



SUNNY IN SOUP

Sunny Leone was questioned by Kerala Police over a complaint filed by an event manager in an alleged cheating case

LEISURE P2



12 KILLED IN MYANMAR

12 persons were killed in an armed attack on a convoy of a former member of Myanmar's self-administered zone

INTERNATIONAL P10



ENGLAND IN COMMAND

Joe Root hits double century to help England reach 555/8 at stumps on Day 2 in 1st Test against India

SPORTS P12

Chock-a-block with tractors, trucks

PNN & AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 6: Thousands of farmers across India blocked roads Saturday with makeshift tents, tractors, trucks and boulders to pressure the government to roll back agricultural reforms that have triggered months-long protests.

While the initial protests were started by rice and wheat growers from northern India who camped out on the outskirts of New Delhi, support for them has been growing especially in states not ruled by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's party.

The Central government has offered concessions to the farmers but refuses to repeal three laws passed last year that it says are crucial to bring new investment to the sector, which accounts for nearly 15 pc of India's \$2.9 trillion economy and about half its workforce.

Saturday's three-hour 'chakka jam', or road blockade, started around noon except in New Delhi and a couple of neighbouring states.

"Today, the support of the whole society is with farmers," Yogendra Yadav, a political activist who is one of the leaders of the farmers' movement, said



Farmers block Shambhu highway during their 'chakka jam' protest as part of the ongoing agitation over new farm laws in Patiala, Saturday

on Twitter: "Victory is certain."

On a highway near the capital, some farmers smoked hookah as songs played on a loudspeaker.

Farmers squatted on the road in the eastern state of Odisha and Karnataka in the south with flags and banners protesting against the laws, with some carrying placards urging the government not to treat them as enemies.

INTERNET SUSPENDED

The Ministry of Home Affairs ordered the suspension of internet services at Singhu, Ghazipur and Tikri borders of Delhi, where farmers have been protesting against the new farm laws, for 24 hours till Saturday night in the wake of their 'chakka jam' call, officials said.

Apart from the three sites, internet services will remain suspended in their adjoining areas

to till 23:59 hours February 6.

The decision has been taken to 'maintain public safety and averting public emergency' under Temporary Suspension of Telecom Services (Public Emergency or Public Safety) Rules 2017, a Home Ministry official said.

The internet has been suspended in view of the 'chakka jam' (road blockade) call given by the farmers' unions for Saturday, another official said.

Traffic partially affected



A blocked NH-16 at Hanspal on the City outskirts, Saturday

BHUBANESWAR: Several farmers' outfits Saturday organised 'chakka jam' on National Highway and other parts of the state to pitch for repeal of the farm laws. However, the traffic was partially affected unlike that in the country's northern belt.

The outfits held the protest from 12pm to 3pm but they were overpowered by police and taken away from the sites to clear traffic jams at several places. The Navnirman Krushan Sanghatan and others organisations organised the stir at Hansapal square here, blocking the National Highway between



Police personnel clear the road of the demonstrators in Bhubaneswar, Saturday

Bhubaneswar and Cuttack. Several protests were also organised at Cuttack, Jajpur, Bolangir and other areas. The state capital saw the protest at Hanspal and Master Canteen Square. P4

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Prime accused in double murder case found dead

POST NEWS NETWORK

Salipur, Feb 6: The Mahanga double murder case took a startling turn Saturday with the prime accused Prafulla Biswal found dead in a road mishap.

Biswal had been on the run since the murder of Mahanga block chairman Baral and his associate Ditya Singh Baral. He was also wanted in connection with murdering one Bikas Jena.

Neither the police nor the family members of Biswal have confirmed the cause of Biswal's death. However, the police believe that he might have come under the wheels of a speeding truck.

According to a source, the police had been tracking Biswal's mobile number and Friday, they came to know that he was in Tangi area. A police team could not find him despite conducting raids at various places.

Later in the night, the police were informed that a body was lying on the road in Tangi area. A team immediately rushed to the spot and recovered the body. Later, the body was identified as that of Biswal.

The former Mahanga block chief Kulamani was returning home along with his associate Ditya Singh on his motorcycle when some miscreants attacked the duo with sharp weapons near Jankoti area in Cuttack, January 2.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



I too am against strikes and willing to work provided I get a job!

MAHANADI DISPUTE

Ch'garh to reply to Odisha in 3 weeks

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Feb 6: The Mahanadi Water Dispute Tribunal Saturday granted three weeks time to the state of Chhattisgarh to file its response to the counter proposal sent by Odisha for the release of 1.002 million acre feet (MAF) water during non-monsoon months.

According to a counsel appearing for the state of Odisha, the tribunal has granted three weeks time to Chhattisgarh to study the proposal of Odisha and posted the matter for hearing March 13. However, the order of the tribunal has not arrived yet. The state of Odisha has sent the proposal in order to make mutual settlement with regard to interim application. Earlier in November, officials said that Chhattisgarh had proposed to release around 0.4 MAF water to Odisha during non-monsoon months. However, the state govern-

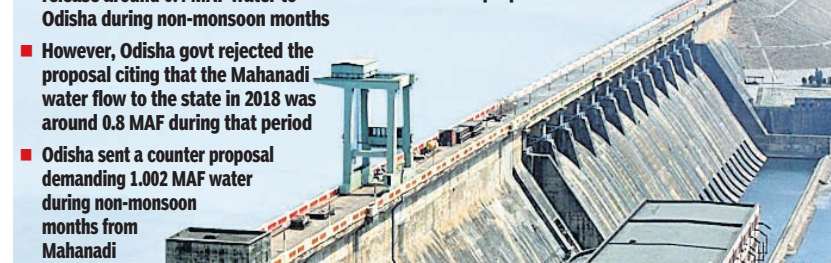
ment had rejected the proposal citing that the Mahanadi water flow to Odisha in 2018 was around 0.8 MAF. The state government also contended that the average water supplied to Odisha from 2006 to 2016 is 1.002 MAF.

It is to be mentioned here that Odisha had in 2018 filed an interim application in the Mahanadi tribunal seeking directions to Chhattisgarh to maintain 1.74 million acre feet flow of Mahanadi river water during the non-monsoon months, starting from November to May. The state had also urged the tribunal to order stay on the operation and construction of barrages built by Chhattisgarh on Mahanadi till the adjudication of main petition. The tribunal had completed arguments in the interim application in 2019 and reserved the judgment. The tribunal had asked both parties to hold meetings and make mutual settlement with regard to interim application.

FACT FILE

- In Nov 2020, Chhattisgarh proposed to release around 0.4 MAF water to Odisha during non-monsoon months
- However, Odisha gov't rejected the proposal citing that the Mahanadi water flow to the state in 2018 was around 0.8 MAF during that period
- Odisha sent a counter proposal demanding 1.002 MAF water during non-monsoon months from Mahanadi

The Mahanadi Water Dispute Tribunal Saturday granted 3 weeks time to Chhattisgarh to file its response to the counter proposal



₹50,000 FOR INFO ON HEADLESS BODY

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 6: The Commissionerate Police Saturday released posters of the headless body of an unknown woman found near Dasapur village on city outskirts appealing people to share details about the identity of lady. The police also declared monetary reward of ₹50,000 for the informers, assuring complete anonymity. The Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Bhubaneswar urged the public to inform police through the numbers (8280338323, 8280338296) of the IIC of Chandaka police station and ACP in case any one comes across any information regarding the deceased woman. P3

Twitter's India snub sparks debate

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 6: Twitter Inc's refusal to comply with an Indian government directive to block more than 250 accounts and posts has put the social media giant at the centre of a political firestorm in one of its key markets.

Government officials, business people and ordinary netizens are split over free speech and the US company's compliance practices, in a controversy that comes soon after Twitter's top lobbyist in India resigned. The showdown, after the firm this week "declined to abide (by) and obey" the order to remove posts and accounts that the government



said risked inciting violence, is the latest instance of worsening relationships between Prime Minister Narendra Modi's administration and US social media platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp.

For Twitter, the stakes are high in a country of 1.3 billion where it has millions of users and is ardently used by Modi, his Cabinet ministers and other leaders to communicate with the public. Farmers are

conducting a growing protest against new agriculture laws, with tens of thousands camping out on the outskirts of New Delhi and launching a nationwide road blockade Saturday.

As the prolonged crisis escalated, the government this week sought an "emergency blocking" of the "provocative" Twitter hashtag "#ModiPlanningFarmerGenocide" and dozens of accounts.

Twitter initially complied but later restored most of the accounts, citing "insufficient justification" to continue the suspensions. The technology ministry warned the company, in a letter seen by Reuters, of legal "consequences" that

could include fines or jail, saying the government was not required to justify its demand to ban accounts. Twitter's public policy director Mahima Kaul recently resigned from her role, two sources said. A LinkedIn ad showed the company is seeking candidates for the key government relations position.

Kaul did not respond to a request for comment. Twitter confirmed Kaul's resignation, saying she would stay on through March and was helping with the transition, but otherwise declined to comment. It said this week that it withholds access to content on receiving a "properly scoped request from an authorised entity".

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JENNIFER LAWRENCE INJURED ON DON'T LOOK UP SET

Hollywood actress Jennifer Lawrence was injured by a shard of glass while shooting her new film, *Don't Look Up*. The actress was shooting a scene with co-star Timothee Chalamet when the accident happened.

CAVILL'S SUPERMAN NOT A PART OF SHAZAM! FURY OF THE GODS

Actor Henry Cavill will not appear as Superman in the upcoming film, *Shazam! Fury Of The Gods*. The film's director David F. Sandberg has tweeted in an attempt to address rumours of Cavill's appearance in the sequel.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
Since you want to examine things and carry out some research, you will get all the required equipment ready today. You will also be very irritable, and anyone posing a hurdle will face your wrath.

TAURUS
You will be particularly warm and intimate to your friends and family members. Ganesh says that you will miss no opportunity to show them how much they mean to you. Your superiors and, back at home, your elders are likely to be unusually benign and well disposed towards you.

GEMINI
You will have an emotionally turbulent day. In the afternoon, you will be extra touchy about what others think of you. But by evening, your aesthetic sensibilities will overcome your insecurity and you will be back to your cheerful self after being witness to an exquisite display of performing arts.

CANCER
Meditation will be the order of the day. Your need to find inner peace is likely to push you to look inward and explore the alternate school of thought. You are likely to get inclined towards the mystical and the metaphysical.

LEO
Today, you shall have the unique ability to put up with any disparity and inequity, predicts Ganesh. Blessed with this, you can look forward to a seemingly endless number of favours and wonders later in the day.

VIRGO
The day promises to be full of surprises and twists and turns, each of which you will handle with maturity. If anyone makes the mistake of taking you for granted, they will repent for their poor judgement as you are not one to be pushed around.

LIBRA
The day brings with it the gift of passion, and all its various nuances. On the career front, you may take steps today that will establish your identity in office. Later in the day, there are also chances of you having differences with your business associates.

SCORPIO
There is a strong prospect that you will be buying a state-of-the-art motor vehicle, foresees Ganesh. In the afternoon, you may finalise deals regarding your dream house. In the evening, you are likely to buy a household item to please your life partner, expects Ganesh.

SAGITTARIUS
It is very likely that you will pay enough attention to your family members today. Take time out to validate the efforts of others and show consideration when and where required. At workplace, people will admire your honesty.

CAPRICORN
For this one day, you will be the master of your own fate, assigning work and cleverly getting it done without having to move a muscle. Incidentally, you will put in efforts to get along well with those around you, and unknowingly impress many by dint of your stupendous management skills, says Ganesh.

AQUARIUS
This day will play an important part in your future! The much-needed funds for business or education may fall your way today. Your seamless happiness will reflect in the playful mood in which you will interact with your loved ones. Ganesh is satisfied with your priorities.

PISCES
A productive and fruitful day awaits you, says Ganesh. You are likely to meet up with old friends, or, pretty scandalously, hook up with an ex-lover. Expect to be the Queen Bee at social gatherings. Enjoy the buzz.



Didn't come to Mumbai unprepared: Rajkummar Rao

Mumbai: Actor Rajkummar Rao, noted for his nuanced performances, says cinema is changing and aspiring artists must prepare first before coming to Mumbai.

"The only talent I had is that I fell in love with my art. I fell in love with acting as a kid. I was never chasing fame or money.

I thought to myself that this is something I really love and I want to do for the rest of my life. With that dream, I started doing theatre in Delhi and later joined the film institute in Pune because I didn't want to come to this city unprepared," said Rao.

"I wanted to train myself first. This is something I often tell budding actors - (don't do it) just because your friends believe you can mimic and you have good looks and you should go to Mumbai. Do not come to Mumbai unprepared, especially now, when cinema is changing," added the Stree actor. **IANS**



Sunny in trouble over cheating case

Thiruvananthapuram: Actress Sunny Leone was questioned by the Kerala Police at a private resort in Thiruvananthapuram. The interrogation was conducted on a complaint filed by an event manager in Kochi in an alleged cheating case.

R Shiyas who conducts events in and around Kochi had filed a complaint with the Kerala DGP that Sunny Leone had taken Rs 29 lakh from him while promising to attend various inaugural functions in the state but failed to do so.

The complainant said that her manager had taken money in sev-

eral instalments from 2016 onwards, promising to attend five functions but as it did not happen he complained to the police.

Sources in the Crime Branch confirmed that the police had indeed questioned the actor Thursday. A police officer said that Sunny Leone had admitted to having taken the money but did not intend to cheat the event manager.

Based on the statement of Sunny Leone, the police will collect more information from the complainant and then take further action. **IANS**

Comparison with Emily was inevitable: Parineeti

Mumbai: Actress Parineeti Chopra says she was not apprehensive about reprising Hollywood star Emily Blunt's acclaimed role in the official remake of *The Girl On The Train*. She claims she was always unfazed about the comparisons people would eventually make.

"I have to say that I didn't approach *The Girl On The Train* with the apprehension of being compared to Emily Blunt. She is a towering actress and I knew that since I was doing the official Indian remake, comparisons were bound to happen. Actually, I relished the challenge to deliver this role at par with the earlier film," Parineeti says.

She is 'thrilled' with the response that the trailer of the Hindi remake has garnered. "I'm humbled with the love that people have poured in for my acting. It def-

initely seems to have lived up to the expectation of the English film. I cannot wait for people to see our version," she adds.

Parineeti maintains that she has performed the role in her unique style and not tried to stay true to the original film. **IANS**



PEANUTS



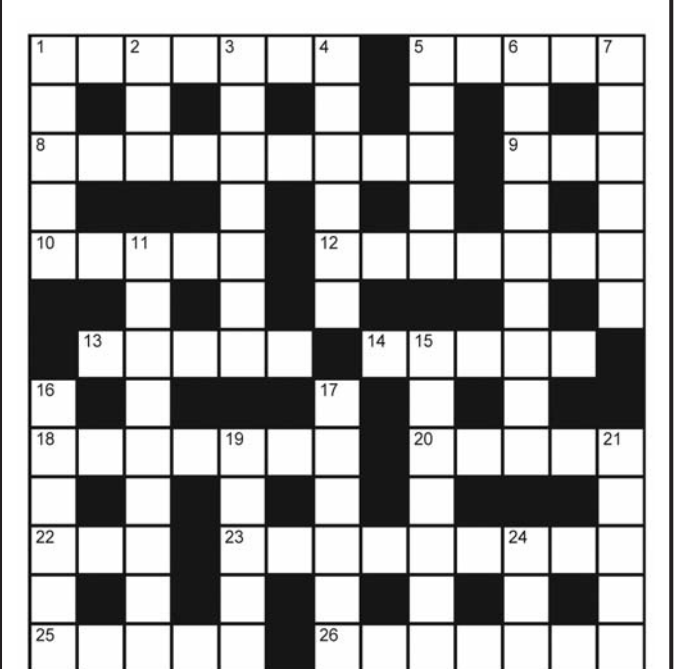
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



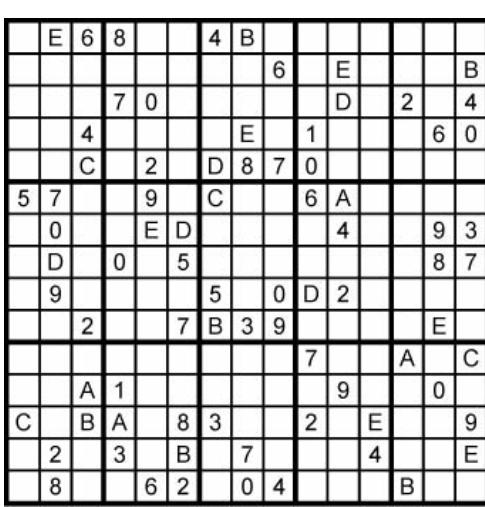
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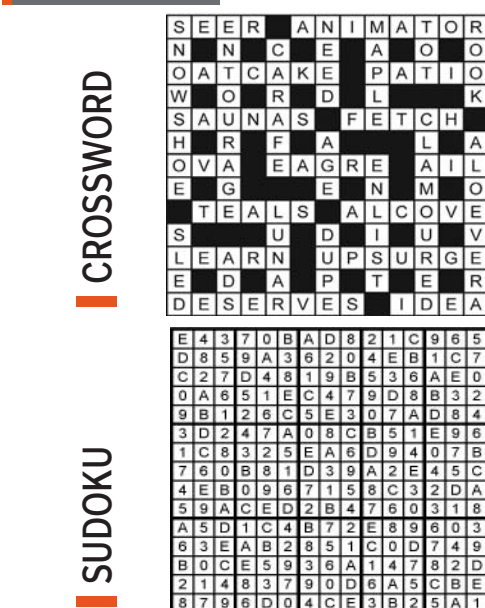
- Across**
1 Coffins
5 Yam
8 Fall guy
9 Like a fox
10 Medicinal plant
12 Difficulty
13 Animal group
14 Ancient Greek theatre
18 Rookie
20 Picture holder
22 Phi follower
- Down**
1 Detective's chores
2 Health resort
3 Beryl variety
4 Yells
5 Aquarium fish
6 Brazilian dance (5,4)
7 Kings and queens, e.g.
11 Return to a standard state of affairs
15 No longer in existence
16 Rotten
17 Practice sessions
19 Softens
21 Come to pass
24 Historic period

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS

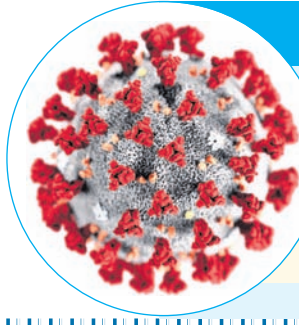


CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



GODDESS OF LEARNING

An artisan shaping clay idols of Goddess Saraswati in Kumbhar Sahi area of Cuttack, Saturday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	10,60,90,832	7,77,51,016	23,13,400
India	1,08,14,304	1,05,10,796	1,54,918
Odisha	3,35,548	3,32,842	1,909

Cops release posters of headless body

POLICE ANNOUNCE A REWARD OF ₹50,000 FOR THE INFORMERS, ASSURING COMPLETE ANONYMITY

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 6: The Commissionerate Police Saturday released posters of the headless body of an unknown woman found near Dasapur village on city outskirts appealing people to share details about the identity of lady. The police also declared monetary reward of ₹50,000 for the informers, assuring complete anonymity.

The Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Bhubaneswar urged the public to inform police through the numbers (8280338323, 8280338296) of the IIC of Chandaka police station and ACP in case any one comes across any information regarding the deceased woman.

The cops shared the pictures of the trident-shaped tattoo on the woman's right hand and clothes recovered from near the torso along the Dasapur-Andharua Road.

The villagers spotted the decapitated body dumped near the Dasapur Thursday morning.



A poster released by the Commissionerate Police to collect information on the murdered woman

The cops are finding it very hard to establish the identity of the-

MURDER NEAR ANDHARUA

The CP shared the pictures of the trident-shaped tattoo on the woman's right hand and clothes recovered from near the torso along the Dasapur-Andharua Road

The police are trying to gather tower dump analysis data to zero in on the particular phone numbers that were active near the spot and surrounding areas on the day

The cops are finding it very hard to establish the identity of the deceased lady due to the missing head

The cops are finding it very hard to establish the identity of the-

identification.

Police recovered the deceased's clothes, four gloves and knife used to sever her head. Sources also claimed that the lady was first strangled by wire and later dumped in Chandaka area. The lady was reportedly one-month pregnant at the time of her murder.

The body was Friday sent to AIIMS, Bhubaneswar for a post-mortem again. However, police are yet to receive the postmortem report.

Meanwhile, sources in the police revealed that the cops are trying to gather tower dump analysis data to zero in on the particular phone numbers that were active near the spot and surrounding areas on the day.

The Commissionerate Police Friday set up a special team headed by additional DCP rank official to probe the ghastly murder of the unidentified woman.

The police also sent the details of the lady to police stations in the neighboring states.

Top officials get Covid shots



DGP Abhay receives Covid vaccine at JN Indoor Stadium in Cuttack, Saturday

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 6: Several top officials in the police department, bureaucracy and other departments in the state Friday got inoculated against Covid-19 on the maiden day of vaccination drive for front-line workers.

Director General of Police (DGP) Abhay, Twin city Police Commissioner Sudhanshu Sarangi and several IPS and IAS officers Saturday got the shots and shared the same on social media urging others to come forward to get vaccinated against the pandemic.

"The government has released the vaccine for us after a proper trial. There is no need to panic. Come forward and take a vaccine," the DGP said. This comes after the state government asked the senior officials of police, district administration and others to get the jabs and urge others to get inoculated against the deadly virus.

Ganjam Collector Vijay Amruta Kulange, Cuttack Municipal Commissioner Ananya Das, Angul Collector Siddharth Swain and several other IAS, OAS and IPS officers besides other frontline workers also got vaccinated.

The government had planned to inoculate 24,629 frontline workers while a total of 22,986 actually got vaccinated taking the success rate to a whopping 93.3 per cent. At the same time, the target success rate for health workers who were also vaccinated reached 68.8 per cent

Odisha now has 853 active Covid-19 cases while as many as 3,32,733 patients have recovered from the highly infectious disease, he said.

The state has so far conducted over 78.40 lakh sample tests for Covid-19 including 20,856 Friday. Odisha's positivity rate now stands at 4.28 per cent.



Police Commissioner Sudhanshu Sarangi gets a shot

OP PHOTOS

BJP dares BJD for open debate

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 6: The state leadership of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Saturday dared the BJD government in the state to come for an open debate on the allocation for railway sector in Odisha. This comes after the regional party accused the Union government of showing step-motherly attitude towards the state in allocation for railway projects.

The BJD government has tried to pick holes in the rail budget allocations to the state. I dare the regional party to come forward for an open debate on the issue

GOLAK MAHAPATRA | BJP LEADER

BJP leader Golak Mahapatra said, "The BJD government has tried to pick holes in the rail budget allocations to the state. I want to dare the regional party to come forward for an open debate on the issue. I am ready to give details of each of the railway project. This is an open challenge."

He also said, "The BJD government is talking about central negligence. In the last seven years, Odisha has got more than ₹36,000 crore allocations for railway. Is this negligence? Several projects of the state are now hanging fire due to delayed land acquisition and other hurdles created by the state government."

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
MAX	33.5°C	32.6°C
MIN	14.5°C	12.6°C
Humidity	91%	75%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

Forecast: Fog or mist in the morning

234 bodies found in Capital in 10 yrs remain unidentified

GYAN RANJAN MOHAPATRA, OP

Bhubaneswar, Feb 6: Even as the Commissionerate Police is leaving no stone unturned to trace the identity of the headless body found on the outskirts of the city, available data claims that as many as 234 bodies found in the city during the last 10 years are yet to be identified.

Data says, as many as 234 unidentified persons were found dead under various police stations in Capital city during the last decade. Khandagiri police station has witnessed maximum number of cases wherein it failed to ascertain the identity of the bodies. Sources claimed that 46 bodies recovered from various places in Khandagiri area between 2010 and 2020 are yet to be identified.

46 BODIES RECOVERED FROM VARIOUS PLACES IN KHANDAGIRI AREA BETWEEN 2010 AND 2020 ARE YET TO BE IDENTIFIED

SIMILARLY, THERE ARE MANY SUCH UNIDENTIFIED BODIES REPORTED FROM CUTTACK UPD

In 2020, cops failed to identify nine bodies recovered in Khandagiri police limits.

Similarly, the police are yet to get the identification details of 13 bodies found in Bargarh police limits during the above mentioned period. Sahid Nagar police have failed to establish the details of 21 dead persons while 33 deceased persons found in Kharavel Nagar police limits during the last 10 years are

still to be identified.

The cops failed to identify four bodies found in Dhauli police jurisdiction, two in Mancheswar, five in Tamando, 12 in Jatni police limits during the above period.

Chandaka police are yet to trace the identity of seven bodies it found during the last 10 years. The identity of 13 bodies in Chandrasekharpur area and eight in Airfield police station area are yet to be identified.

Similarly, there are many such unidentified bodies reported from Cuttack UPD.

As many as 13 bodies spotted in Barang police limits, 24 under Malgondia police station are yet to be identified till the end of 2020.

Lalbag Police in Cuttack are yet to establish the identity of 59 bodies found during the last 10 years.

Dhauili-Kalinga Mahotsav kicks off

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 6: The 17th Dhauili-Kalinga Mahotsav jointly organised by Department of Tourism and Orissa Dance Academy in association with Art Vision got off to a colourful start at the majestic foothills of Dhauili, Saturday.

The two-day festival was broadcast live on DD-Bharat and live streaming was being made in Odisha Tourism Facebook, Twitter and Youtube pages. The first performance of the inaugural evening Odissi dance by Orissa Dance Academy led by Guru Aruna Mohanty got off to a colourful start with an invocation peace of ten incarnation of Lord Vishnu "Dashabatra" (Jaya Jagadisha Hare).

The choreographic vision and in-



Artists of Orissa Dance Academy perform an Odissi recital at the 17th Dhauili-Kalinga Mahotsav-2021 in Bhubaneswar, Saturday

OP PHOTO

terpretation was made by Subas Pani and the dance was choreographed by Guru Sharmila Biswas which left the audience spellbound.

The dignitaries who graced the occasion were Pradeep Kumar Jena, Development Commissioner-cum-ACS; Priyambada Mohanty Hejmadi, eminent Odissi dancer and former Vice Chancellor, Sambalpur University; Bishnupada Sethi, Principal Secretary, Odia Language, Literature & Culture; Vishal Kumar Dev, Principal Secretary, Tourism; Sachin Ramachandra Jadhav, Director, Tourism; Sridhar Patra, Chairman-cum-Managing Director, National Aluminum Company; Guru Aruna Mohanty, Secretary, Orissa Dance Academy and Guru Ileana Citaristi, Secretary, Art Vision.

SOP soon for resuming Classes I-VIII: Minister

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 6: After reopening classes for standard IX, X, XI and XII students, the state government is taking steps for resuming classroom teaching for other students.

The School and Mass Education (S&ME) department is preparing a detailed Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for physical mode of teaching for Class I to VIII students in schools across the state, said S&ME Minister Samir Ranjan Dash here, Saturday.

The Anganwadi centres have already started functioning from February 1 and Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) has allowed

the department to take decision of reopening of schools for all students. Hence, the schools for Class I to VIII will also be reopened at an appropriate time, Dash said. However, he did not reveal about the exact date when the remaining classes would be resumed.

There will be no teaching on Sundays for Class IX and XI students. Emphasis is being given on four subjects—English, Mathematics, Science and Social Sciences, he said.

The district and block education officers have been asked to engage experienced teachers for taking classes. If necessary retired teachers could also be roped in, the minister added.

15 RJs to be feted at 7th Outreach Radio Fair



A presser by the Outreach member

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 6: The 7th Outreach International Radio Fair is scheduled to be held at Bhanja Kala Mandap here February 13 and 14.

The key attraction of the fair will be the antique radio sets, gramophones and broadcasting equipment. Besides, a listeners' conference would be organised during the event.

Addressing a presser organised by the Outreach at a hotel, event coordinator

Subrat Kumar Pati said, "The size of the event would be small due to the pandemic. But, we will honour 15 radio jockeys (RJs) with Covid warrior award. Akshay Patnaik from Bolgarh, Kaliprasanna Patnaik from Cuttack and Rajendra Maharana from Bhubaneswar will bring thousands of rare radio sets for display. But, there will be no international participation due to the pandemic."

The fair will have a stall from where people can pro-

cure new radio sets. People can also avail discounts while buying radio sets.

Many handmade and customised products will be there for sale. RJ Praveen of 93.5 FM from Kolkata will present a special show at the fair, Pati added.

Apart from this, RJ Praveen will receive Outreach best broadcaster award for the year 2020 while the best listener award will be given to Rajneesh Kumar from Bihar. The first Nadia Bihari Smruti Samman will be given to Anitya Mohanty, a popular radio presenter of All India Radio, Cuttack. This award is initiated by Outreach in the memory of legendary radio veteran of Odisha, Nadia Bihari Mohanty, Pati said.

Besides, there will a host of competitions including dance, song, ramp walk, news reading and RJ competition for school and college students.

DSPL - 191

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OIPR-31004/13/0005/2021

EC not needed for earth extraction to lay roads

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 6: Now, environmental clearance (EC) is not required for extraction of ordinary earth for road construction and laying of pipelines.

Revenue and Disaster Management department has recently written a letter to all the district collectors in this regard. The State Pollution Control Board (SPCB) has also made a resolution to exempt extraction of earth for projects like road construction and laying of pipelines from the EC regime.

Therefore, now no one needs to take approval of the SPCB for extracting earth for construction of road and other similar projects, sources said.

Following an order by the National Green Tribunal (NGT) in March 2016, the Board had made it mandatory to obtain EC for extraction of minor minerals in



REPRESENTATIVE PICTURE

the state.

As the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has exempted environmental clearance for extraction of earth for development of roads and pipelines, the pollution watchdog has also followed the suit, sources added.

The Ministry of Environment has exempted extraction of ordi-

nary clay or sand through manual mining by 'Kumbharas' (potters) to prepare earthen pots, and extraction of clay or sand through manual mining by earthen tile makers from the ambit of environmental clearance.

Besides, digging for well and irrigation and drinking water projects, removal of sand deposits

SPCB RESOLUTION

The State Pollution Control Board has made a resolution to exempt extraction of earth for projects like road construction and laying of pipelines from the EC regime

Following an order by the NGT in March 2016, the Board had made it mandatory to obtain EC for extraction of minor minerals in the state

The Ministry of Environment has exempted extraction of ordinary clay or sand through manual mining by 'Kumbharas' (potters) to prepare earthen pots

on agriculture field after flood and digging for laying of the foundation of a building have also been exempted from the list by the ministry.

SCINTILLATING PERFORMANCE



Dancers enthralled audience with an Odissi number at Sisupalgarh Mahotsav organised by Kalinga Association for Protection of Culture and Heritage at a city hotel in Bhubaneswar, Saturday

OP PHOTO

Surrender unutilised fund by Feb 26, depts told

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 6: The state government has asked all the administrative departments to surrender unutilised fund allocated in 2020-21 budget by February 26.

Fixing fresh deadlines for various financial activities for the current financial year, Finance secretary AK Meena has asked the departments to strictly adhere to the norm.

However, the departments have been advised not to surrender the budgetary allocation made under Central Sector Schemes and Centrally Sponsored Schemes in a routine manner where there is likelihood of receipt of central assistance and scope for expenditure towards end of the financial year.

In case of late receipt of central assistance beyond the deadline, Meena said, the administrative departments concerned can immediately move Finance department for extension of the deadlines to facilitate expenditure.

To avoid rush of expenditure towards the end of the current financial year, the department, the department has said that the last

Budgeted funds will not be allowed to be transferred to civil deposit in any circumstances

date of submission of bills to the treasuries for the FY 2020-21 is March 12 for claims under other contingencies, machinery, equipment, vehicle, share capital, subsidy and loans and March 20 for other claims. Accordingly, necessary expenditure sanction for these items/claims should be issued on or before the deadlines for submission of bills, Meena said in his letter. Budgeted funds will not be allowed to be transferred to civil deposit under any circumstances and transfer of money drawn from treasury to civil deposit is banned at all levels.

The concerned controlling officers will be held personally liable for unauthorized transfer of funds to civil deposit while disciplinary action will be taken against the treasury or sub-treasury officer for violation of the order, he warned.

8 central agencies yet to share docs

KULDEEP SINGH, OP

New Delhi, Feb 6: As many as eight central agencies, including the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change and Ministry of Jal Shakti, have not supplied the documents sought by Odisha and Chhattisgarh with respect to Mahanadi basin in order to settle the long pending river water sharing dispute.

According to officials, Odisha and Chhattisgarh had sought documents from 15 central departments. Out of that, only seven departments have released the documents. The India Meteorological Department (IMD), Central Inland Fisheries Research Institute, National Council for Agriculture Research (ICAR), Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services, Ministry of Mines, Geological Survey of India, National Bureau of Soil Survey and Land Use Planning and Survey of India (Air) (Geo-Spatial Data Centre) have supplied the documents sought by the riparian states.

The MoEF, the Ministry of Jal Shakti, National Remote Sensing Centre, Soil and Land Use Survey of India, National Bank for



FILE PHOTO

Agriculture and Rural Development, Central Ground Water Agency, the Central Ground Water Commission and the Central Water Commission are yet to supply the requested documents.

Odisha had sought documents related to environment clearance issued to 37 projects in Chhattisgarh including Kudri barrage, Kelo Project and Sondur Project. Similarly, Chhattisgarh had sought documents related to environment clearance issued to Naraj Barrage, Lower Indra, Lower Suktal and

Upper Jonk in Odisha.

Significantly, a three-judge bench of Mahanadi Water Dispute Tribunal headed by Supreme Court judge Justice AM Khanwilkar January 16 had asked Odisha and Chhattisgarh to submit a consolidated list of documents they need from the Central agencies.

Earlier, in August 2020, Odisha had requested for several documents in order to settle the long pending dispute. The Mahanadi tribunal had also asked the central agencies to furnish the documents

MAHANADI WATER DISPUTE

Odisha and Chhattisgarh had sought documents from 15 central departments. However, only 7 departments have released the documents

Odisha had sought documents related to environment clearance issued to 37 projects in Chhattisgarh including Kudri barrage, Kelo Project and Sondur Project

required by both the states. However, the central agencies are yet to furnish the same.

Odisha and Chhattisgarh have filed petitions in the tribunal in respect of sharing of Mahanadi river water. Odisha, in its petition, has claimed that Chhattisgarh has constructed several barrages on the river obstructing the water flow to Odisha. Odisha has sought a stay on the construction and operation of barrages being built on Mahanadi and also for maintaining specific flow of water during the non-monsoon months - November to May.

Will protect every inch of Odisha's land: Minister

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Feb 6: Following reports of Andhra Pradesh planning to hold rural polls in some disputed bordering villages in Koraput and Gajapati districts, the state government Saturday said it would not allow an inch of its land to be misused by the neighbouring state.

Revenue and Disaster Management Minister Sudam Marandi said this in reply to a question on the state government's steps to stop Andhra Pradesh's alleged attempt to hold gram panchayat polls within Odisha territory.



FILE PHOTO

He said, "The Odisha government is aware of the Andhra Pradesh government's attempts in Koraput and Gajapati districts. The state government is committed to doing its best to resolve the issue and there is no question of giving away an inch of the land of belonging to it."

Appropriate measures will be taken at proper time, he said, but refused to divulge details.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has announced a ₹150 crore package for Kotia Gram Panchayat in Koraput district and inaugurated projects of ₹18 crore recently. He will also visit the Kotia cluster of villages soon and transform it into a model panchayat, Marandi said.

The AP government has planned rural polls February 13 and 17 in some villages located in Koraput and Gajapati districts.

NH blocked as farmers hold 'chakka jam'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 6: Several farmer outfits Saturday organised 'chakka jam' on National Highway and other parts of the state to pitch for repeal of the controversial farm laws.

The outfits held the protest from 12pm to 3pm but they were overpowered by police and taken away from the site to clear traffic jams at several places. The Navnirman Krushak Sanghatan and other organisations organised the stir at Hanspal square here, blocking the National Highway between Bhubaneswar and Cuttack.

Several protests were also organised at Cuttack, Jajpur, Bolangir



and other areas. The state capital saw the protest at Hanspal and Master Canteen Squares. Several outfits observed the stir in different

blocks to press for their demands against the controversial farm bills passed in the Parliament.

The Rashtriya Kisan Mazdoor

Mahasangh during their protest said, "It has been more than two months that the government is attempting to muzzle our voices. We blocked the National Highway and demanded rollback of the controversial farm laws today. If the government does not listen to us, the protest will be intensified."

Suresh Panigrahi, General Secretary of All Indian Kisan Sangarsh Committee said, "The stir was successful. We organised our agitation across the state to impress upon the government for the urgent need to take back the laws in the welfare of the farmers. Several arrests were also made during our protests."

