9,122cr

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Feb 2:** The Supreme Court Tuesday directed Franklin Templeton to disburse a sum of ₹9,122 crore to the unit holders of six mutual funds that were closed by the mutual fund house in April last year.

A bench comprising S Abdul Nazeer and Sanjiv Khanna said that ₹9,122 crore (the figures as on January 15, 2021) should be distributed among the unit holders in proportion to the respective interests in the assets of the scheme. The top court asked the SBI Mutual Fund to carry out the exercise of disbursement, after a counsel for all parties agreed to this arrangement. Advocate Pratap Venugopal, rep-



resenting the SEBI, contended before the bench that if SBI Mutual Fund are involved, then the process of disbursing the amount would be completed equitably within 12 to 18 months. The counsel representing Franklin Templeton Trusts Services Limited and Asset Management Company Limited

agreed to fully cooperate with SBI Mutual Fund.

The top court added that the distribution of money to the unit holders should be completed within 20 days from Tuesday. The bench also allowed the parties to move applications in case of any difficulty in the overall process.

On January 25, the Supreme Court had said that it will first deal with the "contentious" issue of the objection to the e-voting process for winding up Franklin Templeton's six mutual fund schemes, and of distribution of money to the unit holders.

The top court had orally observed that objections around e-voting is a contentious issue. It had scheduled the matter for hearing on February 1 after one of the lawyers cited a media report, which claimed that a group of investors of Franklin Templeton Mutual Fund (FTMF) have moved the top court with a plea to declare the recent e-voting conducted by the fund house as illegal. The bench had noted: "We will first examine the question of objection

to e-voting and disbursement of funds."

The top court had earlier asked the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) to appoint an observer to oversee the e-voting process. The voting took place in the last week of December, and it was approved by the majority of the unit holders. The court had also directed that the SEBI should file a copy of the final forensic audit report before it in a sealed cover.

On January 18, the top court had granted three days for filing objections to the e-voting on the winding up of six mutual fund schemes of the fund house. The court had also asked the fund house counsel if an order could be passed to allow distribution of money to the unit holders.

### ACROBATICS IN SKY

Indian Air Force's acrobatic team 'Suryakiran' performs during rehearsals for the Aero India 2021, at the Yelahanka air base in Bangalore, Tuesday





## 'MY BIGGEST LESSONS ARE FROM RELATIONSHIPS'

Hollywood star Dakota Johnson said she received the biggest lessons in life from relationships, particularly by exploring relationships at work. "I have learned so far that my biggest lessons are from relationships or exploring relationships at work," said Johnson.

## HARRY STYLES THANKS FANS 'FOR ALL THE BIRTHDAY WISHES'

British singer-actor and former One Direction band member Harry Styles thanked fans for their birthday wishes and for celebrating his special day. Harry, who turned 27 February 1, tweeted his gratitude Tuesday.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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**ARIES**  
You are edgy today. Something may be bothering you, and this keeps you cautious for most part of the day. Ganesha suggests that you make the most of your evenings if invited to parties and other social events. Things may turn around for the good.

**TAURUS**  
There is a strong prospect that you will work extremely hard to prove yourself at your workplace today, predicts Ganesha. At times, the returns may not be in proportion to your efforts. You will unwind at the end of the day with a happy and content feeling, expects Ganesha.

**GEMINI**  
You will spend the major part of your day with your spouse and children, if any. You also stand to benefit from your parents. If unmarried, your relationship with your beloved will enter an exciting phase. Inhibitions, if any, will be thrown out of the window and the bonding is likely to be intense.

**CANCER**  
Today, you are likely to mellow down a bit. Your usually strict and practical demeanour will be overpowered by your caring and affectionate inner self. Others may take a little time getting used to the new you, which doesn't mean that they don't like your new avatar.

**LEO**  
The best ideas of the greatest geniuses were nothing but serendipitous accidents. Well, Ganesha asks you to remember this, since it is very likely that today, you are on the verge of a sudden inspiration in your professional field.

**VIRGO**  
Domestic responsibilities will rule the roost today. Subordinates will offer the best of their support to you. But remember that the value of what you seek will exact the maximum efforts on your part. Be wary of people, counsels Ganesha.

**LIBRA**  
When it comes to matters of career, today you shall have an infinite pool of zeal and fervour to dip into. Your ability to convince people makes it easier for you to make them agree with your viewpoints. Be careful of getting too cocky though. You might do well to take inputs from seniors and experienced people before taking any crucial decisions, advises Ganesha.

**SCORPIO**  
Small problems and tiny things will keep you on your feet as you tackle them with tact and precision. On the family front, you will enjoy marital bliss as you communicate on a spiritual level with your partner. You may end up planning a romantic vacation for the near future. On the whole, it will be an animated and lively day, says Ganesha.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Trouble is brewing, foresees Ganesha, and there is a strong possibility of you being caught up in it real bad. But as things progress, you will become high-spirited and noble-minded.

**CAPRICORN**  
You will be all focused and ready to shoulder the burden of piling work which, by now, would have got unwieldy, foresees Ganesha. In fact, the never-ending work pressure will have frustrated you to such an extent that you wouldn't mind spending an entire day cracking your brains over each of those dreadful files.

**AQUARIUS**  
Money ahoy! You are blessed with the Midas touch today, and you need to take advantage of it! Competition will be left far behind as you zoom off into the skies of success. But watch out for the envious ones, warns Ganesha, who are ready to pull the rug from under your feet at the slightest excuse.

**PISCES**  
You might as well drive into a brick wall and hope it is spongy, as expect to achieve a lot of success today. However, this does not mean that you ought to give up. Indeed, it is the Herculean efforts that you put in today that will bring you many laurels and much appreciation, as well as stupendous success in the near future, says Ganesha.

## Alia wants to go on vacation, 'but not solo'

**Mumbai:** Bollywood star Alia Bhatt wants to go on a vacation, but not on a solo trip. The actress made the confession while playing a 'True or False' game with fans Tuesday on Instagram Stories.

Asked by a fan if she wanted to go on a vacation, Alia stated she is not in the mood for solo outings. "You kinda wanna leave everything and go on a solo vaca," asked the fan.

"True but not solo," Alia replied. She made several other admissions in the course of the game. Among these was a revelation that she was not a big fan of shopping—or cooking, for that matter.

When one fan asked if she loved shopping, Alia said: "False. I don't love shopping. I don't like shopping. If you take me into a store I get very very confused and I kind of come out very soon, but online shopping has changed a lot of things for me."

She also revealed that she loves potato and chocolate: "Fully true. Aloo and chocolate are my favourite", confessing that she likes homemade Indian food.

One fan asked if she was a cat person or dog person, to which Alia said she loves cats as well as dogs.

A fan asked if she loves cooking, to which Alia shared a fun video of her eating and saying: "No, only eating."

Meanwhile, the actress is busy with Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Gangubai Kathiawadi*, a film reportedly revolving around the life of a brothel owner and matriarch, and SS Rajamouli's ambitious upcoming film, *RRR*. IANS



## Varun, Shraddha voted kids' icons

**Mumbai:** Bollywood stars Varun Dhawan and Shraddha Kapoor have emerged as the favourite stars of children at the Kids Choice Awards.

Varun won the Best Actor accolade, while Shraddha Kapoor won Best Actress and Badshah was named as the Best Rap Music star.

Sushant Singh Rajput's *Chhichhore* was named as favourite Bollywood movie. This year, the Nickelodeon Kids' Choice Awards 2020 was held virtually owing to the ongoing Covid crisis.

Nominees were selected through an online research to determine who entertained children the most during lockdown, and winners were selected through votes by the kids.

From the small screen, Surbhi Chandna won favourite TV actor (female) for *Naagin* while it was a hat-trick for Dilip Joshi as favorite TV actor (male). He won for his role in *Tarak Mehta Ka Ooltah Chashmah*, which was also named favorite TV show.

Actor-comedian Kapil Sharma emerged as the favorite Instagram personality, while *Muqabla* was declared as the favourite Bollywood movie song, with Nora Fatehi being named favorite dancer. IANS

## Fan greets Vicky with samosa and jalebi

**Indore:** Bollywood actor Vicky Kaushal was super happy Tuesday after a fan came to meet him secretly at Indore airport. The fan, Harshita, not only brought samosa and jalebi for her favourite Bollywood star but also kept the meeting a secret from her parents!

Vicky took to Instagram to express his love and gratitude for Harshita and also shared that the samosas of Indore are delicious!

The actor shared a photo where he gorges on a samosa and wrote: "*Kaha tha nahi kha paunga, par raha nahi gaya*. There you go Harshita (@vickyismylifetime)! Happy to have a fan who knows I'm perpetually hungry *Mummy Pappa ko bina bataye airport milne aa gayi saath mein samose jalebi lekar*. (Aunty Uncle gussa mat karna agar padh lo toh ) Lots of love to you! Indore ke samose waise kamaal hain yaar."

Vicky recently shared the first look from his upcoming film *The Immortal Ashwatthama*.

Written and directed by Aditya Dhar, the film is expected to go on floors later this year. The actor will also be seen as Aurangzeb in Karan Johar's upcoming directorial *Takht*. The historical drama revolves around Mughal emperor Aurangzeb and his brother Dara Shikoh, and their fight for the throne. IANS



## Kareena shows 'Instagram v/s reality' on social media

**Mumbai:** Bollywood actress Kareena Kapoor Khan has shown her version of Instagram-versus-reality on social media and said that her Kaftans and pouts will continue, no matter what.

Kareena posted two pictures on Instagram. In the first image, Kareena is seen sporting sunglasses and putting at the camera. The second picture has her sunglasses off but she still retains her famous pout. "Instagram v/s Reality: PS: Kaftan and pouts continue no matter what the scene is #KaftanSeries," she wrote as the caption. The actress is all set to welcome

her second child with her actor husband Saif Ali Khan. Saif and Kareena reportedly started dating after *Tashan*. They got married in 2012 and Kareena gave birth to son Taimur in 2016. She is currently expecting their second baby, and she often shares photographs of her baby bump on social media. IANS



### PEANUTS



### CALVIN AND HOBBS

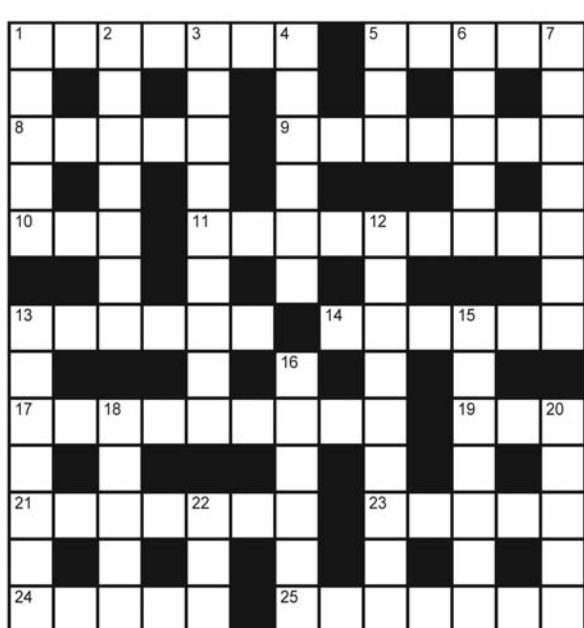


### BREVITY



### FUN post

### CROSSWORD



- Across**
- Enthusiastic applause
  - Honour
  - Kind of poem
  - Simple wind instrument
  - Needing a lift
  - Irons and woods, e.g. (4-5)
  - Charging need
  - Black mark
  - Office staff
  - Zodiac animal
  - Hawaiian guitar
  - Pre-entree course
  - Artist's stand
  - Taqueria offering
  - Needing a lift
  - Irons and woods, e.g. (4-5)
  - Charging need
  - Black mark
  - Office staff
- Down**
- Cantina pots
  - Shorten
  - In disguise
  - Pasta piece
  - \_\_\_ king
  - "Farewell, mon ami"
  - Saltwater lake (4,3)
  - They make things happen
  - Apprehend
  - Great ape
  - Bug
  - Swamp plants
  - Newspapers and television, e.g.
  - Electric fish

### SUDOKU

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

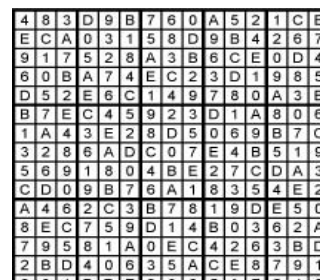


### SOLUTIONS

#### CROSSWORD



#### SUDOKU



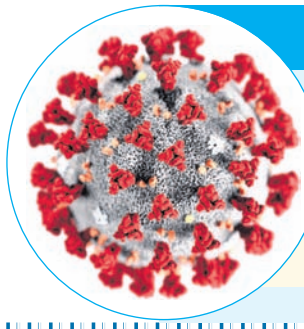
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW





**DEMO OVER BUDGET**

SUCI activists hold a demonstration at College Square in Cuttack, Tuesday, to protest against the Union Budget, which was moved in the Parliament Monday



**COVID-19 TRACKER**

|        | INFECTED     | RECOVERED   | DEAD      |
|--------|--------------|-------------|-----------|
| World  | 10,40,45,811 | 7,58,93,996 | 22,50,677 |
| India  | 1,07,66,245  | 1,04,48,406 | 1,54,486  |
| Odisha | 3,35,211     | 3,32,377    | 1,906     |

# HC stays bus terminal work

**ORISSA HIGH COURT DIRECTS CUTTACK ADMIN TO MAINTAIN THE STATUS QUO OF A KALI TEMPLE LOCATED AT THE PROPOSED SITE FOR CUTTACK NETAJI BUS TERMINAL**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Cuttack, Feb 2:** The Orissa High Court Tuesday stayed the construction of Cuttack Netaji Bus Terminal (CNBT) proposed to come up at Khannagar locality here.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had laid the foundation stone for this bus terminal on occasion of the birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, January 23, this year.

Hearing a petition, the HC ruled that no demolition and construction work can be carried out on the proposed site as it has a Kali temple. The High Court also directed the district administration to maintain the status quo of movable and immovable properties of the temple.

The Odisha government had earlier decided to set up a state-of-the-art bus terminal in Khannagar at a cost of ₹65 crore as the existing Badambadi bus stand faces congestions owing to space crunch.

The bus terminal will have all kinds of modern facilities for the convenience of the passengers. It will have a large terminal building, 180



bus bays, parking space for 247 vehicles, service area, a vehicle repair and maintenance block and parking space for three-wheelers.

The terminal building will be a three-storey one. It will have a passenger lounge, a food court, a cloakroom, a ticket office, an e-vehicle charging point, rainwater storage on the roof and solar panels.

With the Odisha High Court staying construction, the fate of the ambitious bus terminal now hangs in balance.

While laying foundation stone for the bus terminal, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had claimed that the new bus terminal would remind people of the valour and patriotism of Netaji. "The state-of-the-art terminal would be beneficial for the people of Odisha and neighbouring states," Patnaik had said.

The Chief Minister had also said that Netaji Bus Terminal would be a model for the whole country. "The terminal would depict the life and ac-

**Ambitious plan hangs in balance**

The Odisha government had earlier decided to set up a state-of-the-art bus terminal in Khannagar at a cost of ₹65 crore as the existing Badambadi bus stand faces congestions

The terminal will have a large terminal building, 180 bus bays, parking space for 247 vehicles, service area, a vehicle repair and maintenance block and parking space for three-wheelers

With the Orissa High Court staying the construction as the site has a Kali temple, the fate of the ambitious bus terminal now hangs in balance

tivities of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. The bus terminal would add to the glorious history of the Millennium city of Cuttack," he added.

**TECH BOOST FOR SCB**



Health Minister Naba Kishore Das, Choudwar-Cuttack MLA Souvic Biswal and other dignitaries inaugurate a virtual dissection table at the Anatomy department of SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack, Tuesday

**CP BUSTS FAKE DRINKS MAKING UNIT IN CAPITAL**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 2:** The Special Squad of Commissionerate police Tuesday busted a spurious cold drink unit at Mancheswar Industrial estate in the city here.

The owner of the unit identified as Sripati Ranjan Behera has been detained at Mancheswar Police station. Sources claimed that Behera is the owner of Disens Private limited, allegedly not a registered unit.

According to sources, a joint team of Special squad and Mancheswar police carried out the raid at the manufacturing unit Tuesday afternoon. The joint team seized huge amounts of spurious cold drinks measuring 1,000 liters, chemicals, machinery and other items used for making spurious cold drinks.



Behera also failed to produce any documents required for the establishment running since two years. The cops also found duplicate labels of various popular soft drink brands during the raid. Behera used to sell the spurious products in the markets and areas on the outskirts of the city.

Cops are examining the financial activities of Behera and the involvement of others in the illegal business. Notably, the City police have recently unearthed fake Ghee manufacturing unit in Airfield police limits few days ago.

