



GOLDEN GLOBES

Black Panther actor Chadwick Boseman has been nominated posthumously in the Best Actor category in his last film

LEISURE P2



KREMLIN DOESN'T FLINCH

Russia says arrests at protests against the jailing of Opposition leader Alexei Navalny were a 'necessary response'

INTERNATIONAL P10



1ST TEST STARTS TODAY

Virat Kohli-led Team India to take on England in the first Test of the four-match series

SPORTS P12

Peanuts allocated for Odisha

THE TOTAL BUDGET OUTLAY FOR DEVELOPMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE AND SAFETY RELATED WORKS FOR ODISHA IS ₹5,528 CRORE FOR 2021-22, WHICH DOES NOT INCLUDE MANY OTHER PROJECTS AND ESTIMATES

PNN AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 4: The Centre has allocated an outlay of 6,995.58 crore for the state in the Railway Budget for 2021-22, an official statement issued by the East Coast Railway (ECOR) Thursday said. The amount is against the state's demand for ₹7,200 crore.

While the Centre has claimed that the fresh allocation is about 60 per cent more than the previous 2020-21 fiscal's Railway Budget outlay of ₹5,759 crore, the state government as well as the Opposition parties here have described the amount as "peanuts".

State Transport and Commerce Minister Padmanabh Behera, however, termed the allocation made for the railway sector in 2021-21 as "disappointing." Expressing dismay over the Budget allocation, Biju Janta Dal (BJD) Rajya Sabha MP Amar Patnaik said that the Union government has not sanctioned fund for any new project.

"The total Budget outlay for development of infrastructure and safety related works for Odisha is ₹5,528 crore for 2021-22, which does not include many other projects and estimates as they are not significant enough for mention at ministry level, but for ECoR and Odisha, these are important development works," the statement said.

The allotment has been significant for projects to be completed in 2020-21, it said, adding that funding is to ensure that no progress is hindered for lack of funds. There has been a significant increase in outlay for passenger amenities, road safety works, in terms

of Road Under Bridge and Over Bridges, and Limited Height Subway (LHS).

While claiming that the Narendra Modi government has all along been cooperative towards railway infrastructure development in Odisha, Union Steel Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has allocated ₹1,000.50 crore for Khurda Road-Bolangir project against the previous year's allocation of ₹520 crore.

The fresh allocation is an increase of 92.4 per cent from the previous year's outlay for this project, Pradhan said. He urged the state government to complete land acquisition for the project so that the allocated funds be utilised within 2021-22 fiscal. Pradhan said this railway project will connect the coastal region with the western parts of the state.

Similarly, funding for railway line doubling projects especially, Bansapani-

Daitari-Tomka-Jahkapura is ₹228 crore against ₹80 crore last year, which is 185 per cent increase.

This apart, more allocations have been made for other projects like - Brundamal-Jharsuguda fly over (₹20 crore against ₹10 crore last year), Bhadrak-Nergundi 3rd Line (₹229 crore against ₹102 crore last year), Budhapank-Salagaon (₹215 crore against ₹205 crore last year), Rourkela- Jharsuguda 3rd line (₹230 crore as against ₹170 crore an increase of 35 per cent), Narayangarh-Bhadrak 3rd Line (₹225 crore as against ₹50 crore, an increase of 350 per cent). A 'quantum jump' has been given to passenger amenities from ₹129 crore to ₹429 crore, the rail-

ways said, adding that in

order to eliminate level crossing of LC Gates ₹400 crore has been sanctioned as against ₹324 crore last year. State Transport and Commerce Minister Padmanabh Behera, however, termed the allocation made for the railway sector in 2021-21 as "disappointing." "There is no sanction for any new rail line. Our demand is not met. Practically Odisha will get only ₹4,500 crore which is much less than our expectation," Behera said.

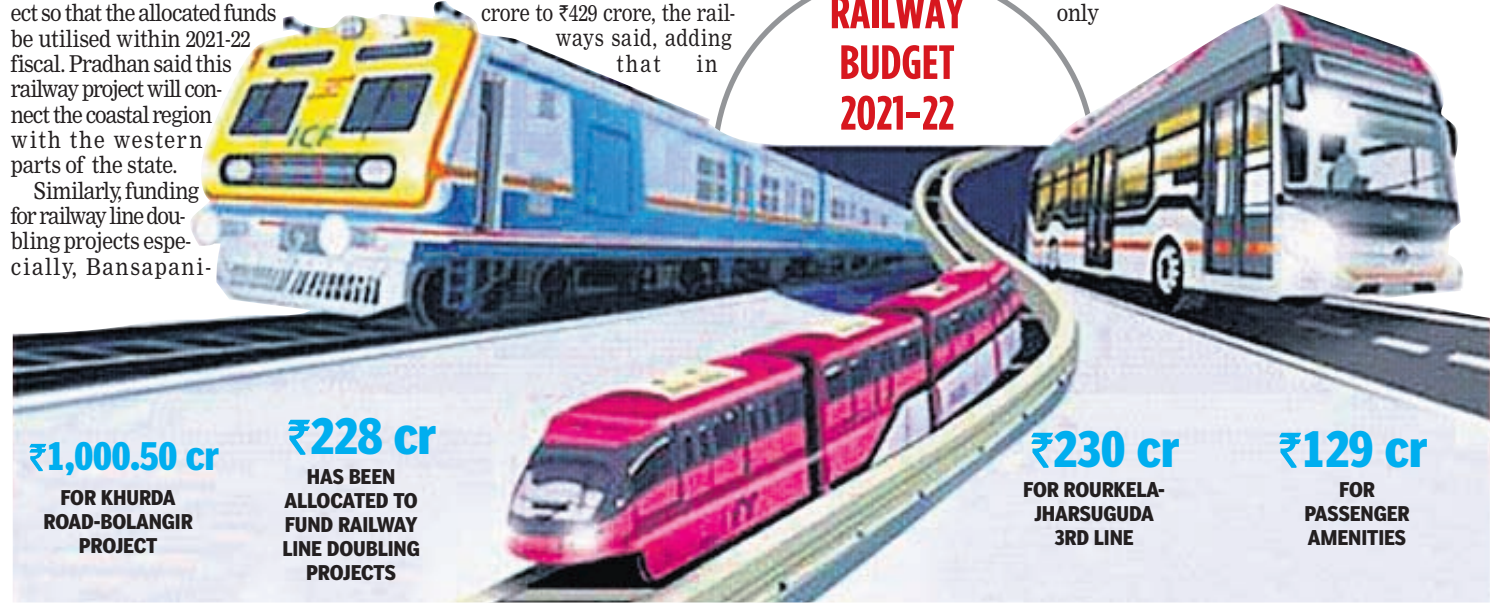
Behera said the state had demanded ₹7,200 crore of which ₹3,500 crore was for the pending projects and ₹3,700 crore for new projects. However, the

Centre allocated only

₹4,500 crore of which only ₹500 crore has been allocated for the ongoing Khurda-Balangir railway project.

He rejected the Railway's claim that ₹6,995.58 crore has been allocated for different railway projects. "In the list of the railway projects prepared by the Centre, many completed projects are mentioned only to increase the figure," Behera said. He said the state had demanded allocation for new railway projects like Puri-Konark, Bargarh-Nuapada, Chakulia- Buramara and Jajpur-Aradi-Dhamra among others.

MORE P3



Two jumbos killed by goods train in Rourkela

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 4: Two wild elephants were killed when a goods train hit them near Mahipani in Bisra area of Rourkela in Sundargarh district, an official said Thursday.

The movement of trains on the route was affected for a few hours following the incident, a South Eastern Railway official said.

"The goods train was going towards Shalimar from Nashik when the accident happened. Restoration works have been completed and the train services resumed," Bangamunda assistant station master Nishant Kumar said.

"It is an unfortunate incident. It happened around 1 am Thursday when a herd of wild elephants was crossing the tracks. Though it's difficult to explain the exact cause, I think it was due to change of direction by elephants. Railway and forest officials are on the spot and



restoration of rail traffic on the route has been done," said Nishant Kumar.

He said that an investigation into the unfortunate incident would be conducted. Meanwhile, the incident has triggered a blame game between the state Forest department and the Railway authorities. Tankadhar Behera, Assistant Conservator of Forests, Rourkela division, said that the train speed at the time of the accident would be looked into.

An elephant was hit and killed by Puri-Surat Express train near Bhabanipali between Hatibari and Maneswar Railway stations under Sambalpur division December 20.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



TWO MINOR GIRLS CHARRD TO DEATH

TIKIRI: In a tragic incident, two minor girls were charred to death while guarding a vegetable farm at Lakris village under Kashipur block in Rayagada district, Thursday. The deceased were identified as Kumari Majhi, 5, and her sister Bidyia Majhi, 3, both daughters of Duryodhan Majhi of the village. The kids were warming themselves around a bonfire when fire engulfed a nearby hay stack on the farm and burnt them. Parents of the duo were away to bring food during at the time of the mishap.

Second COVID shot from February 13

1,239 private and 5,912 public hospitals are being utilised as vaccination session sites

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 4: The second dose of COVID-19 vaccines will be administered to healthcare workers from February 13, NITI Aayog member Dr VK Paul said at a press conference Thursday.

"The second dose of vaccine will be administered to healthcare workers from February 13. Only the first dose has been given to them so far," he said. During the press conference, Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan said that 1,239 private and 5,912 public hospitals were being utilised as vaccination session sites. Bhushan added that the country's Adverse Event Following Immunization (AEFI) system was robust and was strengthened for the purpose of COVID-19 vaccinations. He also noted that 0.18% of vaccinations were followed by adverse events.



"There is a very structured and robust system of AEFI monitoring in this country. It has been further strengthened in view of COVID-19 vaccination. We have 8,563 AEFI so far when we have done vaccination in lakhs. This is 0.18% of vaccinated people," he said. 45,93,427 beneficiaries have been vaccinated against COVID-19 till 1.30pm Thursday. India is the fastest country to reach four million vaccinations. However, Union Health Ministry said that 11 states and Union Territories, including Tamil Nadu, Assam and Jammu & Kashmir, have inoculated 30% beneficiaries.

WOMAN'S BEHEADED BODY FOUND IN CITY

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 4: In a shocking incident, the headless body of an unidentified woman was found in Chandaka area on the outskirts of the Capital City, Thursday. However, the police are yet to ascertain the identity of the deceased lady.

According to sources, the torso of the lady, aged between 30 and 40 years, was spotted by some locals at near Dasapur village on Dasapur-Andharua Road under Chandaka Police limits. On being informed, police rushed to the spot and initiated a probe.

The beheaded body was sent to Capital Hospital for post-mortem. Meanwhile, a forensic science team of the police collected vital items like gloves, a big knife, broken bangle samples and a liquor bottle from the scene. Police thoroughly examined the place with the help of sniffer dogs.

It is suspected that the woman was killed elsewhere and her body



Police engaged sniffer dogs at the site where the body was found, Thursday

was dumped at the spot. Sources in the police have denied that the deceased was abused sexually as her clothes had no such signs.

However, the broken bangles near the dead body indicate that the victim offered stiff resistance to the accused before being killed.

The police suspect that the accused may have taken the severed head in a bag belonging to the lady after discarding her clothes, source added.

The body of the lady has been

kept in the Capital Hospital morgue since Thursday afternoon after autopsy. On the other hand, DCP Umashankar Dash has urged everyone to contact the police if they come across any information regarding any missing in the age group of 30-40 years.

Speaking to **Orissa POST**, Dash said, "Investigation is on to identify the lady and her alleged killer. It will take some time to solve the case due to dearth of enough evidence."

Petrol, diesel prices at fresh high

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 4: Petrol and diesel prices Thursday climbed to fresh highs in the country as rates were hiked by the most in recent times, even as fuel retailers said the government can cut taxes to ease consumer burden.

Petrol and diesel price was hiked by 35 paise per litre each after a gap of a week, according to price notification of state-owned fuel retailers. The increase took petrol prices to a fresh high of ₹86.65 a litre in Delhi and to ₹93.20 in Mumbai. Diesel rates touched ₹76.83 in Mumbai and an all-time high of ₹83.67.

CITY FUEL PRICE
PETROL: 87.31 (+0.34)
DIESEL: 83.69 (+0.37)

Mukesh Kumar Surana, head of India's third-largest fuel retailer Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd, said there has been a sudden spike in international oil prices to \$59 per barrel in the last 2-3 days because of a perception of mismatch in demand and supply.

UK Parliament to consider debate on farmers' issue

THE UK PARLIAMENT'S PETITIONS COMMITTEE WILL CONSIDER A WESTMINSTER HALL DEBATE ON THE FARMERS' PROTESTS AND PRESS FREEDOM IN INDIA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, Feb 4: The UK Parliament's Petitions Committee will consider a Westminster Hall debate in the House of Commons complex on the issue of farmers' protests and press freedom in India after an online petition attracted over 110,000 signatures.

While the name of Boris Johnson appears in his capacity as a west London Conservative Party Member of Parliament, Downing Street had categorically denied that the UK Prime Minister had signed the petition.

The House of Commons further clarified Thursday that while it is possible to view signatures on its petitions website by individual parliamentary constituencies, and the



data also gives the name of the constituency MP, the data does not show whether individual MPs have signed it.

India has called the remarks by foreign leaders and organisations on protests by farmers as 'ill-informed' and 'unwarranted', asserting that the matter pertains to the

internal affairs of a democratic country.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) in New Delhi issued a statement on Wednesday to highlight that the Parliament of India had passed "reformist legislation" for the agricultural sector, which "a very small section of farmers" have some reservations about and therefore the laws have been kept on hold while talks are held.

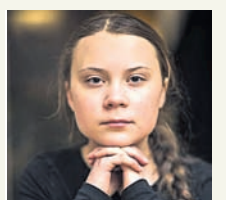
Emphasising that the protests must be seen in the context of India's democratic ethos and polity, the MEA in its statement said some vested interest groups have tried to mobilise international support against the country.

"Before rushing to comment on such matters, we would urge that the facts be ascertained, and a proper

I AM STILL WITH FARMERS: GRETA

NEW DELHI: Greta Thunberg's tweets on farmers have been cited in a case filed Thursday by the Delhi Police alleging an overseas "conspiracy" and an attempt to "promote enmity between groups".

The teen climate campaigner, unfazed, tweeted that she "still" stood with farmers and "no amount of threats" would change that. Greta Thunberg's tweets in support of the protests near Delhi against farm laws are among many posts that have drawn international attention over the past two days to the farmers' agitation that began late-November. The Cyber Cell of the Delhi Police is investigating these tweets but the subject of the FIR refers to Greta Thunberg's controversial tweet on a "toolkit" to support the farmers' protests.



understanding of the issues at hand should be undertaken. The temptation of sensationalist social media hashtags and comments, especially when resorted to by celebrities and

others, is neither accurate nor responsible," the MEA statement said following some high-profile celebrities tweeting over the agitation by farmers.

In London, a UK government spokesperson said, "Media freedom is vital for the protection of human rights and journalists all around the world must be free to do their job and to hold authorities to account without fear of arrest or violence."

"Free press plays a crucial role in our democracies and the government is putting their full weight behind this, including through our membership of the Media Freedom Coalition," the spokesperson said.

The petition on the official Parliament petitions website, entitled 'Urge the Indian Government to ensure safety of protesters & press freedom', calls on the British government to make a public statement on the "fKissanprotests & press freedoms".

MARKET WATCH		
INDEX		VARIATION
SENSEX	50614.29	↑ 358.54
NIFTY	14895.70	↑ 105.70
DOLLAR	72.99	↑ ₹0.18
EURO	87.79	↓ ₹0.19
GOLD	₹47,157	₹593
SILVER	₹67,002	₹1563

WEATHER		
	BHUB	CTK
TEMP MAX	31.4°C	31.4°C
TEMP MIN	14.7°C	13.4°C
Humidity	90%	79%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Fog or mist in the morning	



TARAJI 'EMBARRASSED' BY SUICIDAL THOUGHTS DURING COVID PANDEMIC

Actress Taraji P Henson says she feels embarrassed when she recalls feeling suicidal during the coronavirus pandemic last year. Henson said that she found herself in a 'dark place'. The actress discussed her worries with a friend and her suicidal thoughts quickly subsided.

LeCROY DENIES AFFAIR WITH JLO'S FIANCE RODRIGUEZ

Actor Madison LeCroy has finally opened up on rumours around her affair with Jennifer Lopez's boyfriend Alex Rodriguez. Madison says she did speak to Alex a couple of times on call but they have "never been physical" according to Page Six.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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

ARIES
Ganesh predicts success if you're involved with the media. Here's a golden chance to showcase your talent, as all eyes are on you. Your skills and talent will be acknowledged, and short-term goals will see fulfillment.

TAURUS
You are likely to succeed in everything you start today, predicts Ganesh. Financial transactions will be both satisfying and profitable in the afternoon. The day may not turn out to be as exciting as you may have expected. A thrilling evening will compensate for a rather tiring day, expects Ganesh.

GEMINI
A day filled with love, tenderness and delight — the kind of day when babies are born, families reunite, and good news never stops pouring in. However, the afternoon may be a little rough on a day, which will be, otherwise, high on happiness.

CANCER
For Crabs, this day brings good tidings for job, business as well as love life. The home is where your heart is. Today, you'll get to spend quality time at your most preferred place with your beloved. Just ensure that you remain loyal to your loved ones.

LEO
You may blame the weather, but it still doesn't change the fact that today, you shall be more or less in the doldrums, with little prospect of feeling strong and spirited, says Ganesh. This, coupled with other things, may lead to confrontation and quarrels with peers on the work front.

VIRGO
A candid conversation with your beloved is on the radar today. Labour to complete tasks you've been putting off for a while, says Ganesh. A trip to a sacred place is also blinking. But be advised, and weigh your options before making a choice.

LIBRA
Call it your charm, your influence or whatever you will, but today, it brings incredible results for you, says Ganesh. Also, you may personally contemplate a little bit of self-improvement for ensuring better prospects in the future. It is likely that some of you may decide to smarten up

SCORPIO
Endless ambitions and limitless energy — a day tailored to perfection, forecasts Ganesh. On the career front, you will be looking for some challenging activities. You will have more than enough vigour to tackle anything that work or academics can throw at you.

SAGITTARIUS
The artist in you will shine today, and how, says Ganesh. You'll be content with your possessions, which have been preserved over long years. Later in the day, your focus may shift to renovating or decorating your home by adding artifacts and furniture.

CAPRICORN
There is a creative side to your personality which will come to the fore now. With your unusual wit and intelligence you will guide others on their paths. Many will come to you for guidance and you will be able to spread a harmonious environment around. You don't look down upon people because of their problems which will earn you great respect in the society.

AQUARIUS
Today, you decide not to mix business with pleasure. A wise decision, says Ganesh. Your commitment to work increases and you don't want to harm your prospects. However, you reserve the evening only for your loved ones, who are more than happy to have you with them. A fine balance, says Ganesh.

PISCES
The feelings of resentment that you have been harbouring since some time will not allow you to take any criticism that comes your way in the right spirit. This does none harm, but you. Learn to let go of your negative thoughts and indulge in some harmless fun and frolic today, says Ganesh.

78TH GOLDEN GLOBE AWARDS

The Crown, Mank lead nominations

BLACK PANTHER ACTOR CHADWICK BOSEMAN HAS BEEN NOMINATED POSTHUMOUSLY IN THE BEST ACTOR CATEGORY FOR HIS LAST FILM BLACK BOTTOM



Los Angeles: The Herman Mankiewicz biopic *Mank* and the royal drama *The Crown* lead nominations at the 78th Golden Globe Awards, with both receiving six nods apiece. The award ceremony will be held virtually February 28 in two cities, New York and Los Angeles.

Among highlights is late star Chadwick Boseman's nomination in the Best Actor category. Boseman, who shot to global fame playing *Black Panther*, has been nominated posthumously for his role in Ma Rainey's *Black Bottom*, his final film.

Another highlight this year, on the film front, is a record three fe-

male directors being nominated — Chloe Zhao (*Nomadland*), Regina King (*One Night In Miami*) and Emerald Fennell (*Promising Young Woman*) are in the race to pick the top award.

In the overall count, Aaron Sorkin's film *The Trial Of The Chicago 7* and the comedy series *Schitt's Creek* follow *The Crown* and *Mank*, with five nominations each.

The nominees for the upcoming edition were announced by Sarah Jessica Parker and Taraji P Henson Wednesday in which it was revealed that Sacha Baron Cohen, Anya Taylor-Joy and Olivia Colman are leading the actor and actress nominations, with all of them receiving two nods each, reports variety.com.

Another thing that the nominations highlighted was the gradual

shift of Hollywood from traditional studios and cable networks to the streaming space. Global streaming giant Netflix is dominating the pack with a staggering 42 nominations across film and television categories, which includes nods for *The Trial Of The Chicago 7*, *The Queen's Gambit* and *The Crown*.

Amazon Studios also has 10 nominations, including nods for *Borat Subsequent Moviefilm* and its *Small Axe* anthology series. Hulu gets 10 nods as well, which included nominations for *Palm Springs* and *Ramy*. *Mank*, a black-and-white ode to old Hollywood, which was released by Netflix, got six nominations, which includes nods for Best Drama, as well as for director David Fincher and for Gary Oldman's performance as Citizen Kane screenwriter Herman J. Mankiewicz.