SPURIOUS TOBACCO SEIZED IN KHURDA; TWO DETAINED

PNN/AGENCIES

Khurda, Feb 6: A joint team comprising special task force (STF) of Crime Branch and Begunia police Saturday busted a spurious tobacco manufacturing unit at Beguniapada in Khurda district. Police have detained its proprietor Manas Prusti for interrogation.

The STF was led by inspector Ashok Kumar Giri. Huge cache of spurious tobacco worth lakhs of rupees, manufacturing machines, labels and empty cans of leading brands were seized during the raid,

an official of the STF said.

"While continuing searches at different places, another team of the STF led by inspector Sunita Pradhan and Begunia police recovered huge quantities of duplicate zarda from a shop in Pichukula. The owner of the shop Manoj Kumar Sahu has also been detained for questioning," said Begunia police station IIC Rashmi Ranjan Sahu.

Notably, after Bhadrak and Jajpur districts, Khurda is now emerging as a hub for manufacturing and distribution of spurious tobacco products in Odisha.



RAISING THE PITCH



NSUI leaders unveiling the posters on the 'Naukri Do Ya Degree Wapas Lo' campaign at Congress Bhawan in Bhubaneswar, Saturday

OP PHOTO

LENDING A HELPING HAND

BMC holds Loan Mela for safaimitras

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 6: The Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) has recently organised a 'Loan Mela' under 'Safaimitra Suraksha Challenge' to provide easy borrowing facility to sanitation workers to buy machines for cleaning septic tanks and sewers so that inhumane practice of manual scavenging is kept in abeyance.

The event was held at Soochana Bhawan under the chairmanship of BMC Commissioner Prem Chandra Chaudhary in presence of Deputy Commissioner (Sanitation) Suvendu Sahoo among other officials and dignitaries of the civic body.

Over hundreds of sanitation workers participated in the loan fair. Three companies - Kam Avida, TPS Infrastructure and Maniar &



Co-exhibited their products during the event which could be used for cleaning of sewers and septic tanks.

Seven 'safaimitras' received loans of ₹5 lakh each, of which they got subsidy of ₹2.5 lakh. The loans are being provided at 4 per cent interest and have to be paid back in installments in 10 years. The interest

rate will be further reduced to 3 per cent for women. The loans are being provided by the National Safai Karmchari Finance Development Corporation (NSKFDC), a wholly owned central government undertaking under the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment (MoSJ&E), on the

Seven sanitation workers received loans of ₹5 lakh each, with a subsidy of ₹2.5 lakh

recommendation of BMC.

The NSKFDC works for the all-round socio-economic development of safai karmcharis, scavengers and their dependants throughout India through various loan and non-loan based schemes.

Addressing the occasion, BMC Commissioner, Prem Chandra Chaudhary, said, "This (loan mela) is an opportunity for safaimitras to interact with experts and buy equipment/machines for mechanised cleaning of septic tanks/sewers in place of manual cleaning which will help them living a dignified and safe life."

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Jharaphula strangled to death: Police

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur/Rasulpur, Feb 6: The mystery shrouding the death of Ramadevi Women's University student Jharaphula Nayak is getting deeper with each passing day as police claimed that Rakesh Swain, the prime accused in the case, killed her, a report said.

A police probe confirmed that the deceased did not die of suspected poisoning or gang rape but has been killed. Police suspected that she might have been strangled with hand or a pillow as the post mortem report has ruled out any injury marks on her body.

The male friend of the deceased might have killed her this way, a senior police officer said. However, police are yet to find out the circumstances that prompted Rakesh to kill her girlfriend. Police suspect that the girl refusing for physical relationship due to illness during her stay at the guest house, Rakesh taking time after promising to marry her or the girl insisting on going out on an outside tour might have led to a heated argument between the two resulting in her murder.

The accused, who is said to be a boyfriend of Jharaphula, killed her at a guesthouse, where the duo had spent a night together January



Police suspected that the girl refusing for physical relationship due to illness during her stay at the guest house, Rakesh taking time after promising to marry her or the girl insisting on going out on an outside tour might have led to a heated argument between the two resulting in her murder

26. The body was dumped near Kuakhia, 90 km from Jajpur, to destroy evidence. Rakesh confessed to the crime before police during interrogation, the police source said.

Police have ample evidence against Rakesh Swain and the investigation is underway to collect vital evidence to make the case strong. The death mystery of Jharaphula will be cracked soon, the police said.

Reports said that Jharaphula Nayak and her alleged beau Rakesh Swain had checked into a private guesthouse at Dharma Vihar in

Khandagiri area of Bhubaneswar January 26. They stayed together in Room No 201 at night. During the period, the two got involved in a quarrel following which Rakesh killed Jharaphula on the fateful night late night. The girl is said to have died of asphyxiation.

In this connection, the police have collected many evidence during search at the guesthouse in Bhubaneswar. This clue was found in the post-mortem report while Rakesh also reportedly admitted to have choked her to death. The guesthouse staff also report-

A police probe confirmed that the deceased did not die of suspected poisoning or gang rape but has been killed. Police suspected that she might have been strangled with hand or a pillow as the post mortem report has ruled out any injury marks on her body

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edly told police about the alleged fight between Jharaphula and Rakesh inside the room. However, they were unaware of the reason behind their fight before the visit of Siba Prasad Swain, a friend of Rakesh, who assisted him in dumping the body in Kuakhia, sources said.

Police are also trying to recover the mobile phone of the girl which Rakesh admitted to have thrown it along with the body and in arrest of Swain who is absconding. Meanwhile, police have seized clothes and mobile phone of the deceased during investigation.



A migrant woman and her daughter selling earthen kitchenware on roadside on the outskirts of Sambalpur OP PHOTO

Scrappage policy will lead to job loss: Angul vehicle owners

POST NEWS NETWORK

Angul, Feb 6: Vehicle scrappage policy is going to be implemented in India in coming days. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman mentioned about the policy while presenting the general budget. The objective of introducing the policy is to reduce air pollution and minimize fuel consumption, she had said.

But the vehicle owners in Angul town have an altogether different view to share. According to them, the policy will do good to the industrialists. Common people will hardly get benefits from this policy. Rather, they will be affected adversely.

Around 5,00,000 vehicles are registered under Angul and Talcher RTO offices. Lakhs of trucks, tipers and other heavy vehicles are engaged in transporting coal, aluminum, fly ash and other minerals.

The announcement of vehicle scrappage policy has left them wor-

ried. Similarly, there are hundreds of bus and taxi owners in the district.

Over the last few years, the prices of fuel and spare parts have increased manifold. Various taxes were hiked. But there has not been a correspondent hike in fare.

Moreover, these vehicle owners have yet to come up of the loss caused by the pandemic.

Given the present situation, the policy would be a proverbial death knell for them. If the law is implemented and plying of old vehicles is not allowed, it will give rise to unemployment, it is feared.

Almost all the vehicle owners have a common allegation that they are not in a position to buy new vehicles to continue with their business unaffected. If the policy is introduced, all commercial vehicles above 15 years and personal vehicles above 20 years old will be scrapped.

It will be counterproductive and increase unemployment problem.

The vehicle owners financially hit by the pandemic are not in a position to buy new vehicles," observed Akshaya Kumar Samant, secretary, District Truck Owners' Association.

Raju Mishra, secretary, Angul District Bus Owners' Association, said the policy will break the backbone of the bus owners. It will only benefit the industrialists in the vehicle manufacturing business.

Angul RTO Bibhab Samantasinghar said there is no communication in this regard.

EAST COAST RAILWAY
CORRIGENDUM
to e-Tender Notice No. eT-M-KUR-CM-BBS-129-21.
NECESSARY MODIFICATIONS HAVE BEEN MADE IN NIT & TENDER DOCUMENTS OF TENDER NOTICE No. eT-M-KUR-CM-BBS-129-21
Detailed corrigendum is available at <http://www.treps.gov.in>.
Sr. Divisional Mechanical Engineer/ Khurda Road
PR-527/L/20-21

WALK-IN-INTERVIEW
Candidates securing minimum 55% marks in P.G. level can attend the Walk-in-Interview for the Post of Lecturer in Chemistry, Botany, Zoology & Political Science (Two Posts) with all documents (original & photo copies), C.V. & Photo at 11.30 A.M. on 22.02.2021 in the Principal's Chamber. Candidates having B.A., B.Lib. qualification can also attend the Walk-in-Interview with all documents on the same date & time for the Post of Junior Librarian.
Dr. S.K. Apata
Principal-cum-Secretary
N.B.C. College, Kendupadar, Ganjam

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, RWS&S DIVISION, BARIPADA
Tel.No.06792-254029, Fax No.06792-259464,
E-mail: eerwss_bpd@rediffmail.com, eerwss_bpd@ori.nic.in
No.O-981: Govt.of Odisha e-procurement Notice
Bid Identification No.44 of 2020-21, Date: 22.01.2021
1. Nature of the work: Retrofitting of Rural Piped Water Supply Commissioned Projects under different Blocks of Mayurbhanj District in Lump-sum rate contract: (06 packages).
2. Estimated cost: 41.63 lakh to 67.79 lakhs.
3. Period of completion: 300 days.
4. Date and time of availability of bid document in portal: From 11 hour of 09.02.2021 to 17.02.2021 upto 17 hours.
5. Last date/Time for receipt of bids in the portal: Both technical & financial bid for each package upto 17 hours of 17.02.2021.
6. Name and address of the O.I.T.: Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Baripada.
7. Date & time for opening of tender: 18.02.2021 at 11.00 A.M.
8. Corrigendum and addendum if any shall only be published in the above website <http://www.tenderodisha.gov.in>.
Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal: "https://tendersodisha.gov.in"
Sd./- Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Baripada
OIPR-25014/11/0012/2021

NOTIFIED AREA COUNCIL, ASKA
e-Procurement Notice
BID REFERENCE No. ASKA NAC/PUBLIC WORKS/01/2021
TENDER CALL NOTICE No. 361/NAC/2021, Dated: 06.02.2021
TENDER ID: 2021_ORULB_31648
Bid documents consisting of specification, the schedule of quantities and the set of terms & conditions of contract and other necessary documents can be seen in the Govt. website i.e. www.tendersorissa.gov.in.
1. Nature of Work : Civil Construction works as mentioned in website
2. No. of Works : 02 Nos.
3. Bid Value : Varies from Rs.49.95 lakhs to Rs.57.90 lakhs
4. Period of Completion : 4 Months
5. Date and time of availability : Dt.08.02.2021 at 10.00 A.M. to 22.02.2021 of the bid documents in the at 5.00 P.M. portal from
6. Last date/time for receipt of : Dt.22.02.2021 at 5.00 P.M. Bid in the portal
7. Last date & time of receiving : 23.02.2021 before 1.00 P.M. through of Documents relating of **Registered Post/Speed Post only.** tender offline
8. Bids received online shall be : Dt.24.02.2021 after 11.00 A.M. onwards. opened on
9. Name and address of the : Executive Officer, NAC, Aska (GM) Officer Inviting Bid
10. Further details can be seen from the procurement portal: www.tendersorissa.gov.in.
Sd./- Executive Officer, N.A.C., Aska

Daitari-Bansapani railway project stuck in land mess

₹4 cr is pending with admin while govt is yet to fix compensation rate

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, Feb 6: An inordinate delay in the construction of Banspani-Daitari railway line has caused discontentment among people of Keonjhar.

The railway project is expected to boost the economy of the mineral rich Keonjhar district. But its ongoing expansion is nowhere near completion. Though funds are not a constraint, problem in land acquisition has come up as a major hurdle, a report said.

As the double track work is not ending, running of passenger trains on the route is being affected while introduction of new trains on this line is not becoming possible, it was said.

According to the report, the work for the 155-km long railway line expansion being carried on in a haphazard manner.

The authorities concerned have been carrying out land acquisition in 18 villages of Rasola, Tangriapal and Shalijanga panchayats in Keonjhar and Jajpur district.



Land owners say they will spare their land only after they are paid compensation for the land.

The railways has provided ₹4 crore towards compensation. The fund is pending with the district administration while the land owners have decried the delay in disbursement of the compensation money. "As the project gets delayed, the value of the land is rising every year. This will create problem for the project in coming days," said Krushnachandra Mohanty, a senior citizen of Keonjhar.

On the other hand, the special land acquisition wing of the district had earlier sought permission from the state government about the rates at which compensation for the land will be paid to the people.

But the state government has not yet made its decision clear in this regard. Locals alleged that as compensation is not being paid, there is delay in land acquisition, resulting in procrastination of the project.

When asked about it, special land acquisition officer Kiran Nayak said that after a report about compensation is available from the revenue department, land losers will be immediately paid their money. Once land is acquired, it will be handed over to the railway ministry and the project will start, he added.

It may be noted here that the proposal to lay this railway line was mooted after Independence. The first phase of this line from Jakhapura to Daitari was completed and opened for traffic in 1979. Twenty four years have passed since then but the line has not been completed so far.

Locals say the Banspani-Daitari line will boost the economy of the district once it is completed and opened for traffic.

Man held, 260 gm brown sugar seized

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nayagarh, Feb 6: A special task force (STF) of the state police seized 260 grams of brown sugar and arrested a drug peddler in this district Friday night.

A team of STF raided the Ranapur-Sunakhala road under Ranapur police limits and detected illegal trade of the banned substance going on in the area. They arrested a person identified as Prakash Chandra Behera of Baunsia village along with brown sugar weighing 260 grams.

A case under Section 21 (C) of NDPS Act 1985 was registered against Behera at Ranapur Police station. Notably, the STF is conducting raids at various places.

Explosives recovered by BSF in Koraput, blast bid thwarted



POST NEWS NETWORK

Koraput, Feb 6: In a major crackdown Friday afternoon, a huge cache of explosives suspected to have been stored by Maoists was discovered by a team of Border Security Force (BSF) jawans from Borigi area under Narayanpatna police limits in Koraput district.

This was informed by Koraput Superintendent of Police (SP) Varun Guntupalli at a presser held here in the evening.

The BSF along with Koraput District Voluntary Force (DVF) had been conducting combing operations in the region for the last two days. The anti-Maoist drive was carried out mainly at local villages like Kendaborigi, Mangalpur and Atmakonda in Koraput, the SP expressed.

According to sources, the explosives including gelatin and detonators were kept in an HDPE container. The container was hidden

in an underground bunker and was intended to be used targeting security forces operating in this region, a police official source stated.

The security forces recovered six SBML guns, three tiffin bombs, 50 gelatin sticks, 205 iron pipes meant for SBML guns, two claimer mines, 20 tiffin boxes, three kilogram of raw iron used in hand bombs including three black belts from a forest near Sureshi village. Maoist uniforms and literatures were also seized from the camp.

Following recovery of the explosives, security forces have intensified the search operation.

Kin, locals cry foul over man's death, stage stir

POST NEWS NETWORK

Koraput, Feb 6: Healthcare services were disrupted at Saheed Laxman Nayak Medical College & Hospital here after irate residents staged a protest over the death of a dengue patient due to alleged medical negligence, Saturday. The deceased was identified as Amit Das, 30, of Mission Compound area in the town. He was afflicted with dengue and admitted to the hospital three day back.

He, however, succumbed to the ailment after his health condition deteriorated late Friday night. Family members alleged that doctors and nurses did not attend to her instantly despite being informed about his deteriorating health con-

dition. He finally breathed his last late Friday night.

The incident sparked tension in the area as irate family members and residents staged a dharna before the medical college gate blaming negligence in treatment for the death of the patient.

The family members of the deceased demanded stringent action against the doctor responsible for his death.

Police tried to pacify the irate locals. Later, the local M.L.A, the tehsildar, the BDO and many other people's representatives rushed to the spot and held talks with residents.

They relented after ₹20,000 was given away to the bereaved family members from the district Red-Cross fund.

Probe begins into procurement scam

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bahanaga, Feb 6: After farmers alleged irregularities in paddy procurement at Kalyani Cooperative Society in Bahanaga block of Balasore, Collector K Sudarshan Chakraborty has ordered a probe into it.

The investigation was started Friday. Earlier, farmers had locked the office of the cooperative society and staged a dharna.

The farmers relented after the officials of the Bhadrak-Balasore Cooperative Bank extended the target of paddy procurement by 1600 quintals.

However, three farmers alleged that though they had not registered their names online for procurement, another farmer forged their land documents and managed to sell his paddy.

Chhabindra shows way in sunflower farming

POST NEWS NETWORK

Khajuripada/Balaskumpa, Feb 6: Pressed by poverty, Chhabindra Jani had tried his hand at a lot of odd jobs to eke out a living with his elderly parents. Finally, he decided to do farming and has successfully grown sunflower in Ganjam. Other farmers in the area have taken interest in this cash crop farming.

With the earning from this farming, he hopes to run his family. Chhabindra(45) is a resident of Raikhol village under Khajuripada block. He was fired by an ambition to pursue higher studies. But poverty was a major hurdle for him. He was in tears when he recalled his miserable days.

He completed his matriculation, but could not carry on his studies as his parents were unable to afford his education.

He initially started banana farming,



later, jhadu farming, pulse, onion, potatoes and mustard.

This year, he switched over to sunflower farming and hopes it will earn him more than what he earned from the above-said farming.

Sunflower farming has brought him a new identity in the area, he

said. He bought 100 gm of sunflower seeds for ₹80 from Phulbani in October, 2020. Their saplings have been planted one foot apart on his farmland.

"No agriculture officer is coming to help me for guidance," he rued. He hopes he will get good harvest in February.

He initially started banana, pulse, onion, potato and mustard cultivation before switching over to sunflower farming. He hopes it will earn him more than what he earned before

As this farming is new to the area, people often visit his farmland and are interest to know about the farming.

Chhabindra said that agriculture officials come to the farm and click photographs, but never provided technical guidance in this farming.

Many other farmers in the area say they will do this cash crop if the government provides them with financial and technical support.

FOCUS GEOPOLITICS

DON'T ISOLATE MYANMAR



Renewed sanctions and isolation would likely turn Myanmar into another Chinese satellite, like Laos, Cambodia, and Pakistan

Directly or indirectly, the military has always called the shots in Myanmar. And now that it has removed the decade-old façade of gradual democratisation by detaining civilian leaders and seizing power, Western calls to punish the country with sanctions and international isolation are growing louder. Heeding them would be a mistake.

The retreat of the "Myanmar spring" means all the countries of continental Southeast Asia – Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Myanmar – are under authoritarian rule, like their giant northern neighbour, China. More fundamentally, the reversal of democratisation in Myanmar is a reminder that democracy is unlikely to take root where authoritarian leaders and institutions remain deeply entrenched.