# CM proposes economic corridor

**Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari urged to undertake the proposed eight-lane corridor from Paradip to Barbil**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi, Feb 2:** In order to provide a fillip to the economic development of the state, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Tuesday proposed a 300 km eight-lane integrated economic corridor from Paradip to Barbil in a meeting with Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari.

He also assured that the state government will extend all support to the project.

The Chief Minister took up several important infrastructure projects with Union Minister Nitin Gadkari in a review meeting via virtual mode.

The meeting was also attended by Union Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Dharmendra Pradhan along with Union Minister of State for Road, Transport and Highways General (Retd) VK Singh and Minister of State for MSME Pratap Chandra Sarangi.

Significantly, Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan told media here after the meeting that the Paradip-Barbil corridor will provide employment opportunities in the region.



Pic for representation

"The proposed economic corridor will facilitate growth of multimodal logistics hub near Chandikhol, steel complex at Kalinga Nagar, Mining zones around Dubri, Industrial hub at Keonjhar and Mining areas of Barbil and Joda. This will further facilitate economic growth in region and provide employment opportunities in the region," said Pradhan.

During the meeting, the CM proposed for early completion of various ongoing NH projects in mines rich Keonjhar district and subsequent eight-laning of the projects.

The Chief Minister added that Keonjhar is quite an important district for the state's economy and also for the steel industry of the entire country.

In order to speed up the projects, Naveen Patnaik suggested regular meetings with Nitin Gadkari in every two months and official level meetings with the Union government every month.

Naveen Patnaik also informed in the meeting that the state government has given all necessary clearances for the Digha-Satpada coastal highways project.

Union minister Nitin Gadkari has assured in the meeting that the four-laning of 166 km Panikoli-Remuli section of NH-20 will be completed within a year. Similarly, the 4-laning of 43 kilometer Remuli-Koida and 104 kilometer Singara-BinjabahalNHs will be completed by June 2021, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik said.

The Chief Minister said that the issues of ports connectivity including Gopalpur, Subarnarekha, Asharang, Paradip and Dhamara were discussed and it was decided that appropriate steps will be taken for quick completion of these projects.

# Vaccine for frontline workers from Feb 6

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 2:** Following vaccination of healthcare workers, the state government is gearing up to start vaccination of frontline workers (FLWs) including police and municipal staff from February 6.

Additional Chief Secretary (Health & Family Welfare) PK

Mohapatra has written to all Collectors, municipal commissioners and chief district medical officers in this regard, Tuesday.

This time, the government wants to spare health staff from the work. Therefore, it has asked the officials to identify alternative vaccination sites (other than health institutions), which should preferably be

on the office premises of FLWs.

Similarly, the Collectors were asked to engage alternative vaccinators (other than health department staff) for conducting sessions for the frontline workers. They are to be mobilised and trained in advance in correct withdrawal of vaccine doses so as to minimize vaccine wastage, Mohapatra said.

# State's planetariums reopen with Covid curbs

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 2:** After a 10-month-long hiatus due to the pandemic, the Pathani Samanta Planetarium here and APJ Abdul Kalam Planetarium at Burla reopened for the public Tuesday with strict adherence to Covid-19 guidelines.

The planetarium has been directed to remain open for people on all days of the week except Monday. As per the Covid-19 norms, up to 50 people would be allowed to watch the show at one time

LAXMIDHAR DAS | DIRECTOR, PATHANI SAMANTA PLANETARIUM

The doors of Pathani Samanta Planetarium at Khandapada in Nayagarh district were also thrown open for the public Tuesday, sources said.

Deputy Director, Pathani Samanta Planetarium, Subhendu Patnaik said, "We have started



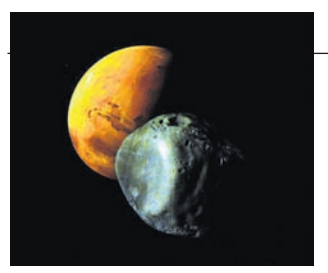
People queuing up at Pathani Samanta Planetarium in Bhubaneswar, Tuesday



The visitors were asked to maintain Covid-19 norms

OP PHOTOS

with three shows as the planetarium reopened for people Tuesday. The timing for the show in Hindi is 2 pm; it is 3:30 pm for the show in English and the timing for Odia show is 5 pm. We are following the Covid-19 guidelines strictly. Only 50 people are allowed inside the planetarium at a time. It is mandatory to maintain social distancing and wear masks at the planetarium. We are also performing thermal screening of the visitors." Patnaik further revealed that



arrangements were in place for live streaming of all the science shows

**TRYST WITH SCIENCE**

Arrangements were in place for live streaming of all the science shows and programmes on social media platforms

Notably, the state government had closed all planetariums in Odisha for people in March last year in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic

and programmes on social media platforms like YouTube and

Facebook Live for science enthusiasts and students.

Director of Pathani Samanta Planetarium, Laxmidhar Das, said that the planetarium had been asked to remain open for people on all days in a week except Monday. "As per the Covid-19 norms, up to 50 people would be allowed to watch the show at one time," Das added. Notably, the state government had closed all planetariums in Odisha for people in March last year in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

# BIRD POPULATION AT CHILIKA RISES

MANISH KUMAR, OP

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 2:** The reports of bird Census for the last four years claim that the bird population in the Chilika Lake has been rising each year since 2018. However, all does not seem to be well when it comes to the flocking of migratory birds to the site.

As per government recorded data, while the population of duck species has seen an appreciable rise, the number of some of the migratory birds has seen a decline, raising concerns over the overall health of the lake and some pre-requisites conditions of these birds which seem to be unfulfilled.

As per the latest Census report of 2021, the lake saw a total of 12,42,826 birds. A lion's share among these was taken by the duck species which included Gadwali (2,22,009), Eurasian Wigeon (2,10,403) and others. Northern Pintail and



Northern Shoveller species of ducks also saw rise in numbers.

Meanwhile the lake has seen substantial decline in the numbers of Common Pochard ducks. Greater Flamingo species also saw a decline at the Nalabana Sanctuary while the wildlife department also saw lesser number of Cotton Teal and Lesser Whistling duck.

Some other birds also visited the site in lesser numbers. Few other species like Curlew Sand Piper, Little Stint and Pied Avocet which had been declining in the last few years continued to show the same trend.



# Focus on agro-enterprise: Tripathy

PLUS II EXAMS

## CHSE announces dates for online form submission

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 2:** Regular and ex-regular students of Plus - II Arts, Science, Commerce and Vocational streams should fill up their online examination forms by March 3.

The Council of Higher Secondary Education (CHSE), Monday, issued a notification announcing the filling-up of forms for annual Plus II Examination 2021. Filling-up of forms will commence from February 6.

The tentative date for commencement of practical examination is April 29, 2021 and theory examination is May 15, 2021

Dates for ex-regular and regular as well as correspondence students have been fixed from February 6 to 12 and from February 12 to 24 respectively. And the last date for form fill-up for students from all categories is March 3 and it is with fine, the notification states.

The notification further added that there will be no extension of form fill-up dates under any circumstances. The tentative date for commencement of practical examination is April 29, 2021 and theory examination is May 15, 2021.

## AGAINST SKYROCKETING OIL PRICES



OPYC activists take out a bullock cart rally in Bhubaneswar, Tuesday, protesting the hike in oil prices

OP PHOTO

# Outfit takes out bullock cart rally

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

HIKE IN OIL PRICES

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 2:** Activists of the Odisha Pradesh Youth Congress, (OPYC), the youth wing of the Congress Tuesday organised a bullock cart protest rally against the unusual hike in oil prices.

The youth Congress activists also demanded repealing of the three farm laws passed by Parliament. Addressing the rally, OPYC state president, Smruti Ranjan Lenka, said people were suffering a lot as

both the state and the central governments were frequently imposing taxes leading to hike in prices of petrol and diesel at a time when the country has not yet been freed from the Covid pandemic.

Lenka said that the price of petrol and diesel per litre was not above Rs 70 during the UPA period when the crude oil price in the international market was 110 dollar per barrel. But now when the cost of crude

oil price in the international market was less than 50 dollar per barrel the cost of petrol and diesel hiked close to Rs 90 per litre.

The youth Congress leader said that the farmers were agitating for the last 66 days to scrap three farm laws. But the centre instead of paying any heed to their demand was conspiring to foil the agitation.

The youth Congress, Lenka said, would intensify its agitation in the coming days if the farm laws were not repealed.

## AIM TO BOOST FARMERS' INCOME



FIELD-LEVEL OFFICERS ARE ORIENTED TO BE IN TOUCH WITH PRIVATE ENTREPRENEURS AND SUPPORT THEM AS PER THEIR REQUIREMENT

THE OFFICIALS CAN PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR EASY CREDIT, MARKET LINKAGE AND TECHNICAL ADVISORY WHICH IN TURN WILL BRING BIG CHANGES IN THE SECTOR

THE AGRICULTURE AND FARMERS' EMPOWERMENT DEPARTMENT HAS BEEN ASKED TO MAKE A STATE-WIDE ASSESSMENT OF THE CURRENT PRESENCE AND POTENTIAL OF THE PRIVATE INVESTMENT IN AGRICULTURE AND AGRO-ENTERPRISE

lakh hectares is under horticultural crops.

Presently, 34 seafood processing units, 36 lemon grass extraction units and 16 cashew processing units are operating in the state.

Potential agro and food processing cultures have been identified. One district and one product list has also been prepared for the development of food processing units and marketing support.

Agriculture director Muthu Kumar said that Mukhyamantri Krushi Udyog Yojana (MKUY) has been launched to promote enterprises in agriculture and allied sectors.

Under the scheme, around 40-50 per cent of capital investment subsidy subject to a limit of Rs 50 lakh is being provided to the entrepreneurs. Around 83 types of projects have been enlisted for support under the scheme.

So far, 365 operating units have been supported under the MKUY. In the current year, a total number of 113 units involving capital investment of Rs 44 crore have been operationalised. These units have been provided a capital investment subsidy of Rs 12 crore and they have created sustainable employment opportunity for 565 persons.

# Handloom expo draws huge footfall



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 2:** On the 14th day of the 20th National level Handloom Expo organised by Boyanika, the fair witnessed a major footfall of buyers and visitors Tuesday.

Ample space in the Mela ground helped people to roam freely from stall to stall and choose from a wide array of products. The total sale in the expo in the first 11 days was estimated to be worth Rs 3 crore. The Boyanika stall sold products worth more than Rs 50 Lakh.

Besides Boyanika, 'Apco' of Andhra Pradesh, 'Co-optex of Tamil Nadu, 'Mruganayani' of MP, 'Kashfab' of J&K and other participants from Karnataka, Delhi, Haryana and West Bengal expressed

their satisfaction on sales.

They hope for better sales in the next 17 days of the expo as multiple marriage ceremonies were coming up. This will help encourage their weavers, who are facing problems due to piling of unsold fabrics.

Interacting with Orissa POST, a weaver named Rashid Ahmed said, "The upcoming wedding season will have a heavy demand for our products and we are hopeful to sell as much as possible to make a good profit over here."

Customers have special attraction for National Handloom Expo, as all types of handloom products ranging from mere handkerchiefs to exotic silk sarees are available under one roof represented through participants from 16 states of the country.

# 'EXECUTE STRATEGY FOR WASTE MANAGEMENT'

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 2:** The state government has asked district collectors to implement the strategy prepared for effective management of construction and demolition waste in the jurisdictions of urban local bodies (ULBs).

Housing & Urban Development (H&UD) secretary G Mathi Vathanan has issued instructions to the collectors in this regard.

The H&UD department has planned to engage Mission Shakti and transgender groups for decentralised management of the construction and demolition of waste in the ULBs.

The members of Mission Shakti groups/transgender groups will collect the waste from the waste generators and transport the same to a processing facility. Decentralised facilities up to 5 tonne per day (TPD) processing capacity will be established and managed in partnership with the Mission Shakti and transgender groups.

The strategy emphasises on the roles and accountability of waste generators and various stakeholders,



As per the strategy, Collectors will provide suitable sites to ULBs for setting up of the facility for storage, processing & recycling of construction and demolition waste

thrust to segregation, recovery, reuse and recycle of construction and demolition waste.

As per the strategy, the collector will provide suitable sites to Urban Local Bodies for setting up of the facility for storage, processing and recycling for construction and demolition waste.

Waste generators have a big role to play towards better management of the construction waste. The waste generators who generate more than 20 metric tonne (MT) or more in one day or 300 MT per project in a month will have to submit waste management plan to the ULB concerned before undertaking any construction or demolition activity.

On receipt of the plan, the ULB authority will examine and sanction the waste management plan within a period of one month from the date of receipt. Waste generators will have to pay for the processing and disposal of the waste generated by them, apart from the payment for storage, collection, and transportation of the waste to the designated site as notified by the ULB.

Further, the Ward Committee will take steps to identify the orphaned construction and demolition waste within its respective jurisdiction and inform the ULB for transportation to the designated site.

# Question Hour in this year's Budget session

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 2:** The upcoming Budget session of the state Assembly will have Question Hour, Speaker SN Patro said here Tuesday.

In view of Covid-19 pandemic, the Question Hour of last two sessions of the House was cancelled. Patro said that Covid-19 test will not be mandatory for the MLAs and others for the upcoming session which starts February 18.

However, those with Covid symptoms will not be allowed inside the House, he said. "Covid-19 restrictions have not been lifted but relaxed. All the existing social distancing norms and other protocols will be duly followed," Patro said.

Adequate gap will be maintained among the seats of members inside the House. The MLAs can also participate in the session through video conferencing from their respective offices, he further said.

## COURTESY VISIT



National Service Scheme volunteers of state, who participated in Republic Day parade at New Delhi, meet Governor Ganeshi Lal at Raj Bhawan in Bhubaneswar, Tuesday

OP PHOTO

## YGLP GLOBAL CONFERENCE

# Bhubaneswar replaces Tangerang as host city

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 2:** The state capital will replace the Indonesian city of Tangerang as the host city for 2021 YGLP Global Leadership Conference. Apart from Bhubaneswar, the Japanese city of Nagoya is the only other change this year that replaces the Malaysian city of Johor Bahru.

The list of YGLP 'host cities' for Asia includes 8 of the world's 10 largest metropolitan agglomeration and 12 of world's 20 wealthiest cities.

The list also includes 4 of world's top 5 financial centres- Tokyo, Singapore, Hong Kong and Shanghai and half of world's most influential cities from the list of 'Global Cities Index'.

The YGLP host cities are first

shortlisted by an international panel through its seating's at the Asia Council Headquarters in Tokyo. The nominated cities are deliberated upon at length by the YGLP Authority in Oxford and the final list is published.

The selected cities known as 'YGLP Host Cities' host the YGLP Global Leadership Conference that brings together global leaders, global icons and YGLP Fellows from across the globe to deliberate upon major issues and challenges before the world. The conference is held by the YGLP Authority in Oxford and HSL London. In Asia, they are held in association with the Program Division, Asia Council, Tokyo.

The 2021 YGLP Global Conference is set to be held in August and September this year.

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ILLEGAL STONE MINING

Lokayukta seeks reply from Jaipur Collector

It is alleged that the lease owner is mining black stones in the Aruha hill in connivance with cops and tehsil officials

AGENCIES

Jajpur, Feb 2: The state Lokayukta has sought reply from the Jaipur Collector over excess mining of black stones than the lease area from Aruha hill under Dharmasala tehsil in this district, a report said.

The Lokayukta has also issued notices to the Dharmasala tehsildar and the lease holder Trinath Jena along with the Collector asking them to file their replies within a period of six weeks.

The excess mining of precious black stones from the hill has resulted in severe revenue loss for the state government. It is alleged that the lease owner is mining black stones from the hill in connivance with police and tehsil officials.

The Lokayukta issued the notice over a petition (1355/2020) filed before it by Sarbeshwar Behura on excess mining of black stones from the hill and subsequent loss of revenue to the state government, December 10, 2020. The complainant while filing the petition had prayed before the Lokayukta to direct an inquiry into the issue by the state Crime Branch and recovery of the revenue amount.

The matter came to fore after Lokayukta Chairperson Justice



The charges are false. I'm ready for any probe and measurement of the lease area. While I've received lease for only three acre of the hill, other leaseholders are illegally mining from the adjoining areas

TRINATH JENA | ACCUSED LEASE HOLDER

I'm yet to receive any notice from the Lokayukta. I will take steps only after receiving the notice

PRASANT SAMANTARAY | TEHSILDAR, DHARMASALA

Ajit Singh heard the matter and issued notice to the district Collector, Dharmasala tehsildar and leaseholder Trinath Jena asking them to file their reply on the issue within a period of six weeks, January 19.

Earlier, a demand notice of Rs 58.62 crore was served on the leaseholder for illegal mining of black stones from the Dankari hill under this tehsil. Moreover, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) had also

slapped a penalty of Rs 25 crore on the state government for illegal mining of black stones from Dankari hill.