The Crown, which leads the television category with six nominations, got mentions in Best TV drama, as well as for the performances of several of its cast members. Olivia Colman who plays the monarch, and Emma Corrin, who essays the role of Princess Diana, picked up nominations.

Adah to play bipolar character in 'Chuha Billi'

Mumbai: Adah Sharma will next be seen in a film titled *Chuha Billi*, a dark subject that casts her as a girl who is bipolar and depressed.

"*Chuha Billi* is a dark subject. I play a girl who is bipolar. She is depressed and she isn't coping with it well. I would like to believe I'm exactly the opposite of this character, and that's what attracted me the most to playing her. We did a lot of workshops for the film, too," Adah said.

She added that the film's director Prasad Kadam wanted her to show her switching 'poles in just seconds'.

"She's very excited about something and very sad in just seconds. He also wanted the changeover being subtle so mostly it all lies in the eyes. I can't wait for

people to watch the film with all the love coming in for just the teaser and the poster," Adah said.

IANS



Tiger shares his flying kick woes

Mumbai: Action star and fitness enthusiast Tiger Shroff Thursday shared that flying kicks, something that he aces, look easy on video games than in real life.

In an Instagram video clip, Tiger is seen running and then performing a mid-air flip, before kicking his partner to the ground. "Why are some of these moves so much easier to do in video games," he wrote as the caption. Tiger's stunt stunned everyone, including his sister Krishna Shroff, who commented: "BRUH, what???"

Krishna's beau Eban Hyams said: "Dang", Singer Shaan wrote: "is this real...or a video game???"

Singer Armaan Malik posted: "im gonna be hiding the next time we jam." Tiger's mother Ayesha Shroff simply said: "Wowwwwwwwzaaaaa!!!"

The Heropanti actor recently joined hands with tennis icon Mahesh Bhupati to expand his active wear brand into various domains including fitness equipment and health food.

IANS



Akshay, Saina trolled over identical tweets

Mumbai: Action star Akshay Kumar and badminton ace Saina Nehwal came under the scanner Thursday for posting identical tweets about the ongoing farmers protest. They are being slammed for the copy-paste job, #SpinelessCelebs trended on Twitter.

From Ekta Kapoor, Karan Johar, Ajay Devgn to Sachin Tendulkar, global personalities took to Twitter Wednesday to urge people not to fall for false propaganda against India. But it was Akshay and Saina's posts that have created a buzz as these were word for word similar.

Their tweets came after international personalities such as Rihanna, Mia Khalifa and Greta Thunberg tweeted in favour of the farmers' protest in India. Soon, the Indian celebrities were reacting to a statement by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) about the issue.

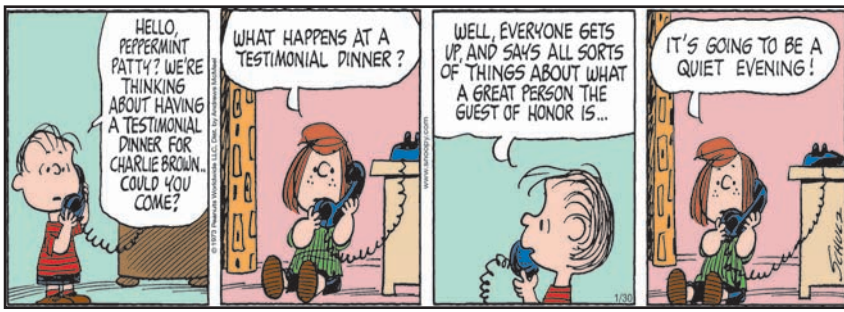
The similarity between the tweets of Akshay and Saina was not missed by netizens, who minced no words while pointing it out on social media. Soon, #SpinelessCelebs was trending on Twitter: "Disappointed with the fraternity tweeting identical tweets that make it more like a marketing gimmick," tweeted Farah Khan Ali.

User Kirti Azad wrote: "Nakal mein bhi akal chahiye #SpinelessCelebs".

IANS



PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

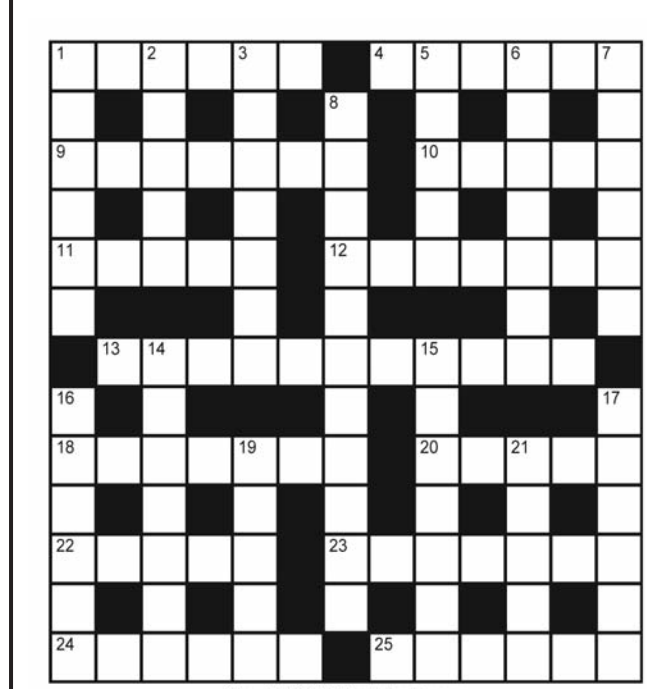


BREVITY



FUN post

CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Cleric's stand
 - 4 Gabled extension
 - 9 Napoleon Bonaparte's birthplace
 - 10 Implied
 - 11 Swift
 - 12 Beseech
 - 13 Money man?
 - 18 Soothing drink (4,3)
 - 20 Exhilarate
 - 22 Below
 - 23 Support
 - 24 Puts forth effort
 - 25 Emeralds. e.g.
 - 6 Large heavy knife
 - 7 Spin
 - 8 A real live wire (5,6)
 - 14 Old sewing machine part
 - 15 Delinquent
 - 16 Dense
 - 17 Adjourn
 - 19 Gypsy's deck
 - 21 Come to terms

SUDOKU

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

A	1	2	B	6	3			9
	4	3	7	1	9	A		
5	8	C	0			4		
		4	9	A			5	
	6	B	D	3	4	7	E	5
		D	6	0	4			
11								
	5	3	B	C	1			6
E						4	2	C
			8			9	7	D
	3	9	2	6		A	1	0
								4
		D		7	0			6
						A		5
D	7					E	8	2
0	B					9	5	C
								8
						B		1

SOLUTIONS

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

CROSSWORD

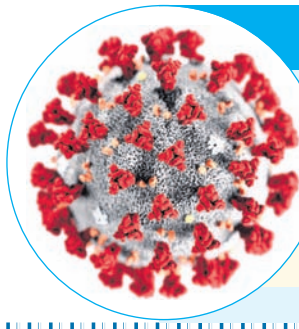
SUDOKU

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



AWARENESS DRIVE

A street play underway at AG Square in Bhubaneswar, Thursday, to create awareness on road safety norms



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	10,50,81,190	7,68,10,847	22,82,985
India	1,07,91,123	1,04,79,508	1,54,742
Odisha	3,35,369	3,32,611	1,907

BJD, Cong slam rly allocation

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Feb 4: Criticising the Union government for its step-motherly attitude towards Odisha, Congress MP from Koraput Saptagiri Ulaka Thursday expressed disappointment over the allocation of funds to Odisha in the railway budget.

Ulaka said that the Union government has allocated peanuts to the state in the name of railway budget.

Ulaka also said that he had discussed Gunupur-Therubali rail line project recently with Union Railway Minister Piyush Goyal and was assured by the minister that he would clarify with the state government on cost sharing and approve the project. Ulaka questioned the Union government's allocation for the Gunupur-Therubali rail line.

The Congress MP also termed



₹40 lakh sanctioned for new South Coast Railway Zone and new Rayagada Division in East Coast Railway as a cruel joke with the state. He urged the government to revise the allocation as the project is pending for a long time.

Expressing disappointment over the allocation to Odisha in the Railway Budget 2021-22, State Transport Minister Padmanabha Behera said the state will get only ₹4,500 crore which is much less

than the state's demand.

"We had demanded ₹7,200 crore but the budgetary allocation is only ₹4,500 crore, which includes ₹500 crore for the Khurda-Bolangir railway project. There is no mention of new line or new project in the budget," Behera said here Thursday.

The state government had proposed for some new projects, but not a single has been taken up, he said. Significantly Biju Janta Dal (BJD)

Rajya Sabha MP Amar Patnaik also expressed dismay over the allocation of funds to Odisha. Patnaik said that this year's allocation to Odisha is very less and the Union government has not sanctioned fund for any new project.

"Allocation of fund is actually reduced. What is shown in capital budget as approximately ₹4500 crore included ₹500 crore of state for Khurda-Bolangir and the out of budget funding of Angul-Sukinda and Haridaspur-Paradip SPV lines," the Biju Janata Dal MP said.

Meanwhile, Union Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said that Odisha has received highest allocation of fund under Railway budget from the Union government. He said the Railway ministry has allocated around ₹7000 crore to Odisha for the strengthening of the rail network in the state. The minister said that the Narendra Modi government has made highest allocation to the state since independence.

Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) President Niranjan Patnaik said, "The Modi government has failed to live up to the expectations of the state. The state was again ignored by the Centre. As per the requirements of the state and keeping in the mind the revenues of the state, adequate steps were not taken."

The Modi government has failed to live up to the expectations of the state. The state was ignored by the Centre yet again

NIRANJAN PATNAIK | PRESIDENT, OPCC

We demanded ₹7,200 crore but the budgetary allocation is only ₹4,500 crore. There is no mention of new line or new project in the Budget

PADMANABHA BEHERA | STATE TRANSPORT MINISTER

Railway ministry has allocated around ₹7000 crore to Odisha for the strengthening of the rail network in the state. The Narendra Modi government has made highest allocation since independence

DHARMENDRA PRADHAN | UNION MINISTER, PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS

Koraput collector transferred

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 4: In the backdrop of fresh row over the disputed Kotia village, the state government has transferred Koraput collector Madhusudan Mishra.

Project director of Cuttack district rural development agency (DRDA) Abdaal Akhtar has been posted as new collector of the tribal dominated district. Mishra has been transferred as additional secretary in Forest and Environment department.

The sudden move of government came in the wake of Andhra Pradesh government reportedly changing the names of three villages on the inter-state border area and notification issued to conduct panchayat election there. Andhra government has changed names of Tala Ganjeipadar, Patu Sineri and Fagun Sineri in the disputed Kotia region.

Even though the border dispute in Kotia region is sub-judice in the Supreme Court, the Koraput district administration was reportedly unaware of the latest move of Andhra government.

To protect people from the lure of Andhra Pradesh, the state government had announced a package for the development of Kotia area. Another revised package may be announced soon.

PURI HARASSMENT

Helpline number launched

POST NEWS NETWORK

Puri, Feb 4: A few days after a tourist couple from West Bengal was allegedly assaulted inside a private bus in Puri, the police today launched a helpline number to ensure safety of tourists visiting the pilgrim town.

The tourists can dial Helpline number- 63709 67100, which will be available round the clock as a single-window contact number, to lodge any grievance. The number will be displayed inside all tourist buses.

A meeting of all private tourist bus associations was held under the chairmanship of Puri SP Kanwar Vishal Singh today for discussion on various related issues. It was decided that sensitization and behavioral change sessions of all bus drivers and helpers will be held frequently.

Office bearers of the associations assured the district police of their full cooperation to ensure best user experience to all tourists coming to Puri, a world class tourist destination and the land of Lord Jagannath. It is pertinent to mention here that a tourist couple from West Bengal was allegedly beaten up by staff of a private bus.

PIPLI BY-ELECTION

Major parties discuss potential candidates

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 4: Major political parties in the state are now working towards finding their best candidates for the upcoming Pipili by-elections with the initial formalities for the poll preparations beginning in the state.

has started garnering views from the ground level workers and the same would be communicated to the top leaders here and at the Centre.

"We are now in the process of getting inputs from our people on the ground and also trying to mobilize support. Based on the ground inputs, we will communicate it to



Many BJD party men are rallying behind the kin of deceased MLA Pradeep Maharathy. However, the final call lies with party supremo Naveen Patnaik

The Congress party has started discussing the same while some ground visits were also said to be scheduled for the Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) President Niranjan Patnaik.

"We have held some meetings in this regard. No ground work has been done yet. I will be visiting the area Thursday and discuss candidature related issues. We have been garnering inputs from our party men. I should not comment on the issue of giving the tickets to Maharathy's kin," he said.

BJP has also started the process. Party spokesperson Lekhashri Samantsinghar said that the party

the Central Parliamentary Committee which will take a final call on the same," Lekhashri told **Orissa POST**.

The BJD has also started their series of meetings. Party Observer for Pipili Pratap Keshari Deb this week held a meeting with the Block presidents of Delang and Pipili and discussed the roadmap for the polls.

A good chunk of the leaders in the regional party have now started gathering support for the family members of deceased MLA Pradeep Maharathy, however they are on record claim that the final decision would be taken by the Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik.

7-year RI for 7 convicts in chit fund case

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Feb 4: The Odisha Protection of Interests of Depositors (OPID) court here Thursday awarded seven years of rigorous imprisonment (RI) besides imposing a fine on seven persons on charges of defrauding many gullible depositors on the promise of hefty returns, official sources said.

The court's ruling came while hearing two cases of fraud by Siddha Mahapurusa Money Society, a firm is accused of duping several investors to a tune of ₹8 crore on the promise of huge returns.

In the first case, the court awarded seven years of RI to four persons in connection with Nikirai police station case (73/2016) under Section 420 of the Indian Penal Code, 6 of the Odisha Protection of Interests of Depositors Act, 4/5 Prize Chits and Money Circulation Schemes (Banning) Act.

The court imposed also a fine of ₹5 lakh on the accused, according to a tweet of the DGP.

In the second case, the OPID court convicted three persons in connection with a case (12/2017) registered with the Nikirai police in Kendrapara district under Sections 6 of the Odisha Protection of Interests of Depositors Act, 4/5 Prize Chits and Money Circulation Schemes (Banning) Act.

The court awarded 7 years of RI and 10 lakhs fine, the DGP added.

CRAFTS FAIR CONCLUDES



Orissa High Court Chief Justice S Muralidhar, Commissioner-cum-Secretary to Handlooms, Textiles & Handicrafts department, Shubha Sarma and other dignitaries visit stalls on the concluding day of Toshali National Crafts Fair-2021 at Janata Maidan in Bhubaneswar, Thursday. (Bottom) Girls playing with bubbles at the fair. OP PHOTOS

Restrictions on Magha Saptami dip

POST NEWS NETWORK

Konark, Feb 4: The annual holy dip rituals at Chandrabhaga beach observed on the occasion of Magha Saptami, the seventh day of the waxing phase of the Odia month of Magha, will be held with limited devotees this year.

The Puri district administration and the Konark NAC Thursday organised a preparatory meeting for the annual ritual. Puri Collector Samarth Verma presided over the meeting.

Participating in the preparatory meeting, Sports and Youth Services minister Tusharkanti Behera said, "The ritual would be organised with strict adherence to the Covid-19 norms of the Centre and state government. Officials of the district administration and all other stake holders will work in unison for smooth conduct of the holy dip."

As per the information provided by Behera, only 500 people will be allowed to participate during the procession and that many devotees can take part in the holy dip with the



deities. Verma put emphasis on all precautionary measures at the venue to keep novel coronavirus at bay. "Section 144 would be clamped at the fair ground to check unnecessary congregation. The annual ritual would be conducted as per the religious tradition," said Puri Sub-Collector Bhabataran Sahu.

As per the tradition, the presiding deities of Konark, Lord Tribeniswara, Lord Aisaneswara and Lord Dakshineswara embark on a grand procession to the Tirtha Mandap at Chandrabhaga during the auspicious occasion.

The deities then march to the NAC Bhoga Mandap and later they are taken for their customary bath

early in the morning. The devotees then take holy dip at the beach before sunrise and offer their obeisance to the Sun God.

"All issues with regard to the rituals, drinking water supply, sanitation, power supply, health service, security arrangement and fire safety measures were discussed at the meeting," said an official of the district administration.

Among others, Puri Additional Collector Binay Kumar Dash Kakatpur BDO Sudhir Kumar Nayak, Gop BDO Diptirani Das, district Information and Public Relation officer Jitendriya Jena and Konark NAC executive officer M Srinivas were present at the meeting.

INTACH decries violations in Ekamra Kshetra project

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 4: The discovery of the remains of a temple and other structures near the Suka-Sari temple complex, close to Lingaraj Temple in Bhubaneswar has not only created a buzz but also caught the attention of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI).

Allegations have been levelled against the Odisha government citing violation of several guidelines on the pretext of carrying out the much-hyped Ekamra Kshetra development project.

The controversy over the destruction of ancient monuments around the 11th century Lingaraj Temple in Odisha's capital Bhubaneswar amid a State-sponsored redevelopment drive, spiralled with the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) stating that irreparable damage had been done to the temple and ancient shrines around it.

An INTACH team comprising AB Tripathy, Sanjib Hota, Anil Dhir, Biswajit Mohanty, Ileana Citarasti, Debabrata Panigrahi, Binode Dash, Deepak Nayak, Satyam Jyoti,

HERITAGE DAMAGED

Allegations have been levelled against the Odisha government citing violation of several guidelines of AMSAR Act

The ancient artefacts that were damaged in the process include lattice work, decorative scroll works and carved stone pieces

Ramahari Jena, Prafulla Swain and Debasish Mohapatro did a preliminary site survey at ground level and sent a report to the centre.

According to state convener of INTACH Amiya Bhusan Tripathy, there was no guideline formed or any suggestions taken from ASI or INTACH before demolition of the heritage site. Use of heavy machinery in such a sensitive spot is uncalled for and is a straight violation of the AMSAR Act 1958, he said.

Anil Dhir said, "It's a clear cultural genocide. What are the Sevayats and the Pandas of the Lingaraj temple doing? A shame on every self re-



Broken fragments of the unearthed shrine

specting Hindu. Imagine this being done for any icon, idol or religious place of any other faith. I had written to the Govt for last 7 months to have a ground-penetrating radar (GPR) done at the site before excavation. This is a normal procedure which lets researchers explore large-scale archaeological sites."

The ancient artefacts that were damaged in the process include lattice work, decorative scroll works, carved stone pieces, Gajavidalas, Nayikas, Salabhanjikas, Chaitanya medallions and many more. Suka Sari temple precinct is one of the important locations in Ekamra Kshetra. It is also mentioned in various an-



A temple plinth unearthed recently

cient treatises like Ekamra Purana, Ekamra Chandrika etc. Moreover the present ground level is much higher than the earlier ground level so it is evident that many heritage resources must be present underneath.

Demolition of the 700 years old Shiva Tirtha Matha was also assessed. Except for a small 15ft by 15

ft temple present inside the Shiva Tirtha Matha, everything has been razed and the stone blocks used to fill the plinths of the surrounding. The surviving temple is perched high on an earthen mound, and is prone to collapse. Moreover it is clear violation of the AMSAR Act 1958, amended in 2010.

ILS conducts 1.5 lakh Covid-19 tests

Bhubaneswar, Feb 4: The Institute of Life Sciences (ILS) here reached a cumulative figure of conducting 1.50 lakhs tests for novel coronavirus February 2. All these tests were conducted using RT-PCR with the samples provided by the Health Department from 26 districts.

cases from the analyzed samples. With the developed infrastructure and trained human resources, ILS could play a major role in infectious diseases surveillance, management and research in future, said Parida. Apart from testing efforts, ILS scientists have also contributed to Covid-19 research and development. ILS has sequenced nearly 300 virus

Apart from testing efforts, ILS scientists have also contributed to Covid-19 research and development. The premier institute has sequenced nearly 300 virus genomes and developed 17 virus cultures

genomes and developed 17 virus cultures. It has established a bio repository for clinical samples for assisting research communities for developing drugs and vaccines. An advanced transnational platform for animal challenge studies is being established for testing vaccine candidates as well as potential drug formulations, Parida added. The city-based ILS has been identified as one of the 10 institutions in the country to carry out whole genome sequencing and establish-

State reports one fresh fatality

Odisha's coronavirus caseload mounted to 3,35,369 Thursday as 87 more people tested positive for the infection

BHUBANESWAR: State's Covid-19 caseload mounted to 3,35,369 Thursday as 87 more people tested positive for the infection, while one fresh fatality pushed the death toll to 1,907, a senior Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department official said. Of the fresh cases, 51 were reported from quarantine centres and 36 were detected during contact tracing. Sundargarh recorded the highest number of new cases at 26, followed by Mayurbhanj at 9 and Khurda at 7, the official said. Regret to inform the demise of 68-year-old Covid positive patient of Kalahandi district who was also suffering from hypertension, the health department said on Twitter. The state had reported the last coronavirus fatality January 25.

Of the 1,907 Covid-19 deaths, Khurda district accounted for 335, followed by Ganjam (248), Sundargarh (173), Cuttack (141) and Puri (117). Fifty-three other coronavirus patients have died due to comorbidities, the official said. Odisha now has 910 active cases, and 3,32,499 patients have so far recovered from the disease. The state has conducted over 77.96 lakh sample tests, including 21,742 Wednesday, and the positivity rate now stands at 4.3 per cent. According to the official, the state has vaccinated 2,13,346 health workers till February 3. The health department said that 1,92,437 frontline workers had been registered for receiving COVID vaccines in the second phase of the inoculation drive scheduled to begin February 6.

ing virus cultures of strains as a part of the Genomic Surveillance program of the Union Government. The scientists and staffers of ILS have taken the first dose of Covid

vaccine, Covaxin, recently. "Everybody has been found normal after vaccination. ILS director Ajay Parida took the first jab," said an official of the institution.