Given this, a punitive approach would merely express democratic countries' disappointment, at the cost of stymying Myanmar's economic liberalisation, impeding the development of its civil society, and reversing its shift toward closer engagement with democratic powers. And, as in the past, the brunt of sanctions would be borne by ordinary citizens, not the generals.

This is a realistic scenario. US President Joe Biden has warned that the military's action "will necessitate an immediate review of our sanctions laws," followed by "appropriate action." But Biden would do well to consider how US-led sanctions in the past pushed Myanmar into China's strategic lap, exacerbating regional-security challenges.

Sanctions are a blunt instrument. Thailand's army chief, with the support of an increasingly unpopular king, has remained enscathed in power in civilian garb since staging a coup in 2014. If the United States can do business with Thailand, where a crackdown on pro-democracy protesters has extended to the use of a feared lese-majesté law to imprison those who insult the royal family, why hold

neighbouring Myanmar to a higher standard? Likewise, the US, India, Japan, and others have established close defense ties with communist-ruled Vietnam. Indeed, the US boasts that in recent years it has established a "robust security partnership" with Vietnam. Only by opening lines of communication and cooperation with Myanmar's generals can democratic powers hope to influence developments in a strategically important country.

In the past decade, as Myanmar's democratic transition unfolded, the West neglected to build close relations with the force behind it – the military. Instead, the prevailing Anglo-American approach centered on Aung San Suu Kyi, making her bigger than the cause. That neglect persisted even after Suu Kyi fell from grace over the fate of Rohingya Muslims, many of whom fled to Bangladesh and some to India during a brutal military campaign to flush out jihadist militants waging hit-and-run attacks.

The West's lopsided approach eventually contributed to this month's coup. Today, the US has little influence over Myanmar's military. The coup leader, General Min Aung Hlaing, and his deputy, General Soe Win, were slapped with US sanctions 14 months ago over the expulsion of the Rohingya. But in responding to the mass detention of Muslims in Xinjiang that it labels "genocide," the US has spared top Chinese military and

party officials, imposing largely symbolic sanctions against lower-ranking functionaries.

Despite their uneven effectiveness and unpredictable consequences, sanctions have remained a favourite – and grossly overused – instrument of Western diplomacy, especially when dealing with the small kids on the global bloc. Non-Western democracies, in contrast, prefer constructive engagement. Japan, for example, has a partnership programme with Myanmar's military that includes capacity-building support and training. Likewise, India's defense ties with Myanmar extend to joint exercises and operations and supply of military hardware; recently, it gave its neighbour its first submarine. Such ties also seek to counter China's supply of arms and other aid to Indian tribal insurgents through rebel-controlled northern Myanmar.

Sanctions without engagement have never worked. In 2010, while the US was pursuing a sanctions-only approach to Myanmar, then-President Obama criticized India's policy of constructive engagement with that country. But within months, Obama embarked on a similar policy, which led to his historic visit to Myanmar in 2012.

Crippling US-led sanctions from the late 1980s paved the way for China to become Myanmar's dominant trading partner and investor. But in 2011, Myanmar's bold suspension of a controversial Chinese

megaproject, the Myitsone Dam, became a watershed moment for the country's democratic opening. It set in motion developments that reduced Myanmar's dependence on China, balanced its foreign policy, and spurred domestic reforms.

Today, nothing would serve Chinese interests more than new US-led efforts to isolate Myanmar, which serves China as a strategic gateway to the Indian Ocean and important source of natural resources. In fact, renewed sanctions and isolation would likely turn Myanmar into another Chinese satellite, like Laos, Cambodia, and Pakistan. As Japan's state minister for defense, Yasuhiko Nakayama, has warned, that outcome would "pose a risk to the security of the region."

US policymakers must not ignore how often American sanctions against other countries have worked to China's advantage. They should perhaps be most worried by how sanctions have forced Russia to pivot to China, turning two natural competitors into becoming close strategic partners. And China has been the main trade and investment beneficiary of US sanctions against Iran.

In this light, the US must take a prudent approach to Myanmar. When Biden has expressed a readiness to cooperate with the world's largest autocracy, China, in areas of mutual interest, he should at least pursue a similar approach with a far weaker Myanmar, where the military is the only functioning institution. To help influence Myanmar's trajectory, Biden has little choice but to address what US officials have recognised as a weak spot in American policy – lack of ties with the country's strongly nationalist military. The US must not turn Myanmar from a partner into a pariah again.

The writer is Professor of Strategic Studies at the New Delhi-based Center for Policy Research.

PROJECT SYNDICATE



Brahma Chellaney

TODAY, NOTHING WOULD SERVE CHINESE INTERESTS MORE THAN NEW US-LED EFFORTS TO ISOLATE MYANMAR, WHICH SERVES CHINA AS A STRATEGIC GATEWAY TO THE INDIAN OCEAN AND IMPORTANT SOURCE OF NATURAL RESOURCES



Aakar Patel

If you were angered by six-word tweets from western celebrities, you should consider what their most respectable and respected voices are also saying

DOWNGRADED

The Economist is a magazine though it refers to itself as a newspaper. It is over 175 years old and sells about 10 lakh copies a week. Its readers are mostly professionals, highly educated and with higher incomes. It is one of the very few magazines in the world, and possibly the only one of its size, which makes more money from subscription than it does from advertising. That means that its readers purchase it for its content. One year's subscription costs ₹15,000 in the United States, meaning that each issue is ₹300.

The magazine promotes free market policies of the sort generally associated with conservative, meaning right-leaning parties. The Economist Intelligence Unit is the research and analysis division of the Economist. Each year it compiles a Democracy Index which shows the state of democracy around the world. This month, it gave its results for 2020. It would be instructive to see what it has said about India.

We have fallen from a global ranking of 27 in 2015 to a ranking of 53. This is mainly, the Economist Intelligence Unit says because "democratic norms have been under pressure since 2015" and as a result India's "global ranking slipped from 27th to 53rd as a result of democratic backsliding under the leadership of Narendra Modi."

The slippage has not come in the issue of electoral process and political participation, where as most of us will accept, India continues to do well. The problem is on the side of political culture and civil liberties, where since Modi took over India has declined. In January 2014, in the last days of the UPA, the EIU gave India its highest rating of 7.92. This slid to 7.74 in 2015 and then 7.23 in 2017 and then dipped to 6.9 in 2019 and 6.61 in 2020. The EIU classifies India as a "flawed democracy".

It describes flawed democracies as countries that have free and fair elections and, even if there are problems (such as infringements on media freedom), basic civil liberties are respected. "However, there are significant weaknesses in other aspects of democracy, including problems in governance, an underdeveloped political culture and low levels of political participation."

In the last few years, India has seen "the increasing influence of religion under the Modi premiership, whose policies have fomented anti-Muslim feeling and religious strife, has damaged the political fabric of the country."

Remember that this is the magazine that the world's topmost corporate executives and decision makers read. While our government has responded strongly to Rihanna and Greta Thunberg, with the foreign ministry putting out a statement, it has not said anything about this downgrade, which more people will read and take seriously than someone's tweet.

The EIU says that the enactment in December 2019 of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2019 "continued to fuel riots in 2020, with several left dead following clashes in February in the capital city, New Delhi. The Act introduces a religious element to the conceptualisation of Indian citizenship, a step that many critics see as undermining the secular basis of the Indian state."

The magazine does not deny Modi's popularity but says that it comes from the same aspects that it finds concerning. It remarks that he participated in the groundbreaking ceremony at the site of the destroyed Babri Masjid. And notes that "the temple's construction will further endear Mr Modi to his Hindu nationalist base."

Unfortunately for us, this is not a popularity contest. The EIU says: "On top of these issues, the authorities' handling of the coronavirus pandemic has also led to a further erosion of civil liberties in 2020." And finally, it notes that "by contrast, the scores for some of India's regional neighbours, such as Bangladesh, Bhutan and Pakistan, improved marginally in 2020."

For those who think India's democracy is just fine and there has been no change in the last few years, perhaps it would be instructive to see what has happened on a few issues. The first is the introduction of electoral bonds. This is a mechanism whereby corporates and even foreign entities can donate money anonymously to political parties. Readers may not know that over 90 per cent of the total value of the bonds donated since the scheme was introduced two years ago are purchased in ₹1 crore denomination. Meaning it is not the common man giving money secretly to parties.

Secondly, that the Modi government has changed the RTI law to make its commissioners dependent on the government for their term and salary. Third, that the Constitution has been repeatedly violated through the bypassing of the Rajya Sabha by illegally calling pieces of legislation 'Money Bills'. The manner of the passing of the farm laws, where the Rajya Sabha was not even allowed to vote despite it not being a Money Bill, will tell us where things stand today in democratic India.

The Economist magazine has also run a story on India in its edition this week headlined 'India's government is censoring people before they comment'. It quotes Idi Amin, the late Ugandan dictator, who once declared that he respected freedom of speech, but could not guarantee freedom after speech. The magazine says that "India's government seems to be taking this concept one step further: Despite running what is often hailed as the world's biggest democracy, it has gained a taste for curtailing freedom before speech." This is what the world has made of issues such as the jailing of Siddique Kappan by Uttar Pradesh and Munaqar Faruqui by Madhya Pradesh.

If you were angered, like Sachin Tendulkar, Lata Mangeshkar, Virat Kohli, Ajay Devgan and Akshay Kumar, by six word tweets from western celebrities, you should consider what their most respectable and respected voices are also saying.

WISDOM CORNER

The only way to have a friend is to be one.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

Happiness can exist only in acceptance.

GEORGE ORWELL

The good times of today are the sad thoughts of tomorrow.

BOB MARLEY

WORDSWORTH

Magiric

Magiric is a fairly rare adjective that refers to cooking. Despite its form, it has nothing to do with magic, at least etymologically speaking. The earliest and perhaps best known appearance, which is cited in the Oxford English Dictionary, is an overwrought and rhapsodising nineteenth-century work: A magiric atmosphere enveloped the capital of the universe with its delicious fragrance, and the joyous free livers of Italy cultivated in their gardens plums of the most beautiful purple and gold, far superior to the much-extolled fruit from Damascus and Memphis. -- The Pantropheon: or History of Food and its Preparation, by Alexis Soyer, 1853. The word derives from the classical Greek mageiros, cook or butcher. Also from it are several other usefully obscure terms that include magericis, the art of cooking, magirological, skilled in cookery, and magirologist, which the OED points out is equivalent in meaning to magirist, an expert in the art of cooking. Also known is mageirocophobia, a fear of cooking, a common affliction. Perhaps the rarest of all the derived words is magirology.

SPECTRUM STATE BUDGET

Odisha's health sector priorities

The state finance minister will present state budget 2021-22 this month. This will be a tough budget as for the first time in the last 20 years revenue mobilisation is sternly affected by - contraction in own revenue and lower central transfers caused by a plummeting economy. Nonetheless, earlier years of prudent fiscal management and flexibility in borrowing beyond the FRMB target of 3% of GDP during the crisis provide leverage to the state.

Covid-19 exposed the weakness of public health systems across states. Odisha has effectively managed the pandemic leading to lower positive cases and deaths per million population compared to the national average. Crisis is ephemeral but building strong public health systems is in the long-term interest of the state. In the Union Budget, though health and well-being consisting of drinking water, sanitation and nutrition witnessed a quantum jump of 137% rise in allocations, the hike in health department was just 11%. Total budgetary provision for health department including AYUSH and health research is ₹76,901 crore for 2021-22, which is just 2.21% of total government expenditure. In this column, I will focus on the health sector priorities in the state budget.

Higher government investment in healthcare: Over the years, health advocates have been vowing for stepping up government spending on healthcare to at

least 2.5% of GDP. This can be achieved when the Union and state governments jointly allocate higher resources. Odisha's government spending as a share of GSDP hovers around 1.2-1.3% and this results in higher out of pocket expenditure (OOPE) at the point of care. As per the national health accounts statistics, total OOPE stands at 68.9%, 10 percentage point more than the national average. A large part of OOPE happens due to expenditure on medicine and diagnostic services. Though in recent years the state's effort to reduce OOPE through BSKY is commendable, the government needs to allocate at least 8% of total government expenditure towards health from the current level of 5.2%.

Comprehensive primary care: Investing in primary care in a resource-poor setting is cost-effective and advantageous to the population as it makes early detection and diagnosis. Comprehensive primary care with components of primary prevention, promotion and basic curative care should be designed which will require additional budgetary support. Covid has further accentuated the case for higher resource allocation towards primary prevention, surveillance systems, and public health functions which should gradually be increased to 70% of the state budget as suggested by the national health policy. The union budget announced PM Atma Nirbhar Swasth Bharat Yojana, a central scheme, with a

budget provision of ₹64,180 crore over six years, where an array of measures: support to rural and urban health and wellness centres, public health labs and other public health activities have been proposed. This requires states to allocate additional resources.

Covid management fund: A separate Covid management fund may be created to spend on vaccines, health promotion and prevention activities. The Union government has provisioned ₹35,000 crore for vaccination in 2021-22 and this may vaccinate a large number of Indians. However, the state needs to make additional provisions of around ₹800 crore exclusively for vaccines expecting ₹300 to 400 crore from the Union government for vaccinating at least 71 lakh vulnerable households free of cost who are currently covered under BSKY.

Local health systems with flexi funds: Local health systems (LHS) may be introduced in select blocks on a pilot basis for a population of around hundred thousand with decentralisation and flexibility in financing as core principles. The administrative block of Odisha may be considered as a unit for developing LHS with a CHC, 5 to 6 PHCs and 20-25 sub-centres. Private sector and alternative service providers in the administrative region ought to be included. The LHS should work independently experimenting innovative financing and payment mechanisms in order to increase efficiency and reduce

fragmentation of services. Both primary and secondary care will be developed within LHS to improve population health.

Flexi funds for action research for promoting evidence-based decision-making: Evidence-based decision-making is paramount for effective implementation of policies. It is proposed to create flexi funds for promoting population-based disease burden studies, health system and cost-effective studies to guide evidence-based policies. This should be exclusively placed with the health secretary and a committee of senior government officials should manage this fund.

Besides, there are two other priority areas which may be considered. It would be politically prudent and economically efficient if the state proposes to cover additional 30% of population under BSKY. For this group, a co-payment system may be introduced according to income criteria. Finally, a separate State Public Health University is recommended which will produce new cadres/professionals – public health specialists, social workers, counsellors beyond doctors or pharmacists to meet changing health needs due to emergence and reemergence of infectious diseases along with growing burden of NCDs.

The writer is Additional Professor in Indian Institute of Public Health Bhubaneswar, PHFI, New Delhi. Views are personal.



Dr Sarit Kumar Rout

COVID-19 EXPOSED THE WEAKNESS OF PUBLIC HEALTH SYSTEMS ACROSS STATES

Twitter tussle

Sir, Twitter is reverberating with hash tags and comments from some foreign celebrities in support of the farmers' protest against farm laws. Later, the MEA gave a strong statement that it will take legal action against Twitter if those comments are not removed immediately. Film and sports fraternity came in support of the government immediately. Earlier, the government disconnected internet connectivity and erected makeshift walls, planting huge metal spikes on roads and deploying concertina wire fences at the farmers' agitation sites outside Delhi. The situation is becoming dicey day by day with nobody budging from their earlier stands. It is better not to prolong the stir on the part of both the sections in the interest of the nation and also preserve the Indian image before the international community.

V Nagendra Kumar, HYDERABAD

Illiberal step

Sir, In the race to the bottom of overzealous policing, Bihar and Uttarakhand appear to have taken a giant, blundering stride. The Bihar police has threatened that the might of the "police verification report" will be used against those indulging in "criminal activity" during street protests and demonstrations — to deny them a passport, government jobs, bank loans and financial grants. The Uttarakhand police has gone further and declared its intent of monitoring social media for "anti-national" posts. Last month, the Bihar government also slapped a gag order on all criticism of the government online by designating it as cyber-crime. For a fourth-term chief minister, whose political career was forged in the crucible of protests and agitation, who had once been hailed as the great liberal middle-ground hope, surely Nitish Kumar must know that governance or 'sushasan' must be about more than wielding the stick. The right to protest is inalienable to a democracy and its citizens. But, increasingly the Indian political class appears to barricade itself behind authority to deflect questions. It appears to see the protester on the street or the critical voice on the internet as an adversary and not a legitimate participant in the process of democracy. Allowing the police to vet citizens based on their participation in protests or online behaviour is a dangerous, slippery slope. Before other states clone this spectacularly undemocratic idea, it must be binned.

N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

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UDF raises Sabarimala issue for poll campaign

According to the draft legislation, those who violate the customs and traditions while entering into the Sabarimala temple will face arrest and imprisonment for a period of two years

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Thiruvananthapuram, Feb 6: The Congress party in Kerala is planning to bring a legislation on women's entry to the famed Sabarimala temple that could prove to be a major political move by the UDF ahead of the Assembly polls as it seeks jail term for those breaking the century old tradition.

Senior Congress leader and former Home Minister Thiruvanchoor Radhakrishnan has publicised a draft of the legislation to be brought by the party if it comes to power. Addressing the media, Radhakrishnan said that according to the draft, those who violate the customs and traditions while entering into the Sabarimala temple, will face arrest and imprisonment for a period of two years.

The drafted legislation also give full powers to the "Tantri" or the Chief priest to take decisions on the customs and traditions of the temple.

In the 2019 General elections, the CPI(M)-led LDF was trounced as the Congress-led UDF got 19 out of the 20 seats. This was attributed to the ire of the Hindu community against the CPI-M and Pinarayi Vijayan allowing women of the banned age-group to enter the hill shrine which is considered sacred as the deity Lord Ayyappa is considered a "Brahmachari".

Women of age group between 10 and 50 are not allowed to enter



the hill shrine but a Supreme Court's verdict had allowed entry of women of all ages to the temple.

The opposition's UDF and the BJP had alleged that the affidavit produced by the LDF government before the top court had resulted in such a verdict.

The drafted legislation by the Congress though has sent shock waves across the CPI(M) and the BJP.

CPI(M) leaders said "This is only an election stunt as the Congress cannot bring up such a legislation. There are lot of bottlenecks involved in this. More than that the "Tantri" cannot be given such a power as the custodian of the temple is the Devaswom board (TDB)." BJP state general secretary M.T. Ramesh while speaking to IANS

said: "This is a farce. Congress is never serious about Sabarimala and when there were major agitations carried out in the state where was the Congress? Why didn't they announce this then? The Congress is trying to garner a few votes in the ensuing elections and people will see through this gimmick."

"The case has been referred to a seven member bench of the Supreme Court and why the Congress is now planning to bring up such a legislation."