The petitioner has alleged - if a proper measurement of Aruha hill is undertaken then the area of illegal mining will be more than the actual lease area.

According to the petition, the Dharmasala tehsil office published a notice inviting applications for leasing of Aruha black stone quarry-

1, September 1, 2017. Accordingly, Trinath Jena was given a five-year lease contract (2017-2018 and 2021-2022) for black stone mining from Aruha hill on the basis of Odisha Minor Minerals Concession Rules-2016. The land record says that Aruha hill has 153.630 acre of black stone quarry out of which only three acres were given on lease to Jena. The petitioner has alleged that Jena in connivance with Dharmasala tehsildar and local police illegally extracted black stones from over 100 acre of area of the hill in excess of his lease area. It is alleged that the district Collector and Dharmasala tehsildar were aware about the illegal mining but did not take any action against the wrongdoer.

Jena termed the charges false stating that he is yet to receive any notice. Moreover, he said that he is ready for any probe and measurement of the lease area. He said that while he has received lease for only three acre of the hill other leaseholders are illegally mining from the adjoining areas.

When contacted, Dharmasala tehsildar Prasant Samantaray said he is yet to receive any notice from the Lokayukta and will take steps only after receiving the notice.

In 1-2 months, work on Dhamra airstrip to start

A PATCH OF LAND MEASURING 229.67 ACRES IN THREE VILLAGES UNDER BASUDEVPUR TEHSIL HAS BEEN EARMARKED

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhadrak, Feb 2: Both the Central and the state governments have been laying stress on the Dhamra port area in Bhadrak. The state government has given go ahead to an airstrip at Balimunda while the district administration of Bhadrak has initiated process to demarcate the land proposed for the project.

An official of the Dhamra port said that in a month or two, the work on the port will be started.

A patch of land measuring 229.67 acres in three villages under Basudevpur tehsil has been earmarked. The state government had earlier stated that the work for the airstrip project will be undertaken after the acquisition of the government and private lands in the area.

The airstrip has a lot to do with the increasing importance of the Dhamra port in the region. There was a plan for expansion of the port by end of 2020. Land has been identified and its schedule was handed over to the Commerce and Transport department in July, 2020. Meanwhile, a patch of 9 acre and 55 decimal of land required for the office of the proposed airstrip has been identified.

"It was finally decided that the airstrip will be set up at Balimunda, 1 km from the main bazaar. The project will sprawl over three mouzas namely Balimunda, Badahabelisahi and Nandapatana,"



representative pic

It was finally decided that the airstrip will be set up at Balimunda, 1 km from the main bazaar. The project will sprawl over three mouzas namely Balimunda, Badahabelisahi and Nandapatana

SOUMYASHRI PANIGRAHY | TEHSILDAR, BASUDEVPUR

Basudevpur tehsildar Soumyashri Panigrahy said.

Notably, keeping in view increasing commercial activities in Dharma port, the Union Civil Aviation Ministry in 2019 proposed the state government to earmark land near Dhamra to set up an airstrip near the port area.

Meanwhile, the district administration has assessed that 43 families will be displaced by the airstrip.

Each displaced families will be provided dwelling and other rehabilitation facilities as per the existing R&R policy of the government, it was learnt.

An official of the Dhamra port hinted that the work on the port will be undertaken in a month or two. However, he added that owing to Covid situation, the land demarcation process got delayed.

The Chief Secretary had held a meeting in Bhubaneswar June 29, 2019 about the execution of the project.

The airstrip is expected to bolster faster communication for the port and help in increasing its business and commerce.

Pari's family to get ₹9L compensation

Victim Compensation Act says that a maximum of ₹10 lakh compensation can be paid to a family in the case of the murder of a member

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nayagarh, Feb 2: Odisha Legal Services Authority has given its consent to provide Rs 9 lakh to Pari's family in Nayagarh district in two phases under Victim Compensation Act, a source said Tuesday.

A meeting of the District Legal Service Authority's committee was convened at the conference hall of Nayagarh District and Sessions Judge Monday.

While the meeting was chaired by District and Sessions Judge Rupashree Chowdhary, district Collector Poma Tudu, SP Siddharth Kataria, CDMO Shakti Prasad Mishra, government lawyer Bishnu Prasanna Mohapatra and DLSA committee secretary attended the meeting.

After discussing Pari murder case in details, the committee



reached a consensus that the family be compensated. A proposal for Rs 9 lakh compensation to the family was passed unanimously in the meeting. For approval, the com-

mittee had sent the proposal to OSLA.

Victim Compensation Act says that a maximum of Rs 10 lakh compensation can be paid to a family in the case of the murder of a family member.

Notably, Pari - a five-year-old girl - went missing from near her house at Jadupur village June 14. Her body parts were recovered from a sack from near the pond behind their house June 23, just 50 metres away from the place where she went missing. Demanding justice, Pari's parents attempted self-immolation in front of Odisha Legislative Assembly November 24 last year while the Winter Session was underway. The incident created ripples across the state, prompting the state government to order an SIT probe. The SIT investigated into the case and arrested a minor for alleged rape and murder.

Leopard dies in Similipal

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada, Feb 2: Taking serious note of the death of a leopard in Similipal, the principal conservator of forests has asked the Similipal authorities to investigate its death and submit a report within seven days.

The regional chief conservator of forests (wildlife) in Similipal was asked to probe if the big cat was hunted by poachers or died of any sickness.

It may be noted here that a leopard was found dead in Bhanjabasa-Dangadiha beat area under STP Monday. The big cat was aged about seven to eight years.

The Forest department had claimed that there was no injury on its body while it might have died of stomach illness.

There was blood clotting in its stomach, said RCCF Juga Dayananda. Veterinary surgeon Sudhir Panda had conducted post-mortem of the carcass.

After post-mortem report, the exact cause of its death will be known.



Odisha Livelihood Mission holds 'Pusti Mahotsav' at Chandrapur in Rayagada district

OP PHOTO

India map built of scrap unveiled

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, Feb 2: Odisha Skill Development Authority Chairman, Subrato Bagchi unveiled an India map built of scraps in Berhampur ITI and a newly-built ladies hostel inside the campus, a report said.

The India map built of scrap irons has been built inside the Asia's largest scarp park established by the Berhampur ITI in its campus. Joining as chief guest, Bagchi lauded the educational atmosphere of the Berhampur ITI and expressed his happiness in inaugurating the ladies hostel.

Among others, information and public relations (I & PR) commissioner Sanjay Singh, DRDA, PD Sindhe Dattatreya Bhausaheb, sub-collector V Kirtivasan, BeMC commissioner Siddeshwar Baliram Bondar, Tata's CSR head Captain Amitabh Bachchan and ITI principal Rajat Panigrahi graced the occasion

Unidentified lenders offer unsecured loans to bizmen

POST NEWS NETWORK

Angul, Feb 2: These days, small businessmen in Angul town are experiencing something unusually lucrative.

They have been approached by four to five youths, offering them loans without any collateral or mortgage. The lenders take only the Aadhar card and mobile numbers of the interested businessmen. They are reportedly offering loan between Rs 5,000 and 25,000.

While this has created a lot of confusion and fear among the local businessmen, the police say they do not have any information regarding this.

A group of four youths who were strangers to the local people were seen visiting from shops to shops in Angul town Monday. They had cash with them. They were even seen coaxing some businessmen who were not interested in their scheme to avail loans. They were offering loans of Rs 5,000 to 25,000.

For giving away loans, they did not demand anything other than Aadhar card and mobile number.

While some businessmen received the money from them, some others refused to take loans out of fear. Those who availed of the loans were said that their boys will collect something between Rs 100 and 500 from them daily. Before leaving the spot, they handed over a receipt book with Shree Vijaya Durga written on its cover leaf.

The businessmen here are yet to make it out why their Aadhar card and mobile numbers are being taken. Are they unknowingly laying up some troubles for themselves by divulging such numbers, some wondered.

When contacted, Angul inspector-in-charge Ramesh Chandra Bisoi said they have not received any such report in this connection. If the allegation is true, then the youths will be interrogated to find out their motive, Bisoi assured.

Jharaphula death case: Interrogation of prime accused starts in Jajpur



Victim Jharaphula and accused Rakesh Swain

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, Feb 2: The Kuakhia police in Jajpur district Tuesday took prime accused in Jharaphula Nayak's death case, Rakesh Swain, on remand for three days.

According to a source, his interrogation has already started at Kuakhia police station with Jajpur SDPO leading the interrogation.

The police are learnt to extract some information relating to Jharaphula's death. It is likely that the police will take the accused to the hotel in Bhubaneswar, where he and Jharaphula had stayed, for crime scene reconstruction.

Notably, Kuakhia police in Jajpur district had recovered the college student's body near Mulapal January 27. The Twin City Commissionerate Police had arrested Swain from his residence at Sundarpada in Bhubaneswar January 28 night and handed him over to Jajpur police.

Notably, Jharaphula, a resident of Jashipur in Mayurbhanj district, was a Ramadevi Women's University Plus-III second-year student. Due to lock-

down restrictions, Jharaphula was staying at her house. During this period Rakesh made acquaintances with her. Rakesh was engaged in underground pipe laying work in her village. Thereafter, the girl met Rakesh on several occasions in Bhubaneswar.

It was January 26 when Rakesh and Jharaphula had checked into OYO Shiv Sai Guest House, Dharma Vihar in Bhubaneswar and stayed at room no. 201 of the hotel.

Swain reportedly found Jharaphula in an unconscious state at the hotel room on the morning of January 27 and called up his friend Shekhar seeking his help. While Shekhar drove the scooter, Rakesh rode pillion making the unconscious girl sit between them. They were spotted leaving the place around 7 AM.

Rakesh initially intended to hospitalise Jharaphula at SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack. But on the way, he realized that she had already died and changed his decision. The two friends rode all the way to Jajpur on the scooter and allegedly dumped the body on the roadside at around 9 am.

LOCALS PROTEST CATTLE SMUGGLING

Bhadrak: Amid increasing cases of cattle smuggling, locals staged protests and blocked a road in Bhadrak. They accused police of failure to act against the cattle smugglers. According to a report, some people had intercepted a container carrying cattle Monday night at Bus Stand Chhak and Sani Mandir Chhak. Thereafter, police seized the contained and left the cattle at a Goushala. Irate over the illegal trafficking of the animal, the locals alleged the inefficiency of police as the reason behind the ongoing animal trafficking in the areas under Puruna Bazar and Rural police limits.

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Kids are being served food at an Anganwadi centre in Takhatpur near Baripada

OP PHOTO



If a religion is not universal, it cannot be eternal. A narrow religion, a sectarian religion, an exclusive religion can live only for a limited time and a limited purpose.

SRI AUROBINDO



Coup in Myanmar

People in Myanmar woke up February 1 to see the country's hybrid democracy suffer a body blow with the generals taking over the administration in a coup.

This followed widespread communications blackouts and banks too were shut due to severe disruption of internet services.

Significantly, the coup took place hours before the first session of the new parliament was set to open and power was handed over to army chief Min Aung Hlaing.

The coup has taken many by surprise since the military already wields significant power. In 2008, the ruling junta drafted a constitution that stipulates the military controls 25 per cent of legislative seats.

The military had alleged that the general elections held in November 2020 were fraught with irregularities and that the results - landslide victory for NLD - were not valid.

The military had demanded that the United Elections Commission (UEC) of Myanmar which oversees elections, or the government, or outgoing parliamentarians prove at a special session before the new parliament convened on February 1, that the elections were free and fair.

While some countries have condemned the military takeover, demanding the popular mandate in favour of the NLD be honoured, the most favoured leader of Myanmar, Suu Kyi, cannot escape her share of blame for the situation.

The USA and European countries have threatened to impose sanctions on Myanmar unless democracy is restored. But this may not prove to be a strong deterrent since the junta has the backing of China.

No wonder China's spokesperson Wang Wenbin said China hoped "all parties in Myanmar will properly handle their differences under the constitutional and legal framework and maintain political and social stability."

Myanmar's trust with a fragile democracy comes to an end, at least for now.

WISDOM CORNER

- Where is all the knowledge we lost with information? TS ELIOT
The smallest deed is better than the greatest intention. JOHN BURROUGHS
Go to Heaven for the climate, Hell for the company. MARK TWAIN

WORDSWORTH

Mad as a hatter

These days we associate mad as a hatter with a bit of whimsy in Lewis Carroll's famous children's book Alice in Wonderland of 1865. Carroll didn't invent the phrase, though. By the time he wrote the book it was already well known.

FOCUS ECONOMIC SUCCESS

DECADE'S GROWTH CHAMPIONS

With 2021 still young, and hope in the air thanks to new COVID-19 vaccines and a new occupant of the White House, we can finally stop covering our eyes in horror and peer furtively into the future.

My bet is on South Korea, Vietnam, and Mexico, three countries at markedly different stages of development. South Korea is an advanced economy, while Vietnam is what the World Bank calls a lower middle-income economy.



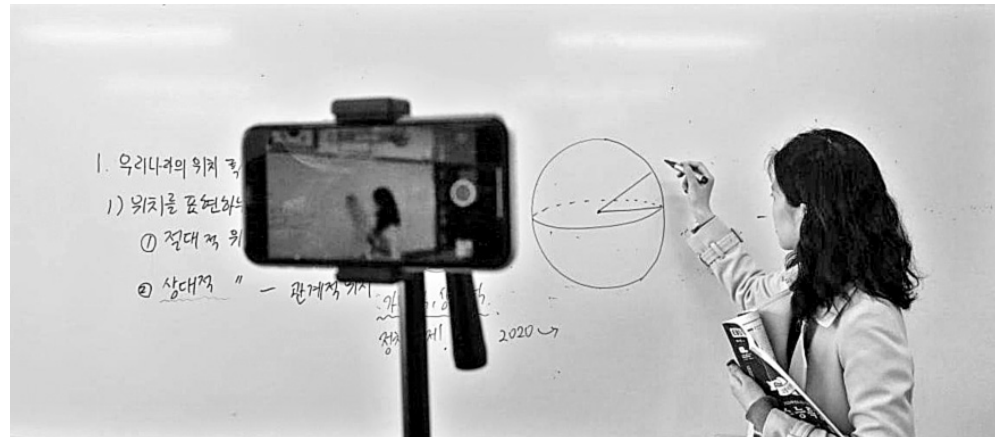
Kaushik Basu

MY BET IS ON SOUTH KOREA, VIETNAM, AND MEXICO, THREE COUNTRIES AT MARKEDLY DIFFERENT STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT... SOUTH KOREA IS THE SAFEST PICK OF THE THREE

South Korea is the safest pick of the three. Beginning in the late 1970s, during the last years of Park Chung-hee's presidency, its economy gathered steam and sustained a two-decade-long growth run.

Rich countries have less growth potential than poorer ones. But among rich countries, South Korea's prospects stand out - mainly because of its investment in human capital.

Moreover, South Korea has gone some distance toward solving a market failure that plagues all countries: teacher selection. As many studies, such as by Abhijit Banerjee and Andrew Newman, and Oded Galor and Joseph Zeira, have shown, schoolteachers are typically paid less than they should be.



South Korea has drawn some of its most talented people into teaching, and schoolteachers are among the country's richest people. The story of Cha Kil-yong, who earned \$8 million in one year teaching school mathematics online, has few parallels anywhere

South Korea has drawn some of its most talented people into teaching, and schoolteachers are among the country's richest people.

South Korea has drawn some of its most talented people into teaching, and schoolteachers are among the country's richest people.

Joe Biden has taken office, trilateral relations should improve. All three countries will benefit, but Mexico will gain the most, because it has more scope for catch-up growth.

Finally, there is the puzzling case of India. Until a few years ago, the country's rapid growth of about 9 per cent per year made it a major global economic success story.

Yet, fundamentally, India is one of the strongest emerging economies. It has a world-class information-technology sector, a strong pharmaceutical industry, and a small segment of highly educated workers.

If India can clean up its political act, it can be a global growth leader. But that is a big "if." At least for now, it puts India out of the running when it comes to picking this decade's likely economic winners.

The writer, a former Chief Economist of the World Bank and Chief Economic Adviser to the Government of India, is Professor of Economics at Cornell University and Nonresident Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution.

IN JEST THIS

Impressive athleticism of record holders



Melvin Durai

I'M NOT SURE HOW MANY GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS HAVE BEEN SET BY INDIANS OVER THE LAST 20 YEARS, BUT I'M SURE IT EXCEEDS THE NUMBER OF OLYMPIC MEDALS INDIA HAS WON

India has a population of almost 1.4 billion, so it shouldn't be surprising that some Indians are absolutely amazing. Their athletic prowess makes me shake my head and wonder why Abhinav Bindra is still India's only individual Olympic gold medalist.

