



GREAT ASPIRATION

Actor Bhumi Pednekar says she wants to stand out as the most versatile actress in India

LEISURE P2



70 YEARS ON THE THRONE

Queen Elizabeth II will mark 70 yrs on throne Sunday, an unprecedented reign that has made her a symbol of stability

INTERNATIONAL P10



U-19 WC FINAL TODAY

Yash Dhull-led India aim for a record-extending fifth title at the ICC U-19 World Cup when they take on England

SPORTS P12

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NEET-PG 2022 to be held May 21

New Delhi: The National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) for admissions to post graduate medical courses will be held May 21, the National Board of Examination in Medical Sciences (NBEMS) announced Friday, a day after the Union Health Ministry sought postponement of the exam by six to eight weeks. Pursuant to the directions of the Health Ministry vide its letter dated February 3, the conduct of NEET-PG 2022 examination which was earlier notified to be held March 12 stands rescheduled. The NEET-PG 2022 shall now be conducted May 21 from 9 am to 12.30 pm, the notice issued by the NBEMS Friday read. The online application window for submission of applications for NEET-PG 2022 which was earlier notified to be closed February 4 (till 11.55 pm) shall now continue till March 25 (till 11:55 pm), it said. The Union Health Ministry had Thursday asked the National Board of Examination to postpone the NEET PG 2022 by six to eight weeks or suitably since it is clashing with the NEET PG 2021 counselling.

OPD service at City AIIMS from February 7

Bhubaneswar: With the improvement in Covid-19 situation in Odisha, the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Bhubaneswar will resume its OPD service from February 7, officials said here Friday. The Covid-19 cases have come down in the state during the recent past and there has been a demand from various quarters to restart the walk-in OPD service. Hence, this decision was taken, an official said. All departments of the institutions have been directed to follow the OPD schedule as before. Every department has reserved 4-5 beds in each ward for the new admission cases (suspected Covid cases).



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LONE INDIAN



Flag bearer Arif Mohd Khan of India during the opening ceremony of the Winter Olympics in Beijing, Friday. The 31-year-old will be the lone Indian competitor at the Games, having qualified in Slalom and Giant Slalom events. India sent a six-member contingent to the Games including a coach, a technician and a team manager. (SOURCE: REUTERS)

MSP panel after polls: Tomar

The minister's remarks came a day after the SKM accused the government of not fulfilling its promise of setting up of the committee



PNN & AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 4: The government is committed to forming a panel on Minimum Support Price (MSP) and the Election Commission has said it can be done after the polls are over, Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar said in the Rajya Sabha Friday.

While announcing the repeal of three farm laws in November last year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had promised to set up a committee to discuss the farmers' demand for a legal guarantee on MSP. Replying to a supplementary ques-

tion during the Question Hour, Tomar said the government had written to the Election Commission in view of Assembly elections in five states. The minister said the matter of forming the Committee on MSP is under consideration of the ministry and will be formed after the elections are over.

"The entire country knows that the prime minister has announced the formation of a committee to make crop diversification, natural farming and MSP effective and trans-

BJD flays Centre for not doubling farm income

NEW DELHI: The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) Friday asked the Union government whether it has been able to double the income of farmers. Senior BJD MP Prasanna Acharya, while speaking during the Motion of Thanks on the President's address in the Rajya Sabha, said that the Union government had promised that the income of farmers will double by 2022, but this is yet to be achieved. He said there is huge difference between words and deeds of the Union government. "This is the promise of this government that by 2022, farmers' income will be doubled. I will ask persistently to the government that can the government say that by now it has been able to double income of the farmers? Can they say it? 'No', Sir. The income of the farmers' has not yet been doubled. Had the farmers' income been doubled, they would not have committed suicides," Acharya said. Citing NCRB data, Acharya said as many as 42,480 farmers and daily wagers committed suicide in 2019, which is an increase of 6 per cent from the previous year. "Had the farmers been in a happy condition, in a very sound economic condition, thousands and lakhs of farmers would not have gone for agitation in the Delhi border," the BJD MP said.



parent. The government is committed to the announcement made by the PM. The matter is under consideration of the ministry," Tomar said. With regard to bringing a law on giving MSP guarantee, Tomar said a committee on MSP will be set up after Assembly polls in some states.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL

Of course, I know you, sir. We have your photo in our police station!

Separate timings for I to VIII & IX to XII

Due to three successive Covid-19 waves, schools for students up to Class V have remained closed for more than two years in the state

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 4: The School and Mass Education Department Friday announced the timings for physical classes of schools that are set to reopen from February 7.

Teaching hours are fixed from 10 am to 4 pm for students from Class-IX to XII in all educational institutions under S&ME Department. For students from Class I to VIII the teaching hours are from 9 am to 1 pm.

Physical classes for students of Class VIII and above will resume from February 7 while schools will reopen for KG to Class VII students, February 14, Chief Secretary SC Mahapatra had said, Thursday.

Dry rations under the mid-day meal programme will continue to be supplied to the eligible students. Due to three successive Covid-19 waves, schools for students up to Class V have remained closed for more than two years in the state.

Meanwhile, the Higher Education Department Friday officially announced to start classroom teaching and other academic activities in physical mode in universities and colleges (under the administrative control of the Higher Education Department) from February 7. Hostels will open from February 6.

SCHOOL REOPENING

- The teaching hours are fixed from 10 am to 4 pm for students of Class IX to XII in all educational institutions under S&ME Department
- For students from Class I to VII, the teaching hours are from 9 am to 1 pm
- Dry ration under mid-day meal (MDM) programme will continue to be supplied to the eligible students until further orders

Department Secretary Saswat Mishra through an official letter to the principals of degree colleges and the vice chancellors of state public universities also directed them to resume classroom teaching and other academic activities in physical mode from February 7.

Examinations (annual/semester) will be held as per the instruction communicated earlier. The Higher Education Department February 1 had directed all the colleges and universities in the state to function with full strength of employees from February.

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VAIATION
SENSEX	58644.82 ↓ 143.20
NIFTY	17516.30 ↓ 43.90
DOLLAR	75.50 ↓ ₹0.19
EURO	85.55 ↑ ₹0.18
GOLD	₹47,965 ↑ ₹48
SILVER	₹61,030 ↑ ₹298

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP. MAX	29.0°C	28.5°C
TEMP. MIN	19.5°C	20.0°C
Humidity	86%	76%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Light to moderate rain	

Don't want 'Z' security, book attackers under UAPA: Owaisi

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 4: Hyderabad MP and AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi Friday rejected the 'Z' security cover extended to him by the Union government after an attack on him.

Speaking in the Lok Sabha, Owaisi urged the government to charge those who attacked him with stringent provisions of the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) and appealed to end radicalisation in the country.



curity. I want to be an A-category citizen, at par with you all. Why was UAPA not invoked against those who fired at me? ...I want to live, to speak. My life will be safe when the poor are safe. I will not get scared

of those who shot at my car," he said in the Parliament. Thursday, gunshots were fired at Owaisi's vehicle at Hapur in western Uttar Pradesh when he was returning to Delhi after campaigning for the state Assembly elections.

Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said the state government has arrested the culprits and also seized the weapon and vehicle used in the attack. Goyal said Home Minister Amit Shah will make a statement in the House Monday.

According to the police, two youths have been arrested for

their involvement in the firing incident that took place in Kithoudh area in Meerut Thursday.

Earlier during the Question Hour, Owaisi first thanked Speaker Om Birla for showing concern over the firing incident and for directing the concerned officials to ensure the safety of a sitting member of the Parliament.

"Who are these youths who have more belief in bullet than ballot? The government should first enquire how did they become so radicalised," Owaisi said.

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ARIES
Today is a bright day, and the stars foretell success for you. If you find yourself in a creative mood, indulge in some activity that will satisfy the urge. But, Ganesh says, if you are driving alone, exercise a great deal of caution to be on the safe side.

TAURUS
Fortune favours the brave and you will wake up feeling gutsy. Your performance will peak today and you will reap the benefits of real estate and construction business. Your peers and boss will extend all the support you need. All in all, a day to bask in the glory of advantages and awards.

GEMINI
Today, you are likely to remain transparent in all your dealings, forecasts Ganesh. You can be optimistic about your chances of success if you choose to propose to that special someone. The day will bring more pleasure than pain.

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

LEO
The discomfort similar to the fish-out-of-water syndrome will be a thing of the past, as today you will be quite flexible and would want to remain on the move, says Ganesh. So much so that you may even begin to feel bound by the environment in your office. Ganesh sees this as a good sign, as being adaptable will help you manoeuvre your way around people.

VIRGO
The artist, the comedian and the showman in you are all set to take the floor today. Entertain people and set the evening ablaze with your arsenal of jokes and gags, says Ganesh. But save valuable time and energy for other pressing matters and responsibilities too.

LIBRA
Monotonous is the word to describe the way things have been till now, but no more, says Ganesh. It might be a very good idea for you to take a break from things around you and go on a small trip. Invigorate yourself with a small picnic with family and friends. It shall go a long way in boosting your energy and enhancing your awareness and wisdom in the coming future.

SCORPIO
It is very likely that the moment of victory is often preceded by a moment of peril; but that is not where the danger ends. In the heat of victory, arrogance and overconfidence can push you away from what you aimed for. So, it is important for you to learn when to stop in victory.

SAGITTARIUS
Today will be a day for introspection, says Ganesh, as you try and find the root causes of your problems. But the job is only half-done; the rest will depend on the initiatives you may take to implement possible solutions to your problems. Overall, a day spent pondering.

CAPRICORN
You will find the day to be taxing, mostly because of the amount of work delegated to you, says Ganesh. But it will take trouble quite an effort to dampen your spirit. You will be in the fray in the latter part of the day, but will leave your rivals trailing behind in terms of business strategies. Success will be yours if you ensure to be mindful of your moves.

AQUARIUS
Ganesh says it's okay to cry on somebody's shoulders. In fact, sharing problems lightens the load, and if nothing else, your friends will think you're as human as them. You will feel much better by evening and will even smile a little, says Ganesh.

PISCES
An important day today, you can expect to reach a much-awaited milestone either on the domestic front or at the workplace, says Ganesh. Expect your professional status and your social standing to receive a boost.



PRE-GRAMMY GALA PUSHED TO 2023

Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductee Clive Davis and the Recording Academy have notified that the star-studded 2022 Pre-Grammy Gala, also known as the 'Clive Party', which is held the night before the awards, has been postponed until next year, reports *Variety*.

MICHELE MORRONE SET FOR INDIAN DEBUT

Italian actor and *365 Days* star Michele Morrone is all set to make his Indian debut with the upcoming track *Mud Mud Ke* alongside Jacqueline Fernandez, the poster of which was released Friday.



Bhumi wants to be the most versatile actress

Mumbai: Bhumi Pednekar is one of the most exciting young actors in Hindi film industry today, given her risky choice of movies and standout performances in all her films.

The actress is now trying to raise awareness towards the LGBTQI community in India through her sensitive performance in *Badhaai Do*. Given her content choices, people have hailed Bhumi as the most risk-taking actress in the Indian film industry today.