Senior lawyer in Kerala High Court, Rajan Velloth told IANS: "The legislation will stand until the Supreme Court brings out a final judgment. The legislation brought by the Tamil Nadu government for the Jallikattu is an example of this. The Congress

strategy will pay off it seems."

The Congress had recently asked the Left government to seek legal remedies to "heal the wounds" created in society due to its alleged "hasty decision" to implement the Supreme Court verdict of September 2018 allowing women of all age groups to enter the Lord Ayyappa shrine at Sabarimala.

The southern state had witnessed protests by right wing and BJP workers against allowing women in the banned 10-50 age group being allowed in the shrine. Numerous review petitions are pending in the apex court.

However, CPI(M) state secretary in-charge A Vijayaraghavan claimed the UDF was fooling the people as it was not possible to formulate a law in a matter which is under the consideration of the Supreme Court.

"The UDF announcement that a new law will be formulated against the women's entry into Sabarimala is just to fool the people of the state. First of all, the UDF is not going to come back to power."

"Secondly, it's not possible to make a law in a matter which is under the consideration of a larger bench of the Supreme Court. There is no legal authority to do so," Vijayaraghavan said.

Friday, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan had said the UDF was raking up the Sabarimala issue because of the coming Assembly elections.

Is Gupkar Alliance dead & buried 4 months after birth?

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 6: Kashmir's People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD), headed by National Conference (NC) president Farooq Abdullah, which was formed to take on the BJP, has evaporated after just four months of its effervescent formation 20 October 2020.

The PAGD's third key constituent, Sajad Lone's Peoples Conference (PC) has already broken away from the alliance and, reportedly, begun efforts to reclaim its liaison with the BJP government at the Centre.

The PAGD was an alliance of seven mainstream opposition parties which was formed with the objective of contesting the elections jointly in order to prevent the BJP and the AP, from occupying key positions in the DDCs and other democratic institutions in the Kashmir valley.

In the very beginning of the DDC elections, the PAGD was ditched by the Congress which fielded candidates without a seat arrangement with the alliance. It suffered the second major setback in January 2021 when Sajad Lone's Peoples Conference (PC) moved out of it over the issue of NC's 'proxy candidates' in the DDC elections.

Even as the PAGD bagged 110 seats-NC (67), PDP (27, PC (08)-and it claimed a majority of votes across the Union Territory, it stood 30



seats short of the prestige mark of 140. However, the NC ended up as the first runner-up with 67 seats, leaving the top slot to the BJP which emerged as the single largest party with 75 seats. It's friendly-but not a formal electoral ally-AP got 12 seats. While the Congress got 26 seats and the PDP 27, those returned included 50 independent candidates.

In this situation, the independent candidates are holding the key for at least 4 districts in Jammu and one in Kashmir.

As the process of reserving 10 DDC chairperson seats for the women, the scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes has been completed, notifications have been issued for election of chairpersons and vice chairpersons. It will be a secret vote by ballot with no restriction of defection or party whip. Attendance of 10 out of 14 elected councillors makes the quorum.

Farooq Abdullah's NC, which

had swept the 2019 Lok Sabha polls getting the majority vote in 41 of the 46 Assembly segments in Kashmir, is ending up the biggest loser.

"Had we not formed or joined this PAGD, we would have won all 10 districts in Kashmir and 4 more in Jammu. By this mistake we have only created a lease of life for the PDP and the PC which had been finished in the Lok Sabha elections. And our relations with the Centre and the BJP wouldn't have turned sour," said a senior NC leader and a former minister. If he is to be believed, there is no possibility of a tie-up with the PDP or the PC.

"In some districts, we have silently managed some votes from the individual councillors of the Congress, the PDP and the BJP but we have no formal arrangement with any party until today," said the NC leader. He also claimed support of some independent councillors to the NC.

J&K residents elated over 4G internet restoration

THE DEVELOPMENT ONCE AGAIN BRINGS INTO FOCUS THE DEMAND FOR RESTORATION OF STATEHOOD TO THE UNION TERRITORY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, Feb 6: Having faced several hardships for over 18 months due to the suspension of high-speed internet, people of Jammu and Kashmir especially students, professionals and those belonging to the business community were elated Saturday following the restoration of 4G mobile internet services across the union territory.

However, the development once again brought into focus the demand for restoration of statehood to the Union Territory.

The high-speed mobile internet was Friday restored in Jammu and Kashmir, exactly one and a half years after it was snapped in August 2019 when the Centre had abrogated the special status of the erstwhile state.

Internet was completely shut August 5, 2019 when the government announced abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution and also its bifurcation into two union territories - Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh.

January 25 last year, 2G services were restored while 4G services on mobile devices in Ganderbal in Kashmir division and Udhampur in Jammu region was restarted in August last year.

People were seen congratulating each other and some politicians, mostly opposition leaders, used the occasion to advocate the restoration of statehood and early assembly polls.

Students were perhaps one of the worst-hit as they struggled to attend online classes during the COVID-19 lockdown.

"We welcome the development but no thanks to the government which deprived us of the fundamental right over the last 18 months," Ankit Sharma, a college student told PTI.

Kanwaljeet Singh quipped "better late than never". Singh, a civil services aspirant, however, said the student community was the worst hit by the ban as the 2G service was not adequate for the on-line classes or preparing for an examination.

The business community also welcomed the restoration of 4G and said they can now enjoy all services without frequent disruptions. Terming the 4G internet service restoration as a "positive step", Jammu Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JCCI) president Arun Gupta said this would fulfil the aspirations of people, youth and business community in particular.

"This will also solve the problems for trade and industry to a great extent regarding generation of e-way



Will boost economic recovery: Trade bodies

Srinagar: Trade bodies and tourism players Saturday welcomed the restoration of 4G mobile internet services in Jammu and Kashmir, saying it will boost economic recovery in the union territory. However, there were some voices that wished the government had shown some courtesy by announcing the restoration with a small apology and also compensation for the loss caused due to internet blockade. "It is better late than never. The government has realised how much losses our economy has suffered. This move will give a boost to the economic recovery now," president, Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI), Sheikh Aashiq told PTI. "Every sector was affected, especially our

export-oriented industry which officially declined 40-50 per cent due to its non-availability. The low speed 2G services did not serve the purpose," he said. Restoration of high-speed mobile internet would especially help the young, budding, entrepreneurs who are dependent on social media, he said. The valley's tourism industry termed it a big confidence building measure for tourism and other sectors. "The tourism fraternity and all the stakeholders thank the government for the restoration of 4G services in J-K. It is a welcome step and a big confidence building measure for tourism and allied sectors," said Asif Burza, a hotelier and president of Pahalgam Hotel and Restaurant Owners Association.

to know 4G is being restored across the entire J&K. The Government of India must restore our rights (Article 370, 35(A), Statehood) as well."

National Panthers Party chairman and former minister Harsh Dev Singh asked how the can the Centre justify the 18-month ban.

"They (Centre) made people face hardships for the last one and a half years and even charged money for 4G internet while providing 2G service. Is there any accountability or not?" he said.

"What is the difference in the situation now and at the time of snapping of internet 18 months earlier," he added. Advocating restoration of statehood and early assembly elections to end the "proxy rule" of BJP in Jammu and Kashmir, he said, "The actions over the last few years demonstrate the dictatorial and authoritarian approach of the government which is against the Constitution and democracy."

Govt under fire over 'backdoor postings'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Thiruvananthapuram, Feb 6: The ruling Left front in Kerala has been questioned by the Opposition over the government postings, which the latter has termed as 'backdoor postings'.

The youth wing of CPM, Democratic Youth Federation of India (DYFI) has backed the postings by the Pinarayi Vijayan-led LDF government, saying they were done under humanitarian considerations.

This has come as a complete contrast to DYFI's earlier stance as in the past, it had conducted several agitations against the previous UDF government led by Oommen Chandy over such postings.

In a press conference, the DYFI said the postings were implemented for those who had completed 10 years on temporary service, and that they were done in categories



and posts where the recruitment was not through the Public Service Commission (PSC).

Reacting to this, Youth Congress state president and Member of Kerala Legislative assembly Shafi Parambil told IANS: "The DYFI had shed blood in the streets of Kerala citing discrepancies during UDF government period and has taken

a clear summersault on these postings as those close to several DYFI leaders got postings through backdoor.

"If they are speaking about humanitarian grounds, what about the youth that worked hard to prepare for the PSC examinations and waited for their turn to get employment after finding a place in the list. This cannot be tolerated and Youth Congress will not be a mere spectators," he said.

In a related development, Kerala Minister for Industries, Youth Affairs and Sports, EP Jayarajan who was the first All India President of DYFI, justified the postings.

"There is nothing wrong in these postings. These are done to post those who had served the past 10 years at meagre amounts and those who are creating trouble are the ones who got postings in this manner during earlier government period," he told the mediapersons.

Meanwhile, Parambil called for a judicial probe into the backdoor appointments and added that the manner in which the spouses of several DYFI leaders got government jobs should be investigated.

The state government in the last Cabinet meeting on Wednesday regularised the services of 118 temporary employees in the Centre for Development of Imaging Technology, or C-DIT, which falls directly under the Chief Minister.

The government is also planning to regularise the services of 90 temporary employees in Matsyafed, a government of Kerala undertaking which is into the welfare of the fishing community as well as sale of fish. Minister for Fisheries J. Mercykutty Amma said that the Matsyafed is also recruiting employees through PSC and those being regularized has been working at the organisation for the past 10 years.

ON WARPATH



Police use water cannon to disperse Youth Congress activists during a protest in Thiruvananthapuram, Saturday.

After brief respite, mercury dips again in Valley

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, Feb 6: Minimum temperatures across Kashmir dipped again Saturday after a few days of respite from the intense cold wave conditions even as the mercury settled above freezing point in Srinagar, the Met office said.

According to meteorological department's forecast, mainly dry weather would prevail in the valley over the next week.

Night temperatures fell at all weather stations in the valley Friday, officials said.

However, the minimum temperature stayed above freezing point in Srinagar - the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir - which



recorded a low of 0.6 degrees Celsius last night - slightly down from the previous night's 1.0 degrees Celsius, they said.

The minimum was still one degree above normal for this time of the season, the officials said.

Qazigund - the gateway town to the valley - recorded a minimum of minus 3.2 degrees Celsius - down from the previous night's low of minus 0.8 degrees Celsius, the of-

ficials said. Pahalgam tourist resort, which also serves as a base camp for the annual Amarnath yatra in south Kashmir, recorded a low of minus 6.3 degrees Celsius - down from minus 3.6 degrees Celsius the previous night.

The minimum temperature at the Gulmarg skiing resort, in north Kashmir's Baramulla district, settled at minus 10.4 degrees Celsius last night - a degree down from the previous night.

Kupwara town, in north Kashmir, recorded a low of minus 1.8 degrees Celsius, while the minimum temperature in Kokernag, in the south, settled at minus 2.5 degrees Celsius.

Wanted terrorist arrested in Jammu

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, Feb 6: A most-wanted terrorist and self-styled commander of Lashkar-e-Mustafa, believed to be a frontal organisation of Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) outfit, was arrested Saturday after police intercepted a car on the outskirts of Jammu city, officials said.

A pistol and a grenade was seized from the possession of Hidayatullah Malik, an 'A' category terrorist from Shopian district, officials said, adding that he is being interrogated.



Senior Superintendent of Police, Jammu, Shridhar Patil said a private vehicle was intercepted by police at Kunjwani bypass on a specific information leading to the arrest.

He said the terrorist attacked the police officer leading the party in an attempt to escape but was overpowered.

"He is being questioned," the officer said, adding more details would be shared as the investigation progresses.

Police are searching for another associate of Malik who allegedly travelled with him from Kashmir to Jammu, officials said.

of the day quote

There is high alert in Delhi, but one can understand the pain of farmers across the country. I have seen that farmers from Gujarat also went to Delhi to present their points (on farm laws)



MANISH SISODIA | DELHI DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER

I think right now we have already supplied (Covid vaccine) to about 15 countries. I would say there would be another about 25 countries which are at different stages in the pipeline



S JAISHANKAR | EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER

Why only Punjab, Haryana and Chhattisgarh, in the whole country, crops should be bought at MSP



BHUPESH BAGHEL | CHHATTISGARH CHIEF MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Naxal killed in encounter

Raipur: A Naxal was killed in an encounter with security forces in Chhattisgarh's Dantewada district Saturday, a police official said. The gunfight took place around 10 am in a forest located between Surnaar and Tetam villages when a team of the District Reserve Guard (DRG) was out on an anti-Naxal operation, Dantewada Superintendent of Police Abhishek Pallava told PTI. "After the exchange of fire stopped, the body of a Naxal, identified as Muchaki Masa, was recovered from the spot along with a weapon," he added.

50 farmers detained in Delhi

New Delhi: Around 50 people were detained near Shaheed Park in central Delhi Saturday for allegedly holding a protest in support of the 'chakka jam' call given by the farmers agitating against the Centre's new agri laws, police said. Farmer unions had on Monday announced a countrywide 'chakka jam' February 6 during which they would block national and state highways between 12 noon and 3 pm to protest the Internet ban in areas near their agitation sites, harassment allegedly meted out to them by authorities, and other issues.

Headless body of woman found

Fatehpur (UP): A headless body of an around 22-year-old woman was found in an agricultural field of a village under Asothar police station near here Saturday, police said. On being informed about the body, the police reached the village and sent the body for post-mortem, Fatehpur's Additional Superintendent of Police Rajesh Kumar said. The body was found lying around 200 metres from a canal, Thariyaon's Circle Officer Anil Kumar said.

4 students jailed in ragging case

Bhopal: Probably in a first such verdict in Madhya Pradesh, a court in Bhopal has handed five-year imprisonment to four women students of a private pharmacy college for abetting suicide of another student in a 2013 ragging case. In his order on Friday, Additional Sessions court judge Amit Ranjan also imposed a fine of Rs 8,000 on each of the convicts-Devanshi Sharma, Kirti Gaur, Deepthi Solanki and Nidhi Magre, the prosecution said.



I want to use this opportunity to scotch rumours by asserting that as long people are with me, and PM Modi and Home Minister Shah are backing me, nobody in the state will be able to ever replace me

BS YEDIYURAPPA | CHIEF MINISTER

ROOSTERS PUT BEHIND BARS TO CURB COCKFIGHT BETTING

Police in at Midigonda police station in Khammam district of Telangana have put roosters, used for cockfighting, behind the bars as evidence in connection with a betting case



Illegal occupants of govt land can't claim regularisation: SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 6: Persons in illegal occupation of government or panchayat land cannot claim regularisation as a matter of right, the Supreme Court has said.

A bench of Justices DY Chandrachud and MR Shah said regularisation of the illegal occupation of government or panchayat land can only be as per the policy of the state government and the conditions stipulated in the rules.

The top court was hearing a plea filed by residents of Sarsad village in Tehsil Gohana in Haryana's Sonapat district who encroached upon panchayat land and constructed houses.

The Haryana government in 2000 framed a policy regarding sale of panchayat land in unauthorised possession outside "Abadi Deh" (the residential area of a revenue estate).

Haryana also amended the Punjab Village Common Lands (Regulation) Rules, 1964 and issued a notification in 2008.

Thereafter, in 2008, Rule 12(4) was incorporated in the 1964 Rules in terms of the notification dated January 3, 2008, which authorises Gram Panchayat to sell its non-cultivable land in Shamlat Deh (vacant land) to the inhabitants of the village who have constructed their houses on or before March 31, 2000.



The petitioners in this case, who were in illegal possession of the land belonging to Gram Panchayat, made an application under Rule 12(4) of the Punjab Village Common Lands (Regulation) Rules, 1964.

The Deputy Commissioner, Sonapat, on perusal of the record and the site report, rejected their application holding that as the applicants are in illegal occupation of the area more than the required area up to a maximum of 200 square yards, they are not entitled to the benefit of Rule 12(4).

The Punjab and Haryana High Court dismissed a writ petition challenging the order passed by the authority.

The top court held the competent authority as well as the high court both are justified in taking the view that as the respective peti-

The Supreme Court said regularisation of the illegal occupation of government or panchayat land can only be as per the policy of the state government and the conditions stipulated in the rules

The top court said that if it is found that the conditions stipulated for regularisation have not been fulfilled; persons in illegal occupation of the govt or panchayat land are not entitled to regularization

tioners are in illegal occupation of the area more than the required area up to a maximum of 200 square yards, they are not entitled to the benefit of Rule 12(4).

"It is required to be noted that the persons in illegal occupation of the Government Land/Panchayat Land cannot, as a matter of right, claim regularization. Regularisation of the illegal occupation of the Government Land/Panchayat Land can only be as per the policy of the State Government and the conditions stipulated in the Rules," the bench said.

The top court said that if it is found that the conditions stipulated for regularisation have not been fulfilled, such persons in illegal occupation of the government or panchayat land are not entitled to regularization.

Govt must allocate 13% of Budget to farm sector: BKS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 6: The Bharatiya Kisan Sangh (BKS), an RSS-affiliated organisation, has urged the government to allocate a 13 per cent share of the Union Budget to the agriculture sector.

BKS national general secretary Dinesh Kulkarni told this news agency that the budgetary allocation for agriculture has increased but it is still less compared to its 13 per cent share of the total GDP.

Kulkarni said that agriculture contributes 13 per cent to the Budget and so the government must allocate 13 per cent of total Budget to the agriculture sector.

"The government said that there is an increase in allocation in the Union Budget for agriculture, but instead of that the government must increase it in percentage of the total budget. The government must allocate about 13 per cent of total Budget for the agriculture sector, which is at par with its contribution to total GDP of the country," he said.

Kulkarni suggested that the increased budgetary allocation can also be used for agricultural research and education which has almost come to standstill due to lack of funds.

"Shortage of funds has taken a toll on agricultural research and education," he said, adding that by infusing more funds the government



can put agriculture research and education back on track.

Kulkarni further stated that five to six per cent of this 13 per cent of total budget allocation must be used for research and education.

He claimed that there are 40 per cent vacancies in Central Agricultural University and State Agricultural University. "On an average there are 40 per cent vacancies and faculty and staff are overworked and they are not able to carry out research work. Vacancies must be filled to increase the pace of agricultural research work in the country," he said.

Kulkarni pointed out that there are some other concerns which need to be addressed by the government.

"We have made some suggestions for reform in agriculture sector and it needs to be addressed and we are waiting for the government's response," he added.

FM extends cash benefit to Assam tea workers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, Feb 6: Ahead of the assembly polls in Assam, Union Finance Minister Nirjala Sitharaman Saturday distributed Rs 3,000 each to 7.47 lakh tea garden workers in the state, totalling Rs 224 crore.