The most recent Indian to amaze me is Laithangbam Vidyasagar Singh, a former weightlifter from Manipur. Singh set a Guinness World Record by doing 85 four-finger pushups in one minute.

Before watching a YouTube video of Singh's achievement, I would have found it almost impossible to believe. Not only did he complete 85 pushups in one minute, he accomplished this feat using just two fingers in each hand.

Eighty-five pushups in one minute? I can't do 85 pushups in one day. And forget about using my fingers. I can barely type with two fingers. Balancing my entire weight on them would produce only one result: a visit to the emergency room.

"I have been practicing this since I was in Class 6," Singh told the news agency ANI. "I focused on physical training and practiced pushups a lot."

It's worth noting that the previous world record was also held by an Indian. Dinesh Sharma did 70 four-finger pushups on April 1, 2018, in Uttarakhand.

Unfortunately, four-finger pushup is not yet an Olympic event; otherwise India would sweep all the medals in the event and Singh would join Abhinav Bindra in the pantheon of Indian Olympic heroes.

After Singh returns from the Olympics with a gold medal around his neck, millions of children will take up the sport of four-finger pushups, and India would set another Guinness World Record: most X-rays of broken fingers in one day.

I'm not sure how many Guinness World Records have been set by Indians over the last 20 years, but I'm sure it exceeds the number of Olympic medals India has won. Of

course, many of these records do not require the type of athleticism that an Olympian might possess. For example, in early 2018, a couple from the Puri district of Odisha, Jyotsna Mishra and Durga Charan Mishra, set a Guinness World Record for the longest journey by scheduled public transport in a single country.

Using only government-run buses and trains, the Mishras travelled 29,119 km across India in 42 days.

Durga, a retired central government employee, was 66 years old and his wife 57 when they set the record, which required not athletic ability but endurance and determination.

If my wife and I went on a 42-day journey on public transportation, we'd be a married couple for only the first half of it. For the second half, we'd need separate compartments on the train.

At least a few of India's world records involve the Rubik's Cube. Arumugam PK of Tamil Nadu set a record by solving 1,010 Rubik's Cubes while riding a bicycle, and Nikhil Soares of Mumbai set a record by solving 151 cubes while balancing on a caster board.

Another Tamil Nadu man, Ilayaram Sekar, solved only six Rubik's Cubes, but he did it underwater. He was underwater for two minutes and 17 seconds while solving the cubes, taking no breathing breaks as he set a world record.

It wouldn't surprise me to learn that Indians have also set these world records: most Rubik's Cubes solved while driving a car; most cubes solved while skydiving; most cubes solved while climbing the Mount Everest.

In the coming years, Laithangbam Vidyasagar Singh will set a world record for most Rubik's Cubes solved while doing four-finger pushups underwater. And the Mishras from Puri will set a record for most Rubik's Cubes solved while taking scheduled public transport in a single country.

Privacy policy

Sir, In a strongly worded letter to WhatsApp CEO Will Cathart the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology has asked WhatsApp to withdraw the recent changes in the privacy policy of the messaging app as the changes are unfair and unacceptable.

Intent is good

Sir, Apropos the news item, "FM's poll pill," published in Orissa POST, February 2, the Budget presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman can be described as the best possible in the current scenario.

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

OrissaPOST B-15, Rasulgari Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010





# Over half in Delhi may have had Covid, says latest survey

The WHO says at least 60 per cent to 70 per cent of a population needs to have immunity to break the chain of transmission



REUTERS

**New Delhi, Feb 2:** More than half of New Delhi's 20 million inhabitants may have been infected with the coronavirus, according to a government serological survey whose findings echoed earlier private-sector research.

India has reported 10.8 million COVID-19 infections, the most anywhere outside the United States. But Tuesday's survey, based on some 28,000 samples, suggests the true figure among its 1.35 billion population is dramatically higher and approaching herd immunity levels.

"In the fifth serosurvey done in the national capital of Delhi, (coronavirus) antibodies have been detected in 56.13% of the city's population," Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain said on Twitter after the report was published.

Separate tests done on more than 200,000 people across India by diagnostics company Thyrocare Technologies showed 55 per cent of the population may have already

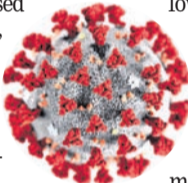
been infected, its chief told Reuters last week.

The World Health Organization says at least 60 per cent to 70 per cent of a population needs to have immunity to break the chain of transmission, though Indian officials have said a lower level can also slow the virus' spread.

Jain said New Delhi had largely beaten COVID, and India's daily cases and deaths fell to eight-month lows Tuesday. Overall it has reported 154,486 COVID deaths, giving the country a relatively low fatality rate.

One factor in that is the country's low average age, medical experts say. Two rich states with relatively older populations - Kerala with 3,459 cases and Maharashtra with 1,948 - now account for nearly 70 per cent of new infections.

India has vaccinated nearly 4 million people since mid-January, when it started what the government touts as the world's biggest immunisation campaign, which aims to inoculate over 300 million people by August.



## 'HERD IMMUNITY INFERENCE TO BE TAKEN WITH PINCH OF SALT'

**New Delhi:** Has Delhi achieved herd immunity against COVID-19? It is tempting to say yes given the dipping case count assessed in tandem with the latest serosurvey that shows 56.13 per cent of people in the city have antibodies against the infection but scientists are wary. The findings are helpful to assess the rate of spread of the disease but need to be taken with caveats, said immunologist Satish Devadas. "Even if the sample size is relatively small, it must be taken to account. However, the conclusions on herd immunity have to be taken with a pinch of salt," Devadas, a scientist with the Institute of Life Sciences in Odisha, told P.T.I. Other scientists also advise abundant caution. Though the results suggest the possibility that herd immunity may break the chain of COVID-19 transmission and the findings are insightful to get an idea of the community spread of the coronavirus in the city, several experts said the dangers may be far from over. Herd immunity occurs when a significantly large number of people in a community become immune to a contagious disease after recovering from infection, thereby curbing its spread across the population. Experts noted that it is not known what the number of recovered individuals need to be in a community to break the chain of viral transmission with herd immunity. "Our best bet is still in the 60-70 per cent range but this is based on theory, and not on specific information we have about duration of immune protection following infection," epidemiologist Ramanan Laxminarayan told P.T.I. Laxminarayan, founder and director of the Centre for Disease Dynamics, Economics & Policy (CDDEP) in the US, said many pockets within urban India may have already reached this threshold. However, it remains unclear if even herd immunity with a 60-70 per cent seropositivity in a population could still prevent a subsequent wave of COVID-19.

# Amid difficulties, locals extend helping hand to farmers

From providing electricity connection from their houses to giving access to toilets and washrooms, farmers say the good Samaritans have been helping them in these dire circumstances

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 2:** Many locals are coming forward and extending a helping hand to protesting farmers who are facing difficulties like power outage, unavailability of water and lack of sanitation at Singhu border, the epicentre of the ongoing farmers' protest against the three contentious farm laws.

Be it providing electricity connection from their houses or giving access to toilets and washrooms to the women protesters, farmers staying put at the Delhi-Haryana Highway say the good Samaritans have been helping them in these dire circumstances.

"We are facing power cuts at night since January 27. If not for the locals, we would have to do without electricity the whole night. They are the one helping us with lights and other things, that too without charging us anything," said Dharmendra Singh, from Punjab's Patiala district.

Initially worried that miscreants might take advantage of the dark at night, Singh thanked God for the help provided by the locals and team of volunteers who are working round-the-clock to maintain vigil against any untoward incident.

Another protester Avtar Singh, also from Patiala, echoed the same sentiments and said that the locals are standing with them in this "fight for rights".



Bharatiya Kisan Union spokesperson Rakesh Tikait having his meal at Ghazipur border during farmers' ongoing protest against the new farm laws, in New Delhi, Tuesday.

PTI PHOTO

"People in the nearby areas are helping our women in all possible ways. They are letting them use their washrooms and toilets. They know that the government is trying to suppress our movement and are supporting us wholeheartedly," said Singh, adding that they won't move an inch till their demands are met by the government.

He further stated that the lo-

calms have always been nice to them and their cause, and alleged that the attack that took place a few days ago at the site was not done by the locals but by goons sent by a political party.

January 30, a section of the highway at the Singhu border witnessed a clash between farmers and a group of people who claimed to be local residents.

Insufficient lighting, solid waste disposal, water stagnation and shortage of warm clothes have been listed down as primary concerns of the farmers as per a survey done by NGO Jan Swasthya Abhiyan in December as well. Many farmers have complained that the situation has worsened further after the Republic Day

**We are facing power cuts at night since January 27. If not for the locals, we would have to do without electricity the whole night. They are the one helping us with lights and other things, that too without charging us anything**

DHARMENDRA SINGH

incident, with heightened security measures and restrictions imposed for movement of people and vehicles ensuring that they don't have access to even the most basic necessities like food, water and electricity.

The suspension of the internet has only added to the problem as they feel cordoned off from the outer world - both virtually and physically.

"The government banned the internet and blocked the roads with concrete dividers so that the public would not get any information regarding the protest and no one would turn up here," complained Palwinder Singh, from Punjab's Amritsar.

Even on Monday, the Budget Day, most farmers at Singhu blamed the lack of Internet for not getting to keep a tab on the details of the budget and if it has anything for the agriculture sector.

The central government Monday extended the temporary suspension of Internet at Delhi's borders at Singhu, Ghazipur and Tikri till February 2. Earlier, the Internet services at Delhi borders had been suspended for 48 hours till 11 pm on January 31.

# Christians are not vote banks: Kerala archdiocese

Thrissur archdiocese is a powerful Catholic centre in Central Kerala and is known for supporting the UDF and at times the LDF

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Thiruvananthapuram, Feb 2:** 'Catholicasabha', the mouthpiece of Thrissur archdiocese has lashed out at the ruling LDF and opposition UDF and said that the Christian community need not be taken for granted, and that it is not a vote bank for any of the fronts.

Thrissur archdiocese is a powerful Catholic centre in Central Kerala and is known for supporting the UDF and at times the LDF.

The mouthpiece also indirectly came out against the local body alliance which the Congress had entered into with the Jamaat-Islami-led Welfare Party through the good offices of Muslim League, and said that those who are entering into alliances with terror groups need not expect the support of the Christian community.

The mouthpiece also lashed out against the CPI(M) state secretary A. Vijayaraghavan for attacking the Muslim League as a communal outfit and said that such utterances would lead to a communal divide in the state which should not have come from a leader of a political party ruling the state.

The Catholicasabha also said the recent meeting of the Cardinals of the Catholic church with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi was a very positive one and



that the Prime minister had listened to all the woes aired by the Church.

Bishop Geevarghese Mar Coorilos of the powerful Jacobite church has also come out against Vijayaraghavan's statement against the Indian Union Muslim League and said that it was an "irresponsible" statement. In a social media post the Bishop said, "The Indian Union Muslim League is not a communal party, it has always upheld a secular stand. Taking refuge in communal tendencies for electoral gains is not appropriate for progressive political outfits."

The Jacobite church has been traditional supporters of the CPI(M) and the LDF.

Vijayaraghavan had on Monday written an article in "Deshabhimani", the CPI(M) mouth-

piece stating that the Muslim League has initiated communal polarisation in the state on the reservation for forward communities in the government departments. He had also said that this would fan up the Hindu communalism under the aegis of the Sangh parivar.

State BJP chief K. Surendran while speaking to IANS said, "The voting of the Christian community will be a turning point in the coming Assembly elections of 2021. The statements of various denominations of the Christian leadership is a clear message in that line. The Honourable Prime Minister had met various sections of Christian communities and gave a patient hearing to their issues and this has provided a lot of hope for the Christians."

# Kerala HC quashes govt order sanctioning 2-day leave for protesting staff

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kochi, Feb 2:** The Kerala High Court Tuesday quashed a state government order, sanctioning two days leave to its employees, including teachers, who participated in a nationwide strike in January 2019, holding that it was 'illegal' and 'arbitrary'.

A division bench, comprising Chief Justice S Manikumar and Justice Shaji P Chaly quashed the G.O. of January 31, 2019 on a petition by G Balagopalan, a retired police officer, who submitted that the government had committed "serious discrimination" by bringing out the order.

While those in the unorganised sector are forced to give up their earnings whether they support the strike or not, those in government service have the option to sign the attendance register and to boycott the call for general strike, he said.

"The order permitting casual leave for the days of absence by striking against the policies of the central government amounts to the state government aiding and assisting its employees to protest against the centre. Thus state government has failed to protect its obligation in the federal structure as



enshrined in the Constitution," the petitioner submitted.

Allowing the petition, the bench held that the order by the Principal Secretary, Department of General Administration, was "illegal, arbitrary, contrary to statutory provisions and therefore liable to be interfered with by this court under Art 226 of the Constitution of India".

Keeping in mind the provisions of law, circulars/G.Os, the Principal Secretary and Heads of Departments were directed by the court to scrutinise the attendance registers and take action in accordance with law within two months.

The bench held that though the senior government pleader relied on a June 17, 2011 order of granting similar relief, it was not impressed "since an illegality cannot be permitted to breed by another illegality".

# Delhi court grants bail to freelance journalist

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 2:** A Delhi court Tuesday granted bail to freelance journalist Mandeep Punia who was arrested by Delhi Police from farmers' protest site at Singhu border.

The complainant, victims and witnesses were police personnel only, "hence, there is no possibility that accused/ applicant can able to influence any of the police officials", Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Satvir Singh Lamba said while granting the bail.

Punia was arrested by police on Sunday in an FIR registered under various sections including 186 (Obstructing public servant in discharge of public functions), 353 (Assault or criminal force to deter public servant from discharge of his duty) and 332 (Voluntarily causing hurt to deter public servant from his duty) of IPC. The judge also noted in the order that the alleged scuffle incident of case was of around 6.30 PM, "however, the present FIR was registered at around 1.21 AM on the next day".

He further said, "Admittedly, the



accused is a freelance journalist. Moreso, no recovery is to be effected from the accused person and keeping the accused further in Judicial Custody would not serve any cogent purpose." He said it was well settled legal principle of law that "bail is a rule and jail is an exception". "Hence, considering the totality of facts and circumstances of the present case, submissions on behalf of both the parties as well as keeping in view the period of detention of the accused in judicial custody, he is admitted to bail on furnishing bail bond in a sum of Rs 25,000 along with one sound surety in the like amount," the judge said.

The court also imposed various conditions on the accused, including that he will not leave the country without its prior permission.

# Kerala's first human milk bank to come up Feb 5

THOUGH THE CONCEPT HAD COME TO INDIA 32 YEARS BACK, THE SOUTHERN STATE DID NOT HAVE A MILK BANK TILL NOW

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kochi, Feb 2:** Kerala's first Human Milk Bank (HMB), a state-of-art facility will be opened at the Ernakulam general hospital here Friday by state Health Minister KK Shailaja.

Set up with the support of the Rotary Club of Cochin Global, the milk bank is to ensure breast milk for new born babies, who are not being breastfed by their own mothers who may be sick, deceased or due to insufficient production of breast milk, in the hospital.

Although approximately 3600 babies are born in the general hospital a year, 600 to 1,000 sick babies are admitted into the NICU.

"Providing the low birth-weight premature babies, infants whose mothers are unable to provide sufficient milk and babies separated from mothers due to many reasons

with the pasteurized breast milk from the bank will reduce the risk of infections and boost their immunity," said Dr Paul PG of Rotary Cochin Global.

Though the concept had come to India 32 years back, Kerala did not have a milk bank till now. This is where Rotary took the lead to bring the project to the state with two such breast milk banks - one at Ernakulam and the other at Jubilee Medical Mission Hospital at Thrissur.

All safety protocols and procedures for collecting, preserving and providing it to needy children will be ensured as per government guidelines.

The collected milk can be stored up to six months safely in the bank, if needed, before it is given to an infant.

In the beginning, the milk will be provided free of cost to only the



babies admitted in the neonatal intensive care unit of the hospital, officials said.

Later on, a network of hospitals for multiple collection and safe dis-

tribution points will be planned. The donors will be the mothers from the hospital who have delivered babies there and will have all their health statistics available at

the hospital. "The mothers with excess milk will be encouraged to participate in the noble cause to save the life of other new born babies," he said.

The human milk bank, which consists of a pasteurization unit, refrigerators, deep freezers, RO plant, sterilizing equipment and computers, was set up at a cost of Rs 35 lakh. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the state health department and Rotary Club of Cochin Global last year for setting up the bank.

However, the project got delayed following the outbreak of COVID-19. The Indian Medical Association (IMA) together with the Indian Association of Pediatricians (IAP) has provided a trained nursing staff for operating the milk bank at the General Hospital.