About her risk-taking streak, the *Shubh Mangal Savdhan* actress says, "Choosing a risky character has never been my prerogative. I feel they are all slice of life characters that are rooted in reality. The characters that I have played are independent, free, cool, uninhibited, straightforward, glass ceiling or stereotype shattering girls."

Bhumi wants to stand out as the most versatile actress in India. She says, "I won't do a film if the character doesn't speak to me or touch my heart. I'm not in this business to play a typical type of heroines on screen. I want to be the most versatile actress in Hindi cinema and do the most diverse projects."

Apart from *Badhaai Do*, Bhumi will also be seen in Anubhav Sinha's *Bheed*, Ajay Bahl's *The Ladykiller*, Shashank Khaitan's *Govinda Aala Re*, Akshay Kumar and Anand L Rai's *Raksha Bandhan*.



AGENCIES



Ban sought on Prithviraj

Lucknow: The Lucknow bench of the Allahabad High Court has asked the Central government, whether the Censor Board has granted a certificate for the release of movie *Prithviraj*.

The court order came Thursday on a public interest litigation (PIL) seeking a ban on the release of the film.

The court has fixed the case for hearing in the week commencing February 21.

A bench comprising Justice AR Masoodi and Justice NK Jauhari passed the order on the PIL moved by Karni Sena's vice president Sangeeta Singh.

The petitioner sought a ban on the release of the movie, alleging it was presenting a 'wrong and vulgar' picture of Prithviraj, a Hindu emperor, and hence it hurt sentiments.

The petitioner said the preview of the movie itself shows that it is controversial.

Prithviraj is an Akshay Kumar starrer Hindi film. This is the second time that the Karni Sena is opposing the release of a film.

In 2017, the outfit had mounted a strong protest against *Padmavati*, directed by Sanjay Leela Bhansali and starring Deepika Padukone.

The nationwide protests forced a delay in the film's release and also made the makers change the title to *Padmavat* from *Padmavati*.

IAN5

Victoria Beckham praises Deepika



Mumbai: Deepika Padukone is presently promoting her upcoming film *Gehraiyaan*. Not only has the actor made news for the film, but also for her elegant looks during the film's promotion. Deepika Padukone's head-to-toe white outfit, from Victoria Beckham's Pre-Spring-Summer collection, has now been praised by the designer herself.

Victoria uploaded two photos of Deepika, who was dressed in a white blouse and wide trousers that resembled a jumpsuit.

She captioned her Instagram image, "Beautiful @deepikapadukone in one of my favourite #VBPSS22 looks."

On the designer's website, the shirt is priced at £420 (Rs. 42,692) while the trousers are listed for £580 (Rs. 58,954).

Meanwhile, Deepika Padukone is now anticipating the release of *Gehraiyaan*, a film starring Ananya Panday Siddhant Chaturvedi, and Dhairya Karwa. The film, directed by Shakun Batra and starring Naseeruddin Shah and Rajat Kapoor, is a modern relationship drama that will release February 12, 2022 on Amazon Prime Video.

AGENCIES

Deepika in a Victoria Beckham outfit

Rocket Boys: A period drama that inspires

The series tells the viewers how Vikram Sarabhai and Homi J Bhabha met, their patriotic zeal, and the bond shared between them along with those whose lives intersected theirs.

This eight-episode series begins and ends with the launching of rockets. In the first episode, an amateur rocket is fired from Cambridge in 1940; the last episode ends with the take-off of India's first indigenous research rocket being fired from the old fishing village of Thumba near

Rocket Boys is an astutely mounted period drama. It is a striking, 'coming-of-age' biographical series based on the lives of two brilliant scientists, Vikram Sarabhai and Homi J Bhabha, who pioneered India's space research and nuclear programmes, respectively.

Spanning from 1940 to 1963, the series, narrated in a non-linear mode, tells us how the two great minds met, their patriotic

zeal, and the bond shared between them along with those whose lives intersected theirs. In between these two above-mentioned events, the series with interesting cre-

DIRECTOR
Abhay Pannu

CAST
Jim Sarbh, Ishwak Singh, Regina Cassandra, Rajat Kapur, Dibyendu Bhattacharya, Saba Azad, Namit Das and others

Ishwak Singh plays Vikram Sarabhai, the versatile, soft-spoken genius and a dynamic leader with equal self-assurance and poise.

Regina Cassandra essays Vikram's wife, the Bharatnatyam dancer Mrinalini and the slender Saba Azad portrays Parvana Irani, whom Homi Bhabha fascinates but does not muster the courage to hold her back. Both the ladies cast opposite the leading men, deliver their acts with dignified composure and distinguished grace.

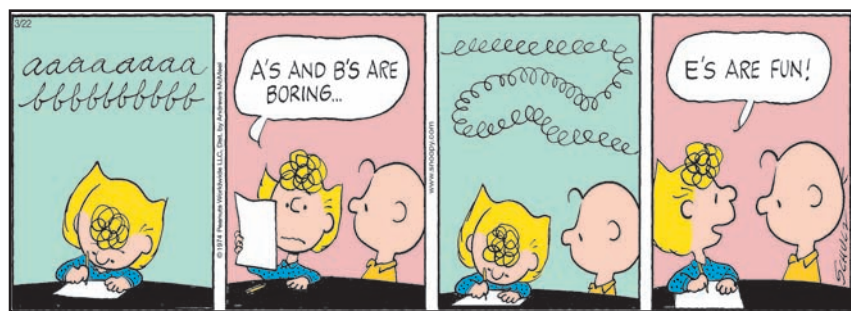
Mounted with excellent production qualities, which include brilliant set pieces, and old-fashioned costumes, the era is captured precisely on a sepia-toned canvas.

Overall, despite its shortcomings, Rocket Boys is a meaningful series that succeeds in both educating and inspiring the viewers, especially young minds inclined towards science.

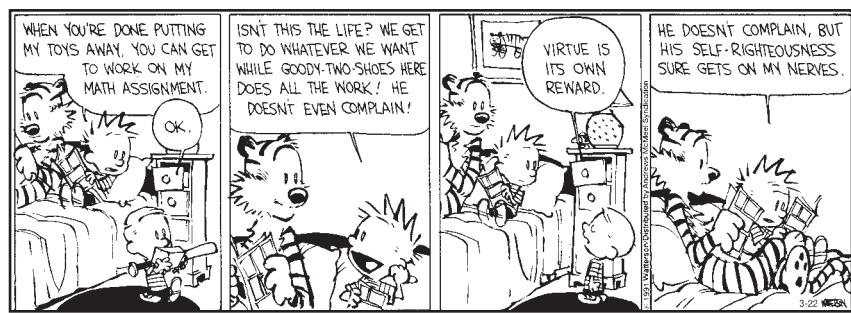


IAN5

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

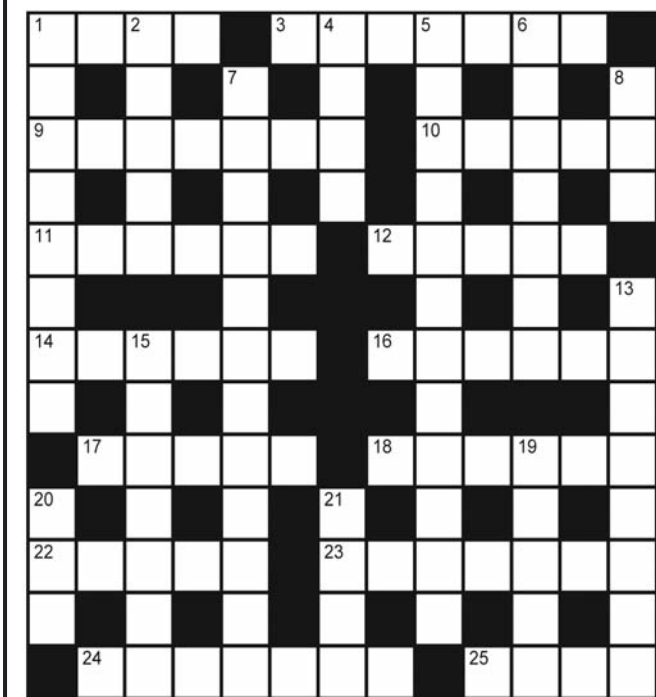


BREVITY



FUN post

CROSSWORD

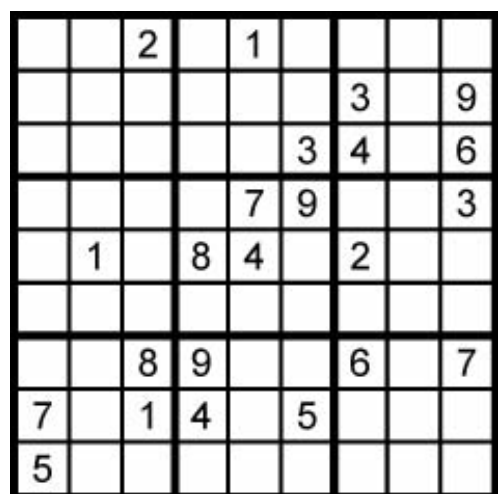


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- Across**
- 1 Defraud
 - 3 Largest city of Northern Ireland
 - 9 Refined
 - 10 Make smile
 - 11 Bit of bait
 - 12 Polecat
 - 14 Dependable
 - 16 Vipers
 - 17 Stubble remover
 - 18 Sporting group
 - 22 Proportion
 - 23 Clothes cleaner
 - 24 Working together
 - 25 Fencing sword
 - 5 Aromatic gum resin
 - 6 Russian satellite
 - 7 The absolute best (6,2,4)
 - 8 Door opener
 - 13 Meet for a meeting
 - 15 Precisely
 - 19 Words to a sleepyhead (3,2)
 - 20 Go astray
 - 21 Quick quaff
- Down**
- 1 One with too many spouses
 - 2 Sheets and stuff
 - 4 Wiggly fish

SUDOKU

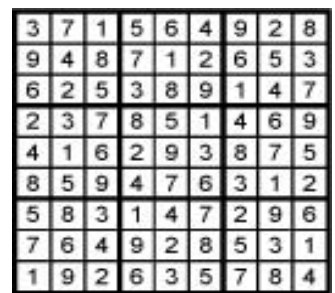
To solve the Sudoku puzzle, fill in the boxes in such a manner that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9, without repeating any.



SOLUTIONS



CROSSWORD



SUDOKU

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown

REHAB OF HIRAKUD DAM OUSTEES

NHRC serves notice on Odisha, Ch'garh



Bhubaneswar, Feb 4: The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has served notice on the Chief Secretaries of Odisha and Chhattisgarh besides the District Magistrates of Sambalpur, Jharsuguda, Bargarh, Sundargarh and Subarnapur in a case relating to the rehabilitation of people displaced by the Hirakud Dam project...

want of documentary proof. "It's quite impossible to show the documentary proof after 65 years of displacement. Neither the government has all the records of displacement, nor any survey has been undertaken on the issue," said the commission.

take up the issue 'constructively' and submit compliance reports on directions of the commission regarding rehabilitation and compensation to the displaced families.