IN MEMORIAM



Dignitaries including Governor Ganeshi Lal pay floral tributes to Utkal Gourav Madhusudan Das on his death anniversary near Raj Bhawan in Bhubaneswar, Thursday

FOCUS ON CANCER CARE

Bhubaneswar, Feb. 4: SUM Ultimate Medicare here observed World Cancer Day, Thursday. Addressing the meeting, Biraj Mohan Mishra, chief of the hospital medical services said, "Around one million new cancer cases are under various stages of treatment. Therefore Comprehensive Cancer Care is the need of the hour and as the number is on the rise, there is an urgent need for spreading awareness to tackle the menace."

Interacting with Orissa POST, Dr Saurjya Ranjan Das of SUM hospital said, "This year, the theme is 'I Am and I Will' which is a multi-year campaign mainly focused on the community as a whole and the steps that each individual should take to reduce the global impact of cancer. Every person has the responsibility to create awareness in their family, community, and cities. It's a combined effect of the enduring power of cooperation and collective action should come together with an agenda to achieve a healthier and brighter world free of cancer. It also aims to reduce misconceptions about cancer and to help people. Moreover it's all about the right information to fight the disease."

Brig. (Dr) Mishra also felicitated several cancer survivors on the occasion in the program in the presence of senior doctors and officials.

Guidelines for 2nd phase PG spot admission out

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 4: Higher Education department Thursday issued guidelines and timeline for PG Spot admission-II in universities and colleges for the session 2020-21. As per the timeline the merit list will be published February 6, 2021 and candidates from the merit list will have to report to the universities and colleges February 8 and 9. After that the selection list of the candidates will be released February 10. The selection will be based on merit (Career mark + CPET mark).

There will be no slide up option for spot selection. The document verification, payment and admission of the candidate from selection list will be done February 11. The data updation of admitted students in Student Academic Management System (SAMS) portal will be updated February 12. As per the guidelines, if some vacancies still persist after the date of admission (February 11), then the universities and colleges are au-

thorised to fill up the vacancies out of the candidates who had reported during the reporting periods and the admission process may continue till February 20, 2021. For the candidates who will take admission, maximum of 5 days will be given to them to submit University Leaving Certificate (ULC)/ College Leaving Certificate (CLC) from their earlier universities/colleges. They will be asked to submit undertaking and allowed to take admission.



Scooter used to carry Jharapula recovered

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar/Rasulpur, Feb 4: In a significant development, the Jajpur police have recovered the scooter used by accused Rakesh Swain and his associate to carry the body of Jharaphula Nayak, the student of Rama Devi University here. The scooter has been recovered from Sundarapada area under Airfield police limits in the Capital city. The two-wheeler is reportedly registered in the name of Rakesh. Rakesh and his friend took the body of Jharaphula by the scooter to Jajpur where they dumped it.

Meanwhile, Rakesh is likely to be produced before the court in Jajpur Friday as his three-day remand ended Thursday. Notably, a team of Jajpur police Wednesday took the accused to a guesthouse at Dharma Vihar area in Bhubaneswar where he had stayed with Jharaphula January 26. According to sources, the police team recreated the crime scene at the guesthouse's room to get a clear picture on the sequence of events on the fateful day. Jajpur police also recovered the dress that Rakesh wore on the fateful day.

NCC CAMP ON NATIONAL INTEGRATION CONCLUDES

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Feb 4: 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat', the webinar hosted by NCC Group Cuttack under the aegis of NCC Directorate Odisha here, culminated Thursday. As many as 200 NCC cadets from Odisha, Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh participated in the webinar that kick-started January 28. During the closing ceremony, Colonel Rajinish Kapoor, Group Commander, NCC Group Cuttack, thanked the participants for putting up excellent performance, making the online camp a memorable event for cadets. Commodore Somen Bannerjee, Dy DG, Odisha Directorate, had opened the webinar January 28. Based on the theme of anti-corruption, the camp was conducted by way of presentations, discus-



sions and interactions to showcase the history, geography, tourism, cuisines and cultural heritage of Odisha, Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh. The camp aimed at fostering the spirit of national integration and solidarity by overcoming cultural, religious, geographical, environmental and linguistic barriers which was evident in the enthusiastic participation of the cadets from these states, said a source.

OSAP personnel on temple duty dies

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

Puri, Feb 4: A personnel of Odisha State Armed Police (OSAP) on duty at Srimandir here died Thursday, an official said. Sources said that Chittaranjan Naik of Mayurbhanj district, who was on duty at Ghandidwar in the 12th century shrine, suddenly fell down and became unconscious. He was initially rushed to the district headquarters hospital and later to SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack where his health further deteriorated, they said, adding that he died during treatment. He had joined OSAP 3rd Battalion stationed at Koraput and was on deputation to Puri for temple duty.

Chief Secy launches MPL 2.0

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 4: To augment revenue collection in the urban local bodies (ULBs), Chief Secretary Suresh Chandra Mahapatra Thursday launched the second edition of Municipal Premier League, (MPL 2.0). The first season of the Municipal Premier League was launched in only nine Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) towns in 2019-20 and it has improved the collections of the ULBs by 37 per cent as compared with 2018-19. Now, all 114 ULBs are included under MPL 2.0 where digital collections through MPoS (Mobile Point of Sale) machines will be made through 900 plus tax officials along with Mission Shakti Self-Help Groups (SHGs). Based on the performance of the tax officials/Mission Shakti SHGs will be



Chief Secretary SC Mahapatra (inset) interacts through videoconferencing awarded after the conclusion of the league. MPL is the first-of-its-kind competition for tax officials initiated by the state government. The main objective of conducting MPL is to motivate tax collecting officials, recognize their contributions through exciting contest format modeled on the IPL and in turn to improve the internal revenue generation of the ULBs across the state.

SPREADING AWARENESS



Puri CDMO Sujata Mishra flags off an awareness vehicle on cancer on the occasion of World Cancer Day, Thursday

ADMISSION QUOTA FOR EWS

Parents' body meets S&ME minister

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 4: A delegation of Odisha Parents' Federation met School and Mass Education (S&ME) Minister Samir Ranjan Dash Thursday and held discussions regarding the implementation of 25 per cent reservation in online admission for economically weaker section (EWS) and disadvantaged group (DG) under the Right to Education (RTE) Act. The parents also discussed various issues pertaining to the implementation of the court order and government notification on fee waiver with the minister. The minister assured the delegation of proper implementation of the direction on fee waiver, sources said. The S&ME minister told the delegation that the government will soon launch the RTE Paradarshi on-



IN NUGGETS

THE PARENTS ALSO DISCUSSED VARIOUS ISSUES PERTAINING TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COURT ORDER AND GOVERNMENT NOTIFICATION ON FEE WAIVER WITH THE MINISTER

THE MINISTER ASSURED THE DELEGATION OF PROPER IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DIRECTION ON FEE WAIVER

line portal for admission of 25 per cent students coming under the EWS and DG categories before the new academic year 2021-22. The date for the portal launch would be decided soon, the minister said. The delegation also demanded similar calendars for all the boards-BSE, CBSE and ICSE. To which, the minister agreed to call a meeting and look into the matter, sources

added. The parents also demanded recruitment of computer teachers for computer education in schools. In the wake of the hunger strike by the parents' body January 28 seeking implementation of the OHRC as well as the S&ME department's orders regarding the uploading of list of books in the school website, the district education officers (DEOs) wrote to the principals of private

English medium schools to implement the order and upload the list books as per the NCERT syllabi. According to sources, Khurda district Collector has directed the district education officer (DEO) to serve notice on all private English medium schools to comply with the orders of Odisha Human Rights Commission (OHRC) as well as the S&ME department.

FOR CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS CONTACT OUR BOOKING STATIONS

Acharya Vihar-Dayal Agency-9437135727, A.P. Tours and Travel, Maitri Vihar, C.S. Pur- 9861301598, Aurobindo Market-Sai Audio & Electronics-9438304668, Airport Road-Sai Baba Variety Store-9090071530, Anish Infotech- Tankapani Road-9861341488, Bapuji Nagar- Dreamland Studio- 9777517314, Baramunda Rental Colony-Maa Ramchandi Communication-9658821469, Baramunda Housing Board Colony-Pappu Variety Store-9040500106, Cuttack Road-Alishan Snacks-8984236754, District Center (Chandrasekharpur)-Sai Google Mart-9776056507, Forest Park-DTDC Couriers & Services (HB Services)-7381024156, IRC Village-Bapi Xerox-9090090404, Gift Hut(Antriksh Gifts & Decors Pvt. Ltd.)-9954781084, Pruthvi Medicine-9853314816, Janpath-Krupajal Book Store-7978646669, Jaydev Vihar-AK Enterprises-7978116618, Subam Sai Books Store-8895550649, Swain Graphics- 9337121249, Jagannath Mobile Point- Janpath Road, Ram Mandir- 9938475415, Kanan Vihar-Auro Electronics-8260697560, Khandagiri- Swosti Mobile Centre- 7992914045, World Solution- 9938317559, KIIT Road-Jugad Jn-9338545031, Laxmi Sagar-Aditya Mobile-9438191836, Lewis Road-Spider Web-7809186415, Metro Satellite City-Arogya Mitra Medicine Store-9853621640, Madhusudan Nagar-Mohapatra Communication-9124446664, Maa Santoshi travels- Gajapati Nagar- 9777675867, Nayapalli- The Cake Room- 7873660137, Near Mayfair Lagoon-Cookiemann-9439491273, Nigamananda-Omm Sai Travels-9668284823, Nr Cosmopolis Main Gate- Shreeram Medical Store- 8763711714, Net Square- Niladri Vihar (C.S. Pur)- 7205634821, Priyadarshini Market-Astro Point-9938134346, R.N. General Store-Nilakantha Nagar-9438642501, Sahid Nagar- Maa Communication- 9437353424, Sahini General Store- Near Patia Railway Station, Mahavir Vihar- 9937586626, Satya Nagar-Baishnavi Mixture & Sweets-7894821764, Samantapur- Download Point-7504557743, Sailashree Vihar-Harsha Book Store-8093449515, Saheed Nagar-Jagannath Graphics-7978652670, Photo World-7978468191, Sainath Photo Studio-8984436129, Shanti & Co-9937071063, Siripur-Omm Maa Sarala Communication-9777682449, Sushree fashion- Jagmara-9938714347, Shree Vision- Sailashree Vihar-9861476678, Unit-3-LIC of India Premium Point-9337787080, Unit-7- LIC Premium Point- 9338227422, VSS Nagar-Friends Cake & Bake-8658200930, Jeet Infoworld-7205195782, XIMB Square-LD Books-9658061373.

Subarnarekha port project hangs fire

LAND ACQUISITION HAS GOT DELAYED WHILE LOCAL RESISTANCE IN SIX PANCHAYATS CREATES HURDLE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhograi, Feb 4: A delay in land acquisition and opposition from locals has resulted in procrastination of the ambitious river-based Subarnarekha port project in Balasore, a report said.

According to the report, the state government had announced setting up of the port about 14 years ago. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had laid foundation stone for its work in 2019, but its work has not taken off as yet. Addressing a public rally in Bhograi in December 2006, the Chief Minister had announced the port project at an estimated cost of Rs 5,000 crore at Kirtania.

However, just two days after this announcement, its location was changed. The state government signed an agreement with the Chennai-based Creative Port Development Limited to set up this port at Choumukhi.

In 2018, Tata Steel proposed to pump in about 51 per cent of the total investment. The Chief Minister, while addressing a youth rally in

Balasore February 13, 2019, claimed the port project will create scope of employment for 12,000 people with development of roads, railway connectivity in the region.

In view of the port project, the central government had announced a mega project with an investment of Rs 75,000 crore. However, over 60,000 people living in six coastal panchayats have opposed the port project and the central project.

Locals united under the Bhitamati Surakhya Committee expressed fears that the project would displace people on large areas while their age-old livelihood hinged on paddy, fishing, betel and betel nut farming. On the other hand, just 10 nautical miles from the port project, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has announced a sea-based port at Ramnagar in East Midnapore district. She assured that the people in the area would not be affected by displacement while 15,000 people will be provided with a scope of engagement. Reliable sources said the port in West Bengal will be started in February. Although 14 years have passed, the



Representative photo

Subarnarekha project has been hanging fire while some opposition leaders and environmentalists have supported the project opponents. Another problem is that some outfits have been battling for the port to be set up at Kirtania or at Bichitrapur.

District planning board chief and Bhograi MLA Ananta Das said the state government will decide on the port project. Former MP Rabindra Jena said the port, once commissioned, will bolster the social-economic condition of people in the

district. Union Minister Pratap Chandra Sarangi said due to delay in land acquisition, the project is getting delayed. "I have written in this regard to the state and central government. I have also demanded compensation for those who will be displaced by the project," Sarangi added.

Congress leader Sadashiba Das said, "The project has failed owing to apathy of the state government and people's representatives in the area. Convener of the Bhitamati

Surlhya Committee Arun Jena observed that the government wanted to snatch the livelihood of lakhs of people by displacing them in the name of development. "The project will protect interests of capitalists. We will put up fight and will not spare our land," he resolved.

The project was reviewed at a high-level meeting here a few months ago. The project requires 692 acres; 4.24 acres is required for railway connectivity and 1.53 acre is needed for construction of access road.

Scams mar Swachh Bharat Mission

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nabarangpur, Feb 4: The Centre has been pushing sanitation through Swachh Bharat Mission, but the object of the scheme has been defeated in many cases due to alleged irregularities in Nabarangpur, a report said.

According to the report, action has been taken against some officials in certain cases after investigation while many officials at other places under Jharigaon block have not been covered under investigation.

As per official guidelines governing the Swachh Bharat Mission, the final list of the beneficiaries will be decided by the executive engineer of the RWSS. It must be approved by the Collector. The names of the beneficiaries as per a village level survey will be displayed at the panchayat offices. The beneficiary himself/herself can do the toilet construction. In cases of any beneficiary expressing his/her inability to carry on the toilet construction work, any SHG, or village committee or a voluntary organization will be asked to work construction.

After construction of every toilet, Rs 12,000 will be credited into the accounts of the beneficiaries. It was learnt that 118 vendors have constructed 26,500 toilets in this block. Rs 31.86 crore has been provided to the vendors' accounts.

However, Congress leaders like Pradipt Majhi and Munna Tripathy alleged that the block administration had stalled the bill



of 1980 toilets. They claimed that 405 beneficiaries have filed complaints at Jharigaon police station in this regard.

Meanwhile, BDO Debendra Bahadur Singh Dharua and JE Sunil Samal have been suspended.

As per the Collector's letter-3168/2018 dated December 2018, the DRDA's PD had been asked to monitor the toilet construction works in Chandahandi, Jharigaon and Raigarh blocks.

It was alleged that no action was taken against some vendors and officials, who are responsible for the irregularities. The BDO said some vendors have been served notices while toilet work of some beneficiaries has been stuck halfway. Beneficiaries demanded that the state government start a high level investigation and taken action against the guilty. When asked about a vigilance probe into the matter, the BDO remained mum.

2K SHG members taken for a big ride

POST NEWS NETWORK

Phulbani, Feb 4: Another ponzi fraud has come to the fore in Phulbani area of Kandhamal district. It was alleged that a chit fund firm named CMC Odisha had swindled over Rs 10 lakh from 2,000 members of 400 SHGs. Gullible tribal women are in a spot after losing their money to the firm, a report said.

According to the report, the chit fund firm had opened its office near the Phulbani SBI branch four months back. On its signboard, its head office was mentioned at Krishna Garden, Phase-II, Plot-18 in Jagamara.

Women alleged that the staff of the chit fund company later opened sub-branch offices at Phulbani, Khajuripada, Tikabali and Baliguda. They won the confidence of the people by assuring them that they will provide loan of Rs 40,000 to each member of the SHG within 45 days. They also visited villages and formed SHGs by involving tribal women. They formed 200 SHGs in Phulbani, 100 in



Khajuripada, 50 SHGs in Tikabali and 50 in Baliguda.

Later, they collected Rs 500 from each as membership fund and issued receipts to them.

After some days, when women SHG members went to the CMC Odisha office, it was closed. Then they suspected foul play.

However, the field staff of the company were mostly locals. They are now in the firing line of the investors. When the staff were asked to pay money, they had contacted the Bhubaneswar office of the chit fund company. But none could be contacted. Nearly, 18 staff of the chit fund firm have filed complaints at Phulbani and Khajuripada police stations about the financial wrongdoings. Police have started an investigation into the alleged fraud, some SHG members said.

Job fraud: Panigrahy sent to Berhampur jail for 3 days

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, Feb 4: Golanthara police produced Gopalpur MLA and former minister Pradeep Panigrahy in the court of Sub-Divisional Judicial Magistrate (SDJM) here, Thursday. A police team brought Panigrahy, currently under judicial custody in Jharpada Special Jail, to the city.

The expelled leader of the ruling Biju Janata Dal (BJD) was arrested by the Crime Branch December 3 in connection with a fraud case registered at the Cyber Police Station. Golanthara police have registered three similar cases against Panigrahy.

Meanwhile, SDJM Jeetendriya Panigrahi remanded Panigrahy to three day judicial custody of Berhampur Circle jail starting from Thursday. There the jailor and jail doctor will look after his health condition, the defendant's advocate Deepak Patnaik said. Later, he will be produced in the SDJM court in Bhubaneswar February 7 before being remanded again to Jharpada jail, Patnaik said.

The CB's case relates to impersonation, cheating, forgery, criminal conspiracy and other cyber offences by Akash Kumar Pathak, who impersonated himself as Managing Director (in-charge) of Tata Motors passenger car division. Akash is the son of senior Indian Forest Service (IFS) officer Abhay Kant Pathak.

Speaking to mediapersons on the court premises, Panigrahy's wife Sujata raised serious concerns over her husband's health. "The court had allowed him to visit a doctor but the police produced him today," she added.

8 kids critical after eating poisonous fruits

POST NEWS NETWORK

Malkangiri, Feb 4: In a bizarre development, as many as eight children fell sick after they ate poisonous Jatropha fruits Wednesday afternoon at an Anganwadi centre near Mansuguda village under Sindhrimal block in Malkangiri district.

Later in the evening, the children started vomiting and suffered from severe head reeling after returning to their respective homes. The children

were immediately admitted to Malkangiri district headquarters hospital (DHH) by their parents. Six among the sick children are girls.

All the children were in critical condition. Their parents admitted them at the hospital in time. All of them are safe now, said a doctor at the DHH.

The eight children consumed Jatropha fruits in the surrounding areas of the Anganwadi centre owing to the negligence of Anganwadi workers, it was alleged.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given to all concerned that Sunil Kumar Nanda, S/o. Chittaranjan Nanda of Kalamada, Aul, Kendrapara has lost Original RSD No. 174 Dtd. 10.02.1998 executed by Panchanan Pani in favour of Bishnucharan Rath.

In the absence of Sunil Kumar Nanda has applied for a housing loan to the LIC HFL, Cuttack by offering mortgage of the said property documents.

All concerned therefore having any claim over the property purchased under the said document i.e. RSD No. 174 Dtd. 10.02.1998 are required to file their claim with the undersigned within 15 (Fifteen) days from the date of publication of this notice, failing which it will be presumed that the property relating to the said document is free from encumbrances and any claim in respect thereof against the applicant as mortgagor and the Company as the mortgagee shall be void and ineffective after the lapse of 15 (Fifteen) days of publication of this notice.

Cuttack Dt. 04.02.2021

Sd./- (U.K. Mishra), Advocate
LIC HFL, Cuttack Area Office
Link Road, Cuttack

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA, DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES
Office of the Engineer-In-Chief, Water resources, Secha Sadan, Bhubaneswar

No.A- 540 Email Address: cemecw-eicwr.od@nic.in
e-Procurement Notice-Bid Identification No.CEM/MDH-04/2020-21

1. Name of the work	: Mechanical Gate works
2. No. of works	: 02 (Two)
3. Category of executors	: SSI Units registered under DIC/NSIC/MSME for Irrigation Shutter/Hydro mechanical gates.
4. Bid Identification No.	: CEM/MDH-04/2020-21
5. Estimated cost	: Rs. 24,56,422.00, Rs. 24,56,422.00
6. Period of completion	: Forty five days.
7. Date & time of availability of bid documents in the portal	: From dt. 10.02.2021 (10.00 A.M.) to dt. 25.02.2021 (5.30 P.M.)
8. Last date / time for receipt of bid in the portal	: Dt. 25.02.2021 (upto 5.30 P.M.)
9. Date and place of opening of bid	: Dt. 26.02.2021 (12.00 Noon onwards in the O/o the undersigned)
10. Name of the officer inviting bid	: Chief Engineer, Mechanical, O/o the E.I.C., Water Resources, Odisha, Bhubaneswar

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>. Any further issue of Addenda/Corrigenda/ Cancellation Notice shall be uploaded in the aforesaid website only.