# national

## of the day quote

They (BJP) had promised to reopen all the seven closed tea gardens before the Lok Sabha elections, but not a single one has resumed operations



MAMATA BANERJEE | WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER

The Shiv Sena can bend in any direction. The Sena is a direction-less party that took a contradictory stand in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha on the three farm laws



DEVENDRA FADNIS | SENIOR BJP LEADER

If you want good governance from me, I will also require good journalism from you



BIPAL KUMAR DEB | TRIPURA CHIEF MINISTER

## SHORT TAKES

### 340 died cleaning sewers in 5 yrs

New Delhi: A total of 340 people have died while cleaning sewers in the last five years, the Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry said Tuesday. Responding to a question in the Lok Sabha, Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment Ramdas Athawale shared data on the number of such deaths reported by states and UTs in the last five years. According to the data, the highest number of deaths has been reported from Uttar Pradesh at 52 followed by Tamil Nadu at 43, Delhi at 36, Maharashtra at 34 and Gujarat and Haryana each at 31.

### Missing boy found dead near school

Varanasi: The body of a nine-year-old boy, who had been missing since January 28, was found dumped behind a school building in Varanasi. Vishal's body was found Monday evening at Paigambarpur village under the Sarnath police circle. On Sunday, the victim's family had received a letter which said that Vishal would be killed if a ₹50,000 ransom was not paid within an hour. DIG Amit Pathak said that after getting the letter, Vishal's father Manjay Kumar had gone to Chaubeypur area, as directed by the kidnappers, while a sub-inspector also followed him.

### IPS officer held for corruption

Jaipur: The Rajasthan Anti-Corruption Bureau arrested an IPS officer on corruption charges in Jaipur Tuesday, a top official said. IPS officer Manish Agarwal's name had cropped up in a case in which a petrol pump owner, Neeraj Meena, was arrested for allegedly demanding money from a construction firm on the officer's behalf. A 2010-batch IPS officer, Agarwal is currently posted as the commandant of the State Disaster Response Force, Jaipur. Earlier, he served as the Dausa SP.

### 2 injured in acid attack in Kolkata

Kolkata: Two persons, including a woman, have sustained critical burn injuries when a youth allegedly threw acid on them at Ultadanga area here, police said Tuesday. The suspect, with whom the woman had a relationship before her marriage a few years back, had been trying to befriend her since the coronavirus lockdown, but she was avoiding him. It appears that she was attacked for this reason, the officer said.



It is binding on all of us to see that the House functions properly; members follow rules and regulations, maintain discipline and dignity and also participate in debates in a meaningful manner

M VENKAIAH NAIDU | RAJYA SABHA CHAIRMAN

## HC CONTINUES INTERIM PROTECTION TO KANGANA

The Bombay High Court Tuesday continued an interim order passed by a lower court restraining the Mumbai civic body from taking action against alleged irregularities at actor Kangana Ranaut's flats here till February 5



# CAA rules are under preparation: MHA tells LS

Press Trust of India New Delhi, Feb 2: The rules under the contentious Citizenship (Amendment) Act, which was enacted over a year ago, are under preparation, the Lok Sabha was informed Tuesday.

Union Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai said the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), 2019 was notified December 12, 2019 and it came into force with effect from January 10, 2020.

"The Rules under The Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 are under preparation. The Committees on Subordinate Legislation, Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha have granted extension of time up to April 9 and July 9, respectively to frame these rules under the CAA," he said in a written reply.

The CAA, which facilitates granting of Indian citizenship to persecuted non-Muslim minorities -- Hindu, Sikh, Jain, Buddhist, Parsi and Christian -- of Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan, was passed by Parliament in December



Union Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai said the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), 2019 was notified December 12, 2019 and it came into force with effect from January 10, 2020

The Manual on Parliamentary Work states that "statutory rules, regulations and by-laws will be framed within a period of six months from the date on which the relevant statute came into force"

2019, triggering protests in different parts of the country. The President had given his assent to the legislation December 12, 2019. Under the Act, people from these communities who had come to India till December 31, 2014 due to religious persecution in the three countries will not be treated as il-

legal immigrants but given Indian citizenship. After the CAA was passed by Parliament, widespread protests were witnessed in the country. Those opposing the CAA contend that it discriminates on the basis of religion and violates the Constitution. They also allege that the CAA along with the National

Register of Citizens is intended to target the Muslim community in India.

However, Union Home Minister Amit Shah had dismissed the allegations and described the protests against the CAA as "mostly political". He had asserted that no Indian would lose citizenship due to the Act.

Clashes between pro and anti-CAA groups had spiralled into communal riots in Northeast Delhi last year which had left at least 53 people dead and around 200 injured.

The Manual on Parliamentary Work states that "statutory rules, regulations and by-laws will be framed within a period of six months from the date on which the relevant statute came into force".

It also states that in case the ministries and departments are not able to frame the rules within the prescribed period of six months, "they should seek extension of time from the Committee on Subordinate Legislation stating reasons for such extension", which cannot be more than for a period of three months at a time.

# Abide by commitment, India tells Sri Lanka



REUTERS

New Delhi, Feb 2: India said Tuesday it expected Sri Lanka to honour its agreement to allow it to operate a major port terminal following Colombo's decision to pull out of the deal.

The East terminal of Colombo port will be 100% owned and operated by the state-owned Sri Lanka Port Authority (SLPA), minutes of a Cabinet meeting released Tuesday said.

Sri Lanka had previously said the port would be 49% operated by India and Japan, with SLPA retaining the majority stake.

India and Japan would instead be invited to develop the nearby West terminal on a public-private partnership basis, the minutes said, without elaborating.

The decision comes less than a month after a visit by Indian Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar to Colombo to shore up support for the 2019 deal, which also involved Japan and India's Adani Group.

"The commitment of the Government of Sri Lanka... has

been conveyed several times in the recent past, including at the leadership level," a spokesman for India's embassy in Colombo said in an emailed statement Tuesday.

"Sri Lanka's Cabinet also took a decision three months ago to implement the project with foreign investors. All sides should continue to abide by the existing understandings and commitment."

Spokesmen for Adani, the Japanese embassy in Colombo and Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Sri Lanka is key in the battle for influence in South Asia between traditional power India and China, which has been making increasing inroads there.

The island nation is a crucial staging post for much of the cargo coming in and out of India, and China's growing influence has alarmed New Delhi.

Beijing took over Hambantota port in the south of the country in 2016 after Sri Lanka failed to keep up with debt repayments, and is involved in the construction and operation of a neighbouring port terminal in Colombo, as well as other critical infrastructure.

# Another Hindi film personality arrested

AGENCIES

Mumbai, Feb 2: Taking ahead the investigation into the Hindi film industry drugs mafia links angle in the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput, the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) Tuesday grilled an assistant director who was a friend the late actor.

The NCB summoned Rishikesh Pawar - whose name had first figured during the investigations in September 2020 for allegedly acting as a drug conduit.

The agency sleuths raided Pawar's residence and seized some gadgets. Later, he was arrested by the NCB for his alleged role in the drugs nexus.

On May 1, 2020, Showik Chakraborty - brother of actress Rhea Chakraborty who was Sushant's girlfriend - had asked the actor's house help Dipesh Sawant to receive a drug delivery of 50 gms of 'charas', from a person named Dwayne, which was given the next day.

The next month, Sawant received another delivery of 100 gms of 'ganja' for which he was later among the people arrested. Siblings Rhea and Showik were nabbed last year and they are currently out on bail.

On June 14, 2020, Sushant, 34, was found hanging at his duplex rented flat in a posh building in

Bandra, triggering a massive furore in Hindi film industry and political circles.

While his death probe was taken over from Mumbai Police by the Central Bureau of Investigation, the Enforcement Directorate and NCB are investigating the financial and narcotics angles.

Top ministers and leaders of the ruling Maha Vikas Aghadi - Shiv Sena, Nationalist Congress Party, and Congress have been repeatedly demanding that the CBI should reveal the findings of the Sushant death probe in the public interest.

While there is no word from the CBI and the ED on their respective probes, the NCB has been carrying out a series of raids.

## MERRY MAKING



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee dances during a mass marriage ceremony of tribals at Falakata in Alipurduar, Tuesday

# UK variant of COVID-19 has mutated again: Report

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 2: The UK variant of deadly novel coronavirus has mutated again, a report in BBC News quoted scientists as saying. According to the report, the scientists have observed new genetic changes in the COVID-19 variant, which was already said to be more contagious and "possibly more deadly".

The latest tests have shown a mutation, called E484K. This mutation has already been seen in the South Africa and Brazil variants of the COVID-19 virus.

The experts, BBC spoke to, said that while the mutation may



effect vaccine effectiveness, the current ones in use should still work. Experts have only found a handful of cases of the UK variant with the E484K mutation, the report said. It does not mean that this mutation is present in all versions of this variant.

It is common for viruses to mutate. As they make new copies of themselves, viruses mutate to spread and thrive.

Speaking to BBC, Dr Julian Tang, a virus expert at the University of Leicester, said that if the mutated versions of COVID-19 continue to spread across the globe, they could merge to make a new version of the virus.

Scientists have found that the mutation, E484K, found in South African, Brazilian and now UK variant, may help the virus evade parts of the immune system called antibodies.

However, early results from Moderna suggest its vaccine still effective against variants with this mutation, although the immune response may not be as strong or prolonged.

# Twitter unblocks high-profile accounts in India

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 2: Twitter has restored several accounts of high-profile celebrities and organisations, including actor Sushant Singh, Caravan magazine, Kisan Ekta Morcha, Tractor2twitr and several other politicians, farmer leaders, writers and activists that were blocked for several hours at the



hest of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) for spreading misinformation during the farmers' protests.

Twitter said that during the meeting with the concerned officials, the company conveyed that the content is free speech and newsworthy. "Protecting public conversation and transparency is fundamental to the work we do at Twitter, the content has been unblocked," the company said late Monday. "Is this tweet visible to Indian accounts?" tweeted Kisan

Ekta Morcha, to understand if the account was unblocked.

The IT ministry and law enforcement agencies had last week ordered Twitter to block these tweets and accounts under Section 69A of the Information Technology Act.

According to Twitter, the company blocked these accounts in the interim in response to a valid legal request from MeitY. A Twitter spokesper-

son said that many countries have laws that may apply to tweets and/or Twitter account content.

"In our continuing effort to make our services available to people everywhere, if we receive a properly scoped request from an authorised entity, it may be necessary to withhold access to certain content in a particular country from time to time," the micro-blogging platform said.

# Oxford names 'Aatmanirbharta' as Hindi word of the year for 2020

THE OXFORD HINDI WORD OF THE YEAR IS A WORD OR EXPRESSION THAT IS CHOSEN TO REFLECT THE ETHOS, MOOD OR PREOCCUPATIONS OF THE PASSING YEAR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 2: 'Aatmanirbharta' implying self-reliance has been named by Oxford Languages as its Hindi word of the year 2020 as it "validated the day-to-day achievements of the countless Indians who dealt with and survived the perils of a pandemic".

The word was chosen by an advisory panel of language experts Kritika Agrawal, Poonam Nigam Sahay and Imogen Foxell. The Oxford Hindi word of the

year is a word or expression that is chosen to reflect the ethos, mood, or preoccupations of the passing year, and have lasting potential as a term of cultural significance.

In a statement, Oxford Languages said in the early months of the pandemic when Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced India's COVID-19 recovery package, he emphasised the need to become self-reliant as a country, as an economy, as a society and as individuals, in a bid to navigate the perils of the pandemic.



There was a massive increase in the usage of 'Aatmanirbharta' following the Prime Minister's address, highlighting its increased prominence as a phrase and concept in the public lexicon of India, it

said. One of the standout successes of the entire 'Aatmanirbhar' Bharat or self-reliant India campaign is the large-scale manufacturing of COVID-19 vaccine in India. "In an unprecedented year, 'aatmanir-

bharta' found resonance with a wide cross-section of people as it is seen to be an answer to the revival of a COVID-impacted economy," said Oxford University Press India managing director Sivaramakrishnan Venkateswaran.

Agrawal said amid a number of interesting and topical entries received, 'aatmanirbharta' stood out because it validated the day-to-day achievements of the countless Indians who dealt with and survived the perils of a pandemic.

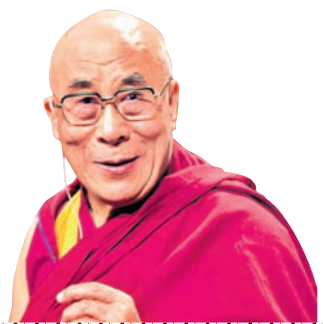
This word "gives a voice to the

strength displayed by young and old alike in dealing with extended periods of isolation, lack of familial support, loss of livelihoods and other difficulties through sheer determination and self-reliance", she said.

Previous Hindi words of the year are Aadhaar (2017), Nari Shakti (2018) and Samvidhaan (2019).

While the Hindi word of the year has great resonance for the year in which it was chosen, it doesn't mean that the word will automatically go into any Oxford dictionaries.





**“We tend to think that happiness comes from money and power, without acknowledging the role of the mind or that the key to happiness is inner peace. We all want to live a happy life and to do so is our right”**  
DALAI LAMA | BUDDHIST SPIRITUAL HEAD

## CAGES SET UP IN AHMEDABAD LOCALITY AMID FEAR OF LEOPARDS

A day after a leopard was found dead on the outskirts of Gujarat's Ahmedabad city, the forest department has set up cages in Vastral locality of the city amid fear of the presence of leopards, an official said Tuesday



## of the day quote

Three days have passed, but no action has been taken against the leaders of Elgar Parishad till now, who insulted the Hindu religion and the Hindu society

RAM KADAM | MAHARASHTRA BJP MLA

The Budget manifests the central government's persistent efforts to sideline non-BJP states like ours, as well as its anti-federal mindset

AMARINDER SINGH | PUNJAB CHIEF MINISTER

Some people told me about the points made for the agriculture sector, but that is something, we are not worried about at the moment

RAKESH TIKAIT | FARMERS' LEADER

# 70 'missing' persons found in Delhi jails: Punjab CM



The Chief Minister said that as per the information received five persons from Punjab were still missing

A 70-member lawyers' team deputed to help out farmers with free legal aid, was reaching out to those in prison

The Delhi Police Monday said that no illegal detention has been done in the farmers' agitation and protest, and appealed people not to fall prey to rumours

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Chandigarh, Feb 2:** Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh Tuesday said a total of 89 persons from the state were reported missing since the Republic Day violence in the national capital. Of these, 70 were found in Delhi jails, 14 were traced at other places and five were still missing, he said.

The Chief Minister said this during an all-party meeting here. He said that as per the information received five persons from Punjab were still missing. All efforts were being made to trace them, he added.

Earlier, he had announced helpline number '112' for citizens to make complaints in this regard.

The 70-member lawyers' team of Advocate General Atul Nanda, de-

puted to help out farmers with free legal aid, were reaching out to those in prison and those facing cases filed against them by the Delhi Police, said Amarinder Singh.

The Chief Minister asserted that his government was extending all possible help to the agitating farmers, camping out at Delhi's borders for over two months now, and also to their families back home.

No effort would be spared to ensure the safe return of all the farmers to their homes in Punjab, he added.

The Chief Minister also disclosed that 170 cases registered against farmers during agitations in Punjab were being withdrawn by his government.

Meanwhile, amid reports of Delhi Police filing FIRs against many

farmers and their leaders, the Congress legal department headed by Vivek Tankha Tuesday formed teams to assist them for any legal help.

A resolution passed by the legal department says, "Delegations of legal department from Punjab, Haryana and Delhi will be visiting farmer leaders at protest-sites at borders of Delhi to apprise them of legal services already taken to help farmers and journalists regarding relief and redressal."

The department will display in public a list of lawyers in each district of the four states who will visit jails and find out about the persons missing and also visit police stations.

The Delhi Police Monday said that no illegal detention has been

done in the farmers' agitation and protest, and appealed people not to fall prey for rumours.

"We have registered a total of 44 cases in the farmers' protest so far and a total of 122 people have been arrested. Apart from those arrested, no one has been detained in the police stations. The records of all those who have been arrested is also available on Delhi Police website," said Eish Singhal, PRO, Delhi Police.

The Delhi Police also said that the kin of those arrested can also seek information from the concerned police stations.

"We have put the information on our website to facilitate the people. We would request people not to give heed to any rumours," the officer added.

# RSS-affiliates ask Centre to reassess divestment decision

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Feb 2:** The Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) and Swadeshi Jagran Manch (SJM), which work in the economic sector affiliated with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), have reacted cautiously to the General Budget presented by the Modi government.

Decisions such as boosting the economy by spending huge sum of money on basic resources in the country have been appreciated by the Sangh organisations, while raising concerns about the government's decision to increase foreign direct investment (FDI) and privatisation and disinvestment of public sector companies. The Sangh organisations demanded the government introspect over this decision.

BMS general secretary Vinay Kumar Sinha has said, "Decisions like disinvestment of two public sector banks and an insurance company would reduce the attraction towards a scheme like the 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat'. In the National Executive Council meeting to be held in Chennai from February 12 to 14, the BMS would decide the future strategy on this budget presented by the Central government."