Planetariums to reopen Feb 8

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 4: In what would be good news for space lovers and space enthusiasts, the Pathani Samanta Planetarium, Bhubaneswar, Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam Planetarium, Burla and Pathani Samanta Museum, Khandapara will be open for public from February 8, 2022 on all days except Mondays in keeping with COVID safety protocols.

Subhendu Pattnaik, Deputy Director of Pathani Samanta Planetarium, Bhubaneswar said planetariums will run with 50% seating capacity in every show at Pathani Samanta Planetarium, Bhubaneswar, and Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam Planetarium, Burla.

Earlier, in accordance with the state government order, the Pathani Samanta Planetarium here, APJ Abdul Kalam Planetarium in Burla and Pathani Samanta Museum in Khandapara were closed for visitors with effect from January 10 until further order.

This decision was taken as a precautionary measure against the spread of new Covid variant Omicron which has been a cause of concern for the state, said Laxmidhar Das, director of Pathani Samanta Planetarium.

State power tariff among the highest in India: Citizens' body

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 4: The Odisha Janshakti Manch (OJM), a citizens' group, has appealed to the Odisha Electricity Regulatory Commission (OERC) that power consumers in the state are paying more tariff in comparison to their counterparts in other states of the country.

Even though Odisha is a power surplus state, households consume less than 200 units of electricity per month and pay ₹945. However, the consumers in Andhra pay ₹620 while people in Delhi get power free of cost.

The outfit further claimed that the power tariff in Odisha is very high as the rates are determined by the OERC in accordance with the estimation and projection of expenses provided by the distribution and transmission companies.



The power tariff in Odisha is very high as the rates are determined by the OERC in accordance with the estimation and projection of expenses provided by the distribution and transmission companies, said the OJM

losses incurred by the DISCOMs. The rates were drastically reduced in Delhi after an independent audit. Hence, an independent audit must be conducted in Odisha before any rate revision," the outfit added.

While many developed states provide power free of cost for agricultural purposes, while Odisha taxes its farmers heavily. Farmers in Punjab, Karnataka and Maharashtra consume 30 per cent

of power for agricultural activities while the figure is 2 per cent in Odisha. Agriculture in Odisha remains backward due to high electricity tariff, it said.

"There is no mention of assets worth ₹20,000 crore created from the public funds through government grants and investments in the audit report submitted in agreement with TATA Power, the new power distribution company," it added.

Chilika home to many endangered species

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Feb 4: Chilika lake, Asia's largest brackish water lagoon, has re-established itself as one of the hotspots of biodiversity and shelters a number of endangered species listed in the IUCN red list of threatened species.

sighted with a good number of them in Rambha Bay area along with the outer channel. The range of 155-165 was inferred from year-long monitoring by CDA, the survey report said.

The report also mentioned that dolphins are now colonising new areas of Chilika lagoon and this gives hope for this endangered mammal. The movement has been facilitated by clearing of gherries (prawn enclosures), it said.

Irrawaddy dolphins in India are protected under Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972, CITES (Appendix-1), and IUCN Red List, the survey report said, adding that the annual survey was conducted by the 'Transact Survey Method' followed worldwide for a population of aquatic mammals.

On the water birds, the report said that about a thousand near-threat-



ened Ferruginous Ducks were sighted for the first time in the lagoon during the survey, besides 2,000 greater flamingos at Nalabana. Two uncommon species, the red-necked stint and the Woolly-necked stork were spotted in the marshland

of Parikud and Mangalajodi, respectively, it mentioned. "The findings are favourable since the water bird census conducted by the Chilika Wildlife Division during the first week of January had put the number at

10,36,220 of 103 species," it said, adding that a total of 2,86,929 birds of 75 species were spotted at Nalabana sanctuary alone during the one-day survey.

The most common migratory ducks found in Chilika were northern pintail, gadwall and Eurasian wigeons, each being more than 1.5 lakh. The mudflats of Nalabana and other regions of Chilika are now exposed as a result of the significant drop in water level and is habit to more than 1.2 lakhs of waders or shorebirds such as the black-tailed godwit, little stint, ruff, curlew sandpiper, and lesser sand plover compared to the January 4 census.

The carnivorous predators were also spotted near the bird's island in the southern sector of Chilika lake. This species has also been camera trapped during fishing cat estimation, it said.

OSPCB Chief Engineer arrested in DA case

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 4: The Vigilance sleuths Friday arrested Rabi Narayan Prusty, the Chief Engineer of Odisha State Pollution Control Board (OSPCB) on allegations of amassing assets worth crores disproportionate to his known sources of income. A case (1/22) was registered against Prusty in this regard for failing to produce satisfactory documents to prove the valid sources of his assets worth crores.

The vigilance officials Thursday carried out simultaneous raids at several places related to Prusty in Bhubaneswar, Khurda, Ganjam and Nayagarh. Vigilance teams comprising eight deputy superintendents of police, four inspectors and five assistant sub-inspectors searched Prusty's residential flat at Kalvik King Palace in Patia area, a flat in Gajapati Palace at Jagmohan Nagar in Jagamara area, a shop at Barabhujia Market Complex in Khandagiri area and a flat at Shreekhresta Bhakta Niwas, all in Bhubaneswar; his parental house at Nuapada under Nuagaon police limits in Ganjam and office chamber in the City. Moreover, the house of one of his relatives at Shreeram Vihar in Nayapalli area here was also raided.

The anti corruption sleuths unearthed huge landed properties owned by Prusty. The accused owned one flat at Patia, in the Grand Awas housing project at Fulnakhara and one shop at the Barabhujia Market Complex in Khandagiri in the capital city.

The market value of the flat at Fulnakhara is more than ₹60 lakhs. This part, three plots registered in Prusty's name are in prime localities of Bhubaneswar and nearby areas. The market value of the above plots has been valued in crores.

The vigilance officials also suspected that the plots have been undervalued during registration. Similarly, Prusty has a flat worth more than ₹1 crore at Shreekhresta Bhakta Niwas in Puri. The sleuths found deposits worth ₹89.46 lakhs in the accused's bank account, insurance policies and bonds.

The sleuths also found gold and silver ornaments weighing 355 gm and 692 gm respectively during the raids. One four-wheeler and 3 two-wheeler were also owned by the accused. "It is suspected that investments have been made by Sri Prusty outside the state in real estate, including benami properties, which are under verification," revealed Vigilance in a press note.

The chartered accountant and bank consultant attached to the Vigilance directorate have been examining the bank statements collected during search to find out any suspected transactions made for acquisition of benami assets.

ODISHA GRAMYA BANK Regional Office: Pipili At/P.O.: Pipili, Dist.: Puri, Ph.: 06758-240750 / 240453. POSSESSION NOTICE [Appendix-IV (Rule 8 (1)) (For Immovable Property)]. Includes table with columns: BRANCH / A/c. No./ Name & Address of the Borrowers / Mortgagors / Guarantors, Description of the Security Interest taken over possession, Outstanding as on Demand Notice/ Possession Notice, Date of Demand / Possession Notice.

DCB BANK. To Applicant: Shiba Prasanna Jena. Co-Appliants: Subhalaxmi Jena & Medilloyd Medicament Private Limited. Secured Asset situated at: Khata No. : 309/425, Plot No. 655 of Area: Ac 0.016 dec. Plot No. 659 of Area: Ac 0.019 dec. Includes table with columns: Loan Account Nos., DBLABHU0401125, DBLABHU0412064, DBLABHU00517691. Includes sections: As you have committed repeated defaults, You are aware that the said loan against property granted by us is secured by mortgage over the property which consist of Land and Building in Khata No. : 309/425, Plot No. 655 of Area: Ac 0.016 dec.

BMC launches special drive to free pavements



BMC and police officials during the eviction drive in City, Friday

Bhubaneswar, Feb 4: In a special awareness drive, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) Friday removed the Banjara community, beggars and homeless people who occupied street side pavements and other locations in the state capital. Jointly launched by the BMC and the Commissionerate of Police, the squads visited different locations between Rajmahal and Janpath.

Deputy Commissioner of BMC Kamala Kant Behera led the drive. He was accompanied by ACP Lalithendu Mohanty. The initiative saw officials interacting with the banjara community and persuading them not to occupy public property. "We have already launched a campaign of beggar-free Bhubaneswar under which we have rehabilitated many beggars in the capital. However, it has been observed that despite repeated warn-

ings, many return to begging at different intersections. Under the drive, many were sensitized over not to indulge in begging while others were asked to vacate the places," a senior BMC official informed.

It can be mentioned that the BMC has about 10 shelters under its jurisdiction of which three are dedicated to beggar rehabilitation. The shelters have a total capacity of more than 357 people. Meanwhile, the three shelters for beggar rehabilitation have a capacity of 300 beneficiaries. However, sources said the individuals from the Banjara community are not rehabilitated as they don't fall under the homeless or beggar category.

"We rescued at least five beggars in today's drive. However, individuals of the banjara community were only asked to leave the public properties. Although during Covid, we had given shelter and made arrangements for Banjara community, the drive was not focused on them," a source at the BMC said. Meanwhile, ACP Mohanty said the police department would continue to crack down on arrests and raise awareness.

Land worth ₹1.05cr of 2 ponzi cos to be sold out

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Cuttack, Feb 4: A special chit fund court here Friday directed the district administration to auction the properties of two chit fund companies that had duped people who had invested their savings in their ponzi schemes.

A total 18 acres of land valued at ₹1.05 crore and moveable properties of nearly ₹9 lakh will go under the hammer. Movable assets and bank deposits worth over ₹1 crore of Orissa Homes

Pvt Ltd and Trisat Estates and Construction were seized earlier under the OPID Act Landed Properties. The finance department had passed an interim order in December 2018 attaching the seized properties of the two chit fund companies which had duped 153 people in Khurda district of ₹7.55 crore. The OPID court had made the attachment 'absolute'. The companies had collected the money from people with a promise to provide them houses at different localities near Khurda town.

Fisherman feted

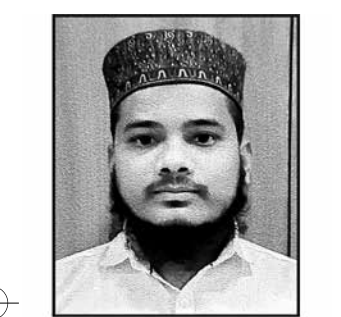
Bhubaneswar: A fisherman of Astaranga area in Puri has earned accolades from various quarters for safely releasing an Olive Ridley turtle which was caught in his net while he was fishing in Devi river, around 15 kilometres from Kanamana village. Bichitrnanda Biswal, winner of the prestigious Biju Patnaik Award for Wildlife Conservation, has felicitated Prabhjanan Nayak for his noble gesture towards a distressed turtle. Odisha Paryavaran Sanrakshan Abhiyan head Soumya Ranjan Biswal, teacher Bijay Kumar Bhatt and Suman Pradhan were present on the occasion.