Sd./- Chief Engineer, Mechanical,
O/o Engineer-In-Chief, Secha Sadan, Bhubaneswar
OIPR-32031/11/0007/2021

NATIONAL HYDROLOGY PROJECT, SPMU-ODISHA, BHUBANESWAR
H.P ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING, DELTA SQUARE, UNIT-8, BHUBANESWAR-751012

Email: dddapbbsr@gmail.com
e-procurement Notice No. Odisha (SW)/NHP/RMRG//2020-21/RFQ-04

No.A-539-

1. Nature of work	: Complete removal of Existing Old Rainfall Observation Stations (Rain Gauge) at different locations and Supply, Installation of new Rain Gauge with provision of fencing work around the station, under NHP work in the state of Odisha. Details can be seen in the Bid Document of the respective works.
2. Total No. of woks	: 03 (Three) no. of works.
3. Estimated cost put to tender (Rs. in lakhs)	: Varies from Rs. 8.60 lakhs to Rs. 11.93 lakhs (Excluding G.S.T). Details can be seen in the Bid Document of the respective works.
4. Cost of bid documents / Bid Security	: Free of cost / The bidder shall transfer the required amount of Bid Security (online). Details of Bid Security can be seen in Bid Document of respective work.
5. Period of completion	: 60 (Sixty) calendar days.
6. Other details as follow	
(i) Procurement Officer	: DD, DAP & Procurement Officer (SW), SPMU Odisha, Bhubaneswar
(ii) Availability of tender online for bidding	: 08.02.2021 from 10.00 hrs. to 18.02.2021 upto 14.00 hrs.
(iii) Date of opening of bid (Technical & Financial) through online	: On 18.02.2021 at 15.00 hrs. in the Office of the Procurement Officer.

Further details can be seen in the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in.
Deputy Director, Data Archiving & Publishing & Procurement Officer (SW)
SPMU (NHP-Odisha), Bhubaneswar
OIPR-32256/11/0003/2021

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (AGRI.), NORTHERN ZONE, HORTICULTURE,

AT/PO- FARM ROAD, SAMBALPUR-768002 (email : ehortznz@gmail.com)
Identification No. 03/Hort./NZ/2020-21 Dt.03.02.2021

No. L-65:-

01 Nos. of work	: 05 Nos.
02 Estimated cost	: Rs. 12,25,630 /- to Rs. 35,08,333 /-
03 Period of completion	: 45 to 90 days
04 Date & Time of availability of bid document in the portal	: From 11.00 Hrs. of 12.02.2021 to 17.30 Hrs. of 23.02.2021
05 Last date/time of receipt of bids in the portal	: 17.30 Hrs. of 23.02.2021
06 Date & Time of opening of bids	: 11.00 Hrs. of 01.03.2021 onwards
07 Name and Address of the officer inviting bid	: Executive Engineer (Agril.), Northern Zone, Horticulture, C/o Dy. Director of Horticulture, AT/PO-Farm Road, Sambalpur, Pin-768002.

Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in
Sd./- Executive Engineer (Agril.)
Northern Zone, Horticulture, Sambalpur
OIPR-01033/11/0004/2021

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (AGRI.), NORTHERN ZONE, HORTICULTURE,

AT/PO- FARM ROAD, SAMBALPUR-768002 (email : ehortznz@gmail.com)
Identification No. 01/Hort./NZ/2020-21 Dt.03.02.2021

No. L-63:-

01 Nos. of work	: 02 Nos.
02 Estimated cost	: Rs. 11,51,661/- to Rs. 41,80,052/-
03 Period of completion	: 45 to 90 days
04 Date & Time of availability of bid document in the portal	: From 11.00 Hrs. of 10.02.2021 to 17.30 Hrs. of 20.02.2021
05 Last date/time of receipt of bids in the portal	: 17.30 Hrs. of 20.02.2021
06 Date & Time of opening of bids	: 11.00 Hrs. of 25.02.2021 onwards
07 Name and Address of the officer inviting bid	: Executive Engineer (Agril.), Northern Zone, Horticulture, C/o Dy. Director of Horticulture, AT/PO-Farm Road, Sambalpur, Pin-768002.

Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in
Sd./- Executive Engineer (Agril.)
Northern Zone, Horticulture, Sambalpur
OIPR-01033/11/0002/2021

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER RWSS DIVISION, RAIRANGPUR
INVITATION FOR BIDS

E-mail-eerwss_rai@nic.in, eerwss_rai@gmail.com
e-PROCUREMENT NOTICE

IDENTIFICATION No. 60RWSS/RRPUR-2020-2021 / Dated 01.02.2021

No. O-1027:- The Executive Engineer, RWSS Division, Rairangpur on behalf of Governor of Odisha, invites percentage rate bids to be received in online mode for the following works from the eligible experienced contractors in similar nature of work, registered with State Govt. & contractor of equivalent Grade/class registered with Central Govt. /Railways.

- Nature of work : - Sinking of 5.50 mtr outer dia 10 mtr deep RCC Intake Well for Piped Water Supply Project to village Laxmipto under Jamda Block and Basingi under Bahalda Block in the District of Mayurbhanj.
- No. of work : - 2 (Two) Nos
- Period of Completion : 03 (three) months
- Cost of tender : ₹6000.00
- Estimated cost : ₹19.91 lac to ₹19.95 lac
- Class of Contractor :- (As mentioned in Tender Call Notice)
- Date and time of availability of bid documents in Portal:- from 9 hours of 08.02.2021 to 17.30 hours of 18.02.2021
- Receipt of bid cost, bid security, documents - Online only
- Date & time of opening of technical bid:- Dt. 19.02.2021 at 11.00 hours onwards.
- Other Documents:- (As mentioned in DTCN)
- The bidders have to participate in on-line bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website <https://www.tendersodisha.gov.in>.
- Any addendum / Corrigendum / Cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website.
- Concession of 10 % will be considered to ST/SC contractors up to B class only on submission of an affidavit over the general category contractors falling which such concession will not be extended to him / her.

OIPR-25010/11/0029/2021 Sd./- Executive Engineer, RWSS Division, Rairangpur

13 Kalahandi migrants 'pawned' for ₹5L in AP

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhawanipatana, Feb 4: In a shocking incident, 13 migrant labourers of Kalahandi were reportedly pawned by a broker to a factory owner in Andhra Pradesh. The matter came to the fore after the labourers narrated their miseries through a video that

went viral. According to the report, a middleman identified as Bishnu Prasad Majhi of Mukhiguda village under Dharmagarh police limits had taken 13 people of his village to Andhra Pradesh on the promise of providing them work in December, 2020. The migrant labourers in

the video message alleged that the middleman has sold them for Rs 5 lakh to a factory owner at Domokonda under Kamareddy block of Chintamonopoly district. The owner has been subjecting them to hard work for more than 18 hours a day and keep them all locked up inside a house at night for a

few hours. Whenever the migrants express their inability to work, the owner tortures and abuses them, they alleged. The migrant labourers in their video message have urged the administration to rescue them from them from the clutches of the owner as soon as possible.

ASI's claim of Lalitgiri facelift at ₹95 lakh on weak ground

POST NEWS NETWORK

Chandikhole, Feb 4: Even as the Archeological Survey of India (ASI) claims it has spent Rs 95, 45,160 lakh towards beautification of ancient Buddhist site Lalitgiri near here over last 11 years, not a single garden has been created to draw tourists to the place, a report said. The revelation came to the fore following a reply available under the Right to Information Act.

The ASI claimed it spent money on beautification and upkeep of the Buddhist site. The Lalitgiri sarpanch Sanjukta Singh has raised objections to such claims. Singh wanted to know on what heads the ASI has spent the money as a single park has not been created at Lalitgiri.

She alleged the claim is



being made to hoodwink people and demanded a proper probe to unravel the truth. Locals suspect that the fund meant for upkeep and beautification of the site has been usurped. Lalitgiri is a major Buddhist site in the state comprising major stupas, 'esoteric' Buddha images, and monasteries. The site has Buddha's relics and was known for practice of Tantric Buddhism at this site.

Lalitgiri is part of the 'Diamond Triangle' together with the Ratnagiri and Udayagiri, the two other sites in the district. Tourists, researchers as well as international tour operators visit

this site in large numbers to see Buddhism and its practices that flourished in past. The Archeological Survey of India on behalf of the Centre works towards the upkeep and beautification of these sites and other sites assigned to it in the state.

Reports said the ancient Buddhist site is situated in Mahanga block of Cuttack district close to Chandikhole. The site acquired prominence after the skeletal remains of Lord Buddha were recovered from this site. Later, on the demand of residents, the ASI constructed a bullet proof museum and stored the skeletal remains of Lord Buddha. The site's impor-

tance can be gauged from the fact that Chinese scholar and traveler Hiuen Tsang also visited Lalitgiri when he visited India. This finds mention in his book Pu-Si-Ko-Li.

According to historians, the site came up between first century BC and second century AD. The ASI discovered the skeletal remains of Lord Buddha packed in a small casket. The skeletal remains have now been kept in three small containers inside the bullet proof museum. The excavation also found remnants of four monasteries and several idols of the Buddhist era. Historians are of the opinion that the ancient sculptures belong to the period between 6th century and 11th century.

The site is visited by researchers from within and outside of the country but the ASI has not been able to establish a park to attract them during their visit. When contacted, Arun Kumar Mallick, superintendent of ASI, refused to comment on the issue, saying he is new to the place.

FOCUS ASSEMBLY POLLS 2021

BATTLE FOR BENGAL



Buoyed by its tally in West Bengal in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, BJP's Amit Shah has taken on himself to wrest West Bengal from TMC and for this purpose he along with other senior BJP leaders embarked on a strategy of organising rallies, inducting 'disgruntled' TMC leaders into the BJP

With just two months to go for the state Assembly polls in West Bengal, battle lines have already been drawn between the major political parties with hectic electoral preparations having been underway for the past over two months. Apart from the ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC) led by Mamata Banerjee, the BJP is seemingly the major challenger. Undeniably, the Left parties and Congress have few pockets of influence in the state; nonetheless, they are not major players. Media reports indicate that Janata Dal-United or JD(U) along with Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) from the neighbouring state of Bihar are also eager to test the electoral waters of Bengal.

Muslims, constituting about 30 per cent of the total population of the state, are said to be a deciding factor in nearly 100-110 seats in the state and the entry of AIMIM in the state politics has been dubbed by the TMC leaders as an attempt to split the Muslim vote in the state and help the BJP. During the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, the Muslims acted as a bulwark of the TMC against its rivals, with most of them voting in favour of the TMC, considering it as a credible force that could resist the saffron surge. However, the decision of Pirzada Abbas Siddiqui of Hooghly district's Furfura Sharif, an influential cleric, to float his new political outfit - Indian Secular Front - and his plans to contest the elections from all 294 Assembly seats, entails the potential of upsetting many political equations in the poll-bound state.

BJP's Game Plan
Buoyed by its tally in West Bengal in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, BJP's Amit Shah has taken on himself to wrest West Bengal from TMC and for this purpose he along with other senior BJP leaders embarked on a strategy of organising rallies, inducting 'disgruntled' TMC leaders into the BJP, raising the CAA issue to polarise the Hindu votes and promising a 'sonar Bangla'. The BJP's known stance on CAA and the minorities, especially the illegal immigrants, is, on the one hand,

led TMC to deflate her morale and enfeeble the TMC.

According to reports in a section of media, the BJP has made efforts to appropriate the legacy of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose to its electoral advantage in the poll-bound state of West Bengal by organizing a meeting at Victoria Memorial in Kolkata on January 23 to commemorate the 125th birth anniversary of Netaji in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. While addressing the gathering, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee objected to the chants of 'Jai Shri Ram', in the presence of Prime Minister and left the podium as a mark of protest. Some observers feel that the BJP's attempts to appropriate the legacy of Netaji are fraught with ideological contradictions because, if anything else, Netaji was avowedly secular through his political career.

Mamata's Defensive Offence
Despite desertion of some leaders from the TMC to the saffron brigade, the TMC leadership is still confident of coming with flying colours in the ensuing state Assembly polls. Though exit of leaders in the run up to the elections is not a surprising develop-

ment for a regional political party like TMC; nevertheless, when it is faced with a national party like the BJP, the ensuing electoral battle becomes more competitive for the TMC leadership for not only to ensure its victory but also to control the damage it could incur by being defensively offensive. The BJP winning of 18 Lok Sabha seats in 2019 translates into 121 assembly segments and in order to realize Amit Shah's estimate of 200 seats, the BJP will have to significantly improve its numbers.

Nevertheless, the TMC takes comfort in the fact that tone and tenor of Lok Sabha polls is usually different from the Assembly elections and its leadership is confident that TMC fort is not going to crumble. Recent desertions within the TMC demonstrate how ill-equipped the TMC is in handling and addressing internal dissent and how centralised power within the party is. The TMC, according to some experts, suffers from a structural flaw primarily because it revolves around the personality of one leader. Admittedly, the TMC had a movement character to it in the initial stage that enabled the party to successfully dislodge the electoral hegemony of the CPI (M) that had lasted for over three decades; nonetheless, the TMC continued to maintain total dominance at the ground level by inducting local leaders and cadres from other parties but failed to carve itself into a party. Allegiance to the leader held the party together and the loyalty was bought by offering patronage.

Some experts also attribute the delay on the part of the senior TMC leadership in addressing the concerns of the party rank and file as being responsible for mass exodus of leaders from the party to the saffron fold and emphasise that the TMC needs to introspect and dispel all doubts about its inclusive character. Recent assertions of Mamata Banerjee reflect her confidence that her government of 'Ma-Mati-Manush' will retain power in the state. She has described BJP as a balloon that is alive only in media, whereas the TMC stays alive in the hearts of the people.



Dr Anil Singh

WITH JUST TWO MONTHS TO GO FOR THE STATE ASSEMBLY POLLS IN WEST BENGAL, BATTLE LINES HAVE ALREADY BEEN DRAWN BETWEEN THE MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES WITH HECTIC ELECTORAL PREPARATIONS HAVING BEEN UNDERWAY FOR THE PAST OVER TWO MONTHS

Good packaging

Refrain in this year's Budget was 'spend'. Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, during her 100-plus-minute speech, was at pains to state that "We have spent, we have spent and we have spent". In fact, the government claimed it spent ₹4.1 lakh crore more than what it had set out for in last year's Budget due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The additional spend worked out to a rise of 13 per cent of the budgeted expenditure which it said pushed the fiscal deficit to an unprecedented 9.5 per cent. The projected fiscal deficit in the coming fiscal has been pegged at 6.8 per cent. Expenditure in the coming fiscal is estimated to go up by over 14 per cent, while the government revenue is projected to dip by 12 per cent. However, in reality, the government's claim that it had spent an additional ₹4.1 lakh crore in the current fiscal is eyewash. Out of ₹4.1 lakh crore additional spend, about ₹3 lakh crore was spent on additional food subsidy. But don't make a mistake by thinking that the additional money was used to arrange free food for the pandemic-hit people in the early months of the nationwide lockdown. In fact, about half of this money was given to Food Corporation of India to clear its old dues. If we take this amount out, the actual spend was just a little over ₹1 lakh crore. Similarly, about ₹50,000 crore of the additional expenditure went towards clearing the old dues of the state-owned fertilizer firms. This means the real additional spending which the government claims to have been spent was between ₹1.3 lakh crore and ₹1.4 lakh crore or just 0.7 per cent of the GDP.

As regards the so-called rise in expenditure in this year's Budget, which is ₹4.4 lakh crore more than last year's estimate, a lion's share of this would go towards clearing the FCI's long pending dues. Therefore, the tall claim of spending big in the next fiscal to trigger growth is not all that true. The Finance Minister also spoke at length about the big capex the government will make in the coming fiscal. An expenditure of ₹5.54 lakh crore will be made on capex. But a major portion of this money will go to four poll-bound states such as Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Kerala and Assam. These four states between them will account for ₹2.27 lakh crore of the so-called big capex and ₹1.08 lakh crore will be spent for capex in railways. The minister said the increased spending is aimed at creating demand in the economy and support job creation. But if at all it happens they will take place in the four poll-bound states, not across the whole country. But the way this was presented in the budget it gave an impression that big money has been earmarked for building infrastructure in the country. The whole exercise was nothing but good packaging. Coming in the aftermath of a global health crisis which saw millions of deaths and still counting, the least we were expecting from the Budget was long-term structural reforms. The stakes were very high. People had more or less made up their minds that this was going to be a tough Budget as the government's resources were tight. Tough times demand tough decisions. But there were no big-ticket announcements in the entire Budget speech of the Union Finance Minister, except for a bold move to sell government assets, euphemistically called strategic disinvestments. Selling assets to overcome tough times is the easiest thing to do. The government is doing precisely this. The rest is good packaging.

WISDOM CORNER

All our dreams can come true, if we have the courage to pursue them. **WALT DISNEY**

The secret of getting ahead is getting started. **MARK TWAIN**

I've missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. 26 times I've been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life and that is why I succeed. **MICHAEL JORDAN**

WORDSWORTH

Broom-squire

A house recently advertised for sale near the Devil's Punchbowl in Surrey mentioned that it had once been used by broom-squires. These weren't the minor aristocracy of rural places that the second half of their title suggests but poor rural artisans. At some unknown date squatters settled in the Punch-Bowl, at a period when it was in as wild and solitary a region as any in England. They enclosed portions of the slopes. They built themselves hovels; they pastured their sheep, goats, cattle on the sides of the Punch-Bowl, and they added to their earnings the profits of a trade they monopolized - that of making and selling brooms. On the lower slopes of the range grew coppices of Spanish chestnut, and rods of this wood served admirably for broom-handles. The heather when long and wiry and strong, covered with its harsh leafage and myriad hard knobs, which were to burst into flower, answered for the brush. On account of this manufacture, the squatters in the Punch-Bowl went by the designation of Broom-Squires. They provided with brooms every farm and gentleman's house, nay, every cottage for miles around. A wagon-load of these besoms was often purchased, and the supply lasted some years. Broom-squires were necessarily restricted to the heathlands of England, such as the Surrey Heaths of the story and the New Forest further south, though at times the brush of the broom wasn't heather but birch twigs, strictly speaking turning their makers into besom-squires, a term that appears only rarely. Squire is not a term of respect here. Alongside its sense of a country gentleman was a contemptuous one that evolved from its oldest meaning of an attendant on a knight, hence later merely a servant, and a lowly one at that. A close relative is the long obsolete apple-squire, which may be politely defined as a male companion of a woman of ill-repute, more accurately a pimp (we may guess the apple was a sly reference to the biblical Eve, though the Oxford English Dictionary suggests a woman's breasts were meant). Broom-squires, often itinerant and always poor, had an unsavoury reputation not so far removed from the then conventional view of gypsies.

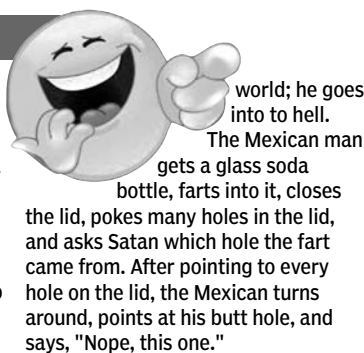
Brouhaha

The usual spelling is brouhaha, meaning an overexcited and noisy response, a commotion, hubbub or uproar. It's a negative word for some unpleasant confusion; a more neutral alternative might be the equally odd-looking hubbub. We know the word came from the French word spelled the same way; it's found in French from the sixteenth century on, but it only arrived in English at the end of the nineteenth century. It seems to have been used in French drama as a noise made by the devil, who cried brou, ha, ha! Many etymologists will say that the word was just a noisy nonsense exclamation that imitated the thing it referred to. But there is a theory, put forward by Walther von Wartburg, that it actually comes from the Hebrew barukh habba, meaning "welcome" - literally "blessed be the one who comes" - a phrase that appears several times in the Book of Psalms and which is used in Synagogue prayers and as a greeting at Jewish weddings and other public occasions. You might think that this is just another case of folk wisdom guessing on the basis of slight resemblance, but there is evidence to suggest it may be correct. There's a similar word in the Arezzo dialect of Italian, barruccaba, which is without doubt borrowed from the Hebrew, and phrases in several other languages suggest that other Hebrew expressions were similarly borrowed.

LOL

Door to heaven

Three dead men go to hell at the same time. There is a white man, a Chinese man, and a Mexican man. Satan tells them that they can only leave hell if he can't do what they ask. The white man asks for the fastest sports car in the world; he goes into hell. The Chinese man asks for the most advanced computer in the



world; he goes into hell. The Mexican man gets a glass soda bottle, farts into it, closes the lid, pokes many holes in the lid, and asks Satan which hole the fart came from. After pointing to every hole on the lid, the Mexican turns around, points at his butt hole, and says, "Nope, this one."

SPECTRUM LABOUR TAXATION

Give workers a fighting chance



Daron Acemoglu

BIDEN HAS INDICATED THAT TAX REFORM WILL BE A HIGH PRIORITY, AND HE HAS RELEASED PLANS TO ADDRESS LONG-RUNNING FISCAL PROBLEMS SUCH AS FEDERAL GOVERNMENT REVENUE SHORTFALLS AND THE TAX SYSTEM'S LOSS OF PROGRESSIVITY

The first months of US President Joe Biden's administration will be defined by the efforts to contain COVID-19 and deliver vaccinations on a mass scale. Over the medium term, however, the economy will determine the administration's success. Here, Biden has indicated that tax reform will be a high priority, and he has released plans to address long-running fiscal problems such as federal government revenue shortfalls and the tax system's loss of progressivity. But these proposals do not go far enough to address a major fault line in the tax code: the excessively favorable treatment of capital income (profits and returns on financial assets and savings).