The BMS has said special schemes for the tea gardens of West

Bengal and Assam would benefit the migrant workers there. Many decisions taken by the central government are good but linking disinvestment and FDI with a beautiful idea like 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' is disappointing. This would affect the interests of employees, it said.

Hiking the FDI limit from 49 per cent to 74 per cent by amending the Insurance Act would increase dependency on foreign countries. The Central government should consider this decision, the BMS added.

**Sangh organisations have welcomed measures undertaken to boost economy, but expressed concerns over increased FDI in insurance sector**

On the other hand, Ashwani Mahajan, the national co-convenor of SJM, told this newsagency, "The central government needs to reconsider the decision of disinvestment of Bharat Petroleum

Corporation Limited (BPCL), Air India, Shipping Corporation of India, Container Corporation of India, Pawan Hans Limited, BEML and others. The announcements of privatisation of public sector banks and insurance companies are worrisome. The performance of these companies needs to be improved rather than them being privatised. Increasing FDI will establish foreign dominance over the insurance and economic sector of the country; this cannot be called a far-reaching step."



## SHORT TAKES

### Corporator shot dead in UP

**Jaunpur (Uttar Pradesh):** A corporator was shot dead by unidentified assailants in Jaunpur, police said Tuesday. The incident took place late on Monday night and the assailants fled in the dark. Circle Officer (City) Jitendra Dube said, "Bala Yadav, 50, was involved in plotting of land because of which he had rivalry with some people. This could be the reason behind the murder." Senior police officials rushed to the spot on getting the information about the incident and the body was sent for post mortem examination, the Circle Officer added.

### Man kills wife with tap head

**Baghpat (Uttar Pradesh):** A man, who allegedly beat his wife to death with the head of a tap, has been arrested. The incident was reported from the Wazidpur village in Baghpat district. The victim, identified as Neelam, was bludgeoned to death using the handle of a tap by her husband Dheeraj. Neelam had married Dheeraj five years ago. According to reports, the couple was involved in an argument over some domestic issue Monday when Dheeraj allegedly removed a tap and used it to beat his wife. The victim died on the spot.

### Two UP PAC personnel killed

**Bulandshahr:** Two personnel of the Uttar Pradesh Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) were killed Tuesday following the collision of two trucks in Bulandshahr's Sikandrabad area. Meanwhile, several PAC jawans have also been injured in the accident. They have been taken to the hospitals for treatment. The bodies of the two victims have been sent for post-mortem. According to reports, the two deceased were posted in 38 Battalion Aligarh and were residents of Ghaziabad.

### Another Trinamool MLA exits

**Kolkata:** Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress (TMC) has lost another MLA. This time, it is two-time legislator from Diamond Harbour, Dipak Halder, who has walked out. His decision, which he said was due to "not being allowed to work", immediately fueled speculation of a possible switchover to the BJP, which in recent months has welcomed a swarm of leaders from rival parties in West Bengal, especially from the ruling one.

# Nitish Kumar likely to expand Cabinet soon

AGENCIES

**Patna, Feb 2:** The Bihar Cabinet is likely to be expanded in the next few days even as leaders of BJP state unit have met with party's national president JP Nadda in Delhi, sources said Tuesday.



Deputy Chief Minister Tarkishore Prasad confirmed that the Cabinet expansion would be done very soon.

The sources said that the Bihar leaders forwarded the probable names for inclusion in the Cabinet to Nadda Monday. Deputy Chief Ministers Tarkishore Prasad and Renu Devi, Bihar BJP chief Sanjay Jaiswal and Rajya Sabha member Sushil Kumar Modi were present at the meeting. The party wants to expand its popularity among all sections of society and hence wishes

that ministerial berths be given on social and regional considerations.

The sources said that the list of probable ministers to be appointed in the BJP quota would be sent to Chief Minister Nitish Kumar in a day or two. Leaders like

Shahnawaj Hussein, Rana Randhir Singh, Sanjay Singh, Nitin Navin, Neeraj Kumar Babloo, MLC Samrat Chaudhary, Sanjiv Chaurasia, Sanjay Sarawgi,

Krishna Kumar Rishi, Bhagirathi Devi, and Pramod Kumar are front runners for ministerial berths, the sources added. A BJP leader said that there was a consensus in the meeting that all sections of society should get equal representation in the Council of Ministers and that the party wanted to give both the experienced and young people ministerial berths.

## COMMUNITY MEAL



Women prepare meals at a site of a protest against the farm laws in New Delhi

REUTERS PHOTO

## 8 ARRESTED FOR RAPING, TRAFFICKING MINOR GIRL

AGENCIES

**Chikkamagaluru, Feb 2:** Eight persons have been arrested for the rape, sexual abuse and trafficking of a 15-year-old girl for over five months in Karnakta's Chikkamagaluru district. Aunt of the rape survivor is among the eight arrested, police said.

A first information report was registered January 30 at the Sringeri police station in Chikkamagaluru after a complaint by the district child welfare committee chairman accused more than 17 people of rape and sexual abuse of the 15-year-old girl.

Additional SP Sriti said, "A 15-year-old girl was raped and sexually abused by 17 men for five months. The victim's aunt is the main accused in this case."

The police official said the rape survivor was working in a stone crushing unit when she was acquainted with one Girish, a bus driver, who raped and sexually abused her.

"He [Girish] then gave her number to one Small Abhi who also raped the minor girl. Abhi took photos, made videos, and used these to blackmail the minor. Later, his friends also raped the girl," the police said.

Police said the rape survivor used to live with her aunt after her mother died three years ago. The aunt of the 15-year-old was arrested as she had known about the repeated sexual abuse.

The accused have been booked under Sections 201, 370 (trafficking), 376 (3), 376 (n) of the Indian Penal Code.

They have also been booked under Sections of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, Immoral Traffic Prevention Act and Child Labour Amendment Act, and the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children Act).

# Aero India takes off today with buzz around 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat'

AS MANY AS 601 EXHIBITORS - 523 INDIAN AND 78 FOREIGN - AND 14 COUNTRIES HAVE CONFIRMED PARTICIPATION

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Bangalore, Feb 2:** The country's premier aerospace and defence exhibition, Aero India 2021 takes off here Wednesday amidst the COVID-19 pandemic with buzz around 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan' and 'Make in India' push.

With a combination of both physical and virtual exhibition, the 13th edition of the biennial international event at Air Force Station Yelahanka will be the world's first hybrid aerospace show, officials said.

A negative COVID-19 RT-PCR test report (dated January 31, 9 am or later) is a must to attend the three-day event, where each day only 3,000 visitors will be allowed at the flight display venue in view of the pandemic.

As many as 601 exhibitors - 523



Indian and 78 foreign - and 14 countries have confirmed participation, they said.

Companies are showcasing their capabilities, latest technologies, so-

lutions, products and services at the show.

Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) will exhibit its latest defence tech-

nologies and demonstrate many systems.

"We will continue to support 'Make-in-India' policy and 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat Mission' of the Indian government, to promote indigenous production, knowledge transfer and global industrial cooperation, to facilitate Indian export of high-end defence technology," said Eli Hefets, Corporate Regional Director, India, Rafael Advanced Defense Systems Ltd.

Director and Industry Lead for Aerospace & Defense in India, Dassault Systemes, Ravikiran Potthukuchi said the aerospace & defence sector in India is at an inflection point, given the large scale modernisation and indigenisation programmes being undertaken by the government.

Alex Zino, Executive Vice President Business Development

& Future Programmes (Defence), Rolls-Royce said, "We recognise that India's defence requirements are evolving, making indigenous development of modern defence hardware and technology a top priority for the Indian government."

"Aligned with the Indian government's Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan and the Make in India initiative, we look forward to participating in Aero India 2021 and reinforcing our commitment to supporting the growth of an indigenous defence manufacturing ecosystem while continuing to deliver our best capabilities to support the Indian MoD and Services," said William (Bill) Blair, vice president and chief executive, Lockheed Martin India.

Among the key attractions will be flight display by 'Surya Kiran' aircraft and 'Sarang' helicopters.





Our vaccine supply schedule has not been finalized even now  
TARO KONO | JAPAN CABINET MINISTER

## DENTAL CARE

If your gums bleed, make sure to improve your intake of vitamin C to reverse the problem, a new study suggests



## of the day quote

All actions by the international community should contribute to Myanmar's political-social stability and peace and reconciliation in Myanmar so as to avoid escalation of tensions, complication of matters



We certainly would have concern about the desecration of monuments of Mahatma Gandhi in a city in California



Nature nurtures and nourishes us, so we will think of assets as durable entities that not only have use value, but may also have intrinsic worth



## SHORT TAKES

### Moscow court orders Navalny to prison

Moscow: A Moscow court Tuesday ordered Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny to prison on charges that he violated the terms of his probation while he was recuperating in Germany from nerve-agent poisoning. Navalny, who is the most prominent critic of President Vladimir Putin, had earlier denounced the proceedings as a vain attempt by the Kremlin to scare millions of Russians into submission. The prison sentence stems from a 2014 embezzlement conviction that he has rejected as fabricated.

### Pak launches vaccination drive

Islamabad: Pakistan Tuesday launched its coronavirus vaccination campaign, with a doctor here becoming the first person in the country to be vaccinated for COVID-19. Prime Minister Imran Khan oversaw the start of the campaign. Khan said the vaccine would be distributed evenly among all provinces.

### Tom Moore dies

London: Capt Tom Moore, the World War II veteran who walked into the hearts of a nation in lockdown as he shuffled up and down his garden to raise money for healthcare workers, has died after testing positive for COVID-19. He was 100. His family announced Moore's death Tuesday in a tweet. Donations poured in from across Britain and as far away as the United States and Japan, raising some 33 million pounds (\$40 million).

### Italy eases curbs

Rome: Coronavirus restrictions has been eased in most of Italy's 20 regions after the country witnessed continued improvement in the pandemic situation. Only Sicily, Sardinia, Apulia, Umbria, and the autonomous province of Bolzano remained in the so-called "orange zone" -- meaning they were still facing a medium risk of the contagion.

### 3 terrorists killed

Islamabad: The Pakistan Army said Tuesday that three terrorists were killed after they tried to infiltrate into the country's northwestern region. In a statement, the Army's Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) media wing said security forces Monday night conducted an intelligence-based operation to thwart an infiltration attempt by terrorists close to the Pakistan-Afghanistan border in the Lower Dir district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

# Pak SC orders release of main accused in Pearl murder case

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Islamabad, Feb 2: The Supreme Court of Pakistan on Tuesday ordered immediate release of Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh, the prime accused in the murder of American journalist Daniel Pearl, from his death cell, notifying authorities to move him to a government rest house within two days.

The Supreme Court was hearing a petition filed by the Sindh provincial government, appealing against the Sindh High Court (SHC) decision of December 24 to release the prime accused Omar Saeed Sheikh. As per the court's order, authorities have been told to keep Sheikh at a better location in the jail in an open room for two days before being transferred to the government rest house.

The court has also ordered to ensure deployment of security around the rest house. However, the court has not allowed Sheikh to have access to a mobile phone or internet facility. The court has allowed the family of Sheikh to stay with him at the rest house from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. "Sheikh should not have access to the outside world from the rest house.

He should be allowed to spend the 'Kashmir Day' with his family members", read the court's order. The decision came after Pakistan's top court again rejected the government's appeal to suspend the SHC's



verdict on the acquittal of the accused, stating that the federal government could file an appeal against the SHC's decision.

"How can the federal government object to the decision of the Sindh High Court?" questioned the Sindh Advocate General. However, the judges maintained "Ahmed Omar Sheikh and other detainees cannot be called as accused".

The case of Daniel Pearl's murder has become a testing assessment for Pakistan as the United States has raised serious reservations on the court's decision to acquit the suspects and later to retain the SHC's decision by Pakistan's top court.

The US has already shared its serious concerns over the legal proceedings in the case with Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi through a telephone conversation.

The US has also stated that it is ready to bring Sheikh to the US and put him to trial in the US courts, hinting at its distrust over the legal proceedings of the case in Pakistan. Qureshi, however, has maintained that the case is being taken forward as per the legal justice system of Pakistan. Analysts on the other hand, have criticised the Pakistan government for not rejecting the US' call of extradition of the accused from Pakistan and the trial to be held in US courts. "How can the US question the legal system of Pakistan and the decisions being taken by the top court? Why should Sheikh be sent to the US for trial? Pakistan has its own law of the land and it should tell the US in clear words that the country's legal system will take its course," said security and defence analyst Lt General Retd Amjad Shoaib.

## 2 FBI agents shot dead in the US while serving warrant

AGENCIES

Sunrise (US), Feb 2: The FBI has confirmed that two of its agents were killed and three were wounded while serving a federal search warrant in a case involving violent crimes against children. The suspect also is dead, the FBI said.

Law enforcement agencies swarmed the neighbourhood in the Fort Lauderdale suburb of Sunrise after the shooting. The suspect reportedly remained barricaded inside the home.

Earlier this agency had reported that several FBI agents were shot Tuesday morning. They had gone to serve a warrant in a child exploitation case in South Florida, authorities said.

A law enforcement official told this agency that multiple FBI agents were shot while serving the warrant. However, the extent of their injuries was not immediately known. A large contingent of officers gathered outside a Fort Lauderdale hospital where victims were taken, according to television video. The Sunrise Police Department tweeted about the heavy police presence and the closure of surrounding roads. The shooting happened around 6.00am in a middle-class neighbourhood of single family homes, duplexes and apartment buildings. Hours later, Sunrise Police urged residents of Water Terrace to remain inside their homes while law enforcement blocked the entrances to their community.

# Russia's Sputnik V vax appears safe, effective

AGENCIES

Moscow, Feb 2: Russian scientists say the country's Sputnik V vaccine appears safe and effective against COVID-19, according to early results of an advanced study published in a British medical journal.

The news is a boost for the shot that is increasingly being purchased by nations around the world who are desperate to stop the devastation caused by the pandemic. Researchers say based on their trial, which involved about 20,000 people in Russia last fall, the vaccine is about 91 per cent effective and that the shot also appeared to prevent people from becoming severely ill with COVID-19. The study was published online Tuesday in the journal, Lancet.

Some early results were published in September, but participants had only been followed for about 42 days and there was no comparison group. The latest study is based on research involving about 20,000 people over age 18 at 25 hospitals in Moscow between September and November; of whom three-quarters got two doses of the Russian vaccine 21 days apart and the remainder got placebo shots.

The most commonly reported side effects were flu-like symptoms, pain at the injection site and fatigue. Serious side effects were rare in both groups and four deaths were reported in the study, although none were considered to be the result of the vaccine.



The study included more than 2,100 people over age 60 and the vaccine appeared to be about 92 per cent effective in them. The research is ongoing but in December, Russia's Health Ministry said it would cut the size of the study from the expected 40,000 to about 31,000 volunteers that have already enrolled. Developers of the vaccine cited ethical concerns about using placebo shots.

The Russian vaccine uses a modified version of the common cold-causing adenovirus to carry genes for the spike protein in the coronavirus as a way to prime the body to react if COVID-19 comes along. That's a similar technology to the vaccine developed by AstraZeneca and Oxford University. But unlike that two-dose vaccine, the Russians used a slightly different adenovirus for the second booster shot.

Some experts say that approach may explain why the Russian vaccine seems to have produced a better immune response than the AstraZeneca vaccine, which has a reported efficacy rate of about 60 to 70 per cent.

# Biden, Harris meet Republican senators

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, Feb 2: US President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris have held a meeting with 10 Republican senators to discuss the \$1.9 trillion relief package for Americans affected by COVID-19 pandemic that has claimed over 4.43,000 lives and infected more than 26 million people in the country.

The meeting held on Monday in the Oval Office of the White House lasted for about two hours, but ended on an inconclusive note.

"We have just had a very productive, cordial two-hour meeting with the president and the vice president and some of their key aides to discuss the next steps on the COVID-relief package," Senator Susan Collins told reporters at the White House after the meeting.

"We outlined for the president the provisions that we have proposed

as part of an approximately \$600 billion package," she said. During the meeting, Biden explained in more depth areas that were not fleshed out as much in the \$1.9 trillion package.

Biden has proposed a \$1.9 trillion relief package that Democratic leaders want to move quickly through Congress.

The group led by Collins countered with a much narrower \$618 billion proposal, and appealed to Biden to make good on his campaign promises to seek bipartisan unity. "It was a very good exchange of views. I wouldn't say that we came together on a package tonight. No one expected that in a two-hour meeting," Collins said.

The group shared a desire to get help to the American people, who are suffering through the worst health and economic crisis in a generation, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said.



The Chicago skyline is visible over snow dumped after a weekend-long winter storm hit the city

PTI PHOTO

# 59 HOMES LOST IN Oz WILDFIRE

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Perth (Australia), Feb 2: An out-of-control wildfire burning northeast of the Australian west coast city of Perth has destroyed at least 59 homes and was threatening more Tuesday, with many residents across the region told it is too late to leave.