HOMAGE TO MADHU BABU



(Photos clockwise) Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik pays tribute to Utkal Gourav Madhusudan Das on his death anniversary, at Naveen Niwas in Bhubaneswar, Friday. Dignitaries including Speaker SN Patro, Information & Public Relations Minister Raghunandan Das and Science & Technology Minister Ashok Chandra Panda pay homage to the legendary leader on the Assembly premises in the City. Members of Bhubaneswar Bar Association launch a signature campaign seeking Bharat Ratna for the renowned lawyer

CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT



I, SAMRAT RAY aged about 22 years S/o Late Durjaya Ray a resident of village Krushna Nagar P.O. Debagam, PS. Raighar, at present residing at village/ post- Jatabal, PS. Dabugan in the district of Nabarangpur, Odisha. I am well acquainted with the contents of this affidavit and I am attained majority on 05.02.2000 from my date of birth. I am HINDU by religion and converted to MUSLIM. My conversion to ISLAM in my own will and nobody has pressurized to do so. I have changed my name from SAMRAT RAY to MIRZA GULAM MOINUDDIN ISMAILY for all purposes. I swear that affidavit in order to produce it before the competent authority for kind information and necessary action. The above facts stated in the affidavit are true to the best of my knowledge & belief.

3 conmen held in City

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 4: Kharavela Nagar police have arrested three persons for allegedly misappropriating public fund worth over Rs 1.16 crore using forged case documents with fake signatures of authorities of Office of the Claims Commission here.

The claims commission is appointed by the Supreme Court to look into matters related to compensation to project-affected people of Mahanadi Coalfields Limited (MCL) in Sundargarh district. A case (423/21) has been registered on the basis of the complaint lodged by retired IAS officer Benudhar Dash, Secretary-cum-Admin and nodal officer at claims commission office. The accused were identified as Trilochan Dandasena, 33, Dushmantha Patel, 43, of Hemagiri in Sundargarh and, Swagat Parkash Barala, 35,

of Mahanga in Cuttack. Dushmantha Patel, technical inspector of MCL, was deputed to claims commission while Barala was a temporary clerk at the claims commission.

Dandasena contacted Mangasira Dharua, whose land was taken over by the MCL, and assured him to provide huge amounts as compensation from the MCL. Dandasena in connivance of Baral and Patel prepared a fake order in connection with the civil case number 306 of 2020 lodged by Dharua.

The accused used fake signature of Dash on the order and prepared a forged compensation rolls. Later, they sent the same order to the ADM of MCL, Basundhara for the sanction of compensation to the tune of ₹1.16 crore in the name of land outstee Dharua.

Dharua later transferred ₹20 lakhs into the account of Dandasena and ₹10 lakhs to the account of Baral. Patel received ₹5 lakhs from Dharua.

Schools, colleges to get 'pattas' by March 5: Sahu

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 4: The Revenue and Disaster Management Department Friday initiates a process to allot land 'pattas' to schools & colleges and other educational institutions to get pattas by March 5. The state revenue secretary issued directions to additional district collectors in this regard.

R&DM Department Secretary Satyabrata Sahu, in a review meeting Friday with officials of different districts, directed them to review the status of transfer of land to respective departments. During the meeting, it was revealed that schools and colleges are being given Pattas (record of rights) for the land on which the institutions are established. By March 5, all educational institutions will get the RoRs, said Sahu.

Revenue and Disaster Management Department has identified 26,500 acres of revenue forest land in January, 2022, which would be used for afforestation.

First state inter-university competition on new dates

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 4: In view of the falling Covid-19 cases, the higher education department Friday permitted the host universities to conduct the Odisha Inter-university competition (OIUC) on revised dates.

Earlier, due to worsening Covid-19 situation, the Higher Education (HE) department had postponed the first Odisha Inter-University competition (OIUC) which was scheduled to be held from January 10 to February 6.

Saswat Mishra, Secretary of Higher Education department, in his letter, said host universities Berhampur University, Maharaja Sriram Chandra Bhanja Deo University and Utkal University will conduct the competition as planned earlier but on revised dates. The revised dates will be communicated to all the Higher Educational Institutions soon.

Treasure hunt ends in recovery of iron piece at Emar Mutt

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Puri, Feb 4: The state government's treasure hunt at the famous Emar Mutt ended Friday with the recovery of a piece of iron buried in the centuries-old religious institution which is located in the southeastern corner of Srimandir here.

The mutt floor was dug up in the presence of the members of its trustee board, government officials, police, the magistrate and media persons anticipating recovery of more hidden treasure, Puri sub-collector Bhabataram Sahu said.

In 2011, a total 522 silver ingots weighing 18 tonne were found from inside the mutt. The ingots were valued at Rs 90 crore and is presently stored at the district armory for security reasons, officials said.



In April 2021, another 45 more silver ingots weighing about 35 kg each were found inside the mutt. This apart a silver tree, silver flowers, 16 antique swords and a bronze cow sculpture were discovered from the premises of the mutt, which was established by Ramanujacharya in 1050 AD when he came to Puri.

Following the discovery, another treasure hunt was carried out in September last year when the metallic detector indicated the presence of some metal at three places in the mutt premises, they said.

"But after digging three identified places in the mutt premises, no hidden treasure was detected today. Only one piece of iron was recovered," Sahu said.

Emar Mutt Trust Board president Narayan Ramanuja Das also confirmed that no hidden treasure was found during the day's digging process.

The presence of hidden treasure came to the fore in 2011 when two masons working in the mutt were caught by police while attempting to sell two pieces of silver ingot. Subsequently, the treasure was recovered from a room closed on all the four sides.

Cop in City held for graft

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 4: An Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) of Mancheswar police station in the city was caught by the Vigilance sleuths while he was accepting bribe from a person.

Accused ASI Rabinarayan Sahoo has been arrested and the money seized from his possession, said a source in the Vigilance department.

According to sources, the police had seized around 40 bottles of liquor during a raid at an eatery at Pandra Thursday.

Sahoo reportedly sought a bribe of Rs 5,000 from the owner of the eatery to help him avail the bail. Sahoo reportedly promised the eatery owner to dilute the case.

The owner of the eatery contacted the vigilance sleuths who caught Sahoo while he was accepting the bribe.

A case (2/22) has been registered in this regard.

CB elicits vital leads on phishing racket

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 4: The Crime Branch (CB) has managed to elicit vital leads about the mastermind behind the Jamtara like phishing racket which operated from the state capital. The racket was busted by the sleuths with the arrest of three accused from a building in Rasulgarh area here January 29.

Speaking to media, ADG, CB, Sanjeeb Panda Friday revealed that the trio worked as per the instructions of the mastermind, a native of Jharkhand. The mastermind used to supply the links and bank account details to the arrested accused. Panda claimed that

the prime accused collected the data from some persons in Mumbai.

A CB team will soon visit Mumbai for further investigation. He urged the public to not respond to any message related to KYC update, eChalan or credit and debit card issues sent to their mobile phones. He also requested the public to report the mobile number to the National Cybercrime Reporting Portal (NCRP).

The accused Pradhman Kumar Mandal, Krishna Kumar Mandal, and Chetlal Mandal of Jharkhand who were brought on a four-day remand Monday were produced before the court that sent them to judicial custody.

Covid cases fall by 46% from 5,057

Bhubaneswar: Odisha recorded 23 more Covid-19 deaths Friday, while the infections were the lowest in a month as 2,697 people tested positive, the Health department said. The daily positivity rate dropped to 4.4 per cent as 60,762 samples were tested in the past 24 hours, a bulletin stated. The deaths are the highest since September 1 and the infections plunged by 46 per cent from 5,057 a week ago. The state had logged 3,629 Covid-19 cases and 18 deaths Thursday. Seven fatalities were reported in Khurda district, followed by three in Sundargarh, and two each in Bhadrak, Ganjam, Kendrapara and Jagatsinghpur, it said.

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SHORT TAKES

NH blocked over drainage woes

Sambalpur: Upset over an overflowing drain and lack of lighting facilities, locals blocked the Sambalpur-Bargarh NH-53 at Bareipalli, Friday. Project director of NHAI N Nageswar Rao, additional SP Tapn Kumar Mohanty and tehsildar Laxman Amat rushed to the agitation site and held talks with the people. The agitators alleged that Dhojijora, a creek flowing in the area, is choked with dumping of earth, leading to waterlogging in the nearby slums. Besides, the NHAI has not built drains alongside the road. Water remains stagnant in the slum areas during rains.

Man gets life term for killing brother

Baripada: A court in Mayurbhanj district Friday sentenced a 55-year-old man to life imprisonment for beheading his brother nine years ago. Baripada Additional District Judge Prabir Chaudhury also imposed a fine of ₹5,000 on Gaya Dehuri, Additional Public Prosecutor Krushna Chandra Das said. It was December 20, 2013, when Dehuri had beheaded his elder brother and critically wounded his sister-in-law with an axe over a family feud.

Youth gets 10-yr jail for raping minor

Phulbani: The fast-track POCSO court in Phulbani, Friday, awarded a youth 10 years of imprisonment by convicting him of raping a minor girl. Additional district judge of Phulbani special court Bhaskar Chandra Sahu has also slapped a penalty of ₹55,000 on the convict, Sania Mallick, a resident of Gochhapada. In default, the convict will have to undergo an additional jail term for nine months, the order stated. According to the case diary, the victim was on way back home from her maternal uncle's house in January 2018 when Sania raped the girl. He also threatened her with life. The victim filed a complaint at the police station January 28. The court pronounced the verdict by examining the statements of 12 eyewitnesses.

MLA faces rebels' ire

Basudevpur: Local MLA Bishnubrata Routray Friday faced stiff opposition from the people while he was campaigning for the party candidates at Bideipur panchayat. The party organisation in the panchayat has already been divided over selection of nominees for sarpanch and samiti member posts. The disgruntled party workers have fielded candidates against the party-backed nominees in the panchayat. During the visit of the MLA, party rebels staged a demonstration, leading to tension in the area.

SHYMAKHUNTA BLOCK

Battle lines drawn between BJD, BJP

Baripada, Feb 4: Although nine candidates of Biju Janata Dal (BJD), Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Congress and Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM), including independents, are in the fray for ward member posts in the two ZP zones. The ruling party candidates have been sweating it out to garner support of the people by highlighting various welfare measures and development works of the state government in the area. It was stated that in many panchayats located on the foothills of Similipal, people are sore over basic problems like education, drinking water and healthcare. Some political observers said that this time, unhappiness among voters on the basic issues will reflect on the voting.



AWARENESS FIRST



Health officials and ActionAid staffers take part in an awareness campaign on Covid appropriate behaviour and vaccination in Paralakhemundi area of Gajapati district Friday

NAUPADA-THERUBALI RLY LINE

BUDGET PEANUTS IRK LOCALS

RESIDENTS HAD PINNED HOPES ON RAILWAY MINISTER ASWINI VAISHNAW, REPRESENTING ODISHA IN THE UNION CABINET, FOR THE COMPLETION OF THE PROJECT

THE AMOUNT SANCTIONED IN THIS YEAR'S BUDGET HAS SHATTERED THE HOPES OF THE PEOPLE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Gunupur, Feb 4: The fate of Naupada-Gunupur-Therubali rail route has reportedly been pushed into further uncertainty after the Centre sanctioned only ₹10 crore in the Budget for FY 2022-23 placed in the Parliament, Tuesday.