Capital has always been taxed more lightly than labour has in the United States. In my own research with MIT's Andrea Manera and Pascual Restrepo of Boston University, we estimate that the effective tax on labour (accounting for payroll and federal income taxes) in the 1980s and 1990s was about 25%, which meant that it cost \$1.25 to pay an employee \$1. By contrast, the effective tax on capital was only around 15%.

The situation has only worsened since then, as effective taxes on capital have declined. Following

the Republicans' 2017 tax cuts, capital such as equipment and software faced a tax rate of about 5%, while the effective tax on labor remained largely unchanged.

Today's rock-bottom taxes on capital are the result of several developments. Marginal taxes on rich households - which tend to receive the greatest share of their income from capital - have declined, and many businesses have changed their tax status to become S-corporations, which are exempt from corporate income tax. The biggest factor, however, is the US tax code's increasingly generous depreciation allowances, which have allowed corporations to deduct so much investment expenditure from their tax liability that some are actually receiving a net investment subsidy.

The asymmetry between capital and labour that began in the 1980s increased income inequality and distorted investment and employment decisions. Today, its consequences are graver still, because the range of technologies that firms can use to automate their operations has expanded. There are many more machines and algorithms capable of performing tasks done by human workers, and the tax code are actively encouraging companies to adopt them,

even to the point of excess.

Consider the choice between employing ten workers for the next ten years, at a salary of \$100,000 per year, and buying an \$11 million machine that will perform exactly the same tasks. The cost of the first option is \$12.5 million (\$10 million for the workers, plus tax), whereas the cost of the second option is only \$11.55 million (the price of the machine, plus the 5% effective tax on capital). The decision is easy. Even though the workers in this case are actually more efficient than the capital (receiving \$10 million for work that would require an \$11 million machine to do), the tax code nonetheless induces this hypothetical business to prefer job-eliminating automation.

To be sure, if more technologies, including digital technologies, were designed to complement rather than replace humans, additional capital investment need not eliminate jobs, and could even boost overall worker productivity. Unfortunately, this is not the case.

How did we end up with tax policies that are overtly fueling inequality and costing jobs? For starters, large corporations have become more vocal and powerful politically over the last several decades - and not just because of the

Supreme Court's 2010 Citizens United ruling, which opened the floodgates for corporate spending in elections. Even more important has been the increase in industry lobbying, with corporations not only influencing lawmakers, but often even writing the legislation themselves.

The economics profession also hasn't helped. Many economists have clung for too long to the view that capital should not be taxed, on the grounds that doing so discourages savings and reduces investment.

This is not a call for the kind of wealth tax that became a hot-button issue in the Democratic presidential primaries. Rather, the point is to devise a tax code that does not inordinately disadvantage labor vis-à-vis machines. Now that we are in the middle of the worst economic crisis in generations, it would be inadvisable to hike capital taxes suddenly. But as we emerge from the COVID-19 recession, the economy will need both jobs and more tax revenues, not just to service a larger national debt, but also to invest more in health care, infrastructure, and education.

The writer is a Professor of Economics at MIT.
#PROJECTSYNDICATE

Odia language promotion

Sir, The efforts of the state government to promote Odia language is praiseworthy as one looks at the several initiatives fill our minds with awe on this. If we look back, crores were paid to launch special Odia language promoting study chairs, scholarship in the name of doyen of Odia language and setting up of an Odia University in Satyabadi, Sakhigopal. These ventures cost the taxpayers' money to promote Odia language, while a close look shows a different picture. Except for a few students many deserving ones are yet to get scholarship. The government has donated corpus donated to universities outside Odisha, while the state's own universities are bereft of required funds for promotion of Odia language. Further the payment of bulk by one government department to another for procuring of land for the proposed Odia University was projected in the manner as if the varsity was already established. Appointment of members to language academy was held routinely and distribution of Odia books in Odia-speaking areas once in a while was projected with hype. But despite the compulsory use of this language, setting up of an Odia Language Commission even few years after the promulgation of the law has not been materialised yet. We are amazed to see the hypocrisy of the government and how far they can play with our people in the name of the language.

Janaki Ballav Dash, BHUBANESWAR

Ranji Trophy cancelled

Sir, The most prestigious domestic cricket championship ever, the Ranji Trophy will not be held this year. Many Indian cricketers metamorphosed from its stables. The championship drew huge crowds on its day. Especially when international cricketers graced the tournament, the excitement cannot be missed. No doubt, it will return next year, but the emptiness now is both visible and palpable, and is irreplaceable. There is a handy excuse for not running the Ranji Trophy: Corona. Of course, the Board is "fully prepared" for the Indian Premier League that will kick start in April. Securing a bio secure environment is not that easy; it demands hard work and utmost discipline. Obtaining a bio bubble and maintaining it for four days in a venue, and for four months in different venues, is a herculean challenge and the board was not game for it. About 800 players stand to be affected. Those with no IPL contract will be affected the most. There are players who depend on the Ranji Trophy alone for their earnings.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

OrissaPOST

B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

FINALLY, FULL HOUSE IN KARNA

The state allows theatres to work in full capacity for next four weeks on an 'experimental' basis

AGENCIES

Bangalore, Feb 4: With the Kannada film industry's first family raising its voice against the government's decision to run film theatres in half of its capacity, Karnataka has allowed the theatres to work in full capacity for next four weeks on an 'experimental' basis.

It all started when Kannada film superstar, Punit Rajkumar taking to Twitter hit out Karnataka government's decision that was taken Tuesday not to allow theatres in their full capacity, he questioned, why the government was targeting film industry alone when markets, shops and all other commercial establishments were functioning without any hindrance.

Once, the tweet of Punit Rajkumar, who is youngest son of Kannada thespian Dr. Rajkumar, went viral, his eldest brother and superstar Shivarajkumar, too slammed the government's decision through his tweet.

Once both brothers tweeted, almost all Sandalwood stars and technicians also came down heavily on the government. This apparently



prompted Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa to assign Health Minister, K Sudhakar to find an amicable solution and meanwhile film actors and technicians delegation led by Shivarajkumar to reached Vidhana Soudha to submit their memorandum to the CM.

Sudhakar after meeting Wednesday the delegations led by Shivarajkumar said that the meeting was held 'as per the instructions of Yediyurappa'.

"As per technical advisory committee recommendations, the Health department had earlier

allowed 50 per cent seating in cinema halls. Though the centre has cleared 100 per cent seating in cinema halls, the decision was left to the discretion of state governments depending on the situation in each state and we opted to continue with 50 per cent seating capacity. But after rethinking, we have decided to allow cinema theatres to operate in its full capacity," he said.

He added that the Kannada film industry opposed this decision and requested to reconsider the decision keeping in

IT ALL STARTED WHEN KANNADA ACTOR PUNIT RAJKUMAR, TAKING TO TWITTER, HIT OUT KARNATAKA GOVT'S DECISION THAT WAS TAKEN TUESDAY NOT TO ALLOW THEATRES IN THEIR FULL CAPACITY

HE QUESTIONED WHY THE GOVT WAS TARGETING FILM INDUSTRY ALONE WHEN MARKETS, SHOPS AND ALL OTHER COMMERCIAL ESTABLISHMENTS WERE FUNCTIONING WITHOUT ANY HINDRANCE

view the welfare of those employed in the film industry.

"They have also appealed to the chief minister to support them in this difficult time," he added.

The minister added that strict guidelines will be released Thursday and halls can start screening their movies from Friday onwards.

While actor Shivarajkumar said that the entire film fraternity Ais suffering from huge losses due to closure of film theatres for nearly a year: "I appeal or fans to respect Covid-19 protocols," he added and profusely thanked Yediyurappa to come to their rescue.

US looking to collaborate with India to counter space threats

AGENCIES

Bangalore, Feb 4: The US is looking forward to working with India to tackle evolving space threats, US Defence Attache in India, Rear Admiral Eileen Laubacher, said Thursday.

At a seminar during the ongoing Aero India, she said: "As we build out our own Space Force, re-establish the Space Command, we look forward to wide-ranging co-operation with India and the Defence Space Agency. It is imperative that we both work together in this emerging domain as space threats evolve."

Rear Admiral Laubacher, referring to the growing Chinese assertiveness and emerging threats for the Indo-Pacific region, said: "Today we are seeing an increasingly provocative set of behaviour throughout the Indo-Pacific, from the Taiwan Strait to the South China Sea, to India's borders high in the Himalayas. These actions threaten the norms of international conduct, the norms which India and the United States uphold resolutely." She also pointed that the security challenges at India's doorstep underscore the impor-



Today, we are seeing an increasingly provocative set of behaviour throughout the Indo-Pacific, from the Taiwan Strait to the South China Sea, to India's borders high in the Himalayas

REAR ADMIRAL LAUBACHER | US DEFENCE ATTACHE IN INDIA

tance of the robust partnership between both the countries. To defend the rules-based international order against actors and activities that seek to threaten it, the US has joined India and like-minded countries to counter these emerging threats. The Defence Attache also talked about India's effort to defend freedom of the high seas and maritime and land borders.

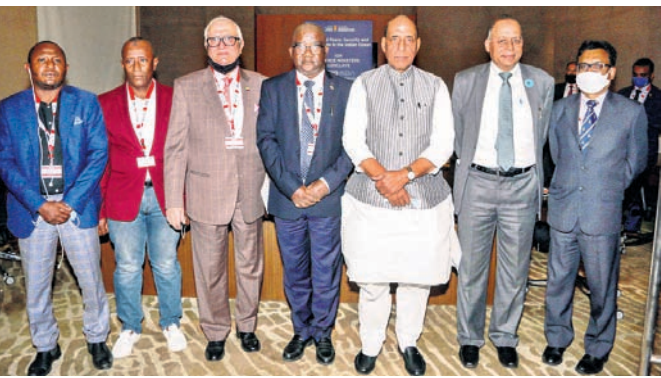
She also mentioned how India sent technical equipment and a team of specialists to Mauritius to help local authorities combat the devastating oil spill last year.

About existing co-operations between both countries, Rear Admiral Laubacher said the

Information Fusion Centre Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR), headquartered in the National Capital Region is already coordinating with maritime agencies throughout the region to prevent environmental disasters in the future.

"Our US liaison officer there in Gurgaon contributes regularly to ensure pertinent information is integrated into the IFC's overall efforts," she added.

India ready to provide weapon systems to IOR countries: Rajnath



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Comoros Dhoinir Dhoulkamal after their bilateral meeting on the sidelines of Aero India 2021 in Bangalore

AGENCIES

Bangalore, Feb 4: India is ready to supply various types of weapon systems to Indian Ocean Region countries, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said Thursday, while stressing that the countries need to ensure peace in the region through "maritime cooperation."

In a reference to the prevailing tension in the South China Sea because of China's expansionist strategy, he said that the negative impact of conflicting claims in some maritime areas highlighted the need to ensure peace in the IOR region.

However, the Defence Minister did not name China while referring to the current situation in the South China Sea during his address at the Indian Ocean Region Defence Ministers' Conclave here.

A total of 27 out of the 28 Indian Ocean countries participated in the conclave and shared their views on enhancing regional cooperation.

Rajnath Singh underlined that the Indian Ocean is a shared asset and a lifeline to international trade and transport due to its control of major sea-lanes carrying half of the world's container ships, one-third of the world's bulk cargo traf-

A total of 27 out of the 28 Indian Ocean countries participated in the Indian Ocean Region Defence Ministers' Conclave

The Defence Minister didn't name China while referring to the current situation in the South China Sea during his address

fic and two-thirds of the world's oil shipments.

He said SAGAR - Security and Growth for All in the Region - is the theme of Indian Ocean Policy as outlined by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2015, adding that in line with this, the IOR conclave should focus on security, commerce, connectivity, fight against terrorism and inter-cultural exchanges.

The Minister identified areas such as deepening economic and security cooperation in the littoral, enhancing capacities to safeguard land and maritime territories, working towards sustainable regional development, the Blue Economy, including sustainable and regulated fishing, and promoting collective action to deal with non-traditional threats.

Cong's campaign against 'backdoor recruitments'

AGENCIES

Thiruvananthapuram, Feb 4: The Congress in Kerala said Thursday that it will carry out extensive public campaign against 'intensive back-door recruitments' done by the CPI-led UDF government and 'review' such cases when it returns to power in the southern state.

"The LDF government led by the CPI-M is on a recruitment spree in Kerala and thereby cheating educated unemployed youths in the state," Senior Congress leader Ramesh Chennithala told the media at Kozhikode during his 'Aiswarya Kerala Yatra'.

"Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan is giving largesse to CPI-M cadres at the expense of ordinary educated unemployed youths who don't have political influence. The Congress and the UDF will take their protests to the streets for the sake of youths of Kerala," the Leader of Opposition in the Assembly added.

The Congress leader also said that the recruitment lists prepared by the State Public Service Commission will be of no use as majority of government jobs will be given by the LDF government through the back door.

Chennithala said that the state government had also regularised the



The LDF government led by the CPI-M is on a recruitment spree in Kerala and thereby cheating educated unemployed youths in the state

RAMESH CHENNITHALA | KERALA CONG LEADER

services of 118 temporary workers posted in the Centre for Development of Imaging Technology (C-DIT), a department under the Chief Minister: A Cabinet meeting Wednesday

had regularised 118 temporary workers, leading to an uproar in the state. "Vijayan had overlooked a note of objection by the Finance Department," highly placed sources

had told IANS. Meanwhile, KPCC President Mullappally Ramachandran said that the United Democratic Front will "review" all back-door recruitment once it returns to power in the state.

Speaking to IANS on phone, he said: "The LDF government is indulging in favouritism on a mass scale at the expense of poor and educated but unemployed youths, who have been struggling to crack the state public service commission exams. These youths will never forgive the Left government for these back-door recruitments. We will review all these recruitments once we come back to power."

Nadda to rescue ailing Kerala BJP

Sulking Shobha Surendran attends the party prez's meeting in Kerala

AGENCIES

Thiruvananthapuram, Feb 4: Former BJP national executive member and firebrand orator from Kerala, Shobha Surendran, who has been sulking since the past eleven months, has finally made an appearance in the party's state executive meet at Thrissur: The executive meet was presided by party president JP Nadda.

Shobha Surendran was the general secretary and party core group member when she was demoted to the post of party state vice president after new president K Surendran assumed office. Shobha had been shying away from party programmes ever since. BJP President JP Nadda Wednesday told media persons at Thiruvananthapuram that the party will take up the issues raised by Shobha Surendran. Her presence at the meeting is a clear indicator that Nadda has addressed the issues raised by her.

Shobha is from the backward class Ezhava community but her bete nohs in the party Union minister of state for External Affairs

The party will take up the issues raised by Shobha Surendran

JP NADDA | PRES, BJP



Shobha Surendran was the general secretary and party core group member when she was demoted to the post of party state vice president after new president K Surendran assumed office. Shobha had been shying away from party programmes ever since

V Muraleedharan and BJP state president K Surendran are from the same community. However, Shobha is popular among the BJP cadres and masses owing to her firebrand oratory skills.

With Shobha Surendran attending the party meeting, it is now clear that she will be a candidate in the upcoming Assembly elections and she will contest either from Palakkad or from Konni in Pathanamthitta dis-

trict or Kazhakoottam from the state capital.

Shobha Surendran has consistently improved her vote share in elections. In the 2019 General Elections as a party candidate from Attingal constituency she had garnered 2,48,081 votes much higher than the 90,528 votes the party candidate had got in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections. The vote percentage had jumped from 10 per cent to 24 per cent.

CBI charge-sheets 9 cops in Kerala custodial death case

THE CUSTODIAL DEATH CASE WAS REPORTED AT NEDUMKANDAM IN KERALA IN 2019



AGENCIES

Thiruvananthapuram, Feb 4: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) charge-sheeted nine police officials, including two women, in an Ernakulam court Thursday in a custodial death case reported in Nedumkandam in Kerala in 2019.

In its charge sheet submitted in the Chief Judicial Magistrate court, then Sub-Inspector of Nedumkandam police station, KA Sabu, has been made the first accused. ASI Sibi and policemen Rejimon, Niiyas, Sajeey Antony, and Jithin K George and Home Guard KM James are the co-accused.

In June 2019, Rajkumar of Nedumkandam was taken arrested in cases related to a ponzi scheme

and allegedly tortured for four days before he was lodged in Nedumkandam sub-jail. He was admitted to a hospital where he breathed his last.

Woman Head Constable Geethu Gopinath and Constable Biju Lukose are also named in the charge sheet that accused Geethu of subjecting a woman employee of a chit fund company, arrested along with Rajkumar, to brutal torture.

The CBI said that the accused police officials had foisted false charges on Rajkumar: The agency had also questioned senior police officers including then Idukki SP KB Venugopal and Kattapana DSP Shams, jail employees, including warders on duty on that day, doctors who had examined Rajkumar and doctors who conducted the post-mortem.

DEMO OVER DEMANDS



Kerala Government PG Medical Teachers' Association members, wearing PPE kits, stage a demonstration outside the Secretariat demanding payment of wage arrears and higher pay at entry-level, in Thiruvananthapuram, Thursday PTI PHOTO

'Pet parents' observe baby shower for dog

AGENCIES

Dharwad (Karnataka), Feb 4: A family that owns four to five dogs and take pride in calling themselves as 'pet parents' has organised Seemanta Karya - 'baby shower ceremony' for Lucy - their first female Labrador whom they do not hesitate to call as their daughter.

"I instantly fell in love with this puppy when I first saw her in one of my acquaintances' houses and straightaway brought her home. When she got pregnant about a month ago, my father recalled that in his younger days, he had organised 'Seemanta Karya' for his pet dog... then it was a taboo then, it was well received," Prithviraj Padater told IANS.

Padater's family lives in a small village, Saunshi in Karnataka, located in the Kundgol taluk of Dharwad district, 400 km from tech hub Bengaluru.



"This gave me an idea to organise, Seemanta Karya, for our daughter Lucy (female Labrador) and we did it but never thought that this will become a news," he said.

He added that Seemanta Karya can be performed only during the

maiden pregnancy and the family did it.

"We performed all rituals such as making the dog wear saree, bangles and necklaces too. We also organised a feast after the ritual. Several of our nearly family mem-

When she (Lucy) got pregnant about a month ago, my father recalled that in his younger days, he had organised 'Seemanta Karya' for his pet dog... then it was a taboo but was well received

PRITHVIRAJ PADATER | OWNER OF LUCY

bers dropped in and along with our neighbours, we enjoyed it," he said. Prithviraj only regrets that he did not capture it on video as he only clicked a few pictures of this programme as it never crossed his mind that this would ever find a place in the media, he observed.

Some pictures taken during this ceremony were posted on his WhatsApp status, and one of his friends who works with a local cable channel, showed it on TV, and that is how, the episode caught the media's attention.



For decades in our country, the meaning of the Budget was restricted to what announcements were made in whose name. The Budget was turned into an account of the vote bank

NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER

TWITTER DELETES KANGANA'S TWEETS

Twitter India Thursday removed two of the tweets by actor Kangana Ranaut, citing a violation of the platform's rules. The actor has been criticising protesting farmers over their agitations against the Centre's three farm laws



of the day quote

Lakhs of farmers are sitting on the border for two months. Has he no desire to meet them? How far is the border from the Prime Minister's residence? Does the PM have so much ego that he cannot go there in a vehicle

PRIVANKA GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

It is settled that these vaccines are safe. After giving 45 lakh doses, there are minimal side effects some times, like one person out of 1,150 persons got a side effect and no death has been attributed yet, proves that these vaccines are superbly safe and safest that can ever be devised

V K PAUL | NITI AAYOG MEMBER

People who don't have any idea about what these farm laws are and how these are going to benefit the farmers, they have no right to comment without the full knowledge. No one should take political gain out of this

ANURAG SINGH THAKUR | UNION MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Four drown in Andhra's Chittoor

Kuppam (Andhra Pradesh): Close on the heels of the shocking murder of two women by their parents in Madanapalle, another tragedy was recorded from Andhra Pradesh's Chittoor district Thursday in which four members of a family, two women and their two daughters, drowned to death in a pond.

Nirav's sister moves court

Mumbai: Fugitive diamond trader Nirav Modi's sister and her husband Thursday approached a court here seeking cancellation of non-bailable warrants (NBWs) against them in the Punjab National Bank (PNB) fraud case. Purvi Modi, Nirav Modi's younger sister, is a Belgian national while her husband Maikant Mehta is a British citizen.

9-yr-old sexually abused, killed

Kolkata: The body of a nine-year-old girl was recovered Thursday from the staircase of a residential building in the city's Jorabagan area, sparking protests by locals, who claimed that the "police did not take action when the family had reported that she was missing". The girl, who was found lying in a pool of blood on the staircase that led to the terrace of the multi-storey building, was "first sexually abused and then killed", a senior police officer said.

Missing minor girl found dead

Kolkata: A nine-year-old girl was found dead with a slit throat under mysterious circumstance in Kolkata's Jorabagan Thursday morning, sparking tension in the area. After police found the partly clothed body bearing multiple injury marks from a rooftop in the neighbourhood, senior police officers led by city Joint Commissioner of Police (Crime) Murlidhar Sharma visited the spot.