The Union Finance Minister was in the city to participate in the programme to offer financial assistance to tea workers under the third tranche of the Assam Chah Bagicha Dhan Puraskar Mela Scheme. Before 2014 Lok Sabha polls, Narendra Modi ji had wished to work for the upliftment of tea garden workers and accordingly several schemes were launched after the NDA came to power, the Union minister said.

As part of the third tranche of the flagship scheme, an additional amount of Rs 3,000 each will be credited to the bank accounts of 7,46,667 workers.

Each tea worker had earlier received Rs 5,000 in two phases.

The incentive was made through direct benefit transfer (DBT) mode to 6,33,411 bank accounts of tea gardens in 2017-18 and 7,15,979 accounts in 2018-19 across 752 tea gardens. Sitharaman said, all middlemen have been eliminated with introduction of the DBT mode in various schemes and the Centre will continue to support tea gardens in Assam in future.

"PM Modi favoured using technology for the benefit of people while implementing the schemes and so the concept of DBT was introduced," she said.

CAPTURING THE MOMENT



Volunteers click selfies in front of a photograph of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman during a programme to celebrate his historic speech delivered at the Brigade Parade ground on this day in 1972 in Kolkata, Saturday

BJP's worries rising due to prolonged farmers' protest

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, Feb 6: The worries of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Uttar Pradesh have started to increase due to the farmers' agitation getting longer. Panchayat elections in Uttar Pradesh will be held in April after a High Court order. This has raised the anxiety levels of BJP leaders. Now some BJP leaders have started saying that a solution needs to be found to end this agitation.

The impact of this agitation has been felt more in western Uttar Pradesh. The effort to create an atmosphere against the BJP is strong even in the mahapanchayats taking place these days. The leadership of the mahapanchayat is being handled by Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) national vice-president Jayant Chaudhary himself.

At present, there appears to be no solution in sight to the farmers' agitation. In such a scenario, the worries of the BJP leaders fighting the panchayat elections have increased. They are thinking that the agitation against the farm laws may have a detrimental effect on villages.

On the other hand, speaking in

The impact of the farmers' agitation has been felt more in western Uttar Pradesh. The effort to create an atmosphere against the BJP is strong

favour of RLD Chief Chaudhary Ajit Singh at the Muzaffarnagar mahapanchayat, Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) President Naresh Tikait said it was our mistake to defeat Ajit Singh in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. "We are guilty of this. This family [Ajit Singh's] has always fought for the rights of farmers. We should not repeat such a mistake from now on."

After this statement, the BJP feels that Jat votes in the western part of the state may slip from their hold. Its effect is likely to be felt in the upcoming 2022 state Assembly elections, to be held along with the panchayat elections.

Requesting anonymity a BJP leader said that apart from the growing solidarity of the Khap panchayats, a more active presence by RLD's Jayant Chaudhary

would have an impact in the upcoming state panchayat elections. The government must find a solution to this protest and end it. Otherwise, its effect would be seen in the upcoming state Assembly elections, in addition to the state panchayat polls.

In western UP, the Jat community decides victory or defeat on about 20 Assembly seats. About 17 Lok Sabha constituencies of these are in west UP, so keeping this vote bank intact is a big responsibility.

The BJP does not want to let the Jat votes slip from its hold at any cost. It has deployed its leaders to deal with this challenge. Senior BJP leaders of western Uttar Pradesh have been asked to clear misconceptions about the Union farm laws. State government ministers would also try to convince farmers through a dialogue.

Senior political analyst Ratan Mani Lal says the farmers' protest would have an impact on panchayat elections. "This protest is also being widely discussed in western UP. It will be discussed in elections as well. Let us see to what extent does the BJP prevent this discussion from going against it."

Now, Hollywood veteram Susan Sarandon supports farmers' stir

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 6: Veteran Hollywood actor Susan Sarandon became the latest celebrity to extend support to the farmers' protest, posting a news story from the New York Times with her comment.

"Standing in solidarity with the #FarmersProtest in India. Read about who they are and why they're protesting below," read her tweet, posted days after the huge row triggered when pop icon Rihanna flagged the protests.



Rihanna's post had set off a wave of global support for the protest by lakhs of farmers against the farm laws passed in September.

A number of celebrities, political leaders and activists - including Swedish teen climate activist Greta Thunberg, Meena Harris, an American lawyer and niece of

US Vice President Kamala Harris, actor Amanda Cerni, singers Jay Sean, Dr Zeus and former adult star Mia Khalifa - have supported the protesting farmers.

383 schools, 680 hostels to be renamed after Netaji

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 6: In order to provide inclusive and quality education to all as envisaged in the National Education Policy, the Union Ministry of Education has decided to rename the 383 residential schools and 680 hostels, under the Samagra Shiksha Scheme, as Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose residential schools.



Talking about the decision, Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' said, "The Education Ministry has funded schools in the sparsely populated areas, especially in tribal areas, where it is difficult to open schools, and for the urban children who are in special need of care. Funding is being provided to the states and for opening residential schools and hostels. All the schools which will be renamed as Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose residential schools will follow the rules followed by Kasturba Gandhi Girls schools and will strive to achieve the same quality."

Apart from the regular curriculum, skill training and self-defence etc. will also be imparted in all these schools.

MINOR'S CONSENT A GREY AREA: BOMBAY HC

Prison term of 19-yr-old convicted of raping cousin

The girl was 15 years old, a student of Class 8, and was living in the house of her paternal uncle for two years

AGENCIES

Mumbai, Feb 6: Bombay High Court has suspended the order of 10 years' rigorous imprisonment to a 19-year-old boy who was convicted of raping his minor cousin living with him. The court observed that a minor's consent is a legal grey area. The girl was 15 years old, a student of Class 8, and was living in the

house of her paternal uncle for two years. In September, 2017, the victim told her friend that her first cousin brother had touched her inappropriately and since then she had been having stomach pain.

The friend also noticed that the girl was depressed and informed her class teacher. The teacher inquired with the victim, who told her about the sexual harassment meted out to her by cousin brother.

The class teacher informed the principal and thereafter, an FIR was registered by the teacher March 3, 2018 against the boy. The victim had told the court that she was sexually assaulted in September, October 2017 and again in February 2018. However, the



medical officer who examined the victim on the date of FIR registration did not notice any external injury on her.

The victim's statement before a magistrate was also recorded under

Section 164 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. In the statement the victim said that it was a consensual act. Not once, but at least for 4-5 times. In that statement she also told the magistrate that the statement

before the police "was at the insistence of the class teacher".

The boy after being convicted by the lower court had filed an appeal and also sought bail in the high court. After going through all the evidence, Justice Shinde said, "I am also conscious of the fact that consensual sex between minors has been in a legal grey area because the consent given by minor is not considered to be a valid consent in eyes of law."

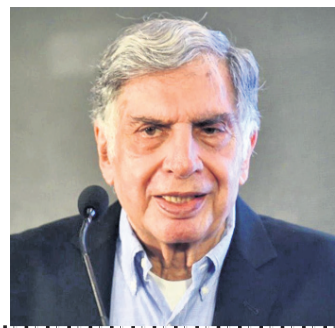
However, the court felt that "in the case at hand, facts are distinctive". The accused and victim live under the same roof. They are students. A fact cannot be overlooked that the victim had resiled from her statement, noted the court.



“Their (BJP’s) deeds did not match their words. After coming to power, they forgot their promises and enacted three agricultural laws which will ruin farmers”
ABHAY SINGH CHAUTALA | INLD LEADER

RATAN TATA FROWNS AT BHARAT RATNA CAMPAIGN ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Ratan Tata, the Chairman Emeritus of Tata Sons, Saturday expressed displeasure over a social media campaign that has demanded conferring India’s highest civilian honour, the Bharat Ratna, on him



of the day quote

The dual character of the Congress party for supporting dreaded gangsters like Ansari for its own political gains and turns a blind eye towards the sufferings of the common people needs to be exposed

SIDHARTH NATH SINGH | UTTAR PRADESH MINISTER

The Union government should think of “positive steps” like bringing in a Constitutional amendment to ensure the Maratha community in Maharashtra gets reservation

ASHOK CHAVAN | CONGRESS LEADER

In Modi’s crony-centric Budget, farmers will have to pay more for petrol, diesel and no financial assistance will be given to them

RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

Nadda flags off BJP’s ‘Poriborton Yatra’ in Bengal

BJP national president JP Nadda slammed CM Mamata Banerjee for running a ‘government of tyranny’



AGENCIES

Kolkata, Feb 6: Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) national president JP Nadda flagged off the party’s ‘Poriborton Yatra’ (March for Change) in poll-bound West Bengal Saturday. Nadda said he feels “enthused” by the yatra and it is time for change in Bengal.

“Poriborton Yatra’ begins here. It is a change of not only the government, but also of thinking,” Nadda said while flagging off the yatra in Nabadwip.

Hitting out at Chief Minister

Mamata Banerjee and the ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC), Nadda said, “Mamata di formed government 10 years back by swearing on ‘Ma Mati Manush’. In 10 years, ‘Ma’ (mother) was looted, ‘Mati’ (soil) was disrespected and ‘Manush’ (humans) wasn’t protected.”

Nadda also alleged that the state government has been blocking West Bengal’s development despite Centre’s efforts.

“Prime Minister Narendra Modi has tried to give Bengal everything. But Mamata says ‘chahi na, chahi na, chahi na’. She says ‘hobe na’

BJP asks EC to deploy central forces for Bengal polls

NEW DELHI: A Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) delegation met the Election Commission (EC) and requested it to deploy only Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) in upcoming West Bengal Assembly polls to maintain the sanctity of the process. The eight member BJP delegation was led by its National General Secretary Bhupender Yadav and party’s West Bengal unit chief Dilip Ghosh. “Mamata Banerjee government can’t be allowed to hijack democratic processes and let violence go on. BJP Bengal stands committed to restoring rule of law. Met EC officials with party leaders seeking early deployment of forces for peaceful polls,” Yadav tweeted after meeting with EC. In a memorandum to the Election Commission, the BJP said that it is necessary to “deploy members of only CAPF”, duly trained to ensure fairness, dignity, and sanctity of the process.

(won’t happen) for everything. He alleged that Mamata Banerjee was running a “government of tyranny” under which lives of common people isn’t safe.

“What government is this? A government of tyranny? Around 130 of our people have been killed, over 300 people have been attacked. This government will have to go. When they can attack even us, I can understand the condition of the common people in West Bengal,” he said. Earlier in the day, the BJP president met a group of farmers and ate khichdi with them seated on the floor as he reached out to peasants in election-bound West Bengal. He said the Mamata Banerjee

government has been depriving farmers of the benefits of the PM Kisan Scheme to “satisfy her ego”.

“What Mamata di did to the farmers of Bengal by depriving them of PM Kisan Scheme was an injustice. Due to her whims and to satisfy her ego, Mamata di did not allow the scheme to be implemented. This has affected over 70 lakh farmers who for the last two years have been deprived of annual aid of ₹6,000,” he said.

The BJP president added, “What is (Mamata Banerjee’s) problem with Jai Shree Ram? Why is Mamata di so angry? Is it wrong to pay tribute to India’s culture? It appears politics is above India’s culture.”

IRCTC to run four pilgrim special trains

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Gandhinagar, Feb 6: The Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC), a subsidiary of the Indian Railways, will be running four pilgrim special trains from Rajkot in Gujarat in February and March.

Rahul Himalayan, the group General Manager of IRCTC Western Zone, said: “All the four trains will commence from and terminate in Rajkot. Two pilgrim special trains will start from February.”

“The Dakshin Darshan Pilgrim Special Train, covering Nashik, Aurangabad, Parli, Kurnool town, Rameswaram, Madurai and Kanyakumari will be from February 14 to February 25.

“Namami Gange Pilgrim Special Train, which will run between from February 27 and March 8, will cover Varanasi, Gaya, Kolkata, Ganga Sagar and Puri.”

The Bharat Darshan trains will start from March.

“The Kumbh Haridwar Bharat Darshan Train, covering Mathura, Haridwar, Rishikesh, Amritsar



and Vaishnodevi will run from March 6 to March 14.”

“While the South India Tour Bharat Darshan Train will cover Rameswaram, Madurai, Kanyakumari, Trivandrum, Guruvayur, Tirupati and Mysore from March 20 to March 31,” added Himalayan.

Besides, the IRCTC will be restarting its Corporate Tejas Express train on the Ahmedabad-Mumbai route from February 14.

“The Tejas train operations were stopped in March of last year owing to the Corona pandemic outbreak. The IRCTC once again resumed these services as lockdown was eased in October last year, but due to low occupancy the operations were stopped. But now once again, we have decided to resume its functioning. The train will be running on Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays and Mondays,” said Vayumandan Shukla.

SHORT TAKES

Poacher killed in Assam

Tezpur/Guwahati: A poacher was killed and another arrested from two different places in Assam Friday, forest department officials said. In the first incident, a poacher was killed by forest guards in Nameri National Park in Sonitpur, they said. The poachers, in a bid to escape, opened fire at the forest guards. In retaliatory firing, one of them was killed, the officials said. A hand-made gun and fishing equipment were also recovered from their possession.

Four men booked for rape

Chitrakoot (UP): Police have registered a case against four people for allegedly raping a 35-year-old Dalit woman in Chitrakoot district in Uttar Pradesh, following a court’s orders. SHO of Karvi police station Virendra Tripathi Saturday said that in compliance with the orders of the court, a case of gangrape was registered against four persons under various sections of the IPC and the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act.

Idli seller killed by 3 customers

Thane: A 26-year-old roadside idli vendor was allegedly killed by three unidentified customers at Mira Road in Thane district following an argument over ₹20, police said Saturday. The incident occurred Friday morning, they said. The victim, identified as Virendra Yadav, used to sell idlis. On Friday, three customers came to his road-side joint and told him that he owed them ₹20. Soon, an argument broke out and escalated into a scuffle, a police official said.

Spurious liquor kills 2 in Bihar

Patna: Two people have died and one fallen seriously ill after consuming suspected spurious liquor in Bihar’s Kaimur district, police said Saturday. As per preliminary reports, some residents of Kurasan village in Kaimur district consumed liquor Thursday evening following which three people were admitted to a nearby hospital after they had complained of uneasiness. Later, two of them died and one is still under treatment. Bhabua Nagar police station in-charge Ramanand Mandal confirmed that two people died and one hospitalised after drinking suspected spurious liquor in Kaimur district.

CRPF inducts first women CoBRA commando unit

The personnel, earmarked for CoBRA, have been chosen from the existing six all-women battalions of the force



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Gurgaon, Feb 6: A maiden contingent of 34 CRPF women personnel was on Saturday inducted into its specialised jungle warfare commando force CoBRA, which will soon be deployed in the anti-Naxal operations grid of the country.

The Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA) was raised under the CRPF in 2009 for undertaking intelligence-based jungle warfare operations. It has been an all-male affair for this unit till now.

The majority of CoBRA teams, whose commandos are expected to have tough mental and physical attributes, are deployed in various Maoist violence affected states while a few are based in the north-eastern states for undertaking counter-insurgency operations.

A ceremonial event was held at the forces’ camp in Kadarpur village here with CRPF Director General AP Maheshwari witnessing combat drills performed by the chosen women as he underlined that it was important to defeat gender-based beliefs and stereotypes.

The personnel, earmarked for CoBRA, have been chosen from the existing six all-women battal-

ions of the force, a Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) spokesperson said.

“These women will undergo a pre-induction training for three months and subsequently will be embedded with CoBRA units deployed in Naxal violence affected districts of Chhattisgarh like Sukma, Dantewada and Bijapur,” the spokesperson said.

An all-women brass band of the country’s largest paramilitary was also commissioned during the ceremony that was held to mark the 35th Raising Day anniversary of its first women battalion.

The first battalion, numbered 88, was raised this day in 1986 at a CRPF base in Delhi and the force now has six such units with just over 1,000 personnel in each.

They are deployed for rendering various kinds of law and order duties across the country.

The CRPF also has an all-women pipe band that was raised in 2012.

Maheshwari lauded the women, saying they are an inspiration for numerous young girls who aspire to do good for themselves and the country. He said these combatants have proved that power is not in the muscles but in the head.

UN urges ‘maximum restraint’ as farm protesters widen blockade

REUTERS

Mumbai, Feb 6: The United Nations human rights office called on Indian authorities and protesting farmers to exercise “maximum restraint” hours before the growers impose a nationwide road blockade on Saturday seeking a repeal of new agricultural laws. Tens of thousands of farmers have camped out on the outskirts of New Delhi for more than two months, blocking key roads and demonstrating against the laws they say will benefit large private buyers at their expense.

The protests have mostly been peaceful but a tractor rally January 26 flared into turmoil as some farmers clashed with police in New Delhi. Since then, authorities have shut down the mobile internet in parts of the national capital and heavily barricaded border roads to prevent protesters from coming into the city again.

“The rights to peaceful assembly & expression should be protected both offline & online,” the Office of the United Nations High



Commissioner for Human Rights said on Twitter late on Friday.

“It’s crucial to find equitable solutions with due respect to #HumanRights for all.”

The farmers will hold a three-hour “chakka jam”, or road blockade, starting around noon local time (0630 GMT) across the country except in New Delhi and a couple of neighbouring states.

While the protests were initiated by rice and wheat growers from northern India, particularly opposition-ruled Punjab state, support has been growing across the country. The issue has also caught

international attention with celebrities such as pop star Rihanna and environment campaigner Greta Thunberg announcing their support for the farmers. The United States has also urged India to resume talks with farmers.

Modi’s government has held multiple rounds of talks with farmer representatives but failed to resolve their differences.

The government says the reforms will bring much-needed investment to the farm sector, which accounts for nearly 15% of India’s \$2.9 trillion economy and about half its workforce.



Icicles hang from the roof of a house in the backdrop of a neighbourhood covered in snow in Shimla, Saturday

Why India’s COVID cases have fallen so sharply

INDIA HAS ONE OF THE LOWEST CASE-FATALITY RATIOS AMONG THE TOP 20 WORST-AFFECTED NATIONS IN THE WORLD

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

New Delhi, Feb 6: With its 1.3 billion population, India has the world’s second-highest number of coronavirus infections - more than 10.8 million - but new cases and deaths have fallen sharply in recent weeks.

This week, new daily infections were the lowest in eight months, while deaths fell below 100 - the smallest single-day total since May. AFP looks at how the South Asian giant has tackled the pandemic:

India reported its first Covid-19 infection on Jan 30, 2020, and its

first death in mid-March.