The sanction of a meagre ₹10 crore for the project has sparked sharp resentment in Gunupur and in whole of Rayagada district. The demand for the rail route is not new but for the last 47 years. It found mention in Budget of 2017-18 for the first time after a long standing demand of the residents.

Residents had pinned hopes on Railway Minister Aswini Vaishnav, representing Odisha in the Union Cabinet, for the completion of the project. However, the amount sanctioned in this year's Budget has shattered the hopes of the people. Members of a local outfit 'Rail Vikash Manch' also took out a cycle rally and submitted a memorandum to Vaishnav when he visited Rayagada recently. People also urged him to expedite the



project work from Gunupur to Therubali.

The Railway Board had sanctioned ₹935.72 crore after 79.15km long Gunupur-Therubali rail route received the approval. Later, the project cost escalated to ₹1,398 crore after preparation of a detailed project report (DPR). The Railways claimed that the rail

route would not be financially viable and asked the state government to provide land free of cost and bear 50 per cent of the project cost. The state government agreed to provide land free of cost but remained tight lipped on bearing 50 per cent of the cost. A sum of ₹1 crore was sanctioned for the rail route in the first

phase. Later, the plan outlay was hiked to ₹232.37 crore after survey was conducted for the project in August 2016.

The plan outlay has increased substantially after the project was shelved for 11 years. It was initially planned to complete the project in six years - by 2023.

Akshaya Das, a social activist of Gunupur, has urged the state government to intervene and take steps for early completion of the project. He has also urged the state government to clarify on bearing 50 per cent of the project cost.

Reader at Nabarangpur Women's College Sanjukta Panda and social activist of Malkangiri Sibaprasad Das opined that the sanctioned fund is much less than what is required to complete the project.

Andhra-Odisha Rail Users' Association convener Satya Prakash Panda of Gunupur said that both the Union and state governments should understand the need for Naupada-Gunupur-Therubali rail project and take steps for expediting it.

MILLERS TO FACE MUSIC FOR DELAY IN PROCUREMENT

POST NEWS NETWORK

Chhatrapur, Feb 4: Amid allegations of hiccups in paddy procurement, Ganjam Collector Vijay Amruta Kulange has asked officials concerned to meet the procurement target, and warned the millers and officials of stern action in case of lapses.

At a review meeting here, the Collector directed the tehsildars to visit the procurement centres and take stock of the process so that farmers do not face any problem.

Furthermore, he told officials that after the procurement process is over, the officials should ensure transfer of money to the farmers' accounts.

The district civil supplies officer, Pusa Munda, said the procurement began in January and will end in March. He also stated that procurement is going on at places where local millers have been tagged. However, the process is getting delayed where block millers have been tagged.

The Collector made it clear that action will be taken against the millers who are delaying the



If millers fail to arrange trucks for transporting paddy, they should draw attention of the district or block administration, said Ganjam Collector

process. If millers fail to arrange trucks for transporting paddy, they should draw attention of the district or block administration, he added.

Notably, a total of 366 millers in the district have been asked to collect 32, 95, 852 quintals of paddy. Till date, 40, 422 farmers have received their payments.

Mysterious death of youth in Boudh

POST NEWS NETWORK

Boudh, Feb 4: A youth was found dead at Ambhuri under Harbhanga block in Boudh district Friday, raising suspicion that someone might have killed the youth.

Locals suspected that the youth might have been beaten to death before the body was dumped at the place. Police have seized the body and started an investigation.

The deceased was identified as Sarathi Guna of Raskoti village under Manamunda police limits.

As per information available, some people on way back home after bathing in a river saw the body and informed police. Police have also seized a cellphone from the crime scene.

The deceased was identified as Sarathi Guna of Raskoti village under Manamunda police limits

EAST COAST RAILWAY 'E' PROCUREMENT SYSTEMS Tender Notice No. PCMM/EP/2021-22/56 Dtd.: 02.02.2022

3 killed as pickup truck overturns

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Phulbani, Feb 4: Three women were killed and 30 others injured after a pickup truck carrying them overturned in Kandhamal district Friday, a police officer said.

The accident occurred in the afternoon when the vehicle, carrying more than 40 people, was on its way to a wedding party.



The driver reportedly failed to negotiate a curve and rammed into a tree in Kotagarh, inspector of Kotagarh police station, Dhiraj Lenka, said.

On being informed, a team of Kotagada police including fire services personnel reached the accident site. With the help of some locals, they rescued the injured from the overturned mini truck. Police have registered a case in this connection and launched a probe. Bodies were sent to nearby hospital for post-mortem. The condition of three of the injured is stated to be critical.

सेन्ट्रल इंस्टीट्यूट ऑफ पेट्रोकेमिकल इंजीनियरिंग एण्ड टेक्नोलॉजी (सिपेट) CENTRAL INSTITUTE OF PETROCHEMICALS ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY (CIPET) INVITATION FOR QUOTATION

यूनियन बैंक Union Bank of India REGIONAL OFFICE: CUTTACK M-14, Baramunda Housing Board Colony, Bhubaneswar- 751003 DEMAND NOTICE

यूनियन बैंक Union Bank of India REGIONAL OFFICE: CUTTACK M-14, Baramunda Housing Board Colony, Bhubaneswar- 751003 DEMAND NOTICE



You take up the spiritual path only when you feel you cannot do otherwise.



THE MOTHER

Ex-babus still in play

Ex-babus do not always go away when their stint in the civil service ends. Often, they find themselves hoisted into government committees and continue to be productive. DKB has learnt that former Shipping Secretary Gopal Krishna, who heads the Conciliation and Settlement Committee (CSC) set up by the Ministry of Port, Shipping and Waterways, was crucial to settling a decade-old dispute.

The committee includes, besides Krishna, former Special Secretary (Logistics) of Commerce Ministry N Sivasailam, former DoPT secretary Dr C Chandramouli, former special secretary Road Transport and Highways Shambhu Singh, among others.

The mediation by the Krishna-led committee ended a difficult dispute over a contract between the Chennai Port Authority and Chettinad Logistics, remarkably within six months. Sources say though there are more than 100 cases of contractual disputes in major ports, the success of these retired babus sends out a positive signal that disputes can be resolved quickly and also inexpensively.

Similarly, it was an alert babu who had first advised the government in 2010 to scrap the controversial Antrix-Devas deal, which is back in the news these days. Former Additional Secretary in the Department of Space Gopalan Balachandran who had been tasked with reviewing the report on the deal had advised the government to scrap the deal and investigate former top officials of the department who had withheld crucial information regarding the deal and led the Cabinet to cancel the agreement.

The good that babus do often remains buried in files and paperwork, but sometimes it does manage to get its rightful time in the sun.

Time to debate cooling-off period for babus

Politically ambitious babus find it hard to resist the call of their parent state, especially when it is headed for elections. In the upcoming Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh and Punjab, a few "sons of the soil" have heeded this call and exchanged their civil service career for the rough and tumble of state politics. A few weeks ago, this column (Jan 12) had written about two senior IAS officers in UP, Asim Arun and Rajeshwar Singh, who took VRS and jumped into the poll fray. Close on their heels, DKB has learnt that Additional Chief Secretary of Tamil Nadu, Jagmohan Singh Raju, took voluntary retirement from service, which was promptly accepted. Raju has now been fielded as a BJP candidate in Punjab.

In most cases the babu-turned-netas claim that they felt the compelling need to "do something" for their native state, which they apparently were unable to do while in the service. But the exit of these senior babus once again props up the question of having a mandatory cooling-off period for babus before they can jump ship whether into politics as in this case or other lucrative careers in the private sector.

The Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) has already said so on several occasions, but the government has chosen to ignore the advice. But given the growing number of babus who are quitting the service to join politics, and often the ruling party that they served in their civil service career, the time is ripe to revive this important debate.

Kerala babus told to remove flags on official cars

IAS, IPS and other officers in Kerala often display a blue flag on their official vehicles, which has the same symbol as on the flag of the training academy in Mussoorie. But now that the Kerala Motor Vehicle Department has termed it "illegal" and said there is no order from the state government that allows the flying of flags on the official vehicles of the babus.

Even earlier, babus in the state had got into trouble for not putting registration number plates on official vehicles. Even official vehicles of the state Governor and several ministers were reportedly in violation of the rules. At the time, the then state Transport Commissioner Tomin Thachankary had taken action against this practice and also directed the removal of the flags from the official vehicles. Clearly, the order was not followed through.

Given the reluctance of babus to relinquish the trappings of their official status, this new order in all likelihood will face the same fate, unless there is vigorous follow-through. Do you know of other states that have this rule? Do share if you know.

Share a babu experience! Follow [@dilipthecherian](https://twitter.com/dilipthecherian) on Twitter. Let's multiply the effect

WISDOM CORNER

- It always seems impossible until it's done. **NELSON MANDELA**
- If you can dream it, you can do it. **WALT DISNEY**
- I attribute my success to this - I never gave or took any excuse. **FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE**

WORDSWORTH

Abecedarian

The strangest aspect of this unusual word is the way it's said, as though the first part is an abbreviation: "ay-bee-see-DAIR-ee-un". That may explain why it has at times been written abecedarian. The source is the post-classical Latin of the fifth century AD. English imported the word from French in the 1500s. An early sense was of a person who taught or learned the alphabet. From the latter sense, it also came to mean more generally a novice or beginner; sometimes this was extended to a person in need of instruction, hence somebody illiterate or ignorant. Paradoxically, it was also attached to a member of a sixteenth-century German sect which opposed all forms of learning, including knowledge of the alphabet. It can be a primer for teaching, reading and spelling and more loosely any listing in alphabetical order. We may also come across it in reference to a poem in which the first letters of each verse or line are in alphabetical order, a special class of acrostic. Some early cases were hymns or psalms: the Hebrew original of Psalm 119 is abecedarian; around 1375 Chaucer translated a French prayer so that verses began with the letters of the alphabet in order (missing J, U and W, not then used). A famous example, often anthologised, is usually attributed to Aleric Watts, although some doubt over authorship remains. It was published in the Literary Gazette of London on 23 December 1820 to illustrate alliteration rather than abecedarianism, though it is abecedarian as well. The abecedarian insult also exists, which requires significant vocabularian talent, especially near the end of the alphabet.

LOL

Swerve to avoid a box

Driving to work, a gentleman had to swerve to avoid a box that fell out of a truck in front of him. Seconds later, a policeman pulled him over for reckless driving. Fortunately, another officer had seen the cartoon in the



road. The policemen stopped traffic and recovered the box. It was found to contain large upholstery tacks. "I'm sorry sir," the first trooper told the driver, "but I am still going to have to write you a ticket." Amazed, the driver asked for what. The trooper replied, "Tacks evasion."



GN Bajpai

EVEN THOUGH BOTH THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND BANK SHEETS HAVE BEEN CLEANED, SOME HESITANCY IS HOLDING THE SPEEDY RUN

The budget proposals for 2022-2023 tabled in Parliament and the preceding speech of the Union Finance Minister are in many ways futuristic and growth-oriented. Yet, judicial, administrative and police reforms remain in the shadows. This threatens to wipe out substantial gains of reforms in other areas and in particular in the ease of doing business and living.