Mob attacks cops

Thane: Three policemen were injured when a mob attacked them and freed a man accused of chain snatching in Ambivali town of Maharashtra's Thane district Thursday, an official said.

FARMERS' PROTEST

R-Day violence like 'Capitol Hill rioting'

AGENCIES

New Delhi/Washington, Feb 4: In response to the US remarks, the government Thursday compared the violent protests against its farm reforms to the rioting by the supporters of former President Donald Trump at the Capitol Hill last month.

A spokesperson of the US State Department had told the Wall Street Journal on Wednesday that the Joe Biden administration recognises "that peaceful protests are a hallmark of any thriving democracy, and note that the Indian Supreme Court has stated the same. We encourage that any differences between the parties be resolved through dialogue".

Though the spokesperson also said that "in general, the United States welcomes steps that would improve the efficiency of India's markets and attract greater private sector investment," he reprimanded the Indian government over the suspension of internet services in and around some farmers' protest sites.

"We recognise that unhindered access to information, including the internet, is fundamental to the freedom of expression and a hallmark of a thriving democracy," he had said.

On Thursday, during his weekly briefing, Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said that it has taken note of the US State Department's statement on the agriculture reforms and the ongoing protests. He pointed out how the protesters resorted to violence at Red Fort on India's Republic Day on January 26, undermining the country's law and order and the tricolour.



The spokesperson compared it to the Capitol Hill violence and said that both the incidents were "part of vibrant democracies".

The ministry in a statement issued on Wednesday had explained that the Parliament of India, after full debate and discussion, had passed the reformist legislation relating to the agricultural sector. "These reforms give expanded market access and provide greater flexibility to the farmers. They also pave the way for economically and ecologically sustainable farming," it said. The government also said that a very small section of farmers in parts of India have some reservations about these reforms.

"Respecting the sentiments of the protesters, the government of India has initiated a series of talks with their representatives. Union ministers have been part of the negotiations, and 11 rounds of talks have already been held. The government has even offered to keep the laws on hold, an offer iterated by no less than the Prime Minister of India," it said.

The ministry said, "Yet, it is unfortunate to see vested interest groups trying to enforce their

agenda on these protests, and derail them. This was egregiously witnessed on January 26, India's Republic Day. A cherished national commemoration, the anniversary of the inauguration of the Constitution of India, was besmirched, and violence and vandalism took place in the Indian capital. "Some of these vested interest groups have also tried to mobilise international support against India. Instigated by such fringe elements, Mahatma Gandhi statues have been desecrated in parts of the world. This is extremely disturbing for India and for civilised society everywhere."

Indian police forces have handled these protests with utmost restraint. It may be noted that hundreds of men and women serving in the police have been physically attacked, and in some cases stabbed and seriously wounded, it said. Meanwhile, Lok Sabha proceedings were disrupted for the third consecutive day Thursday as protests by Opposition members demanding a separate discussion on the three contentious farm laws created uproar, leading to repeated adjournments of the House.

Nails removed at Ghazipur

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 4: The Delhi Police on Thursday said that it had got removed the iron spikes and nails cemented into the road near the spot where farmers have been protesting on the Ghazipur entry point. It, however, clarified that the iron spikes and nails would be strategically put up at other places.

The action comes after a group of MPs from 10 opposition parties visited the Ghazipur border on Thursday morning to meet the farmers but were unable to reach the spot due to bed of iron spikes and nails at the barricades.

A senior Delhi Police officer told IANS: "We are strategically planning to install these iron spikes and nails at another location. That is why they have been removed



from here around 11 a.m. We will install them wherever we need to."

The Bharatiya Kisan Union said: "A right decision has been taken now. By doing the fortification in the area, an atmosphere to

facilitate a dialogue can't be created. But better be late than never. The government should not take such decisions that make the protesters feel that they are sitting on the border of another country."

HAL to launch unmanned fighter jet

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bengaluru, Feb 4: Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) on Thursday unveiled a leap in technology of teaming up unmanned aircraft and vehicles with manned jets similar to the US project of skybrog. It will enhance Indian military strike capabilities.

Teamed with a manned aircraft known as mother-ship, the unmanned aircraft will leverage autonomy to disrupt and defeat adversaries in contested environments.

The technology named Combined Air Teaming System (CATS) will have a mother ship, operating from faraway, and four autonomous unmanned aerial vehicle known as CATS Warrior with a capacity to carry out strike stealthily entering 700 kilometres inside enemy territory. These unmanned aerial vehicles are capable of autonomous functions and will also have all the manoeuvring capabilities.

"We are developing the project where the manned aircraft will operate within the boundary and the unmanned aircraft will enter the enemy zone and can carry out strikes deep inside the enemy territory," said Arup Chatterjee, Director (Engineering and R&D)



at HAL. He said that it is a dream project of HAL and very futuristic.

Elaborating upon the system, Chatterjee said the system will have a mother-ship carrying components like Hunter and Alpha. The mother ship which is a manned aircraft will be in the Indian territory. "The mother ship can be LCA or Jaguar or other combat manned aircraft," Chatterjee said.

The CATS Hunter attached to the mother-ship, which has a deep penetration straight way strike capability, can go deep into the enemy territory and carry out strikes. At present, the CATS Alpha is a glider and has capabilities to carry four, eight, sixteen or twenty four swarm drones. Alpha has can glide 50 to 100 kilometres into the enemy territory and once it reaches the mission zone, swarm drones comes out.

MIXOPATHY IMA members observe relay hunger strike

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Gurugram, Feb 4: The Indian Medical Association (IMA) members in Gurugram observed a relay hunger strike on Thursday against the governments notification permitting Ayurveda doctors to conduct 58 types of modern surgeries.

Around 200 doctors participated in the relay hunger strike. The IMA, the apex body of Indian doctors, has also planned to shut down OPDs from February 6 to 14 between 8 a.m. and 10 a.m. However, emergency services, such as casualty, labour room and intensive care units will be exempted from the strike.

The members of the association said they have begun a relay hunger strike from Thursday and will organise a candle march Friday evening in the civil lines area.

They also handed over a memorandum against the notification to the deputy commissioner Gurugram.

The association members said they will also go to the IMA headquarters in Delhi on February 6 and 7 against the government move.

BACKLOG IN OBC VACANCIES

Government to begin special recruitment drive

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 4: The Central government is planning to start a special recruitment drive in its all ministries, departments, public sector banks, financial institutions as well as public sector undertakings under it to fill backlog OBC vacancies.

The Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT), which monitors the progress in filling up of backlog reserved vacancies for the Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other Backward Classes (OBCs), in these ministries and departments under Central government, has given an instruction to its officials to begin the drive.

Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER), MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances, Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Jitendra Singh informed the Rajya Sabha in a written reply to a question Thursday.

GOLDEN HOUR



Youngsters riding bicycles are silhouetted against a setting Sun in Nadia

'Chinese actions disturbed peace'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 4: The Chinese military's attempts to unilaterally alter the status quo along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh have seriously disturbed peace and tranquillity in the region, the government said in Rajya Sabha on Thursday.

Minister of State for External Affairs V Muraleedharan said the attempts have been responded to "appropriately" by the Indian armed forces and it has been made clear to the Chinese side that such unilateral attempts are "unacceptable". In a written response to a question on the overall boundary issue with China, the minister said the two sides have agreed to seek a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable solution through dialogue and negotiations. He said the two

sides also agreed that pending final settlement of the boundary question, maintenance of peace and tranquillity in the border areas is an essential basis for the overall development of the bilateral relationship.

"However, since April/May 2020 the Chinese side undertook several attempts to unilaterally alter the status quo along the LAC in western sector. These attempts have been responded to appropriately by our armed forces," Muraleedharan said. "It has also been made clear to the Chinese side that such unilateral attempts are unacceptable. These actions have seriously disturbed the peace and tranquillity along the LAC in the western sector," he said.

The government often refers to eastern Ladakh as western sector. The minister also said that India's

engagement with China is "complex". "In the last few years, the two sides have agreed to manage their differences and not allow differences on any issue to become disputes," he said.

In addition, he said, the two sides also agree that the future rectification of ties should be built upon mutual respect for each other's developmental aspirations bearing in mind the importance of respecting each other's sensitivities, concerns and aspirations.

On the eastern Ladakh stand-off, he said: "Over the last several months, we have been engaged with the Chinese side through diplomatic and military channels to ensure complete disengagement from all friction points and full restoration of peace and tranquillity in the India-China border areas.

'Heritage trees more beneficial than construction of rly over bridges'

A HERITAGE TREE IS A LARGE TREE WHOSE VALUE IS CONSIDERED IRREPLACEABLE. THESE TREES TAKE DECADES AND CENTURIES TO MATURE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 4: The 300 heritage trees that are to be chopped for the construction of five railway over bridges in West Bengal are valued at Rs 220 crore in terms of oxygen and other products they offer which means a living tree will be more beneficial than the project, an expert committee has told the Supreme Court.

A heritage tree is a large tree that takes decades or centuries to mature. The committee of experts told a bench headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde that a heritage tree serves the civil society and the environment and its valuation can be reached on various counts including oxygen,

micro-nutrients, compost and bio-fertiliser. It said that if all costs are added and multiplied by the remaining age of a tree, in the present case 100 years, the grand total would be Rs 74,500 per tree year. "This means that 300 trees if allowed to live for a period of 100 or more years, will give products worth Rs 220 crore. This is the future value of 300 trees. If the entire stretch of 59.2-kilometre road is taken into consideration, which will become congested in a period of a decade or so, authorities will be forced to widen its width and on this count 4,056 trees will be required to be cut down. "In that case, the cost of products over a period of 100 years will be Rs 3,021 crore. So to avoid this



environmental catastrophe a solution out of routine framework is need of the hour," the committee said in its report. The five proposed bridges are part of a "Setu Bharatam Mega Project" financed by the

Centre to build 208 rail over- and under-bridges across 19 states in the country with a sanctioned cost of Rs 20,800 crore.

The five-member committee informed the apex court that before

implementing a project of national importance environmental impact assessment is desired and this has not been done in West Bengal. The committee said that state authorities are considering project under consideration as an independent project which is affecting a distance of 59.2 km only from Barasat to Bongaon. "According to a circular issued by MoEF, if a road project has a length less than 100 km, in that case, there is no need to get EIA from any government agency. Such an argument, in the present case, is an attempt to circumvent the law of the land. Noting the submissions, the top court observed that it would consider laying down a protocol to be followed for projects like road

widening project which require cutting of trees so that there is minimum damage to the environment. The observation came while hearing a plea related to felling of over 350 trees for the construction of railway over bridges (ROB) and widening of National Highway-112 on the Indo-Bangladesh border in West Bengal.

The bench has now posted the matter for hearing February 18. The apex court had earlier formed a committee of environment experts to suggest an alternative to felling of over 350 trees for construction of railway over bridges (ROB) and widening of National Highway-112 along the Indo-Bangladesh border in West Bengal.

of the day quote

The NDA government was committed to farmer welfare, it is committed to farmer welfare and will remain committed to farmer welfare

JYOTIRADITYA SCINDIA | SENIOR BJP MEMBER

I appeal to the people to take part in the 'Switch Delhi' campaign to promote replacement of polluting petrol and diesel vehicles with electric vehicles and make contribution towards a pollution-free Delhi

ARVIND KEJRIWAL | DELHI CHIEF MINISTER

No other party can take our place since the TMC has provided the most people-friendly government in the world

MAMATA BANERJEE | WEST BENGAL CM

SHORT TAKES

Maha Assembly Speaker resigns

Mumbai: Maharashtra Assembly Speaker Nana F. Patole resigned from his post here Thursday. He submitted his resignation to Deputy Speaker Narhari S. Zhirwal, after a tenure of nearly 14 months in the august post. The development comes ahead of 58-year-old Patole's likely appointment as the new President of the Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee, according to party sources.

11 tribal girls rescued

Agartala: Tripura police have rescued 11 tribal girls, suspected to be trafficked, and detained a man in this connection, officials said Thursday. Police added that they were brought to Agartala from tribal refugee camps in northern Tripura. According to a police officer, the rescued tribal girls are now at the NGO Child Line's home, who had helped the police in their rescue operation of these girls, two of whom are 18-years-old and others below 18 years of age.

Convict hangs self to death

Bareilly (UP): A convict, who had fled from the prison but was caught later and kept in a temporary jail for the Covid test, allegedly committed suicide, an official said. "Nar Pal alias Sonu, 44, had escaped from the central jail here Monday after scaling the wall. He was, however, caught by the Bijnore police on Tuesday and was kept in a temporary jail for the Covid-19 test," Prison Additional Director General (Prison) Avinash Chandra said.

21.5% of population may have had nCoV

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 4: Over 21 per cent of the population, aged 10 years and above, showed evidence of past exposure to COVID-19 in the ICMR's latest national serosurvey, the government said on Thursday, noting that a large proportion of people are still vulnerable to the infection.

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) third national serosurvey was conducted between December 7 last year and January 8. Presenting the findings of the survey, ICMR Director General Dr Balram Bhargava said 21.4 per cent of the 28,589 people, aged 18 years and above, surveyed during the period showed evidence of past exposure to the coronavirus infection. While 25.3 per cent of children aged 10 to 17 years from the same number of surveyed population have had the disease, he said.

Urban slums (31.7 per cent) and urban non-slums (26.2 per cent) had a higher SARS-CoV-2 prevalence than those in rural areas (19.1



per cent), Bhargava said, adding that 23.4 per cent of individuals above 60 years of age had suffered from COVID-19. Blood samples of 7,171 healthcare workers were also collected during the same period and the seroprevalence was found to be 25.7 per cent, the ICMR director general said.

The survey was conducted in the same 700 villages or wards in 70

The central government has passed a law in the Cabinet to snatch power of Delhi's elected government and give it to Centre-appointed Lieutenant Governor. The BJP wants to govern Delhi through backdoor as people chose not to elect them in three consecutive elections

MANISH SISODIA | DELHI DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER

MERCURY RISES IN KASHMIR

The minimum temperature in Srinagar settled above the freezing point for the first time in over a month as the mercury rose at most places in Kashmir Thursday, providing relief to the residents, even as the valley experienced fresh snowfall, officials said



Pakistan-based hackers behind Airtel data leak

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 4: The recent data leak of at least 26 lakh Airtel users from Jammu and Kashmir was the handiwork of Pakistan-based hackers, who created new accounts to put data in the public forum and sell them for \$3500 in Bitcoin, a security expert said Thursday.

The hackers, who go by the name of 'TeamLeets' and are possibly operating from Pakistan, initially dumped the data on a link and even threatened to leak more Airtel data via a new Twitter handle that goes by the name of 'Red Rabbit Teams'.

The new Twitter account, however, has been restricted by the microblogging site for "unusual activity". TeamLeets then created another Twitter handle that goes by the name of 'PANAMA-iii (Scandal and Mega Database)', which tweeted fresh links to another subset of data from the original sample of 26 lakh J&K users, which may belong to the people from the Indian Army. This particular ac-



count was also deleted later. "TeamLeets, which is a Pakistan-based hacking group, is behind the Airtel data leak," independent cyber security researcher Rajshekhhar Rajaharia told IANS when contacted. "They first dumped the data on a domain in December last year, which was removed. TeamLeets then created a couple of Twitter accounts to further push its agenda. It is possible that Red Rabbit Teams and TeamLeets are two sides of the same coin or are working together," Rajaharia added. The Pakistan-based hackers had access to the data and wanted to sell them but could not succeed. Hence, they dumped the data on the internet.

7,139 Indian prisoners lodged in foreign jails

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 4: A total of 7,139 Indian prisoners, including under-trials, are lodged in various jails around the world, the Ministry of External Affairs said on Thursday. Saudi Arabia has the highest number of 1,599 Indian prisoners, followed by the United Arab Emirates with 898 and Nepal having 886 inmates, according to information provided by Minister of State for External Affairs V Muraleedharan in Rajya Sabha.

"As per the information available with the ministry, the number of Indian prisoners in foreign jails as December 31, 2020, is 7,139, which also includes under-trials," he said responding to a question. He said due to strong privacy laws pre-

vailling in many countries, the local authorities do not share information on prisoners unless the person concerned consents to the disclosure of such details.

"Even countries which share information do not generally provide detailed information about the foreign nationals imprisoned," he said. Muraleedharan said Indian missions and posts abroad remain vigilant and closely monitor incidents of Indian nationals being put in jail for alleged violation of local laws. "Missions and posts also maintain a local panel of lawyers where Indian community is in sizeable numbers," he added.

According to the details provided by the minister, 548 Indians are languishing in jails in Malaysia and 536 are lodged in Kuwaiti prisons.



RS by-polls in Guj, Assam March 1

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 4: Rajya Sabha by-polls to three seats in Gujarat and Assam, including the one which fell vacant due to the death of senior Congress leader Ahmed Patel, will be held March 1, the Election Commission said Thursday.

Two Rajya Sabha seats in Gujarat fell vacant late last year, following the deaths of Ahmed Patel and Abhay Bhardwaj (BJP). While Patel died November 25 last year, Bhardwaj passed away December 1 last year. The Rajya Sabha terms

of Patel and Bhardwaj were to end in August 2023 and June 2026, respectively. One Rajya Sabha seat in Assam fell vacant after lone Bodo People's Front MP Biswajit Daimary resigned from the upper house in November last year.

His term was to end in April, 2026. The notification for the bypolls will be issued February 11 and the election would be held March 1. The counting of votes will take place March 1 evening.

As per procedure, counting for Rajya Sabha elections is held on the day polls take place.

CHILLING OUT



Tourists visit Solang valley after a fresh spell of snowfall, in Manali

PTI PHOTO

Delhi sisters claim ownership of mosque land in Ayodhya

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, Feb 4: Two Delhi-based sisters have moved the Lucknow bench of the Allahabad High Court, claiming the ownership of the five-acre land allotted to the Uttar Pradesh Sunni Central Waqf Board for the construction of a mosque in Ayodhya, in accordance with the Supreme Court verdict in the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid case.

The petition was filed before the Lucknow bench of Allahabad High Court Wednesday and is likely to come up for hearing February 8. Rani Kapoor a.k.a Rani Baluja and Rama Rani Punjabi have said in the writ petition that their father Gyan

Chandra Punjabi had come to India during partition in 1947 from Punjab and settled in Faizabad (now Ayodhya) district. They have claimed that their father was allotted 28-acre land in the Dhannipur village by the Nazul Department for five years which he continued to possess beyond that period.

However, his name was struck down from the records after which their father filed an appeal before the Additional Commissioner, Ayodhya, which was allowed. The petitioners further claimed that the consolidation officer again removed their father's name from the records during the consolidation proceedings. Against the order of the consolidation officer, an ap-

peal was filed before the Settlement Officer of Consolidation, Sadar, Ayodhya, but without considering the said petition, the authorities have allotted five-acre of their 28-acre land to the Waqf Board for the constructing of mosque, the petitioners said. The petitioners have demanded the authorities be restrained from transferring the land to the Sunni Waqf Board till the pendency of dispute before the settlement officer. The state government has allotted five-acre land to the Sunni Waqf Board in the Dhannipur village for the construction of mosque in compliance with the Supreme Court directive issued in November 2019 in the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri mosque title suit.

'Restricted' military study materials seized

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Ayodhya/Lucknow, Feb 4: Based on specific inputs from the Military Intelligence (MI), a team of Ayodhya Police has recovered a large volume of 'restricted' military study materials, mostly digital in nature, from a civilian shopkeeper in Faizabad Cantonment of the temple town.

Official sources told IANS that in January this year, the Lucknow-based MI unit got some credible inputs that some restricted military study materials were in possession of few shopkeepers in Faizabad Cantonment.

The input was developed and subsequently shared with the local police and the central intelligence agencies and jointly pursued as 'Operation Dastavez'.

Two shops were identified as suspected unauthorised holders of 'restricted' military study materials in Sadar Bazar area in Faizabad Cantonment.

On Wednesday, a team of Ayodhya Police led by Sub-Inspector Sandeep Kumar Tripathy, under the supervision of Inspector (SHO, Cantonment Police Station) Suresh Pandey and following the directions of DIG Deepak Kumar, raided the two shops in Sadar Bazar area.

In the raid, Arif Hussain (36), the owner of a shop called 'Aarif Stationery', was found in possession of a large volume of 'restricted' military study materials stored in four pen-drives and laptop.

Apart from that, printed documents/books prepared using those contents were also recovered from his shop.

Sources said Arif Hussain since long has been gathering digital copies of such study materials from various army personnel, who used to come to his shop for getting photocopy/print-outs of their study materials (both in paper and digital form), without their knowledge.

After battling Covid, hosps to draw focus back on cancer

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 4: The Covid-19 pandemic has taken a toll on timely diagnosis and treatment of chronic diseases, and preventive care for ailments like cancer is one of the worst hit.

However, since the cases of Covid-19 have started to subside gradually, the need for awareness among the patients has multiplied. In lieu of it, the hospitals have geared up to start awareness campaigns to draw patients' attention back on cancer treatment. Suresh Kumar, Director at Delhi's Lok Nayak Hospital, told IANS that the hospital will start an awareness campaign specifically for cancer patients.

"Cancer patients have now started to visit our centre since we are now available to all kinds of patients. We are going to start an awareness drive to evade the fear of Covid and stress on the importance of

early screening among the people," he stated. Lok Nayak was recently delisted from the dedicated Covid hospital list by the Delhi government. It had served as a key Covid care centre since the pandemic struck the national capital.