The number of new daily cases peaked at just over 97,000 infections in September, with deaths averaging 1,000 a day that month.

Deaths then started to decline. On January 2, just 94 fatalities were reported, out of 8,635 fresh infections.

India has one of the lowest case-fatality ratios among the top 20 worst-affected nations in the world.

Experts say the number of people in India who have contracted the disease is probably much higher than the official figure. They are backed by various state and na-



tional surveys measuring antibodies for the virus.

An official national survey in

December-January of urban and rural neighbourhoods as well as healthcare workers suggested that

some 21.5 per cent - almost 280 million people - carried antibodies.

In the capital New Delhi, one of India’s worst-hit cities, serological data released this week found that more than half of the 28,000 people sampled had developed antibodies.

Experts had warned that the coronavirus would wreak havoc in India’s densely populated cities, which are plagued by poor sanitation. There were also fears that the chronically underfunded healthcare system would not be able to cope. The government sought to clamp down early, halting interna-

tional flights and imposing one of the world’s strictest lockdowns in March. Masks were made compulsory in many states.

Restrictions have been gradually eased since June as the government sought to boost the pandemic-devastated economy.

The population has become more relaxed. Hundreds of thousands flocked to the Kumbh Mela in January, mostly without masks. And tens of thousands of farmers have been taking part in crowded protests in Delhi since November to fight new agriculture laws.



It is essential to carry out the Security Council's calls for a return to democracy, respect for the results of the parliamentary elections, and release of all people detained by the military in Myanmar
ANTONIO GUTERRES | SECRETARY-GENERAL, UNITED NATIONS

WORLD'S SMALLEST REPTILE

Scientists have identified Earth's smallest known reptile, *Brookesia nana*, warning at the same time that sustained destruction of forests in northern Madagascar threatens its survival



of the day quote

What Biden is doing is restoring the asylum and refugee system, is equivalent to once again providing transparency and clarity on these issues



URSULA ROLDAN | RESEARCH DIRECTOR, RAFAEL LANDIVAR UNIVERSITY, GUATEMALA

Time is running out for the Americans, both because of the parliament bill and the election atmosphere that will follow the Iranian New Year



MOHAMMAD JAVAD ZARIF | FOREIGN MINISTER, IRAN

This new AI framework, applied to the specifics of this virus, can provide vaccine candidates within seconds and move them to clinical trials quickly to achieve preventive medical therapies without compromising safety



PAUL BOGDAN | ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, USC VITERBI

SHORT TAKES

Erdogan goes after students

Istanbul: Turkey's president has ordered the establishment of two new departments in the country's most prestigious university, which has been rocked by weeks of protests. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's decision, published in the Official Gazette Saturday, says law and communications faculties are to be launched in Bogazici University. Student groups involved in the protests tweeted against the new decision, saying it was an "occupation" attempt against academic freedoms.

Nepal to get vax from China

Kathmandu: China will provide 500,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccines to Nepal on a grant basis, officials here said Saturday, supplying the first batch of vaccine aid for the Himalayan nation. During a telephonic conversation with his Nepali counterpart Pradeep Gyawali on Friday evening, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi assured that China would accord priority to Nepal in vaccine cooperation, according to a press statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs here.

Selection of UN Secy-Gen starts

United Nations: The United Nations kicked off the selection of its next secretary-general Friday, asking the 193 UN member states to submit candidates to be the world organisation's chief diplomat and operating officer. The process officially began with a joint letter signed virtually by General Assembly President Volkan Bozkir and Britain's UN Ambassador Barbara Woodward, this month's president of the Security Council opening the nomination of candidates.

2 children killed in Ohio shooting

Toledo: Authorities in Toledo, Ohio, say two children were killed and a third was wounded in a shooting Friday. A tweet from Toledo police said the children were shot "during a domestic dispute" and a suspect was in custody. The third child shot was in critical condition, police tweeted. We believe we have the guy responsible in custody," Toledo police Lt. Daniel Gerken told news outlets at the scene, adding that the shooting took place inside an apartment.

Attack on convoy in Myanmar kills 12

AGENCIES

Nay Pyi Taw, Feb 6: At least nine civilians and three policemen were killed in an armed attack on a convoy of a former member of Myanmar's self-administered zone, a statement released by the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Service Office said Saturday. The convoy led by U Khin Maung Lwin, a former central executive committee member of Myanmar's Kokang Self-Administered Zone, was attacked by a group of 20 members from the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) Friday. Xinhua news agency quoted the statement as saying.

The attack took place while the Maung Lwin was on his way from Lashio to Laukkai, capital of Kokang Self-Administered Zone in Shan state.

Eight civilians and five police personnel were also injured, the military statement said.

The development comes in the wake of the military's recent extension of the suspension period of its operation against armed groups.



Thousands of people took to the streets of Yangon on Saturday to denounce this week's coup and demand the release of elected leader Aung San Suu Kyi despite a blockade on the internet by the junta.

In an upwelling of anger in the country's largest city protesters chanted, "Military dictator, fail, fail; Democracy, win, win" and held banners reading "Against military dictatorship". Bystanders offered them food and water.

Many in the crowd wore red, the colour of Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) which won

The attack took place while the Maung Lwin was on his way from Lashio to Laukkai, capital of Kokang Self-Administered Zone in Shan state

Nov. 8 elections in a landslide, a result the generals have refused to recognise, claiming fraud.

Yangon streets had a festival at-

mosphere as a cacophony of car horns blared across the city. Thousands marched toward City Hall. Drivers leaned out of their cars and raised the three-finger salute. Bystanders returned the gesture. Some held up NLD flags or pictures of Suu Kyi. Many clapped and danced.

Several hundred people gathered in the capital Naypyidaw, in central Myanmar, with motorbikes blaring horns. They chanted slogans against the coup and called for the release of Suu Kyi.

The protests built despite a blockade of the internet imposed after demonstrators first began to gather.

Monitoring group NetBlocks Internet Observatory reported a "national-scale internet blackout", saying on Twitter that connectivity had fallen to 16% of ordinary levels. Witnesses reported a shutdown of mobile data services and wifi.

The junta did not respond to requests for comment. It extended a social media crackdown to Twitter and Instagram after seeking to silence dissent by temporarily blocking Facebook, which counts half of the population as users.

Cop dead, six hurt in Kabul bombings

AGENCIES

Kabul, Feb 6: A police officer was killed and six civilians were injured in two separate bombings in Kabul Saturday, the latest in a string of explosions to hit the Afghan capital in recent months.

The police officer died in the line of duty when a police pick-up truck struck an IED in Khairkhana neighbourhood, Police District 11, at around 9.40 a.m., a source from the Kabul police told Xinhua news agency. The vehicle was destroyed and several shops were damaged by the force of the blast.

Earlier in the day, another IED exploded outside a shop in Shorbazzar locality, PD 1, injuring six civilians, Kabul police spokesman Ferdaus Faramarz told reporters.

No group has claimed responsibility for the attacks so far.

Tuesday, four blasts took place in different parts of Kabul, leaving three people dead and six others wounded. Kabul has seen a recent



THE VEHICLE WAS DESTROYED AND SEVERAL SHOPS WERE DAMAGED BY THE IMPACT OF THE BLAST

spate of bomb blasts and killings.

In December 2020, at least 23 people were killed and 70 others injured in security incidents in the capital city.

Most of the magnetic IED blasts targeted security vehicles and were near police headquarters buildings in various areas of the city.

Biden admin may strip Houthis of terror tag

AGENCIES

Washington, Feb 6: President Joe Biden's administration is moving to revoke the designation of Yemen's Houthis as a terrorist group, citing the need to mitigate one of the world's worst humanitarian disasters.

President Donald Trump's administration had branded the Iranian-backed Houthis as a foreign terrorist organisation, a move that limited the provision of aid to the beleaguered Yemeni people, who have suffered under a yearslong civil war and famine.

A State Department official confirmed the move Friday after members of Congress were notified of the administration's plans. The official, who wasn't authorized to speak publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity, said the removal changed nothing about the Biden administration's views of the Houthis, who have targeted civilians and kidnapped Americans.

"Our action is due entirely to the humanitarian consequences of this last-minute designation from the prior administration, which the United Nations and humanitarian organizations have since made clear would accelerate the world's worst humanitarian crisis," the official said.

The move comes a day after Biden announced an end to offensive support to Saudi Arabia's campaign against the Houthis.

The Obama administration in

2015 gave its approval to Saudi Arabia leading a cross-border air campaign targeting Yemen's Houthi rebels, who were seizing ever more territory, including Sanaa. The Houthis have launched multiple drone and missile strikes deep into Saudi Arabia.

The US says the Saudi-led campaign has entrenched Iran's role in the conflict, on the side of the Houthis.

The US targeting assistance to Saudi Arabia's command and control was supposed to minimize civilian casualties in the Saudi-led airstrikes. But bombing since then has killed numerous Yemeni civilians, including schoolboys on a bus and fishermen in their boats. Survivors have displayed fragments showing the bombs to be American-made.

Democratic Sen. Chris Murphy of Connecticut praised the Biden administration's move, saying, "The designation did not impact the Houthis in any practical way, but it stopped food and other critical aid from being delivered inside Yemen and would have prevented effective political negotiation."

THE US SAYS THE SAUDI-LED CAMPAIGN HAS ENTRENCHED IRAN'S ROLE IN THE CONFLICT, ON THE SIDE OF THE HOUTHIS



A girl walks alone along high-ground between flood waters on the banks of the river Seine, Paris, Saturday

Canada's unemployment rate hits new high

AGENCIES

Ottawa, Feb 6: Amid the raging second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, the unemployment rate in Canada rose by 0.6 percentage point to 9.4 per cent in January, the highest rate since August 2020, according to the national statistical office.

Friday, Statistics Canada said that employment decreased by 213,000, or 1.2 per cent, in January as lockdowns and restrictions caused the closure of many businesses across the country, reports Xinhua news agency.

The decrease marked a second straight month that the labour market contracted after 63,000 positions disappeared in December 2020 to break a streak of monthly gains that began in May 2020.

It was heavy in the services sector and part-time work fuelling the largest monthly decline since last April when some 2 million jobs were lost. Compared with February 2020, employment was down 858,000,



Employment decreased by 213,000, or 1.2 per cent, in January. The decrease marked a second straight month that the labour market contracted. 63,000 positions disappeared in December 2020 to break a streak of monthly gains that began in May 2020.

or 4.5 per cent, in January and Covid-related absences from work were up 529,000.

Among Canadians who worked at least half their usual hours, the number working from home increased by nearly 700,000 to 5.4 million in January, surpassing the previous high of 5.1

million last April.

January's employment figures show the "continuing challenge of balancing economic activity with the need to protect public health", and how restrictions hit specific sectors and groups of workers harder than others, the national statistical office added.

Pak mountaineer reported missing on K2 expedition

AGENCIES

Islamabad, Feb 6: Pakistan Army launched an aerial search operation Saturday to locate a missing mountaineer and his team members who are on an expedition to summit K2, the second highest peak of the world.

The missing mountaineer, Ali Sadpara had successfully climbed the 8,611-metre-high peak during the K2 Winter Expedition 2021, a month after their first attempt failed, Geo News said in a report.

The report said that Sadpara and his team had departed for their journey on Wednesday.

Since then, he has since been providing updates on his Twitter account about the expedition.

His last tweet was posted on Saturday morning somewhere around 8.20 a.m.

Sources here said Sadpara and his team were to reach camp 3 by 2 p.m. on Saturday, but communication with the team has been lost for the last several hours.

K2 is located on the China-Pakistan border between in the Gilgit-Baltistan region of northern Pakistan, and Dardir Township in Taxkorgan Tajik Autonomous County of Xinjiang, China.

It is the highest point of the Karakoram mountain range and the highest point in both Pakistan and Xinjiang.

The peak is known as the



"Savage Mountain" because of its harsh weather conditions: winds can blow at more than 200 kilometres per hour, and temperatures can drop to minus 60 degrees Celsius. Unlike Mount Everest, which has been topped by thousands of climbers, K2 is much less travelled.

Virus origin directly related to climate change: Researchers

AGENCIES

London, Feb 6: Researchers at University of Cambridge have revealed a mechanism by which climate change could have played a direct role in the emergence of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that caused the Covid-19 pandemic.

The new study published in the journal *Science of the Total Environment* revealed large-scale changes in the type of vegetation in the southern Chinese Yunnan province, and adjacent regions in Myanmar and Laos, over the last century. Climatic changes including increases in temperature, sunlight, and atmospheric carbon dioxide - which affect the growth of plants and trees - have changed natural habitats from tropical shrubland to tropical savannah and deciduous wood-

land. This created a suitable environment for many bat species that predominantly live in forests.

The number of coronaviruses in an area is closely linked to the number of different bat species present. The study found that an additional 40 bat species have moved into the southern Chinese Yunnan province in the past century, harbouring around 100 more types of bat-borne coronavirus.

This "global hotspot" is the region where genetic data suggests SARS-CoV-2 may have arisen.

"Climate change over the last century has made the habitat in the southern Chinese Yunnan province suitable for more bat species," said Robert Beyer, a researcher in the University of Cambridge and first author of the study, who has recently taken up a



European research fellowship at the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, Germany.

Understanding how the global distribution of bat species has shifted as a result of climate change may be an important step in reconstructing the origin of the Covid-

19 outbreak," he added.

To get their results, the researchers created a map of the world's vegetation as it was a century ago, using records of temperature, precipitation, and cloud cover.

Then they used information on the vegetation requirements of the

world's bat species to work out the global distribution of each species in the early 1900s.

Comparing this to current distributions allowed them to see how bat "species richness", the number of different species, has changed across the globe over the last century due to climate change.

"As climate change altered habitats, species left some areas and moved into others - taking their viruses with them. This not only altered the regions where viruses are present, but most likely allowed for new interactions between animals and viruses, causing more harmful viruses to be transmitted or evolve," said Beyer.

The world's bat population carries around 3,000 different types of coronavirus, with each bat species harbouring an average of 2.7 coron-

aviruses - most without showing symptoms.

An increase in the number of bat species in a particular region, driven by climate change, may increase the likelihood that a coronavirus harmful to humans is present, transmitted, or evolves there.

Most coronaviruses carried by bats cannot jump into humans. But several coronaviruses known to infect humans are very likely to have originated in bats, including three that can cause human fatalities: Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) CoV, and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) CoV-1 and CoV-2.

The region identified by the study as a hotspot for a climate-driven increase in bat species richness is also home to pangolins, which are suggested to have acted as intermediate hosts to SARS-CoV-2.

business



This V-shape recovery has been made possible due to the measures taken to combat the Covid-19 pandemic, and the historic reforms that were implemented to support the economy.
ANURAG THAKUR | MINISTER OF STATE FOR FINANCE

INDIA'S FOREX RESERVES SWELL BY OVER \$4.8 BN

India's forex reserves rose by \$4.852 bn during the week ended January 29. An RBI report said, the reserves increased to \$590.185 bn from \$585.334 bn reported for the week ended January 22.



of the day quote

Indian Railways have introduced premium services like Vande Bharat Express, Humsafar, Tejas, Antyodaya, UDAY, to provide better travelling experience to the passengers



Apple and Samsung were the only vendors to perform well on a YoY basis, but we saw LG, OnePlus and others improve (on-month), buoyed by the popularity of flagship devices during the holiday season



Affle delivered broad-based growth from both existing and new customers, across the key industry verticals in India and other emerging markets



India's internet start-ups on cusp of listing: Report

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 6: India's internet start-ups that operate business ranging from food delivery, e-commerce to online insurance are now on the cusp of listing, a report said putting their combined value at USD 180 billion by 2025.

"The growing scale and maturity of India's internet economy is starting to create more value and investment opportunities. More than USD 60 billion has been invested in India's internet start-ups in the past five years, with around USD 12 billion in 2020 alone," HSCB Global Research said in a report of India's internet.

It put the total sector value (ex-Fintech) to reach USD 180 billion by 2025. "Many of these leaders, which operate businesses ranging from food delivery, e-commerce to online insurance, are now on the cusp of listing," the report said.

India has 42 Unicorns and over 45 soonicorns, HSCB said. E-commerce is the largest opportunity, worth an estimated USD 67 billion by 2025, it said adding this was



Chasing big money

AMAZON AND FLIPKART CONTROL OVER 80 PC OF THE INDUSTRY BUT CONTOURS OF THE COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE ARE STILL EVOLVING

IN INDIA, 48 PER CENT OF RETAIL SPENDING IS ON GROCERY, COMPARED TO 15 PER CENT IN CHINA AND 10 PER CENT IN THE UNITED STATES

MORE THAN USD 60 BILLION HAS BEEN INVESTED IN INDIA'S INTERNET START-UPS IN THE PAST FIVE YEARS, WITH AROUND USD 12 BILLION IN 2020 ALONE

worth USD 31 billion 2019 after expanding at an impressive five-year CAGR of 39 per cent.

Amazon and Flipkart control over 80 per cent of the industry today but the contours of the competitive landscape are still evolving.

"For example, Reliance Jio is set to emerge as a significant competitive threat, along with multiple vertical e-commerce players and

hundreds of brands that are now delivering direct to consumers," it said. "We see e-commerce logistics companies such as Delhivery as a lucrative opportunity."

In India, 48 per cent of retail spending is on grocery, compared to 15 per cent in China and 10 per cent in the US. Ed-tech is the second-largest opportunity with a market size of USD 48 billion by 2025.

Although still quite fragmented, it is one of the most profitable segments and has one of the largest total addressable markets.

Food delivery is getting back on track, with gross merchandise value almost back to pre-pandemic levels.

"We expect 6 million online food orders a day by 2025. This is well behind China where 40 million orders are delivered every day,"

the report said.

The online insurance market remains lucrative, with PolicyBazaar likely to maintain its lead for the foreseeable future. Meanwhile, ride-sharing faces significant challenges, travel is the most penetrated market and hotels are an untapped opportunity, the report said adding ride sharing has fallen 40 per cent from pre-pandemic levels.

"Mobile penetration, demographics, consumer awareness and convenience are the key drivers of most internet sub-segments. Still, despite strong growth, companies need to continue to invest to 'incubate' the market and work on cultural inhibitions," it said.

For instance, food delivery volumes are 1/20th of China's, leaving massive scope for growth, but companies will still need to invest in growing the food ordering culture.

"For the gig economy, the regulatory regime has yet to evolve. We see particular risks for ride-sharing, ed-tech and gaming industries. Recent regulations/guidelines for ride-sharing reflect these risks," the report said.

Punjab & Sind Bank loss zooms to ₹2,375 crore

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 6: Punjab & Sind Bank Saturday said its net loss in December quarter 2020-21 spiralled to ₹2,375.53 crore on higher provisions for bad loans.