The 7,000-hectare (17,000-acre) blaze, which has a 80-kilometer (50-mile) perimeter, began Monday and raged through the night near the town of Wooloroo, with the shires of Mundaring, Chittering, Northam, and the city of Swan affected.

"Firefighters have done a remarkable job in some of the most challenging conditions that we've



experienced in the metropolitan region for some time," Western Australia state Department of Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner Darren Klemm said. "Tragically, 59 properties have been lost in this fire and that number may increase as we continue to assess the extent of the damage," Klemm added. Six firefighters sustained minor

injuries, Australian Broadcasting Corp. Reported. No other injuries were reported. The fire doubled in size overnight and burned through 7,366 hectares (18,202 acres) of farm and woodland, officials said.

State Premier Mark McGowan said 80 per cent of all properties at Tilden Park near Gidgegannup on Perth's northeast rural fringe have been lost. McGowan said a large aerial tanker was flying from the Australian east coast to help fight the blaze.

People in a 25-kilometer (16-mile) stretch west from Wooloroo to the Walyunga National Park northeast of Perth were told Tuesday it had become too dangerous to leave their homes.

# Rohingya refugees fear returning to Myanmar after coup

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Dhaka, Feb 2: Rohingya refugees from Myanmar living in camps in Bangladesh condemned the military coup in their homeland and said it makes them more fearful to return.

A counterinsurgency operation by Myanmar's military in 2017 involving mass rape, murders and the torching of villages drove more than 700,000 Rohingya Muslims into neighbouring Bangladesh.

Bangladesh has hosted them in crowded refugee camps, and is eager to begin sending them back to Buddhist-majority Myanmar. Several attempts at repatriation under a joint agreement failed because the

Rohingya refused to go, fearing more violence in a country that denies them basic rights including citizenship.

Refugees said Tuesday they are more afraid now that the military is in complete control.

"The military killed us, raped our sisters and mothers, torched our villages. How is it possible for us to stay safe under their control?" said Khin Maung, head of the Rohingya Youth Association in the camps in Cox's Bazar district.

"Any peaceful repatriation will hugely be impacted," he told The Associated Press. "It will take a long time because the political situation in Myanmar is worse now."



Officials from Myanmar and Bangladesh met last month to discuss ways to start the repatriations, with Bangladesh's Foreign Ministry

seeming more hopeful of success and officials saying they expected to begin sometime in June. But refugees said they totally oppose the military takeover.

"We strongly condemn the coup. We love democracy and human rights, so we are worried about losing them in our country," Maung said. "We are part of Myanmar, so we feel the same as Myanmar's common people. We urge the international community to raise its voice against the coup," he said.

Bangladesh's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said Monday that it hopes the coup will not hamper the repatriation. "As an immediate and friendly neighbour, we would like

to see peace and stability in Myanmar. We have been persistent in developing mutually beneficial relations with Myanmar and have been working with Myanmar for the voluntary, safe and sustained repatriation of the Rohingya sheltered in Bangladesh," it said.

The United Nations has described the Myanmar military crackdown on the Rohingya as a form of genocide. In total, more than 1 million refugees are being sheltered by Bangladesh.

Monday's coup was a dramatic backslide for Myanmar, which was emerging from decades of strict military rule and international isolation that began in 1962.





**Deficit targets presented in India's Central government budget are higher, and medium-term consolidation more gradual, than we expected**  
JEREMY ZOOK | DIRECTOR, FITCH RATINGS' ASIA-PACIFIC SOVEREIGNS TEAM

## EXPORTS RISE 5.37 PC IN JAN

The country's exports grew 5.37 per cent year-on-year to \$27.24 billion in January 2021, mainly driven by healthy growth in pharmaceuticals and engineering sectors, according to provisional data of the Commerce ministry



## of the day quote

**Agriculture demand for tractors and farm mechanisation is witnessing a continuous growth. We are hopeful of a sustained momentum as we see strengthening in farm and rural economies**



**NIKHIL NANDA**  
CHAIRMAN & MD, ESCORTS LTD

**The government doesn't consider crypto-currencies legal tender or coins and will take all measures to eliminate the use of these crypto-assets in financing illegitimate activities or as part of the payment system**



**ANURAG SINGH THAKUR** | MOS, FINANCE

**Announcements made by the Finance Minister in the budget are indeed a welcome step. There is an emergent need to improve agri infrastructure of mandis while also preserving and processing agriculture output**



**VIKRAMJIT SAHNEY**  
CHAIR, BRICS AGRICULTURE BUSINESS FORUM

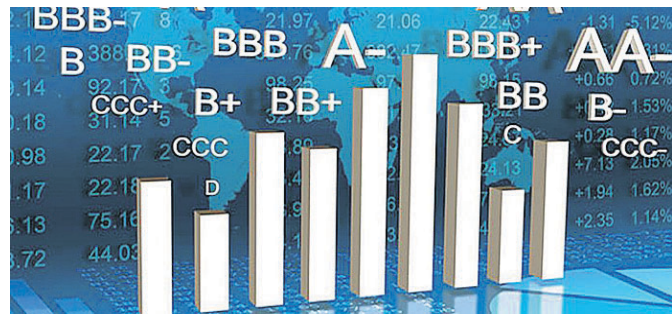
# India's sovereign ratings may take hit

FM SITHARAMAN SAID THE CURRENT YEAR FISCAL DEFICIT WILL TOUCH 9.5 PC OF GDP, MUCH HIGHER THAN THE BUDGETED 3.5 PC AND SHARPLY ABOVE ANALYST ESTIMATES OF AROUND 7 PC

**While higher fiscal deficits can lead to sovereign downgrades, the alternative of stunting the India story by a tight fiscal policy is surely worse**

**The deficits in FY21 and FY22 were driven by inclusion of earlier off-budget items and very low revenue assumptions at only 5 per cent in gross taxes across FY20-22, and higher expenditure**

**The Reserve Bank, which can raise concerns from an inflationary standpoint in tandem with the rating agencies, is likely to view the budget as a 'medium-term positive' and maintain a 'dovish hold' at the forthcoming policy review later this week**



AGENCIES

**Mumbai, Feb 2:** Wider fiscal deficits and a more gradual pace of consolidation will lift the Indian government's debt and pressure its sovereign ratings, Fitch Ratings said, cautioning that the fiscal firepower is limited due to a high debt ratio. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the current year fiscal deficit will touch 9.5% of GDP, much higher than the budgeted 3.5% and sharply above analyst estimates of around 7%.

The government has also projected a deficit of 6.5% for the next

fiscal year starting April and said it would reach 4.5% only by fiscal 2025/26. "Deficit targets presented in India's central government budget on February 1 are higher, and medium-term consolidation more gradual, than we expected," Jeremy Zook, director Fitch Ratings' Asia-Pacific Sovereigns team said in a note on Tuesday.

Fitch had placed India's "BBB-" rating on a negative outlook in June 2020 due to the pandemic's impact on growth prospects and the challenges of the high debt burden. Zook said the government's prioritisation of support towards

healthcare and economic recovery is understandable but there is very little fiscal space given the country's high public debt ratio even prior to the virus shock.

The public debt to GDP ratio stands at around 90% for India compared to a 53% median for "BBB" rated economies.

The rating agency said though revenue and economic assumptions made in the budget are "largely credible", the disinvestment target at over three times of what was achieved in 2020/21, appears optimistic. India plans to raise 1.75 trillion rupees from selling its stake in state run companies and banks.

Fitch said higher infrastructure and expenditure will support near-term recovery alongside falling coronavirus cases and the vaccine rollout, and possibly reduce longer-term economic scarring.

"We believe the previously legislated labour market and agricultural reforms are potentially positive for the medium-term growth outlook, though they clearly face implementation risks," Zook said.

## FUTURE- RIL DEAL

# DELHI HC RELIEF FOR AMAZON



AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Feb 2:** The Delhi High Court Tuesday directed Future Retail Ltd (FRL) to maintain status quo in relation to its ₹24,713 crore deal with Reliance Retail, which has been objected to by US-based e-commerce giant Amazon.

Justice JR Midha said the court was satisfied that an immediate interim order was required to be passed to protect the rights of Amazon. "Respondents (FRL) and other respondents are directed to maintain status quo as on today at 4:49 PM till pronouncement of the reserved order," the judge said.

Amazon has approached the high court seeking direction to order enforcement of the award by Singapore's Emergency Arbitrator (EA) restraining FRL from going ahead with its ₹24,713 crore deal with Reliance Retail.

Amazon has sought to restrain Kishore Biyani-led Future Group from taking any steps to complete the transaction with entities that are a part of the Mukesh Dhirubhai Ambani (MDA) Group.

The high court, which heard the matter for four consecutive days, reserved its order on the main petition and also directed all other concerned authorities to maintain status quo in relation to the matters which are in violation of the emergency award and to file status report with regard to the present status within 10 days.

While pronouncing the interim order, the high court said it was of

the prima facie view that the emergency arbitrator is an arbitrator and he has rightly proceeded against FRL and its order was not in nullity. The court said it was clear that the October 25, 2020 order of the emergency arbitrator passing the award was enforceable and appealable under the relevant provisions of the Arbitration and Conciliation Act.

The high court directed FRL to file an affidavit stating the steps and actions taken by it from October 25, 2020, when the emergency award was passed, till now in connection with the deal with Reliance.

The high court had earlier issued notices and sought responses of FRL, Future Coupons Pvt Ltd (FCPL), Biyanis and other related parties on the petition by Amazon.

Amazon.Com NV Investment Holdings LLC, in its plea, also sought detention of the Biyanis, directors of FCPL and FRL and other related parties in civil prison and attaching of their properties for alleged "wilful disobedience" of the emergency arbitrator's order.

It also sought to restrain Future Group from taking any steps to transfer or dispose of FRL's retail assets or the shares held in FRL by the Biyanis in any manner without prior written consent of Amazon.

The Future Group and Amazon have been locked in a battle after the US-based company took FRL into the emergency arbitration over alleged breach of a contract between them.

## SHORT TAKES

### Indigo Paints' impressive debut

**New Delhi:** Shares of Indigo Paints Tuesday made an impressive market debut and jumped over 109 per cent at close of trade against its issue price of ₹1,490. The stock got listed at ₹2,607.50, registering a sharp gain of 75 per cent against its issue price on BSE. Later, it zoomed 110 per cent to ₹3,129 during the day. It finally closed at ₹3,118.65, rising 109.30 per cent. On NSE, it listed at ₹2,607.50, jumping 75 per cent.

### Huge fines for faulty structures

**New Delhi:** National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) Tuesday said it has come out with a strict policy to deal with major lapses in structures that provides for a fine up to ₹10 crore for defaulters besides debarment of the firm or personnel for up to three years. The move is aimed at maintaining high-quality standards in highway development. NHAI issued a strict policy to decide penal action against defaulting firms/ personnel if there are any lapses in construction standards.

### No subsidy on kerosene now

**New Delhi:** The government has eliminated subsidy on poor man's fuel kerosene through small fortnightly price increases and the fuel sold through the public distribution system is now priced at market rates. The Union Budget for 2021-22 makes no provision for payment of subsidy on kerosene in the fiscal year beginning April, according to budget documents tabled in Parliament. In the current fiscal ending March 31, the kerosene subsidy was ₹2,677.32 crore, down from ₹4,058 crore in the previous financial year, the documents showed.

### Brookfield REIT issue opens today

**New Delhi:** Global investment firm Brookfield's Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT) public issue will hit the capital market Wednesday to raise up to ₹3,800 crore. Brookfield REIT will be the third listed trust in India if it is successfully subscribed. The first one Embassy Office Parks REIT, backed by Blackstone and Embassy group, got listed in April 2019.

# Govt agrees to lower sharing of tax proceeds with states

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Feb 2:** The Finance Ministry has accepted the 15th Finance Commission's recommendation to share 41 per cent of the net proceeds of Union taxes with the states against the current 42 per cent, among other recommendations.

The Commission was of the view that financial resources equivalent to 1 per cent of the net proceeds of Union taxes should be retained with the Centre for financing the requirements of the newly-formed Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh. Similar, sharing of revenues were earlier also proposed by year 2020-21 for which the commission presented a report to the President in December 2019.

The government has also accepted the recommendation of post-



devolution revenue deficit grants amounting to ₹2,94,514 crore for 17 states over 2021-22 to 2025-26. The number of states qualifying for the revenue deficit grants decrease from 17 in 2021-22, the first year of the award period, to six in 2025-26, the last year of the grant period.

The panel has also recommended grants-in-aid revenues of states for revenue deficit, local bodies, disaster management, sector-specific

and certain state specific under Art 277 of the Constitution. The Centre has accepted this suggestion too.

Further, the recommendation of total grants for duly-constituted local government that add up to ₹4.36 lakh crore for the period 2021-26, has also been accepted.

The NK Singh-led 15th Finance Commission also recommended for providing of grants to state governments in eight different sectors including health, school education, higher education and agriculture. It suggested providing grants worth ₹1.29 lakh crore during the five-year award period.

The Finance Ministry has said that it would give due consideration to the sectors identified while formulating and implementing existing and new centrally sponsored and central sector schemes.

# 'Air connectivity to small cities will boost hospitality industry'

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Feb 2:** Terming the general budget as a tourism-friendly budget, Union Minister of State for Culture and Tourism (Independent Charge) Prahlad Singh Patel said that with increased allocation in the budget of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the tourism sector is expected to grow rapidly.

Patel has been working towards getting global recognition to the tourist destinations in the country. His focus is especially on Leh-Ladakh and Kargil. He is the first minister of the Modi cabinet who has spent a night at Kargil.

He said, "For the first time in the budget, an allocation has been made for the iconic site scheme. Two important schemes of the Ministry of



Tourism - 'Prasad' and 'Swadesh Darshan' - have also been continued. This will boost the tourism sector which was adversely affected due to Covid. The budget shows that the Modi government is focussed towards the tourism sector."

According to Patel, rail, road and air connectivity is directly related to tourism. Not only domestic but also international tourists want good connectivity. The Union Minister said, "We need to develop our tourist destinations global for which connectivity is extremely important."

# By March, 3 PSBs likely to be out of PCA framework

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Feb 2:** The Finance ministry expects the remaining three public sector banks (PSBs) to be out of the RBI's prompt corrective action (PCA) framework in two months as their financial health has improved.

Indian Overseas Bank, Central Bank of India and UCO Bank are currently under this framework which puts several restrictions on them, including on lending, management compensation and directors' fees.

"In fact, these three banks are also now consistently for the last two quarters... In profit and they are fulfilling by and large all the parameters of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI)," Financial Services Secretary Debasish Panda said.

In any case, he said, "They are



lending, they're doing all that businesses but there are some restraints, so that they will be out of that. So we hope that before the close of this financial year (they should be out of PCA)."

He also assured additional capital for these banks if the regula-

tor insists as the government has cushion of the remaining amount of ₹20,000 crore recapitalisation budget for PSBs.

"Although we believe that they are already meeting the regulatory requirement of 11.5 per cent Capital to Risk (Weighted) Assets Ratio

INDIAN OVERSEAS BANK, CENTRAL BANK OF INDIA AND UCO BANK ARE CURRENTLY UNDER THIS FRAMEWORK

THESE THREE BANKS ARE NOW CONSISTENTLY, FOR THE LAST TWO QUARTERS, IN PROFIT AND ARE FULFILLING BY AND LARGE ALL THE PARAMETERS OF THE RBI, SAYS FINANCIAL SERVICES SECRETARY

(CRAR) so that we will take it forward and we hope that they should also come out from the PCA," he said. For the current financial year, the government had allocated ₹20,000 crore for capital infusion into the PSBs for meeting the regulatory requirement.

Among the 12 PSBs, Punjab & Sind Bank was given ₹5,500 crore.

# Why Wall Street fears America's young new day traders

AGENCIES

**New York, Feb 2:** James Villalobos, a communications consultant for an insurance company in New York, downloaded the Robinhood online brokerage app back in September.

He was hesitant about getting involved in the stock market - "I never understood what it was, what it did" - but a few months later he created an account and bought shares in airlines and cruise lines, figuring the industries, slammed by COVID-19 disruptions, would eventually rebound.

He started watching YouTube videos about stocks, and joined a Facebook group created by a friend who is "really into options trading." Villalobos was quickly down \$1,200. But he was ready to make his money back.

Last Monday, he put \$551 into a

clutch of shares that included BlackBerry Ltd and AMC Entertainment Holdings Inc, part of a group now known as "meme stocks" for their popularity on online forums like Reddit.

Tapping at an iPhone, Villalobos was playing his part in a surge of retail trading that unleashed chaos on the markets last week, sending big names on Wall Street scrambling, with U.S. hedge funds buying and selling more stock than they had in the previous decade, according to a Goldman Sachs note on Friday.