Jagat Ram, Director, Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education & Research (PGIMER), Chandigarh, told IANS that its departments are coordinating to raise cancer awareness in the hospital.

"Dietetics, community medicine and radiotherapy departments of our hospital have put up posters besides having dialogues with different groups of people. We have also joined hands with the Panjab University in this endeavour," he said. Manish Sharma, Medical Oncologist at Rajiv Gandhi Cancer Institute and Research Centre (RGIRC) in Delhi, said that owing to the fear of Covid-19, people have delayed preventive screenings and



WORLD CANCER DAY

early diagnosis of cancer, leading to a burden in the disease. He also cautioned that the burden of Stage 2 and Stage 3 cancer is set to see a spike in the coming months.

"The patients have been extra apprehensive and skeptical of getting cancer care from hospitals as they are immunocompromised and hence are more vulnerable to complications of Covid-19. Since many

of them did not come for regular screening, check-up and treatment, their disease has progressed to the advanced stage," Sharma explained.

"We need an assorted campaign from the hospitals as well as from the government to have an upper hand over a flood of cases in the coming months," he suggested. Annually, February 4 is observed as World Cancer Day to raise awareness

CHEMOTHERAPY UPS COVID INFECTION RISK

According to experts, immunity plays a strong role in coping with such viruses or diseases as it produces antibodies to kill pathogens. "Chemotherapy process decreases the immunity level of the patient by lowering white blood cells count. And with low white blood cells count severe infection can affect the patient more severely and add to the challenges," Deni Gupta, Senior Consultant, Medical Oncology, Narayana Hospital Gurugram, told IANS on the occasion of World Cancer Day that is observed February 4. Astudy, presented at the European Society for Medical Oncology Virtual Congress 2020, analysed 3,600 patients from 122 institutions and found that 30-day mortality was highest among the cancer patients treated one to three months prior to Covid-19 diagnosis and was highest for those treated with a chemotherapy/immunotherapy combination. Patients with active haematologic or lung malignancies, peri-Covid-19 lymphopenia, or baseline neutropenia may have the worse Covid-19 outcomes. The experts also stressed that cancer patients should follow all the Covid-19 protocols and should never leave the treatment in between as it can make the disease more dangerous.

about cancer and reduce the stigma that surrounds the disease which is the second leading cause of death globally. The World Cancer Day is a 'global uniting initiative' led by the

Union of International Cancer Control (UICC) and is meant to encourage the prevention, detection, diagnosis and treatment of cancer as early as possible.

international



Ahead of informal UN talks on Cyprus, today I spoke to Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu and reinforced the need for all sides to be flexible
DOMINIC RAAB | FOREIGN SECRETARY, UK

NON-CITIZENS AREN'T ALLOWED IN KUWAIT

Kuwait will stop the entry of non-citizens to the country for a period of two weeks in a latest effort to curb the spread of Covid-19, a govt spokesman said



of the day quote

Rather than introducing the guidelines unilaterally, we should make the virus prevention rules along with the public



CHUNG SYE-KYUN | PRIME MINISTER, SOUTH KOREA

The Parliament must decide in coming days how to finance continuing measures to soften the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. We will have to decide very concretely on how we deal with the new challenges



OLAF SCHOLZ | FINANCE MINISTER, GERMANY

No matter who was involved, I want the ministry to check facts firmly and make a response based on rules



YOSHIIHIDE SUGA | PRIME MINISTER, JAPAN

SHORT TAKES

Trump's helipad to be demolished

Miami: A helipad at former US President Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida's Palm Beach town built for use during his time in office, will soon be demolished, according to a media report. The report published Wednesday by the Palm Beach Daily News said that "a permit was pulled on Tuesday for demolition of the town's sole helipad" at the resort to which Trump moved to on the morning of January 20 ahead of Joe Biden's inauguration as the 46th President of the US.

Shehbaz Sharif returns to jail

Lahore: Shehbaz Sharif, Pakistan's Leader of Opposition in the National Assembly, Thursday returned to the Kot Lakpat jail in Lahore after visiting a hospital as his health deteriorated earlier in the day. Strict security arrangements were made and a heavy contingent of police has been deployed in and around the hospital, reports The Express Tribune. It was reported that Sharif would undergo positron emission tomography (PET) scan and other medical tests. After receiving the reports of medical tests, he was discharged and sent back to jail.

nCoV kills 303 Indonesian docs

Jakarta: At least 303 doctors have died due to the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia, according to authorities Thursday. In a statement, the Indonesia Medical Association said that among the 303 victims, 169 were general practitioners, 129 specialists, and five resident doctors, reports Xinhua news agency. The oldest doctors who died of the disease were aged between 81 and 85 years-old, and the number stands at six. The youngest were aged between 28 and 30, and the number stands at 11. January 2021 is the month with the highest fatality of doctors due to the pandemic.

No demonetisation in Myanmar: Govt

Yangon: Myanmar's State Administration Council has announced that the citizens can continue the use of 5,000 and 10,000 kyat notes, while denying rumours of demonetisation of banknotes. In a statement Wednesday, the Council said that rumours and fake news were spread in social media about the demonetisation of 5,000 and 10,000 kyat notes published by the state officially, reports Xinhua news agency.

Kremlin doesn't flinch

Russian authorities say arrests at protests against the jailing of Navalny were a 'necessary response'

AGENCIES

Moscow, Feb 4: The Kremlin said Thursday that thousands of arrests at protests against the jailing of opposition leader Alexei Navalny were a necessary response to the unsanctioned rallies and strongly rebuffed Western criticism.

Asked about the harsh treatment of thousands of detainees, many of whom spent long hours on police buses and were put in overcrowded cells, Russian President Vladimir Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, said that they have to bear responsibility for joining the unau-

thorized protests. "The situation wasn't provoked by law enforcement, it was provoked by participants in unsanctioned actions," Peskov said in a call with reporters.

Massive protests erupted after Navalny, a 44-year-old anti-corruption campaigner who is Putin's most determined political foe, was arrested Jan. 17 upon returning from his five-month convalescence in Germany from a nerve agent poisoning, which he has blamed on the Kremlin. Russian authorities deny any involvement and claim they have no proof that he was poisoned despite tests by several



Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny shows a heart symbol standing in the cage during a hearing to a motion from the Russian prison service to convert the suspended sentence of Navalny from the 2014 criminal conviction into a real prison term in the Moscow City Court in Moscow, Russia



People clash with police during a protest against the jailing of opposition leader Alexei Navalny in Moscow, Russia

European labs.

A Moscow court Tuesday ordered Navalny to prison for two years and eight months, finding that he violated the terms of his probation while recuperating in Germany, a ruling that caused international outrage and triggered new protests in Moscow and St.

The situation wasn't provoked by law enforcement, it was provoked by participants in unsanctioned actions

DMITRY PESKOV | PRESIDENT VLADIMIR PUTIN'S SPOKESMAN

Petersburg.

Following Navalny's arrest, authorities also have moved swiftly to silence and isolate his allies. Last week, a Moscow court

put his brother, Oleg, top associate Lyubov Sobol, and several other key allies under house ar-

rest — without access to the internet — for two months as part of a criminal probe into alleged violations of coronavirus restrictions during protests.

Thursday, Sobol was formally charged with the incitement of violation of sanitary regulations by organizing protests.

Protests have spread across Russia's 11 time zones over the past two weekends, drawing tens of thousands in the largest show of discontent with Putin's rule in years.

In a no-holds-barred response to the protest, police arrested over 10,000 protest participants across Russia and beat scores, according to the OVD-Info group monitoring arrests. Many detainees had to spend hours on police buses after detention facilities in Moscow and St. Petersburg quickly ran out of space and later were cramped into cells intended to accommodate far fewer inmates.

One detainee, Almir Shamasov, who spent 10 days at a detention facility in Sakharovo outside Moscow, said he spent 20 hours in a police van suffering from engine fumes or shivering cold when it was cut off.

"While we were driving, staying, the whole day passed," he said after being freed late Wednesday.

200 people held during general strike in Nepal

AGENCIES

Kathmandu, Feb 4: Over 200 people were arrested Thursday for their involvement in arson and vandalism during a general strike called by the Nepal Communist Party's splinter faction led by Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' that paralysed normal life across the country.

The strike was called by Prachanda-led faction to oppose the appointment of office bearers and members of various constitutional bodies by Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli-led caretaker government. Major markets, educational institutions, offices and factories were shut down while transport services were disrupted during the strike. The government had mobilised at least 5,000 security personnel in Kathmandu Valley.



Sledders enjoy the snow during a storm in the Brooklyn borough of New York City

REUTERS

US House passes budget resolution

AGENCIES

Washington, Feb 4: The US House of Representatives approved Wednesday a budget resolution that would allow Congress to pass President Joe Biden's \$1.9 trillion Covid-19 relief package without Republican support.

The Democrats-controlled House passed the budget resolution Wednesday night by a vote of 218-212, with no Republicans supporting the measure, reports Xinhua news agency.

"While bipartisan talks continue, today's passage of the 2021 budget resolution ensures that we have another path to enacting President Biden's 'American Rescue Plan',"

House Budget Committee Chair John Yarmuth said in a statement.

"The American people cannot wait, and Congress cannot slow down our response to these urgent crises while Republicans decide if they want to help or not," Yarmuth said. The Senate is expected to approve the budget resolution later this week.

Then both chambers will need to approve a budget reconciliation package that includes the Covid-19 relief deal, according to local media.

Using budget reconciliation, Democrats could push the relief package through the Senate with a simple majority, rather than the 60 votes needed for most legislations.



THE DEMOCRATS-CONTROLLED HOUSE PASSED THE BUDGET RESOLUTION WEDNESDAY NIGHT BY A VOTE OF 218-212
NO REPUBLICANS SUPPORTED THE MEASURE

The package includes over \$400 billion to combat the pandemic directly such as more funding for testing and vaccine distribution; roughly \$1 trillion in direct relief to households; and over \$400 billion for hard-hit small businesses and communities. The party breakdown in

the Senate is 50-50 now, with Vice President Kamala Harris having the power to cast the tie-breaking vote to give Democrats the majority. "I think the President has been clear there is an urgency to delivering relief to the American people," White House Press Secretary said.

'Not like every time': Beirut blast victims want truth

THE SKEPTICISM IS JUSTIFIED; LEBANON, A COUNTRY WROUGHT BY POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND ASSASSINATIONS, HAS A HISTORY OF UNFINISHED PROSECUTIONS

AGENCIES

Beirut, Feb 4: Days after a massive explosion ripped through Beirut's port and disfigured the Lebanese capital, family members of some of the 211 people killed in the blast demanded an international probe.

It was a swift vote of no confidence in the authorities' ability to investigate one of the largest non-nuclear explosions in history and one of the nation's most traumatic experiences.

The skepticism was justified. Lebanon, a country wrought by political violence and assassinations, has a history of unfinished prosecutions and buried secrets.

Six months after the Aug. 4 blast, the domestic investigation has been brought to a virtual halt by the same political and confessional ri-

valries that thwarted past attempts to uncover the truth in major crimes.

What started as an investigation into how nearly 3,000 tons of ammonium nitrate, a highly explosive fertilizer component, were stored in Beirut port for years with politicians' and security agencies' knowledge has taken a turn, wading into a web of murky international business interests in the explosives trade and global shipping.

Government officials rebuffed an international probe and appointed former military court judge Fadi Sawwan to investigate. He has largely focused on government incompetence amid public anger at a corrupt political class blamed for Lebanon's slide into poverty and upheaval.

In a rare move, Sawwan charged two former ministers and the cur-

rent prime minister with negligence, triggering pushback.

The prime minister refused to appear for questioning, calling it "diabolic" to single him out for charges. The ministers challenged the judge and asked Lebanon's highest court to replace him in a move that brought the probe to a halt since Dec. 17. The interior minister said he won't ask security forces to implement arrest warrants targeting political figures.

In early January, the Court of Cassation ruled that Sawwan can resume his investigation while it reviews calls to replace him, keeping the possibility hanging over the probe.

Yet Sawwan has not resumed work, raising concerns among victims' families that he may have caved to pressure.



A damaged closed shop with Arabic graffiti written by protesters reads: "You literally blew us up. We shall live to kill you," in Beirut, Lebanon

Dozens of family members gathered outside his house Monday, urging him to restart the probe.

"We want to know if they are not letting him," Kayan Tleis, whose 40-year-old brother was killed in

US encourages talks between farmers, Indian government

AGENCIES

Washington, Feb 4: Recognising that peaceful protests are a hallmark of a thriving democracy, the US said that it encourages dialogue between the protesting farmers and the Indian government to resolve their differences.

Thousands of farmers, mainly from Punjab and Haryana, have been camping at several Delhi border points since November last year, demanding the government to repeal the three farm laws and legal guarantee of minimum support price (MSP) for their crops.

The State Department, responding to a question on the ongoing farmers' protests in India, said Wednesday that the US encourages that any differences between the parties be resolved through dialogue.

Indicating that the new Biden administration is supportive of the Indian government's move to reform the agricultural sector that attracts private investment and greater market access to farmers, a State Department spokesperson said: "In general, the United States welcomes steps that would improve the efficiency of India's markets and attract greater private sector investment."

Myanmar blocks FB as resistance grows

AGENCIES

Yangon, Feb 4: Myanmar's new military government blocked access to Facebook as resistance to Monday's coup surged amid calls for civil disobedience to protest the ousting of the elected government and its leader, Aung San Suu Kyi.

Facebook is especially popular in Myanmar and is how most people access the internet.

The military seized power shortly before a new session of Parliament was to convene Monday and detained Suu Kyi and other top politicians.

It said it acted because the government had refused to address its complaints that last November's general election, in which Suu Kyi's party won a landslide victory, was marred by widespread voting irregularities. The state Election Commission has refuted the allegations.

About 70 recently elected lawmakers defied the new military government Thursday by convening a symbolic meeting of the Parliament that was prevented from opening. They signed their oaths of office at a government guesthouse in the capital, Naypyitaw, where about 400 of them were detained in the aftermath of the takeover. They have since been told they can return to their home districts. The unofficial convening was a symbolic gesture to assert that they, not the military, are the country's legitimate lawmakers.

Some expressed their anger and their determination to resist the coup as they left the guesthouse.



Men flash a three-finger salute of protest against military coup in Yangon, Myanmar

"This violates the human rights of the whole citizenry. This is not a coup. This is treason against the government. I will have to say that this is state treason," said Khin Soe Soe Kyi, a member of Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party.

The military declared a one-year state of emergency and put all state powers into the hands of the junta, including legislative functions. It said that at the end of that period it will call an election and turn over power to the winner.

Anti-coup graffiti appeared in Yangon, the country's biggest city, with the slogan "Don't want dictatorship" scrawled on a wall on a busy street.

In Mandalay, a city known for its activist politics, a spirited protest by about 20 people in front of the University of Medicine was broken up by police. Three were arrested.

Medical personnel have declared they won't work for the military government. Health workers are highly respected for their work during the coronavirus pandemic that is taxing the country's dangerously inadequate health system.

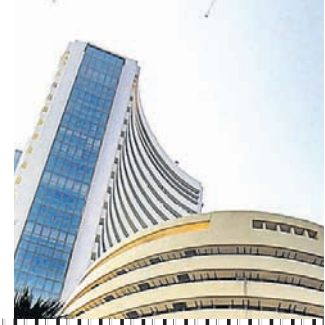


As we grow our presence and expand, this fresh round of funds will help us focus on our core value propositions - a robust platform with the best features for gamers

SAI SRINIVAS |
CO-FOUNDER AND CEO, MPL

RECORD RUN MAINTAINED

Equity indices defied gravity for the fourth straight session to close at fresh lifetime highs Thursday as FMCG and banking counters saw robust demand amid encouraging quarterly earnings. Participants shrugged off weak Asian cues and kept accumulating stocks ahead of RBI's policy decision Friday, traders said.



of the day quote

I'm happy to welcome Bikram Singh Bedi to lead our India business. With a proven track record of building and growing successful enterprise businesses, his experience will be an asset to the team

KARAN BAJWA |
VP, GOOGLE CLOUD IN ASIA PACIFIC



We are excited to resume our (twice) weekly flight from Delhi to Moscow under the air bubble agreement. These flights are a positive step forward after COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions

ANDREI ALIMOV |
GENERAL MANAGER FOR INDIA, AEROFLOT



Every partnership counts as we work towards this goal by leveraging CyberSmart. After partnering with multiple state governments, we are now proud to partner with the Hyderabad City Security

KESHAV R. MURUGESH | GROUP CEO, WNS



SHORT TAKES

Mahindra recalls 1,577 Thar units

New Delhi: Utility vehicles major Mahindra & Mahindra (M&M) Thursday said it is recalling 1,577 units of its SUV Thar with diesel powertrain to replace faulty camshaft, an engine part. The Mumbai-based auto major said it would undertake proactive inspection and replacement of camshaft on a batch of 1,577 units of Thar diesel variants, manufactured between September 7 and December 25, 2020.

'Sebi ban will not affect deal'

New Delhi: Future Retail Ltd has said that SEBI's one-year ban on its Chairperson Kishore Biyani and some other promoters from the securities market will have "no impact" on the ₹24,713 crore-deal with Reliance. Further, Kishore Biyani, some other promoters and Future Corporate Resources Pvt Ltd (FCRPL) plan to appeal against the order passed by Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) on Wednesday. The SEBI order "has taken care to exclude dealings in securities under any impending Scheme of Arrangement."

GAIL bifurcation plan put on hold

New Delhi: The Oil Ministry has put on hold a plan to bifurcate state-owned gas utility GAIL (India) Ltd so as not to dilute the firm's ability to finance the massive infrastructure building plan, a top official said Thursday. GAIL is India's biggest natural gas marketing and trading firm and owns 60 per cent of the country's 26,284-km gas pipeline network, giving it a stranglehold on the market.

Tata Steel ties up with FarEye

Mumbai: Tata Steel BSL has tied-up with software logistics firm FarEye to help the steel maker in its digital transformation process. A predictive logistics SaaS (software-as-a-service) platform, FarEye's intelligent logistics platform enables enterprises to orchestrate, track, and optimise their logistics operations, according to a company release. By embracing FarEye's platform Tata Steel BSL is also driving automated delivery workflows including automatic order allocation, the company said.

BIZ BUZZ

Ultratech Cement to raise ₹3,000 crore

New Delhi: Ultratech Cement's board has approved a proposal raise up to ₹3,000 crore through issuance of US dollar-denominated bonds. "The finance committee... Approved raising funds by way of issuance of foreign currency (USD) denominated bonds (Notes) aggregating up to USD 400 million, corresponding to ₹3,000 crore, to be offered and sold within the United States to qualified institutional buyers... In one or more tranches," the company said in a late evening regulatory filing Wednesday. Ultratech Cement said the proceeds from the issuance will be used to refinance existing rupee debt, with the remainder reserved for regular ongoing capital expenditure requirements and general corporate purposes.



Reliance sells Pennsylvania shale asset

New Delhi: Billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries Ltd has sold its stake in the shale gas asset in the US to Northern Oil and Gas Inc for USD 250 million, the firm said Thursday. "Reliance Marcellus, LLC (RMLLC) a wholly-owned subsidiary of Reliance Industries Limited (RIL), announced the signing of agreements to divest all of its interest in certain upstream assets in the Marcellus shale play of southwestern Pennsylvania," a company statement said. These assets, which are currently operated by various affiliates of EQT Corporation, have been agreed to be sold to Northern Oil and Gas, Inc, a Delaware corporation, for USD 250 million cash and warrants that give entitlement to purchase 3.25 million common shares of Northern Oil and Gas (NOG).



Cognizant Q4 income down 20 per cent

New Delhi: IT major Cognizant has reported about 20 per cent drop in net income to USD 316 million (around ₹2,303.2 crore) for the December quarter. The US-based company, which posted a net income of USD 395 million in the December 2019 quarter, said it is seeing a strengthening in demand environment. For the fourth quarter of 2020, Cognizant's revenue declined 2.3 per cent to USD 4.18 billion from USD 4.28 billion in the year-ago period. "Fourth-quarter revenue was USD 4.2 billion, a decline of 3 per cent year-over-year in constant currency," Cognizant Chief Executive Officer Brian Humphries said in an investor call. Cognizant - which has about 2 lakh employees based in India - follows January-December as financial year.



Bad Bank to absorb ₹2L cr NPAs

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 4: India's growth is set to further accelerate on the back of the path breaking plan to set up a 'Bad Bank', which is expected to absorb ₹2 lakh crore worth of non-performing assets (NPA).

Accordingly, the process is expected to clean up banks' books and allow them to lend more freely.

According to the Finance Ministry's Chief Economic Advisor Krishnamurthy Venkata Subramanian, the crucial reform measure in the sector will pave the way for a stronger banking sector.

In a conversation with IANS, he said the Budget proposal on 'Bad Bank' is really critical for the sound health of the financial sector as it would clean up the balance sheets of banks while also giving them opportunity to raise additional capital from the market to step up lending.

"...in excess of ₹2 lakh crore of bad assets are actually likely to be transferred to the bad bank," he told IANS.