As the headlines settle, the four themes of the budget are becoming manifest:

Futuristic: The budget seeks to address the issues of current sectors of the economy with equal, if not sharper focus on the sunrise sectors like Information Technology, Drones, AI, Blockchain, Digital Currency and even DiFi (Distributed Finance). It also focuses on the green and circular economy with emphasis on clean energy. The proposed investments in e-governance and bridging the digital divide will improve productivity and ease of living. The idea of extending the benefit of technology from communication, manufacturing, trade, distribution and entertainment to defence and agriculture provides a futuristic approach across the spectrum. Harnessing the scope of the International Financial Center for experimentation and a global window including operations of Foreign Universities will function as a sandbox for leapfrogging of the economy. Initiatives have the potential to deliver a future-ready economy.

Holistic: The sharp focus on 'Gati Shakti' will benefit the economy as a whole by enhancing the demand for products and services, reducing supply chain cost and improving inventory management. The facilitation of startups, venture capital and private equity will hopefully lead to a spurt in innovation and co-creation of globally competitive product and services.

Growth: The proposed increase of 35% in public capital expenditure to ₹7.5 lakh crore further boosted by ₹1 lakh crore of interest-free loans to State governments for CAPEX will help sustain growth impulses and pave the way for crowding in of the private capex.

FOCUS ECONOMY

A FUTURISTIC BUDGET



Judicial system, bureaucracy, and the police are overdue for a resurrection. The edifice of these institutions will have to be rebuilt in consonance with constitutional guarantees

High GDP growth warrants a high level of investment. Twin-engine firing - private and public sector investment alone can enable sustained investment of over 30% to build a potential GDP growth of 7-8% trajectory. Even though both the private sector and bank sheets have been cleaned, some hesitancy is holding the speedy run. The proposal of enhanced public sector capex will hopefully entice them to join the procession of the medium to long-term CAPEX cycle.

Employment: The three biggest employment generators of India next to agriculture are construction, infrastructure and manufacturing. The budget proposals deepen the revival of the construction sector by greater allocation to affordable housing and low cost of financing. The 'Gati Shakti' mission alone has the potential to open up a storehouse of employment opportunities. The PLI schemes launched last year have revived the manufacturing sector, helped boost exports and provided lakhs of jobs. The IT, Telecom and Railway Minister in a TV interview was at pains to emphasise that the electronic manufacturing sector alone in its aspiration to cross \$300 billion of exports in the next three years will create over 10 million jobs.

The direct and indirect tax proposals did not temper with the current rates demonstrating an environment of stability. Infact, the budget seeks to eliminate inconsistencies in capital gains tax and some areas of customs. The critics credit the consistency to tax

buoyancy rather than any effort of the government.

Inflation: Both WPI & CPI have emerged as a major risk to GDP growth. Inflation also threatens to snatch away the gains of economic growth from the larger sections of society. Hence, the Finance Minister has reaffirmed the commitment of the government to a fiscal deficit glide path and maintaining prudence by lowering revenue expenditure and enhancing capital expenditure. The budget proposals as also derived numbers reflect a sense of transparency.

The journey of simplifying and creating an environment of trust amongst tax payers has been continued. The proposal to allow to correct the numbers, file revised returns and pay revised tax liabilities within two days is to say, "I trust you". The digital filing, faceless assessment and appeals, digitisation across the economy and integration and aggregation of data and above all the confidence and trust-building have been strong levers of tax buoyancy; complemented of course by GDP growth.

The criticism not to dole out moneys to poorer sections of society even in an environment of revenue gale to spur demand and mitigate their misery is only partly justified. The current global environment is beset with the pandemic and its effects. There is also the revival of nationalism and geopolitical tensions. All part of the melting pot.

First generation reforms on building efficient allocation of fac-

tors of production - land, labour and capital are done. Whatever is not done is difficult to accomplish in a vibrant democracy like that of India. Marginal tweaking will continue along the road of development. The optimisation of value creation - economists call it Total Factor Productivity (TFP) - is achieved by institutional reforms, which the Economic Survey has described as process reforms.

Implementation of policy decisions for the expected outcomes necessitate authorisations and delegations in an institutional framework. It also opens up avenues for rent seekers who identify kinks in the highway of process management and delay, derail and even frustrate the objective of that policy. Exit policy is one of the signature reforms of the Modi Government and the objectives were sought to be achieved with the vehicle of one of finest legislations, 'IBC'. Unfortunately, it has delivered sub-optimal results, notwithstanding numerous amendments and adequate jurisprudence built up in the last five years.

India ranks 168th amongst 180 plus nations in the matter of enforcement of the contract. It takes on an average over 1200+ days and entails a cost of over 25% of the value of the contract. There are several other areas of concern where delays, cost and deprivation of justice have been voiced. Judicial system, bureaucracy, and the police are overdue for a resurrection. Minor tweaking or even reforms will not work. The edifice of these institutions will have to be rebuilt in consonance with constitutional guarantees. Unless this is done, the ease of doing business and in particular, ease of living will remain distant dreams.

On the whole, the key to delivering in a futuristic budget will be execution in a mission mode. Speed has to be stepped up significantly. The global environment and India's demography offer probably the last opportunity to take the nation on a new trajectory. The focus must therefore shift to execution.

The writer is a former Chairman of SEBI and LIC. Views are personal.

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SPECTRUM EMPLOYMENT

Distress migration amid economic growth



Sarbeswar Padhan

THE STATE'S ECONOMIC PROGRESS HAS FAILED TO CREATE ADEQUATE NUMBERS OF JOBS AND CONTAIN LABOUR MIGRATION FROM THE REGION

Odisha has lately made remarkable progress on the economic front as its growth rate has surpassed the national average in the last couple of decades. It has witnessed gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate of 7.1 per cent against the national average of 6.6 between 2012-13 and 2019-20. While the main driver of the growth remains the service sector in other states, in case of Odisha, the industrial sector has emerged as one of the main drivers. However, when it comes to employment generation, Odisha has failed miserably. Despite its shrinking share (19 per cent) in total output, agriculture and allied activities continue to absorb half of its workforce (48.8 per cent). Theoretically, in a developing economy, shrinking agricultural output with continuing overdependence on it for employment fuels distress migration to the cities. The migrants look for greener pastures leaving behind their abundant mineral resources, mountains, forests and rivers to be encroached upon by the outsiders. The industry is incapable of generating an adequate number of jobs for the local youths.

According to Census-2011, there were 45 crore migrants in India. Of them, 5.4 crore were inter-state mi-

grants. In Odisha, 8.5 lakh people migrated to other states for different reasons, including unemployment. However, the labour migration, called 'dadan' in western Odisha, that occurred in undivided Kalahandi-Bolangir-Koraput (KKBK) districts, had gone unreported in the national statistics. In the KKBK region, the most underdeveloped districts are known for poverty, agrarian crisis, chit-fund scams and mismanagement of healthcare facilities. This region sends lakhs of distress-driven migrants to different growth poles of urban centres. These segments are primarily unskilled and they belong to the lowest strata of the socio-economic pyramid, especially from Schedule Caste (SC), Schedule Tribes (ST) and Other Backward Classes (OBC). Migrants were forced to work in unhygienic, dangerous and discriminated sites at brick-kilns of Hyderabad and construction sites in Mumbai and Raipur. It has been reported that migrants were treated as 'nowhere citizens' unable to exercise any fundamental rights over their labour.

According to a government report, following the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, nearly six lakh migrant workers, most of them being

distressed-driven, have returned to the state. A sizeable number of migrants also reached the state through their own arrangements. Shockingly, 30 stranded labourers from Chennai took the sea route to reach Ganjam coast while thousands came by bicycle from Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka.

During the first and second waves of COVID-19, the government took measures to deal with migrants, including providing cash incentives for voluntary home quarantine, advance rationing for all beneficiaries, and cash transfers to migrants upon completion of the quarantine period, among others. The government has also promised to create jobs through various schemes, particularly the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). These initiatives have been undertaken perfunctorily to address the grievance of distress-driven migration from the state.

Unfortunately, the loud outcry of civil society members and media on some gruesome incidents of brutalisation of migrants didn't awaken the government from its deep slumber. Given the pandemic situation, young people from several parts of the state are ventur-

ing into other states for livelihood. While lakhs of labourers are waiting for their turn to board a train to travel to their workplaces, the Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act (1979) is hardly being implemented on the ground. In sum, the state's economic progress has failed to create adequate numbers of jobs and contain labour migration from the region. Distress-induced migration of unskilled workers by-passing the state's policy is a shameful paradox of the so-called welfare state. The irony is that the state government cannot formulate any particular scheme for the backward region exclusively to stem migration. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) recognises migration as a powerful tool for migrants and their communities to achieve sustainable development. The manner in which migration occurs in the region dehumanises the poor and destitute that have no choice but to become trapped in a "vicious circle of poverty."

The writer is Assistant Professor, Department of Economics Dr Bhim Rao Ambedkar College, University of Delhi. Views are personal.

Hopeful Biden

Sir, Different US Presidents have ruled the country in contrasting styles. But their aim has always been to consolidate the US' status as a global superpower or big brother. It was during the regime of Donald Trump that experts believed Washington's stock took a plunge. All hopes, therefore, rested on Trump's successor, Democrat Joe Biden. However, the President's preparedness during the Afghanistan imbroglio in general and the total US troop withdrawal in particular has had little takers in his country. Those were early days alright but subsequent developments have not done Biden's image any good. It is easy to pan a big man who has settled down in office not very long ago but down the line, into his second year as President, questions will be asked of Biden. The President's reputation as an "executive head" is not something to applaud because many in the US feel he is yet to give his image of "a senator," a position he held for 36 long years, a makeover. Now as he is fighting to hold his and his party's, fort in the US Congress, his popularity has reportedly plummeted. After Afghanistan, the President's handling of Covid-19 was, by all accounts, satisfactory though not exemplary. He was able to release sufficient funds for the overall infection management. Notwithstanding a recent US Supreme Court order that disapproved Biden's "test or vaccine" policy in large businesses, there is no doubt that he has done far better than his predecessor Donald Trump in Covid control.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

An unreliable entity

Sir, The findings of a year-long investigation by a group of social media researchers that China's casualties in the June 2020 Galwan valley border clash with India were much higher than the official figures have put Beijing in a tight spot. Its efforts to silence any discussion about the high-altitude battle have been exposed. Against the count of just four fatalities, announced eight months after the clash, a report in an Australian newspaper says at least 38 soldiers drowned while crossing a fast-flowing river in sub-zero temperatures in darkness. In comparison, highlighting its professionalism and honouring its bravehearts, the Indian Army was quick to report the loss of 20 men in the deadliest face-off in Galwan. The report 'Galwan Decoded' says that a lot of facts about what really happened have been hidden by Beijing. What was told to the world, it concludes, were mostly fabricated stories.