The lender had posted a net loss of ₹255.49 crore in the same period a year ago. In September quarter also, the bank had a loss of ₹401.27 crore.



Total income in the quarter under review also fell to ₹1,982.52 crore from ₹2,077.01 crore in the same period of 2019-20, Punjab & Sind Bank said in a regulatory filing.

Net income fell 9.1 per cent to ₹1,763.10 crore and income on investments was down 12.1 per cent to ₹455.42 crore.

The bank's gross non-performing assets (NPAs) remained high at 13.14 per cent of the gross advances as of December 31, 2020, compared to 13.58 per cent by the year-ago same period.

In value terms, gross NPAs or bad loans stood at ₹8,489.89 crore by the end of December 2020 as against ₹8,923.49 crore earlier.

Net NPAs came down significantly at 2.84 per cent (Rs 1,638.25 crore) as against 8.71 per cent (Rs 5,417.79 crore).

Provisions for bad loans and contingencies spiked to ₹2,924.69 crore during the quarter, as against ₹494.30 crore. Of this, provisions for bad loans were ₹1,482.17 crore, which was higher than ₹464.01 crore a year ago.

The bank said during quarter, it has fully provided for frauds declared up to December 31, 2020. In case of two NPA accounts having balance outstanding of ₹588.77 crore where provision of ₹486.81 crore was held till September 2020 and are declared fraud up to the reporting date, the bank has provided for the balance amount of ₹271.96 crore till December 31, 2020.

"As such, a total provision of ₹903.33 crore including these two accounts has been made during the quarter," the bank said. Further, the provisions held in respect of total borrowal accounts referred to NCLT stood at ₹4,429.26 crore as against balance outstanding of ₹4,965.66 crore, it added.

'Vivad Se Vishwas' resolves 25% of direct tax litigations

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 6: The Centre's ambitious tax dispute resolution scheme Vivad Se Vishwas has settled almost a quarter of the over 5.10 lakh tax disputes, with about Rs 97,000 crore worth disputed tax being resolved so far under it.

As many as 1,25,144 cases have so far opted for the Vivad se Vishwas (VsV) Scheme, which is 24.5 per cent of the 5.10,491 cases that were pending at different legal fora, according to sources in the Department of Revenue (DoR).

"The response to VsV Scheme has been very encouraging and so far involves the tax dispute settlement amount to the tune of more than ₹97,000 crore," sources added.

The Vivad se Vishwas Scheme has received 15 times better response in comparison to Direct Tax Dispute Resolution Scheme, 2016 (DTDRS), and with regard to the settled disputed amount, it is 153 times of DTDRS.

The 1998's Kar Vivad Samadhan Scheme (KVS) Scheme could gather ₹739 crore with just few thousand cases, while the 2016's DTDRS Scheme resolved just 8,600 odd cases involving an amount of ₹631 crore.



Sources said that the setting up of Dispute Resolution Committee (DRC) announced in the 2021-22 budget is in furtherance of the VsV Scheme. Under DRC, further impetus is to be provided to resolve the litigations in the best interest of the small taxpayers in a Tax Lok Adalat format which would bring transparency and accountability in a faceless manner.

The last date for filing declaration under the VsV scheme has been extended till February 28, while for paying the disputed tax the date is March 31.

The scheme provides for settlement of disputed tax, disputed interest, disputed penalty or disputed fees in relation to an assessment or reassessment order on payment of 100 per cent of the disputed tax and 25 per cent of the disputed penalty or interest or fee.

Lower duty on gold to curb smuggling

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 6: The Union Budget 2020-21 proposal to reduce customs duty on gold and silver will curtail the increasing trend of smuggling of these precious metals in the country, India Ratings and Research has said. Accordingly, the Budget has proposed to reduce the customs duty on gold and silver to 7.5 per cent from 12.5 per cent.

"The move will also improve the government's overall revenue from the sector," Ind-Ra said in a report. "The duty reduction will support sectoral demand in the long term, as jewellery costs will come down and customers' purchasing power will improve." According to the report, the erstwhile duty structure gave incentives for gold smuggling into India.

In July 2019, as part of the revenue-raising budget, the customs duty on import of gold was increased to 12.5 per cent from 10 per cent. As per Ind-Ra's estimates, unofficial imports of gold range between 150-180 tonnes compared to the official gold import numbers of 600-700 tonnes for FY20. "Ind-Ra believes that reduction in import duty thus is favourable for the domestic organised jewellery players."

Nabard disburses ₹16,500 cr under RIDF in FY21

AGENCIES

Mumbai, Feb 6: The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (Nabard) Saturday said it has sanctioned ₹30,200 crore and disbursed ₹16,500 crore for various rural infrastructure projects across the country under the Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF) in the first 10 months of the current financial year.

The RIDF, which was set up in 1995, is a dedicated fund to create social assets in rural India. "In FY21, the sanctions to the RIDF stood at ₹30,200 crore as against the corpus of ₹30,000 crore. The disbursement for the current financial year as on January 31, 2021 stands at ₹16,500 crore," Nabard chairman G R Chintala said in a statement.

Since the inception of the fund, Nabard has disbursed ₹3.11 lakh crore for different rural infrastructure projects, it said. Chintala said this fund has constituted around 10 per cent of gross capital formation in rural areas.

Over the years, the RIDF has become a dependable source of funding for states and union territo-



ries for building, strengthening rural infrastructure in critical areas like agriculture and irrigation, rural connectivity and social sector, including drinking water, primary health and education.

It could be noted that in the Union Budget 2021-22, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced to enhance the allocation to the RIDF to ₹40,000 crore from ₹30,000 crore.

She also increased the corpus of the Micro Irrigation Fund by ₹5,000 crore to ₹10,000 crore. Chintala noted that the increased allocations to both the funds will help push rural infrastructure projects across states.

52% MILLENNIALS KEEN ON INTERN'L HOLIDAY: SURVEY

AGENCIES

Mumbai, Feb 6: With vaccination drive against COVID-19 gathering steam across the world and restrictions on movements easing gradually, many millennials are keen on taking an international holiday this summer, according to a survey.

Things are looking up for 2021, as 52 per cent millennials are eager to take an international holiday this summer as COVID-19 vaccine ushered in hope that the end to the pandemic is on the horizon, according to a survey by BOTT (Business of Travel Trade) Travel Sentiment Tracker.

The survey was done online with over 6,000 millennial travellers across the country during January 2021.

As per the survey, 75 per cent millennials would prefer to go to foreign destinations with fewer COVID-19 cases while 71 per cent would opt for destinations with defined protocols for the pandemic to avoid unnecessary hassles.

The industry finds survey findings encouraging for the travel industry. The findings, they believe, will generate more confidence in an industry, which is currently disappointed by being ignored in the Union Budget.

"However, inbound and outbound are two verticals of travel that go hand in hand. We hope the gov-

Offshore attractions



THINGS ARE LOOKING UP FOR 2021, AS 52 PER CENT OF MILLENNIALS ARE EAGER TO TAKE AN INTERNATIONAL HOLIDAY THIS SUMMER AS COVID-19 VACCINE USHERED IN FRESH HOPE THAT THE END TO THE PANDEMIC IS ON THE HORIZON

THE SURVEY ALSO SHOWED THAT 62 PC MILLENNIALS WOULD PREFER THAILAND, FOLLOWED BY SINGAPORE (58 PC), UAE (52 PC), MALDIVES (46 PER CENT) AND SAUDI ARABIA (40 PER CENT) IN THE SHORT-HAUL CATEGORY OF FOREIGN DESTINATIONS

IN LONG-HAUL CATEGORY, THE TOP-RANKED INTERNATIONAL DESTINATIONS INCLUDE FRANCE (53 PC), GERMANY (51 PC), AUSTRALIA (50 PC), SWITZERLAND (49 PC), THE USA (46 PC), BRITAIN (45 PC), CANADA (44 PC), JAPAN (38 PC

ernment will look into opening up borders in India soon, and so will other countries," Travel Agents Association of India president and the Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism and Hospitality vice chairperson Jyoti Mayal opined.

The survey also showed that 62 per cent millennials would prefer Thailand, followed by Singapore

(58 per cent), UAE (52 per cent), Maldives (46 per cent) and Saudi Arabia (40 per cent) in the short-haul category of foreign destinations.

Malaysia and Indonesia are chosen by 39 per cent millennials each Sri Lanka (36 per cent), Bhutan (31 per cent), Turkey (28 per cent) and Seychelles (24 per cent) coming close among the top preferred short-haul foreign destinations, it noted.

In the long-haul category, the top-ranked international destinations include France (53 per cent), Germany (51 per cent), Australia (50 per cent), Switzerland (49 per cent), the USA (46 per cent), Britain (45 per cent), Canada (44 per cent), Japan (38 per cent).

The ongoing vaccine drive coupled with dropping COVID-19 cases in India has instilled confidence in the travellers, especially the millennials, according to Outbound Tour Operators Association of India (OTOAI) President Riaz Munshi.

"The road to complete recovery is long and tough but we are definitely seeing an uptick in trip-planning and requests right now for the holidays and into 2021, as well as far-flung international trips. Many of our members are planning trips for 2021 and 2022 because they know demand will be high in popular destinations eventually," he added.

The survey showed that 40 per cent millennials are open to spend between ₹2-5 lakh for their holidays while 35 per cent would spend between ₹5-10 lakh. Around 34 per cent millennials would like to book luxury hotels with limited inventory while 25 per cent each would go for boutique and budget properties, it said. Travellers are still looking for places with fewer crowds, it added.

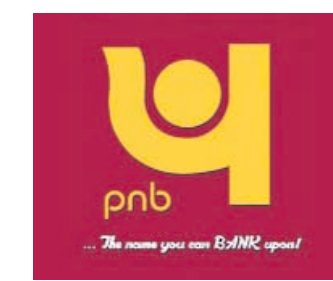
PNB to raise ₹3,200 cr from share sale this quarter

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 6: State-owned Punjab National Bank Saturday said it plans to raise ₹3,200 crore from share sale during the current quarter to enhance its capital base.

The bank has raised ₹3,788.04 crore from qualified institutional placement (QIP) in December following which the government holding in the bank came down from 85.59 per cent to 76.87 per cent.

The bank had taken approval



for raising ₹14,000 crore through a mix of equity and debt. As per the plan, the bank decided to raise ₹3,000 crore from AT-1 bonds, ₹4,000 crore from Tier II bonds and ₹7,000 crore from QIP.

"We have already taken ₹4,000 crore from Tier-II and ₹3,788 crore we have taken through QIP as at the end of December. In the month of January we have also taken AT-1 of another ₹500 crore. So I am very confident that remaining ₹2,500 crore of

under Additional Tier-1 bonds will be garnered from the market before March 31," PNB Managing Director S S Mallikarjuna Rao said.

Talking to the media after result, he said, "We are also actively looking at going for the QIP again with respect to the remaining ₹3,200 crore to be acquired from the market at an appropriate time...It could be in this fiscal also."

However, he said, current level of capital adequacy ratio is sufficient to take care of not only the re-

The bank has raised ₹3,788.04 cr from QIP in December following which the govt holding in the bank came down from 85.59 per cent to 76.87 per cent

quirement in the month of March 2021 but also during the next financial year. Besides, Rao said, the bank has sold some of the non-core assets including sale of its holding in UTI Mutual Fund.

Going forwards, he said, the bank expects to mobilise ₹500 crore from sale of real assets by June 2021. PNB Friday reported a standalone net profit of ₹506.03 crore for the December quarter on the back of a reduction in bad assets.

JOE FORTIFIES ENGLISH ROOT



England skipper Joe Root became the first-ever cricketer to notch up a double century in his 100th Test. Former Pakistan skipper Inzamam ul Haq, who hit 184 against India in Bangalore in 2005, held the previous best score in the 100th Test

Root joined compatriot Alastair Cook, South Africa's Graeme Smith and India's Rahul Dravid, who all have five double centuries

He became the ninth player in the history of the game to score a ton - his 20th in Tests - on his 100th appearance

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, Feb 6: Skipper Joe Root (218, 377b, 19x4, 2x6) continued to torment the Indian spinners with a majestic double century that placed England in a commanding position and scuttled home team's chances of enforcing a favourable result in the first Test here, Saturday.

England ended the day two at an intimidating 555/8, built around Root's knock that was result of a near nine-hour effort in. The pace of his innings on the second day was a bit in contrast to how he played on the first day when he was the enforcer and Dom Sibley the grafter.

On the second morning, it was Ben Stokes (82, 118b, 10x4, 3x6) who entered the stage and made it his own with big hitting. He let Root rotate the strike in their 124-run stand.

Worse, England didn't declare after being well past 500 which was like driving home a point and piling on the misery on an Indian team which has now been shaken up on a track where nothing happened for two days.

While Root will be lauded for sure for his second double ton in last three Tests, it was Stokes, whose counter-attack deflated the home team.

SCORECARD

England 1st innings (overnight 263/3)

Joe Root lbw b Nadeem 218, Ben Stokes c Pujara b Nadeem 82, Ollie Pope lbw b Ashwin 34, Jos Buttler b Ishant 30, Dom Bess batting 28, Jofra Archer b Ishant 0, Jack Leach batting 6; Extras: 37 (b-2, lb-16, nb-19); Total: 555/8 (180 overs).

Fall: 1/63 (Burns), 2/63 (Lawrence), 3/263 (Sibley), 4/387 (Stokes), 5/473 (Pope), 6/477 (Root), 7/525 (Buttler), 8/525 (Archer).

Bowling: Ishant Sharma 27-7-52-2, Jasprit Bumrah 31-4-81-2, Ravichandran Ashwin 50-5-132-2, Shahbaz Nadeem 44-4-167-2, Washington Sundar 26-2-98-0, Rohit Sharma 2-0-7-0.



Shahbaz Nadeem (C) celebrates Ben Stokes' wicket with teammates in Chennai, Saturday

Ravichandran Ashwin (2/132), who was brilliant over two days, was only a bit rattled when Stokes gave him the charge. Although Root hit Ashwin for two sixes - the second one bringing up his fifth career double hundred for the England captain - it was Stokes who gave him and the other spinners a big charge.

Also the only one who played Ishant Sharma with some degree of confidence was Stokes. Ishant bowled as best as he had in any unfavourable conditions, something that the scoreboard wouldn't perhaps tell.

The veteran of 98 Tests finally got a couple of wickets at the fog end of the day but his performance with old ball on one of the flattest tracks will be remembered for a long time.

The pace never dropped even when he was well past bowling his 20th over as the tattered old ball would consistently tail in. But Ishant, Ashwin and Jasprit Bumrah's good work was undone once again by rookie Washington Sundar.

And Shahbaz Nadeem (2/167) for all his experience at the domestic level for a decade and half, probably understood that he probably is a bit less-skilled when facing a team full of quality players of spin. His wickets column would read that he had got Stokes and Root but it was well after they had accomplished what they had set out to do.

Manvir, Krishna sink Odisha

AGENCIES

Goa, Feb 6: Manvir Singh and Roy Krishna scored a brace each to help ATK Mohun Bagan (ATKMB) register a 4-1 victory over Odisha FC in their match of the Indian Super League (ISL) at the GMC Stadium in Bambolim, Saturday.

ATKMB are now second with 30 points from 15 matches, three less than table-toppers Mumbai City FC (33 points). Odisha, on the other hand, are at the bottom with only eight points from 15 matches.

ATKMB took the lead through Manvir in the 11th minute. Marcelo Pereira sent a cross from outside the box on the left towards Pronay Halder, who was outside the penalty area. Halder eased it in the path of Roy Krishna on the right side of the box who played it towards Manvir on the right flank.

Manvir cut in and after a step over the ball with his left foot, his weaker foot, Manvir bent the ball towards the goal at the far post. It sneaked into the back of the net.

Odisha found the equaliser through Cole Alexander just before the half-time break. Paul Ramfangzauva first shot the ball from distance but the ball came off the upright to the right of the goal-



MANVIR SINGH

keeper Arindam Bhattacharja, who dived to save the ball but couldn't get to it. The deflected ball fell in the path of Alexander. The South African took a touch and guided a finish into the back of the net to the left of the keeper.

After change of ends, Manvir put the Mariners in front again in the 56th. Roy Krishna did really well to shrug off Alexander. The Fijian then passed the ball towards Manvir on the right side of the penalty area. The Indian run forward and shot it hard and low with his right foot this time to beat Arshdeep Singh at the near post.

In the 83rd, Pronay Halder's cross from outside the box was blocked by Alexander inside his own penalty area. The referee was prompted by his assistant and the Mariners were awarded a spot-kick after finding the ball hit the left hand of the Odisha FC skipper. Krishna calmly made it 3-1 from the spot.

Three minutes later, Manvir won his header on the right flank to direct the ball into the path of Krishna. The Fijian was too strong and easily shrugged off Shubham Sarangi's attempt to win the ball. He composed himself and then fired the ball inside the frame of the goal at the far post.

STATE ATHLETES BAG TWO GOLDS IN JUNIOR NAT'L

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 6: Odisha athletes had an impressive day Saturday, securing two medals, on the opening day of the 36th National Junior Athletics Championship 2021 at Sarsujai Stadium in Guwahati, Assam. Twelve athletes from Odisha have participated in the event, which will end February 10.

Sabita Toppo bagged the first gold medal in the girls' U-16 long jump event as she cleared a distance of 5.59 metres.

Manisha Merel secured the second yellow medal in the girls' U-20 long jump. She jumped 5.63m to secure medal.

Among others, Dilip Naik qualified for the finals of the 1500m in the boys' U-20 category. The finals will take place, Sunday evening. Anshika Routray secured sixth position in girls' U-16 shot put event.

IPL auction: Smith sets base price at ₹2 crore



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

He was the only bowler in Australia camp to leak over three runs an over in the series against India. There was speculation that he would command a big price at this year's auction.

But according to a report in 'ESPNCricinfo', the left-arm pace bowler has opted out. He may have done it to manage workload and prepare for the T20 World Cup in India and Ashes at home this year.

Apart from Smith, England's Moeen Ali, former India off-spinner Harbhajan Singh and Aussie Glenn Maxwell too have registered in the ₹2 crore bracket. Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan, who returned to cricket last month after serving a ban for failing to report corrupt approach, also registered himself in the same bracket.

Former India pace bowler S Sreesanth, who also returned to cricket after serving out a ban, too has registered for the auction at a base price of ₹75 lakh.

England batsman Tom Banton, who was with Kolkata Knight Riders last year, but did not get to play much has not registered as he wants to focus on playing the County championship.

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