The CEA said that with banks provisioning for bad assets rising to 85 per cent against 15 per cent for bad assets, a lot of hit that banks would have otherwise taken in these toxic



assets have already been covered. With 'Bad Bank' coming into the picture, banks would not only get higher realisation for bad assets but also free up their capital that could also help in augmenting capital by tapping market with share offering.

According to the RBI's bi-annual financial stability report (FSR), bank NPAs may rise to as high as 14.8 per cent in one year in case of a severe stress scenario, from 7.5 per cent as of September 2020 or close to ₹7.5-8 lakh crore. The RBI's stress test covers the first six months of

The Budget proposal on 'Bad Bank' is really critical for the sound health of the financial sector as it would clean up the balance sheets of banks while also giving them opportunity to raise additional capital

KV SUBRAMANIAN |
CEA

the current fiscal ended March and projects a baseline scenario of gross NPAs (GNPAs) at 13.5 per cent.

So, even if the bad bank picks up an ₹2 lakh crore tab, the stress in the

LENDING RE-BOOT

ACCORDING TO THE RBI'S BI-ANNUAL FINANCIAL STABILITY REPORT (FSR), BANK NPAS MAY RISE TO AS HIGH AS 14.8 PER CENT IN ONE YEAR IN CASE OF A SEVERE STRESS SCENARIO

THE RBI'S STRESS TEST COVERS THE FIRST SIX MONTHS OF THE CURRENT FISCAL ENDED MARCH AND PROJECTS A BASELINE SCENARIO OF GROSS NPAS (GNPAs) AT 13.5 PER CENT

banking sector would be relieved by a significant margin.

Monday, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman proposed creation of an Asset Reconstruction Company and Asset Management Company to consolidate and take over the existing stressed debt and then manage and dispose of the assets to Alternate Investment Funds and other potential investors for eventual value realisation.

The proposal was made by Sitharaman in the Union Budget FY22.

A 'Bad Bank' buys non-performing loans of scheduled lenders at the current market price. It is considered vital to a robust banking ecosystem.

Govt sticks to \$5 trn target, says DEA Secy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 4: The government is sticking to the target of becoming a USD 5 trillion economy by 2024-25 and emphasis on infrastructure sector and other initiatives taken in Budget 2021-22 are aimed at achieving the goal, Economic Affairs Secretary Tarun Bajaj has said.

The Budget presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday has given a big push to infrastructure spending, monetisation of assets, ramping up of capacities in healthcare sector and agriculture sector, among others. These initiatives are aimed at reviving the economy ravaged by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We have not revised the target. We are pushing for it. The various initiatives of the government including emphasis on infrastructure are targeting towards achieving that goal," Bajaj told PTI in an interview.

The spending on infrastructure has gone up from ₹ 4.12 lakh crore



to ₹5.54 lakh crore while on the health sector it has risen to ₹2.23 lakh crore from ₹94,000 crore in the Budget Estimate for 2020-21.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2019 envisioned making India a USD 5 trillion economy and a global economic powerhouse by 2024-25. With this, India would become the third largest economy in the world.

Although the Indian economy is estimated to contract by 7.7 per cent during the current fiscal, it is projected to record a growth rate of over 11 per cent in 2021-22.

China is next with 8.1 per cent growth in 2021 followed by Spain (5.9 per cent) and France (5.5 per cent).

Bank officials decry divestment

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 4: Four officers' organisations representing the entire fraternity of officers in the banking industry AIBOC, AIBOA, INBOC and NOBO deplored and resolutely opposed the proposal of privatisation of two public sector banks and one general insurance company, announced during recent budget.

General Secretary of AIBOC Soumya Datta, General Secretary of AIBOA Nagarajan S, General Secretary of INBOC Prem Kumar Makker and General Secretary of NOBO Viraj Tikekar condemned the proposal of sale of public sector banks, insurance companies and CPSE's and urged upon the central government to roll back the strategic divestment plan.

"The proposal for sale of public sector enterprises in pursuance of strategic divestment is to prepare the ground for the corporates and foreign companies to take control of the public sector space. In the era of 'Bank Nirbhar Bharat', where all the schemes of the government are being implemented by the Public Sector Banks, the proposal to privatise two PSBs



is retrograde and inimical to national interest, Datta said.

The four officers' organisations have decided to launch an all-out resistance to the attempt of selling national assets with all major stakeholders if the proposal is not withdrawn. The all India strike will be declared soon.

Moreover, the associations also sent a request letter to union finance minister addressing the consequences of privatization.

"We consider that any proposal for privatisation of PSBs is retrograde, ill-conceived and thoroughly inimical to the national

interest. Any step towards privatisation, dilution of government equity and/or further mergers and amalgamation of PSBs would face stiff resistance, not only from our organisations but also from all the major stakeholders. We urge upon your good office to kindly rescind any such privatisation proposal, if on the anvil, not only for the PSBs but for all the PSUs. The Union Government should rather initiate policy discussion on the ways and means of reforming and strengthening the PSBs," mentioned in the letter.

LIC IPO to lend sparkle to markets this Diwali

ON THE SIZE OF THE LIC OFFER, PANDEY SAID THAT THE AMOUNT OF SHARES TO BE OFFERED IN THE INITIAL PUBLIC OFFERING (IPO) WOULD DEPEND ON THE EMBEDDED VALUE AND THE SIZE

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 4: The much-anticipated IPO of public sector insurer Life Insurance Corp of India (LIC) may well lend more sparkle to the Indian stock markets this Diwali.

Speaking to IANS, Disinvestment Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey noted the fact that LIC is a complex undertaking but the government is up to the challenge and will complete the market offering post October.

"It may happen after October... around Diwali," Pandey said in the interview.

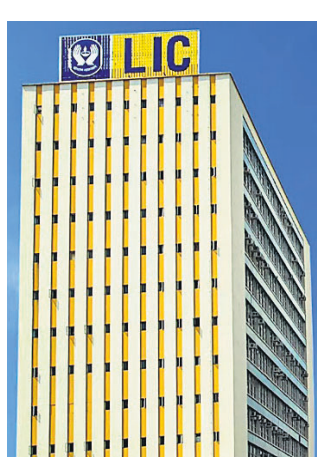
He added that the government has already initiated its plan to clear all incumbrances on way of LIC IPO. In this regard, he said that the

amendment required for the IPO has already been included as part of the Finance Bill, 2021 and will become effective once Parliament gives its nod to the Union Budget.

Presenting the Union Budget Monday, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that all the announced disinvestment proposals including the LIC IPO would be completed this fiscal. She had first made the mega announcement of the IPO in the last year's budget.

On the size of the LIC offer, Pandey said that the amount of shares to be offered in the initial public offering (IPO) would depend on the embedded value and the size. The valuation process is underway for the insurance giant.

"This is an institution in which



people have trusted and we don't want to break their trust. We have

even asked them to be the owners (shareholders)."

Pandey said that Amendment Act reserves 10 per cent of the total shares on the block for policy-holders. Regarding the requirement of listed public sector companies to achieve minimum public shareholding of 25 per cent, he said that a new rule is in the making for large PSUs having high valuations.

A rule notified in 2018 had mandated every listed PSU, which has public shareholding below 25 per cent, to increase its public shareholding to at least 25 per cent, within a period of two years from the date of that notification - August 3, 2018. The government has however extended the time period for compliance to the norm till August 2021.

Currently, the government totally owns LIC and its valuation is expected to be in the range of ₹8-10 lakh crore. Once LIC enters the stock market, it may be the largest IPO in Indian history, even if just 5 per cent of its paid-up equity capital is offered to the public.

The top five IPOs in India so far are Coal India, Reliance Power, General Insurance Corporation of India (GIC Re), ONGC and SBI Cards and Payment Services. Each of these has been in the vicinity of ₹10,000 crore.

The Secretary for the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) also said that the government's core focus in terms of disinvestment will be strategic sale.

Ropeways, mobility solutions under Highways Ministry

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 4: Ropeways, cable cars and innovative mobility solutions like funicular railways have been brought under the ambit of Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari said Thursday.

The move will give a big fillip to infrastructure building in remote, inaccessible areas and hilly terrains of the country, the Road Transport, Highways and SMEs Minister Gadkari told PTI.

Ropeway, cable car, funicular railway, public transport on electricity etc have come under the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways. This will give a big impetus to infrastructure building in inaccessible terrains, the Minister said.

Apart from last mile connectivity for remote locations, it will reduce congestions on mainstream roads, the Minister said.

The move will result in setting up of world-class ropeways in the country with emphasis on quality and safety.

HDFC launches new term plan

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 4: HDFC Life launched its latest flagship term product 'Click 2 Protect Life'. The non-linked, non-participating, individual term plan has been designed to cater to the changing needs in the different life stages of an individual.

HDFC Life's Click 2 Protect Life offers three main options such as life & critical illness auto-balance, life protect option and income plus option. Life & critical illness auto-balance option provides protection against critical illness (CI) and death by auto balancing life and CI cover with increasing age.

Life protect option provides financial protection to the family of the life assured by providing coverage against death during the policy term.



99 Tests played by Joe Root as Chepauk Test will be his 100th appearance in the longest format of the game

I think walking out for the first time in England shirt probably (has) been the proudest moment. I look back on walking out to bat and seeing Kevin Pietersen still at the end, someone who I watched as a teenager and as a kid growing up and I just couldn't stop smiling as I was living my childhood dream. I just couldn't stop smiling. I look around the field and (MS) Dhoni is behind the stumps, Sachin Tendulkar is on the field as well, who I think made his debut before I was even born! It was a really strange, surreal week really, and something I will always remember fondly.
—JOE ROOT

19 Wins for India against England in Tests at home, compared to England's 13 in 60 matches as 28 ended in draws

9 Tests were played at the Chepauk, with India winning 5, England 3 and the 1982 game ended in a draw

8 Matches have been played at the Chepauk since 2000, with India winning 5 and 3 ended in draws. The last time India lost here was in 1999 against Pakistan

Head-to-head in India (records since 2000)

YEAR	WINNERS	TESTS	MARGIN
2016-17	India	5	4-0
2012-13	England	4	2-1
2008-09	India	2	1-0
2005-06	Draw	3	1-1
2001-02	India	3	1-0

Highest total

INDIA: 759/7d (Chennai; 2016)

ENGLAND: 537 (Rajkot; 2016)

Lowest totals

INDIA: 100 (Mumbai; 2006)

ENGLAND: 158 (Vizag; 2016)

Rishabh will start and take the gloves. The reason was basically to have someone similar to (Ravindra) Jadeja's skills as to what they provide to the team which Axar (Patel) brings in all three departments of the game. We are looking forward to giving them (Rohit-Gill opening pair) all four Tests and give us good starts. Jassi (Bumrah) will be keen to start in home conditions. Along with Ishant, Siraj, all of them bowling so well, it's exciting to know that you have so many options
—VIRAT KOHLI



INDIA SQUAD

Virat Kohli (C), Ajinkya Rahane, Rohit Sharma, Shubman Gill, Cheteshwar Pujara, Rishabh Pant (wk), Ravichandran Ashwin, Jasprit Bumrah, Ishant Sharma, Mohammed Siraj, Washington Sundar, Kuldeep Yadav, Axar Patel, Hardik Pandya, Mayank Agarwal, KL Rahul, Wriddhiman Saha (wk) & Shardul Thakur.

BACK IN BACKYARD

Kohli's India set to rely on present, England bank on deep Root-ed history as the first Test starts today

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, Feb 4: A dream took flight during an unforgettable Australian summer and a confident India will aim to soar higher with the return of Virat Kohli against Joe Root's England during a four-Test series starting Friday with both sides bidding to qualify for the World Test Championship (WTC) final.

International cricket returns to India after a year-long COVID-19 break and it couldn't have been bigger than a series against a world-class side which is led by a modern day great in Root.

Root would be playing his 100th Test match and the team also features the most respected new ball attack in contemporary cricket besides having the game's best all-format all-rounder.

And in the middle of all this will be the awe-inspiring presence of Kohli, fresh from a paternity break, leading a side which would be expected to present another enthralling show after a miracle come-from-behind series win in Australia.

But in England, they face a team that in the last 15 years, is the only one to have won a Test series (2012) in the sub-continent.

In Root they have a player, who knows a thing or two about how to tackle spinners on sub-continental turners as he showed during the just-concluded Sri Lanka series.

James Anderson, the world's highest wicket-taking seam bowler, will again test Rohit Sharma's pa-



tience and Shubman Gill's technique using the pronounced seam of the red SG Test while preparing a tough set of questions in the cor-

ridor of uncertainty for the Indian captain. Jofra Archer would like to use the bouncer sparingly and Ben Stokes wouldn't mind if the old

ball reverses a bit. India will be wanting to guard themselves against the complacency that can always creep in after

PRE-MATCH STATEMENTS

VIRAT KOHLI

On Pant: Rishabh Pant will start (in the first Test). He is in good headspace and he has come along very nicely. He is working hard on all aspects of the game.

On Rahane: Me and Jinks (Rahane), we have always enjoyed batting with each other. It's quite evident on the field that we share mutual respect. He is always been someone who has had the capability and capacity to give inputs at different stages. I go and discuss a lot of things with him to get more clarity and perspective other than me focussing on team plans. That's how we work together.

JOE ROOT

On Pujara: He (Pujara) is a fantastic player. I had (the) pleasure of playing alongside him only a couple of games at Yorkshire. Having played against him as well and being at the wrong end of him, making some huge scores and been out there for long periods of time, you know you learn from those kinds of innings. And you have seen his importance, the value that he adds to the Indian team, he is going to be a huge wicket for us, no doubt about that.

On Ashwin: I won't look to dominate or defend but just try and play the ball that is delivered. He has got a great record in India and is probably full of confidence for that series. You know, I have played against him before and scored some runs and he has got the better of me a couple of times and it will be a little battle. The contest that you want to get the better off.

a triumph like Australia.

So, after batting on firm, even bouncy Australian tracks, it's time for them to adjust to the red soil traditional Chennai pitch which will have bounce on the first day and start helping the spinners from the third day.

One might find Cheteshwar Pujara shedding his combative 'take body blows' style to a slightly more attacking one on a track where the ball won't be consistently flying above the waist level.

The Indian batsmen are likely to enjoy an upper-hand against the England slow bowlers as save Moeen Ali, the other two - off-spinner Dom Bess and left-arm spinner Jack Leach - haven't had the experience of bowling against a formidable Indian batting line-up.

Against the old ball, one might see India unleashing Rishabh Pant, who on his day can murder any bowling line-up.

However, it is the bowling combination that will be key for India

as they aim to win at least two Test matches or more during the series in order to clinch a face-off against New Zealand in the WTC final at the Lord's.

Jasprit Bumrah will also be making a different kind of debut - his first Test at home since his debut against South Africa in 2018.

Ishant Sharma, in his last Test appearance nearly a year back claimed a five wicket haul at the Basin Reserve but hasn't played a red ball game ever since due to injury and COVID-19 induced break.

But Mohammed Siraj's gutsy performance Down Under can't be forgotten in a hurry and it will be one of the toughest calls for Kohli and coach Ravi Shastri in recent times when they decide between Siraj and Ishant. The logic in favour of Ishant is that he was out due to injury and now gets his rightful place back as the man who is just three short of 100 Test matches.

But then a form player always has an advantage and Siraj, over the years in first-class cricket, has tolled hard on unresponsive wickets.

India are likely to play three spinners and Axar Patel, who has always been dubbed as 'poor man's Ravindra Jadeja', is in contention to get his maiden Test cap.

The choice could well be between Washington Sundar, who had a great debut in Brisbane in unfavourable conditions, and Patel.

Ravichandran Ashwin picks himself while Kuldeep Yadav, being a wrist spinner, is an attacking option that skipper Kohli would fancy.

Gallego spot-kicks save NEUFC's day



FEDERICO GALLEGU (C)

AGENCIES

Goa, Feb 4: Federico Gallego struck two spot-kicks to help NorthEast United FC (NEUFC) steal a point from FC Goa in their Indian Super League (ISL) encounter, Thursday.

Both sides gave it their all but 90 minutes was just enough time for the sides to be separated. A draw was a fair result as both sides did well not to lose the game.

The Gaurs opened the scoring in the 21st minute through Alexander Jesuraj's composed finish. The Highlanders got back on level terms four minutes before the first half as Alberto Noguera brought down Luis Machado inside the box. Gallego made no mistake from the spot and put his side level heading into the break.

The second half was also an end-to-end affair as both sides looked to get their noses in front. The Gaurs once again restored their lead 10 minutes before regulation 90. Substitute, Amarjit Singh's

header put the Gaurs back in front. It looked like this would be enough to see FC Goa bag all three points. That was not to be as three minutes later, Ivan Gonzalez brought down Ashutosh Mehta inside the box to award the Highlanders their second spot-kick of the game.

Once again it was Gallego who stepped up to take the penalty. Dheeraj Singh this time guessed it correctly and got his hand to the ball but the power with which Gallego hit it saw it squirt into the back of the net.

The Highlanders will be a bit disappointed not to have taken all three points as they had the better chances of the two sides. A draw though will not be something they would be extremely disappointed with.

FC Goa would feel they should have defended well in the final 10 minutes to protect that lead but will be pleased with the point. All-in-all both sides will be satisfied with a point.

Dicka goals help Real Kashmir hit Arrows for a six

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kalyani (WB), Feb 4: Real Kashmir FC got back to winning ways in grand fashion, inflicting a 6-0 drubbing on Indian Arrows in an utterly lopsided I-League match here on Thursday, the result propelling the Snow Leopards into second place in the standings. RKFC scored through Dipanda Dicka (42nd, 74th), Lukman Ademi (51st), Haroon Amiri (61st), Chesterpoul Lyngdoh (80th) and Danish Farooq (86th).

Coming into the match on the back of two successive draws, Real Kashmir FC showed their swiftness in the field of play before trouncing their opponents by an embarrassing margin.

Giving their fans something to cheer about, RKFC's Haroon Amiri, Lukman Adefemi and Dicka dominated the match with their skills. Most of Real Kashmir's chances kept coming in from long balls and corners.

It was a clinical performance by Real Kashmir in the second half as the David Robertson-coached side scored five goals in that period.

Barca rally past Granada; enter Copa semis

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Madrid, Feb 4: Down by two goals with two minutes left, Barcelona finally showed the character of a champion again. Lionel Messi helped set up two late goals to force extra time, and Barcelona went on to beat Granada 5-3 Wednesday to reach the Copa del Rey semifinals - giving fans hope that the club won't go two straight seasons without a trophy.

Barcelona trailed 0-2 going into the 88th minute before Messi helped create goals for Antoine Griezmann and Jordi Alba as the Catalan club kept alive their chance of ending their title drought.

There were more swings in extra time as Griezmann's firm header in the 100th minute put Barcelona ahead, but a penalty committed by American defender Sergino Dest led to Fede Vico's equalizer for the hosts three minutes later.

Frenkie de Jong put Barcelona ahead for good from close range after Messi's shot was saved in the 108th. Alba closed the scoring with a beautiful volley from Griezmann's pass in the 113th.

The victory came on the heels of the embarrassing leak of Messi's multimillion-dollar contract Sunday, the latest mess involving the club which is mired in debt and has



Antoine Griezmann scores Barcelona's first goal against Granada, Wednesday

been enduring political turmoil since last season.

Barcelona failed to win a title last season, which hadn't happened since 2007-2008. They were eliminated in the quarterfinals of the Copa last year to end a streak of nine consecutive semifinal appearances.

Granada's late collapse cost the team a chance to make it to the semifinals for a second straight season. Barcelona had already needed extra time to advance past

third-division club Cornella in the round of 32. It also played extra time in both Spanish Super Cup matches this year - a win against Real Sociedad in the semifinals and a loss to Athletic Bilbao in the final.

Robert Kenedy opened the scoring for the hosts from close range in the 33rd after a blunder by Barcelona defender Samuel Umtiti, who misplayed a ball inside the area. Former Real Madrid forward Roberto Soldado, 35, added to the lead on a

breakaway in the 47th, outrunning Umtiti to a long pass from the back.

Francisco Trincao and Ousmane Dembele both struck the crossbar in the second half before Griezmann pulled the Catalan club closer with an angled shot from a long pass by Messi in the 88th.

Messi again found Griezmann inside the area with a well-placed pass, and the French striker set up Alba's late equalizer two minutes into stoppage time.

Liverpool lose again at home as EPL title defense collapses



ASSOCIATED PRESS

London, Feb 4: After going 68 Premier League games unbeaten at Anfield, Liverpool have slumped to back-to-back losses at the stadium that was their impenetrable stronghold for nearly four years.

The latest defeat - to lowly Brighton - left the champions' title defense on the brink of collapse. Just like against Burnley two weeks ago, Liverpool were beaten 0-1 by a

team battling to avoid relegation. Jurgen Klopp's team dropped seven points behind leader Manchester City, who have a game in hand and is on a nine-match winning streak.

City are the next visitors to Anfield, Sunday. A win for Pep Guardiola's team may effectively knock Liverpool out of the title race - with more than three months of the season remaining.

Seeking to regain the title it relinquished to Liverpool last season,

City produced another dominant display in overwhelming Burnley in a 2-0 victory at Turf Moor. Gabriel Jesus and Raheem Sterling scored first-half goals as City won a 13th straight game in all competitions.

The Reds are in fourth place but only two points ahead of fifth-place West Ham, who won 3-1 at Aston Villa. Leicester moved above Liverpool into third place with a 2-0 win at Fulham thanks to goal by Kelechi Iheanacho and James Justin.