That Villalobos is 25 years old should come as no surprise.

Apex Clearing, which helps facilitate trades for brokerages, said the nearly 6 million accounts it opened in 2020 represented a 137% increase from the year before. About 1 million of those belonged to Gen Z investors born in the late-1990s or



younger, with an average age of 19. Robinhood says the average age of the 13 million users on its platform is 31. In interviews with more than a dozen digital brokerage users, Reuters found a younger generation that approaches trading much differently than the suits of Wall Street.

These are young women and men who feel comfortable on digital communities, whether monitoring threads on Reddit, following tips on Twitter or swapping ideas in Slack groups.

They are also coming up in a time of cheap, fast online trades, fed recently by cash from government

stimulus programs and plenty of free time thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic. Though most of those interviewed described themselves as "buy and hold" investors who generally avoid swing trading plays, they said they were open to the occasional gaming of speculative stocks.

"I look at it as essentially gambling. I don't put more than I'm willing to lose," said Will Callewaert, a 27-year-old Robinhood user who started trading during the coronavirus lockdowns.

JJ Buckner, 29, who gives his views on stocks to 250,000 followers on YouTube, lost more than \$7,000 on options for AMC, Blackberry and Nokia Oyj on Thursday. But he told his viewers that he's holding on, in the hope the rally will resume. "It's one for history books," he told Reuters.

Part of what makes people like

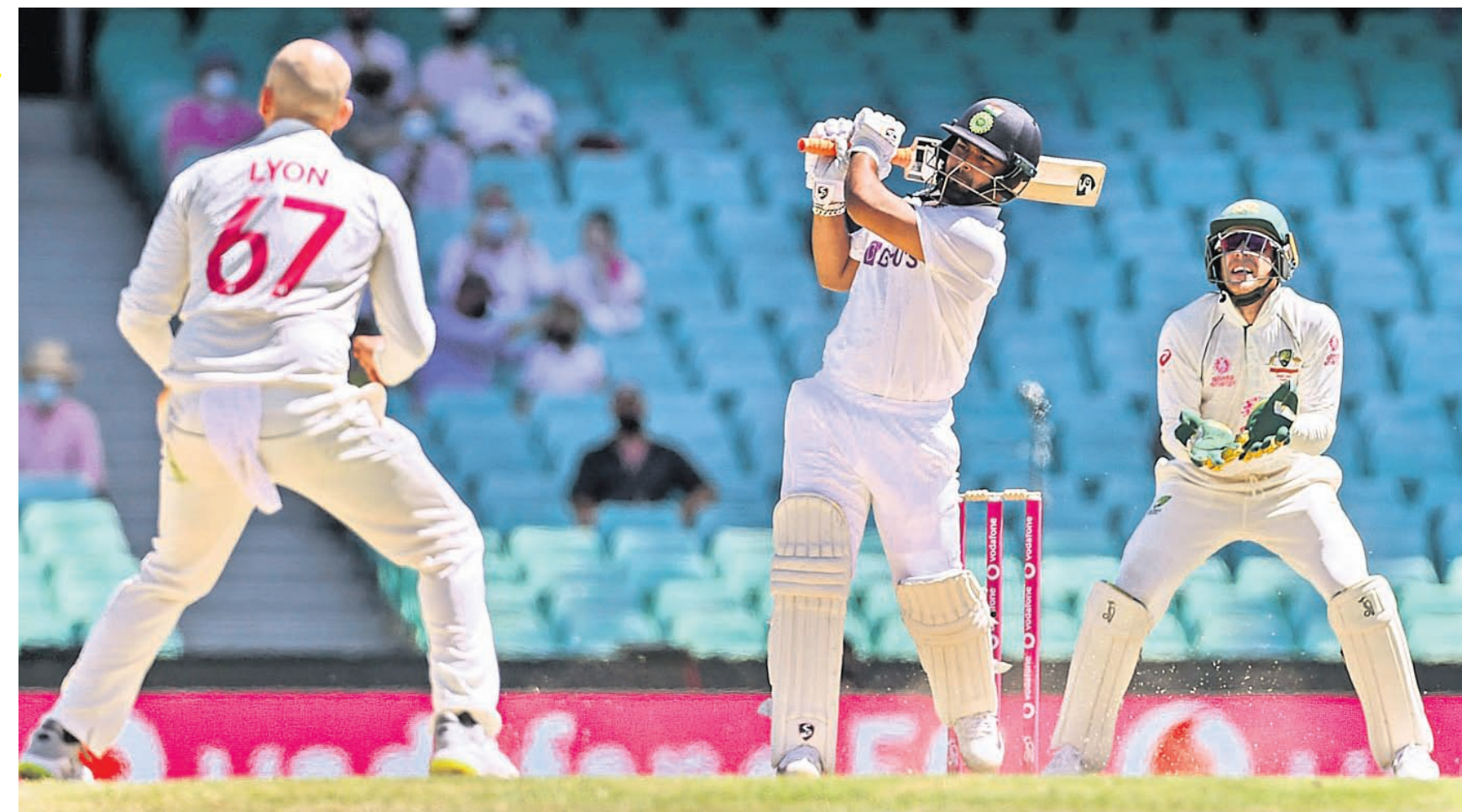
Buckner so confident is the power of the crowd.

"What we saw in Reddit this week was that you need a group to make it effective," said Evan Keegan, 25, who does financial services public relations and has been trading on Robinhood for seven years. "You need to have enough people because the average retail investor isn't moving the kind of money that the hedge funds are."

It helps that retail investing today is so much easier than during the dot-com bubble of the late 90s, when traders had to pay higher transaction fees and purchase entire shares to get in on a stock, according to investment management experts.

Now, the advent of free trades and fractional shares allows investors to scale into investments without putting too much cash on the line at once.





## 2nd pacer's slot: Ishant or Siraj!

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 2:** From not having enough options due to a plethora of injuries, the Indian team will have a different worry while selecting the playing XI for the opening Test against England, with old warhorse Ishant Sharma facing tough competition from newcomer Mohammed Siraj.

Indian team had their first of the three available practice sessions Tuesday and going by the traditional Chepauk wicket that normally assists the spinners, India might go with two pacers and three spinners for the February 5-9 opener.

"The pitch is a typical Chepauk wicket. No English feel or anything. In this humidity, you need to have grass on the wicket so that it doesn't break up that easily. This wicket will help spinners as it always has been the case," a BCCI source, who is monitoring the developments, told this agency on the condition of anonymity.

All eyes will be on the troika of head coach Ravi Shastri, bowling coach Bharath and last but not the least, skipper Virat Kohli, to make a tough call on who would partner pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah.

Bumrah, who missed the last Test against Australia in Brisbane due to a groin strain, is fit and available to lead the pace attack.

However, there are questions about 32-year-old veteran Ishant being out of red ball cricket for nearly one year. On the other hand, Siraj is in red-hot form having

picked 13 wickets in three Tests, including a five-wicket haul in Brisbane. As far as Ishant is concerned, he has only recently made a comeback to competitive cricket, having played four Syed Mushtaq Ali trophy matches and bowled a total of 14.1 overs.

It is expected that in the course of the next two days, bowling coach Arun will take a call after checking the two bowlers in question.

The second call could be a bit tougher as there is an in-form Washington Sundar and left-arm orthodox spinner Axar Patel, with senior off-break bowler Ravichandran Ashwin and left-arm wrist spinner Kuleep Yadav.

Washington is the man in form having hit a half century and taken four wickets on his debut, but his presence would mean two identical bowlers even though there is a vast difference in terms of quality.

Axar is also a very handy middle-order batsman apart from being a like-for-like replacement for Ravindran Jadeja. Hardik Pandya to start training from Wednesday.

All-rounder Pandya's quarantine will end Wednesday morning and he will join the team training. Pandya, who is back in the Test team after a long hiatus, joined his colleagues a day late after attending to a personal matter.

While Pandya may not feature in the opener, he is expected to increase his bowling workload keeping the final of the World Test Championship and the five-match Test series in England in mind.



# PANT JOINS ROOT, STIRLING

INDIAN WICKETKEEPER-BATSMAN AMONG FINAL THREE FOR THE INAUGURAL ICC MEN'S PLAYER OF THE MONTH AWARD

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Dubai, Feb 2:** One of the architects of India's historic win in Australia, wicketkeeper-batsman Rishabh Pant was Tuesday nominated for the ICC Men's Player of the Month award along with England skipper Joe Root and Ireland's Paul Stirling.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) announced the nominees for the inaugural Player of the Month Awards which will 'recognise and celebrate the best performances from both male and female cricketers across all forms of international cricket throughout the year'.

The 23-year-old Pant played two Tests against Australia where he scored a 97 at Sydney to ensure a draw before an unbeaten 89 at Brisbane that led India to a historic series-clinching win.

In January, Root played two Tests against Sri Lanka, where he scored a 228 and 186 and led his team to a



JOE ROOT



PAUL STIRLING

2-0 Test series victory.

The third nominee in the category, Stirling played two ODIs against the UAE and three ODIs vs Afghanistan, where he scored three centuries.

Among women cricketers, Pakistan Diana Baig and the South African duo of Shabnim Ismail and Marizanne Kapp were nominated for the monthly honours.

Baig played three ODIs and two

T20Is against South Africa, where she led the wicket-takers with nine wickets in the three-match ODI series against South Africa.

Ismail also played three ODIs and two T20Is against Pakistan and took seven wickets in the victorious ODI series against Pakistan, before taking five wickets in the second T20I against the same opposition.

Her compatriot all-rounder

Marizanne played two ODIs and two T20Is against Pakistan where she made 115 runs at a strike rate of 110.57 and added three wickets in the ODI series against Pakistan.

Explaining the voting process, ICC said its Voting Academy, comprising prominent members of the cricket family including senior journalists, former players, and broadcasters and some members of the ICC Hall of Fame, will primarily

decide the winner.

"The Voting Academy will submit their votes by email and will retain a 90 per cent share of the vote. Additionally, fans registered with the ICC will be able to vote via the ICC website once the shortlisted players are announced and will have a 10 per cent share of the vote. Winners will be announced every second Monday of the month on the ICC's digital channels."

## RAHUL REGAINS FULL FITNESS

**NEW DELHI:** His tour of Australia cut short after a wrist injury, Indian batsman KL Rahul Tuesday said he has regained his fitness after completing rehabilitation and is looking forward to the home series against England. The 28-year-old, who played the ODIs and T20Is but sat out of the first two Tests in Australia, had suffered an injury to his left wrist during a net session at MCG and was ruled out of the last two Tests. Rahul had then returned home to join the National Cricket Academy (NCA) in Bangalore for his rehabilitation. Glad to have completed his rehab strong. No better feeling than being back fit and healthy. Always fun to get back with the boys, and an honour to represent. Looking forward to the home series," he wrote on his twitter handle. Rahul, who had scored two fifties in the limited over series in Australia, has been named in the Indian squad for the first two Tests against England beginning in Chennai February 5.

# Oz all but out of WTC final contention after SA series postponed

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Sydney, Feb 2:** Australia Tuesday postponed their tour of South Africa next month citing 'unacceptable health and safety risk' in that country because of a fresh COVID-19 outbreak, a decision that virtually knocks them out of contention from the World Test Championship final later this year.

The Australian team was scheduled to play a three-Test series during the tour. However, with the host nation battling a second wave of COVID-19 and a new variant of the

virus, Cricket Australia's (CA) interim chief executive Nick Hockley on Tuesday said travelling to South Africa is not possible given the current scenario.

"Following extensive due diligence with medical experts it has become clear that travelling from Australia to South Africa at this current time poses an unacceptable level of health and safety risk to our players, support staff and the community," Hockley said in a statement.

"We acknowledge the significant amount of work by CSA in planning



for the tour, during which we made it clear that CA was prepared to take on additional cost and effort to make the series happen," the statement read.

The announcement is a blow to Australia's chances of qualifying for the WTC final, scheduled to be played in June in England. The top two teams in the points table will make the final.

Australia, currently third in the WTC points table behind leaders India and New Zealand, needed to win two Tests in South Africa and prevent their hosts from winning

one, to ensure their spot in the inaugural WTC decider.

For Australia to have a chance at qualification, India and England will need to draw at least twice in their four-Test series starting Friday.

This is the second series to be postponed in South Africa due to COVID-19. Last year, England had pulled out of their tour midway through an ODI series after there was an outbreak of cases in the team hotel.

Australia had also postponed their tour of Bangladesh last year. New dates for the Bangladesh or South Africa tours are yet to be announced.

# Kiwis make it to the final of inaugural WTC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Dubai, Feb 2:** New Zealand Tuesday became the first team to reach the final of the inaugural World Test Championship (WTC) after Australia's away series against South Africa got cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

With Australia's Test series postponed indefinitely, no team can surpass New Zealand's percentage points of 70 and for all practical purposes, the series between India and England starting in Chennai Friday will decide the opponents for Kane Williamson's men.

"All to play for in the upcoming India v England series with three teams able to meet New Zealand in the final of the inaugural ICC World Test Championship," the ICC tweeted.

# OFC SACK BAXTER FOR RAPE REMARK



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 2:** Indian Super League (ISL) side Odisha FC Tuesday sacked their head coach Stuart Baxter for making an unsavoury comment on rape to criticise a refereeing decision after the team's loss to Jamshedpur FC.

The club also issued a public apology after the Englishman suggested one of his players 'will have to rape someone or be raped' to get a penalty after the 0-1 loss to Jamshedpur FC in Bamolim, Goa Monday.

"Odisha FC has decided to terminate Head Coach Stuart Baxter's contract with immediate effect. Interim Coach for the remainder of the season will be announced soon," the club said in a statement Tuesday.

Odisha FC lost a tightly-contested match, leaving Baxter displeased by the refereeing. Odisha made a late penalty claim after Diego Mauricio was tripped by TP Rehenesh in the penalty area but it was turned down by the referee.

"You need decisions to go your way, and they didn't. I don't know when we are going to get our penalty. One of my players will have to rape someone or get raped himself if he was going to get a penalty," Baxter said in the post-match interview.

The club quickly issued a statement apologising for Baxter's comments, stressing that the 67-year-old's views do not reflect its values.

"The Club is appalled at the comments made by Head Coach, Stuart Baxter during the post-match interview today (Monday). It is completely unacceptable whatever the context and does not reflect the values of the club," the club had tweeted, Monday. "We, at Odisha FC, unreservedly apologize and the club management will handle this matter internally," it added.

Odisha are languishing at the bottom of the 11-team table in the league after managing just one win from 14 matches and enduring eight losses.

# Bengaluru FC down SC East Bengal

AGENCIES

**Goa, Feb 2:** Bengaluru FC (BFC) ended an eight-game winless run in the Indian Super League (ISL), 2020-21 with a 2-0 victory over SC East Bengal (SCEB) at the Tilak Maidan, Tuesday.

Bengaluru found their groove in the first half as Cleiton Silva opened the scoring in the 12th minute. Debit Majumder's unlucky own goal saw Bengaluru FC enter the break with a two-goal cushion. It was enough for the Blues to secure full three points for the first time in 2021.

Both the sides began with aggression and attacking intent. However, it was Bengaluru who drew the first blood on the night when Silva found the back of the net. The Blues took the lead through a brilliant half volley from Silva.

Gurpreet Singh Sandhu took the free-kick from just outside BFC's own box following a barrage of corner kicks. He hoofed in a long ball around the SCEB box. Sunil Chhetri jumped higher than Scott Neville and headed it to Silva.

Silva was in the box with space in front of him as he took a touch, set up a half volley and smashed it into the back of the net. He then celebrated in front of Daniel Fox, with whom he had an argument just



prior to the goal.

Bengaluru double their lead just before the break and the misery mounted on SCEB and Robbie Fowler. A little bit of luck went Parag Srivas' way.

Rahul Bheke dashed forward on the right and got inside the box close to the byline. He cut it back in-

side the box. Parag hit it first time. It ricocheted from post, only to hit the back of Majumder's leg and went into the back of the net.

SCEB tried their best in the second half but were clearly the second best side. BFC came close to the third when Chhetri's shot rattled off the bar in the second half. The Red

and Gold Brigade were unable to threaten Sandhu and the BFC goalkeeper ended his 11 game search for a clean sheet.

SCEB meanwhile succumb to their second league defeat in three games and their chances of finishing in the top four is almost over unless there is a miracle.



Kane Williamson

As of now, India has highest percentage points 71.7 while New Zealand has 70 while Australia are third at 69.2 and England are currently placed fourth with 68.7 points.

Percentage of points is won out of the total number of points contested by each team. India will qualify if they beat England in the series by winning at least two matches. England can make it by triumphing in at least three games while recording a series victory.

If the two teams end up drawing, then it will open up a chance for Australia to sneak in. The WTC final is scheduled to be played from June 18 at the Lord's.