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, opinion and suggestions, preferably by email, to: edit@orissapost.com

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national

of the day quote

Congress had been at the helm for the longest time after independence and people migrated because the means of livelihood were not available. After that, whether it was the SP or BJP government which ruled the state, unemployed people migrated in search of livelihood as the governments did not make arrangements for them

MAYAWATI | BSP PRESIDENT

The renewed attacks on the fishermen under the pretext of transgressing the border has caused apprehension among the fishers and raised concern about their livelihood prospects

O PANNEERSELVAM | AIADMK COORDINATOR

65 per cent of the adolescents between the 15 and 18 age group have received their first dose of Covid-19 vaccine since the beginning of the drive last month

MANSUKH MANDAVIYA | UNION HEALTH MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Six convicted

Pondicherry: A special court in Pondicherry has convicted six persons belonging to a fundamentalist Tamil outfit, Tamilar Viduthala Padai for planting a bomb near the residence of former Chief Minister of Pondicherry, V. Narayanasamy, officials said Friday, January 23, 2014, Narayanasamy's staff members found a bomb planted under a car in front of his official residence. The senior Congress leader was then the Chief Minister of Pondicherry. Later, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) conducted a probe and arrested the culprits.

Youth held

Chennai: A 29-year-old man has been arrested for marrying and impregnating a 16-year-old girl in Erode district of Tamil Nadu. N. Nirojan, who was residing in a refugee camp for Sri Lankan Tamils at Archalur, married the girl from the camp at Bhavanisagar in 2021. The girl became pregnant and was admitted to a hospital on Wednesday. When the Aadhar card of the girl was checked it was found that she was only 16 years of age, informed doctors. The All Women Police Station (AWPS) of Erode was alerted and police picked up Nirojan on Friday.

3 electrocuted

Srinagar: Three employees of J&K Power Development Department (PDD) were injured after they received a strong electric shock while carrying out repairs in Srinagar on Friday, officials said. "The three employees of PDD were electrocuted while repairing service line in Rawalpura area. "The trio identified as Nazir Ahmad, Tariq Ahmad and Ghulam Muhammad were immediately rushed to SMHS hospital for treatment," an official said.

Two girls rescued

New Delhi: Two girls, including a minor, who were trafficked from Gujarat, were rescued and one person was arrested in this connection from the national capital, an official said Friday. The accused was identified as Shyam Beer Gujar, a resident of Rajasthan. According to the official, the Cell Against Illegal Foreigners and Narcotics (CAIFAN) of Dwarka had received an information from Ahmedabad Police that two young girls/victims and one male accused had their hideout somewhere in the area of the national capital.

Oppn slams Cong after Channi's nephew's arrest

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, Feb 4: Hours after the Enforcement Directorate (ED) arrested the nephew of Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi in a money laundering case, rival parties launched an attack on the Congress government saying it cannot escape answerability. Bhopinder Singh alias Honey was arrested under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) in a case linked to alleged illegal sand mining late Thursday night after several hours of questioning at the agency's office in Jalandhar. Honey is the son of Channi's sister-in-law, Aam Aadmi Party leader Raghav Chadha on Friday referred to the huge sums of cash seized from the premises linked to Channi's nephew and alleged that Honey had swindled the money during the 111 days of the Channi government.

"If one relative of Channi accumulated so much ill-gotten wealth in his 111 days of tenure as the chief minister, imagine how much his other relatives would accumulate in five years," Chadha alleged. Shiromani Akali Dal leader and former minister Bikram Singh Majithia said he has been maintaining that the money was seized first, and then Honey was arrested. How can Channi escape from the

issue, he asked. However, senior Congress leader Randeep Singh Surjewala said one needs to understand chronology of BJP's political gimmick which has started over 15 days before the Punjab polls. In a series of tweets and later in a video statement, Surjewala, who is in poll-bound Goa, said the BJP was staring at a total rout in Punjab polls and had deployed its 'Election Department' (ED). Dubbing the AAP BJP's 'B' team, he said with the BJP facing a rout in Punjab polls, they want to favour 'Chota Modi' Kejriwal through the backdoor who had also notified one of the farm laws and had deployed the ED (Enforcement Directorate) to help him.

Surjewala said the people of Punjab have made up their mind to not even allow the BJP and its allies to open their accounts in this election. The Congress leader said Punjab and Punjabis are being attacked for supporting the farmers' agitation and fake raids and fake arrests are being carried out. He said the ED raids and arrests are being done in the desperation of defeat. "No matter how much fraud and conspiracy they indulge in, it cannot stop the Congress's return to power in Punjab as blessings of the people are with the ruling party," he said.



Bhopinder Singh Honey, the nephew of Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi being taken by the Enforcement Directorate officials to a court in connection with a money laundering case in Jalandhar, Friday

India offers 80 Afghan cadets 1-year training programme

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 4: India has offered a one-year training programme for around 80 Afghan cadets following completion of their courses in various Indian military academies.

The Afghan embassy in India welcomed the offer considering the uncertain future facing the young cadets in view of the prevailing situation in Afghanistan. The Afghan cadets will be given training under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme (ITEC) of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).

"Eighty young Afghan cadets who recently graduated from various military academies in India have been offered a 12-month training program in Effective English Communication for Business and Office," the Afghan embassy said in a statement. It said the programme starts on February 7 and the cadets will be placed in three different institutes in India and that they will be provided with accommodation and a monthly allowance.

ORDER OF PREMATURE RETIREMENT

Entire service record to be considered: SC

The bench, while setting aside an order of the Delhi high court, also said that an order of compulsory retirement is in the public interest and is passed on the subjective satisfaction of the Government

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 4: The Supreme Court Friday said that an order of premature retirement should be passed on the basis of entire service records.

"The entire service record is to be taken into consideration which would include the ACRs of the period prior to the promotion. The order of premature retirement is required to be passed on the basis of entire service records, though the recent reports would carry their own weight," said a bench comprising Justices Hemant Gupta and V Ramasubramanian. The bench, while setting aside an order of the Delhi high court, also said that an order of compulsory retirement is in the public interest and is passed on the subjective satisfaction of the Government.

It said the order of compulsory retirement is not liable to be



quashed by the Court merely for the reason that uncommunicated adverse remarks were taken into consideration. The top court was hearing an appeal filed by the Central Industrial Security Force challenging an order of the Delhi high court which set aside an order of premature retirement of a constable. The apex court referred to its earlier decisions and said the courts should not interfere with the exercise of the power of compulsory retirement if arrived at bonafide and based on material available on record. "It was held that an order of

compulsory retirement is not an order of punishment. It is a prerogative of the Government but it should be based on material and has to be passed on the subjective satisfaction of the Government and that it is not required to be a speaking order," the bench said. The top court said that the High Court has completely misdirected itself while setting aside the order of premature retirement of the constable. "The writ petitioner has been awarded a number of punishments prior to his promotion including receiving illegal gratification from a transporter while on duty in the year 1993. There are also allegations of absence from duty and overstaying of leave. After promotion, a punishment of four days fine was imposed on the charge of sleeping on duty and two days fine was imposed for overstaying from joining time," the bench said.

China illegally occupies 38,000 sq km of Indian territory: Govt

About the eastern Ladakh border standoff, Muraleedharan said India and China have maintained dialogue through both diplomatic and military channels for disengagement in the remaining areas

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 4: China continues to be in illegal occupation of approximately 38,000 square km of

Indian territory in the Union Territory of Ladakh for the last six decades, the government said in Lok Sabha on Friday.

Minister of State for External Affairs V Muraleedharan said that Pakistan illegally ceded 5,180 sq km of Indian territory in Shaksgam Valley to China in 1963 from areas illegally occupied by it.

"China continues to be in illegal occupation of approximately 38,000 sq kms of Indian territory in the Union Territory of Ladakh for the last six decades," he said in a written reply to a question in Lok Sabha.

"Further, under the so-called China-Pakistan 'Boundary Agreement' signed in 1963, Pakistan illegally ceded 5,180 sq kms. Of Indian territory in



Shaksgam Valley from areas illegally occupied by Pakistan in Union Territory of Ladakh to China," Muraleedharan said. He said the government of India has never recognised the so-called

China-Pakistan 'Boundary Agreement' of 1963 and has consistently maintained that it is illegal and invalid.

"The fact that the entire Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh are an integral and inalienable part of India has been clearly conveyed to Pakistani and Chinese authorities several times," he said.

To a separate question, Muraleedharan said the government has taken note of a bridge being constructed by China on Pangong lake. "This bridge is being constructed in areas that have continued to be under the illegal occupation of China since 1962," he said. "Government of India has never accepted this illegal occupation. The government has made it clear

on several occasions that the Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh are an integral part of India and we expect other countries to respect India's sovereignty and territorial integrity," he added.

About the eastern Ladakh border standoff, Muraleedharan said India and China have maintained dialogue through both diplomatic and military channels for disengagement in the remaining areas.

"Our approach in these talks has been and will continue to be guided by three key principles, that, (i) both sides should strictly respect and observe the LAC (ii) neither side should attempt to alter the status quo unilaterally; and (iii) all agreements between the two sides must be fully abided by in their entirety," he said.

SPREADING AWARENESS



District election officials along with others participate in a voting awareness march ahead of the upcoming Punjab Assembly elections in Amritsar

People at top want a weak CM: Sidhu

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Amritsar, Feb 4: Ahead of the announcement of the CM face for the Punjab Assembly polls by the Congress, party's state unit chief Navjot Singh Sidhu said "people at the top" want a weak chief minister.

"People at the top want a weak chief minister who can dance to their tune," Sidhu said addressing his supporters here on Thursday evening. He did not make it clear whether he was referring to the Congress central leadership or anybody else.

When contacted, his media adviser said Sidhu was actually referring to the government at the Centre. Sidhu's remark came at a time when Congress leader Rahul Gandhi is likely to announce the name of his party's chief ministerial candidate for the Punjab



polls Sunday in Ludhiana.

For the last several weeks, both Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi and Sidhu have directly or indirectly made a case for themselves to be declared as the party's nominee for the top post.

Addressing his supporters and workers after returning from Mata Vaishno Devi shrine in Jammu and Kashmir, Sidhu targeted SAD leader Bikram Singh Majithia, who is fighting against the Congress leader from Amritsar East. Sidhu lashed out at the SAD

Sidhu's remark came at a time when Congress leader Rahul Gandhi is likely to announce the name of his party's chief ministerial candidate for the Punjab polls Sunday in Ludhiana

for its alleged misrule and "looting" the state besides "patronising criminals". They established a "goonda raj", he alleged.

Taking on AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal, he asked whether he was giving Rs 1,000 per month to every woman above 18 years of age in the national capital, a promise the Delhi CM made in in Punjab.

"What is his stand on the SYL. He must clarify," said Sidhu the

Sutlej-Yamuna link canal. He said in the last Assembly elections people had shown AAP the mirror and even then Kejriwal's desire was to become the chief minister here.

Attacking the Delhi CM, he said he wants to run through remote control from Delhi. "I have to say one thing that if a new Punjab has to be made, it is in the hands of the chief minister," said Sidhu, while adding two previous chief ministers of Punjab pushed the state backwards.

"You have to choose the CM this time. If you make an honest person sit at the top, then honesty will percolate down below," said Sidhu.

Sidhu then made a mention of Singapore's former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, saying he made Singapore world's key economy in the world.

Yogi files nomination

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Gorakhpur, Feb 4: In the presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath Friday filed his nomination papers for the Gorakhpur Assembly seat.

Several party leaders and MLAs were present on the occasion, turning it into a mace saffron event. The BJP's allies, Ashish Patel of Apna Dal and Sanjay Nishad of Nishad Party, were also in attendance.

This is the first time that Yogi, a five-time former Lok Sabha MP, is contesting the state Assembly elections as a candidate. Shah had earlier declared Yogi as the party's Chief Ministerial candidate. In 2017, when Yogi Adityanath became Chief Minister, he had opted to become member of the legislative council instead of contesting an Assembly seat.

Earlier in the day, Shah also addressed a workers' meeting and said that the BJP was all set to repeat the history of 2014, 2017 and 2019 when it had walked home with an overwhelming majority.

He said that the party would win over 300 seats this time. The Union Home Minister further said that Yogi had freed the state of mafia.

PENT HOUSE FLESH TRADE

Minors forced to please politicians, bureaucrats

While the police themselves are shocked with the revelations, the case has now been transferred from Mangaluru South Police Station to the City Crime Branch considering the seriousness and sensitivity of the issue

The Mangaluru police have arrested three persons, a couple and another woman in connection with the case. They have also rescued two pre-university college students studying in reputed colleges in the coastal town. The accused have been identified as Shameena, Siddiq and Ayeshamma.

While Siddiq and Shameena are couple who trapped minor students and carried out the racket in the limits of Mangaluru South Police Station in the penthouse of an apartment, Ayeshamma coordinated from Kasargod and sent elite customers.

The accused sent youths to befriend gullible good-looking girls studying in class 10th and PUC (Class 11, 12). Once the girls were befriended they were brought to a penthouse fitted with CCTV cameras by the youth.

The accused would then blackmail them saying that their private videos would be made public and sent to their parents.

According to police, the racket was going on since long but gullible minor girls were targeted on the requests of the clients. Girls with weak financial background were also roped in with promise of monetary help. The nexus came to light, when one of the 17-year-old victims shared her ordeal with her friend.

When the matter reached the Principal, she called the police helpline. Mangaluru Police Commissioner N Shashi Kumar formed a team under the leadership of DCP (Law and Order) Hariram Shankar and conducted raids and arrested the culprits Thursday.

The police are also looking into the angle of clients being blackmailed by the accused. The case has been registered under various sections of the POCSO Act and Immoral Traffic Prevention Act. Further investigation is on.

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Dakshina Kannada, Feb 4: Investigation into the penthouse prostitution racket has revealed shocking details, police sources said Friday.

During interrogation, the accused revealed that they watched, selected, trapped and forced minor girls studying in reputed colleges, after taking their private videos to entertain influential politicians and top officers from neighbouring state of Kerala.

The investigating officers are also probing the involvement of Kerala politicians and bureaucrats in the sex racket. The network operated with their full support and accused in the case allowed elite customers from Kerala only.

Considering the seriousness and sensitivity of the issue, the case has now been transferred from Mangaluru South Police Station to the City Crime Branch (CCB), police sources said.

The police themselves are shocked with the details and suspect the accused to have trapped many minor college students in the district into the flesh trade.

POLLS, PANDEMIC & PRIORITIES

As the Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh draw closer, participant parties summon heavyweights to public meetings and roadshows Friday, jamming up further the hustle and bustle of party workers and commoners, seemingly disregarding the pandemic



Union Ministers Amit Shah and Dharmendra Pradhan with UP CM Yogi Adityanath and UP BJP President Swatantra Dev Singh during a public meeting in Gorakhpur



AICC General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra waving at supporters during a roadshow in Ghaziabad



Samajwadi Party National President Akhilesh Yadav and Rashtriya Lok Dal President Jayant Chaudhary during a roadshow in Agra

Watch out for 'fake Samajwadis': Modi



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, Feb 4: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Friday accused the Samajwadi Party of fielding anti-social elements in the assembly polls and said the "fake Samajwadis" will corner the benefits given by the Centre to the poor if they come to power.

Addressing a virtual rally directed at the western UP constituencies, he urged people to keep "history-sheeters" out, and instead create a "new history". Modi focused on law and order and the government measures to help farmers at the virtual "Jan Chaupal".

The PM asked people to come out in large numbers on polling day and to "vote before you eat." He said in Hindi, "Pehle matdaan, phir jalpaan," at his second virtual rally for UP in recent days. Polling in the first phase is February 10. The virtual rally targeted voters in Ghaziabad, Meerut, Hapur, Aligarh and Noida.

He said the Yogi Adityanath government in Uttar Pradesh has dealt strongly with criminals and mafias and if a government favourable to them comes to power, they would extract "revenge" from people.

Modi highlighted the "double benefits" of the "double-engine government" over the last five years, referring to the BJP government both in the state and at the Centre during this period.

"Till five years ago, these 'mafia-wadis' did not allow the benefits of the Central schemes to reach

Till five years ago, these 'mafia-wadis' did not allow the benefits of the Central schemes to reach the poor, Dalits and the backwards. Since they did not have a say in the Centre's schemes and could not commit corruption, they used to put brakes on them

NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER

the poor, Dalits and the backwards. Since they did not have a say in the Centre's schemes and could not commit corruption, they used to put brakes on them," Modi said.

"The opposition party is giving tickets to anti-social elements on the basis of which one of them can understand their future intentions. Hence, I request you to vote in large numbers," he said.

"No matter how cold it may be, remember first you have to cast your vote, and then have your breakfast," Modi added.

The Prime Minister claimed that the government had given a free hand to rioters and criminals, harming "daughters and sisters".

"The BJP declares that the rule of criminals (dabang) and rioters will not come back to UP. In the past five years, in order to establish the rule of law, almost 1.5 lakh people were inducted in the police."

He said the 'fake Samajwadis' are keen to return to their previous incarnations - "from ration mafias to commission mafias, from contract mafias to mining mafias".

Siddaramaiah castigates Sitharaman over river-linking project in Budget '22



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, Feb 4: Senior Congress leader Siddaramaiah Friday accused the Central government of unilaterally announcing the river-linking project in the Union Budget without taking Karnataka into confidence, which, he said, was against the basic structure of the Constitution and federalism.

He said Tamil Nadu is likely to gain benefit from the proposed project. Therefore, the Leader of Opposition in the Karnataka Assembly urged the State government to immediately call for an all-party meet to discuss and send the State's unanimous view to the Centre in this regard.

He expressed Congress's opposition to the project and termed the attitude of the Centre as dictatorial. "The Finance Minister in the Union Budget has announced a proposal for linking southern rivers and this project is probably not viable. Nirmala Sitharaman, the Finance Minister, is from Tamil Nadu and hence I feel she has proposed it in the budget," Siddaramaiah said.

Speaking to reporters here, he said it appears that no discussion on river-linking has been held with Karnataka. "By linking rivers, Tamil Nadu will get more water. How much water will be available from each river and what is the allocation to each state, these have not been discussed with Karnataka. Without discussion, without getting the consent of the state, if gone ahead, it will lead to inter-state water disputes," he said.

Presenting the budget earlier this week, Sitharaman had said the draft detailed project report (DPR) of five river links, namely

Sitharaman had said the draft detailed project report of five river links, namely Damanganga-Pinjal, Par-Tapi-Narmada, Godavari-Krishna, Krishna-Pennar, and Pennar-Cauvery, have been finalised.

Implementation would be done once a consensus is reached among the beneficiary states, she had said

Of these projects, the Godavari-Krishna, Krishna-Pennar and Pennar-Cauvery river-linking projects concern Karnataka

Damanganga-Pinjal, Par-Tapi-Narmada, Godavari-Krishna, Krishna-Pennar, and Pennar-Cauvery, have been finalised. Implementation would be done once a consensus is reached among the beneficiary states, she had said. Of these projects, the Godavari-Krishna, Krishna-Pennar and Pennar-Cauvery river-linking projects concern Karnataka. Siddaramaiah urged the Centre to consult all southern states by calling for a meeting of political parties and Chief Ministers, preferably in Karnataka, in this regard, and place all the information before people. "States should know how much water they will get. We are a council of states, we are in a federal system, not dictatorship. Prime Minister Narendra Modi keeps making speeches that we are into cooperative federalism, but the conduct of his government is against it," he said and added that such unilateral decisions represent a dictatorial attitude, which is

condemnable. Karnataka Chief Minister, reacting to the announcement in the budget, said the state would stick to its stand that peninsular rivers should not be interlinked before the state's share of waters is finalised.

"They (Centre) have said they will go ahead once all states agree with the DPR, which is still under discussion. When the DPR is being prepared, our state's share has to be decided in the right way. This is our stand," the Chief Minister said.

Noting that the project has been discussed at the National Water Development Agency, Siddaramaiah said it has been estimated that 347mc water would be available by linking rivers, which can be used to provide water to the southern states.

"In Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and other states, more than 55 per cent of the lands available for cultivation are irrigated while in Karnataka it is only 30 per cent. After Rajasthan we have more area under the dryland. So, Karnataka should get justice," he said.

Demanding detailed discussions before the commencement of the river-linking project, the Congress Legislature Party leader further said Karnataka is also partner of the project, as Cauvery originates from the state flows here before flowing into neighbouring Tamil Nadu and then to the sea.

"Tamil Nadu will get more than 90 per cent of the benefit from river-linking while the benefit for Karnataka is less," he said. The idea of river-linking is not new and the plan to join rain-dependent Cauvery with Ganga, a perennial river, had started during the Morarji Desai government.

Hitting out at the BJP government in Karnataka and 25 MPs from the ruling party for remaining silent on the river-linking proposal in the Budget, Siddaramaiah urged the state government to immediately call for an all party meeting to explain the advantages and disadvantages.

Alleging that the Centre is biased towards Karnataka, he questioned as to why the Centre was not giving equal importance to give clearance to the Mekedatu project, which is for drinking water purpose.

Karnataka Hijab Row Girls denied entry again to college

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mangaluru, Feb 4: Muslim girl students, who tried to enter a government pre-university college at Kundapur in Karnataka's Udipi district wearing hijabs (headscarves), were again denied entry to the premises by authorities Friday, the third day since the issue surfaced in the institution.

The students, who came along with their parents, pushed into the compound gate of the college despite a strict order given by the authorities that wearing hijabs will not be allowed as per the status quo on dress code issued by the state government.

The girls' parents also protested outside the college gate. When they entered the premises, a few Hindu boy students wearing saffron shawls started roaming around the place as a mark of protest. The boys were soon asked to remove the shawls and attend classes in the college.

In view of the tension, police personnel from Kundapur station present at the gate sent the girls' parents away citing instructions from the government. The girls, however, continued to remain near the gate.

Meanwhile, a group of students of the government girls' PU college at Udipi, where the hijab row first started last month, approached the Additional Deputy Commissioner to resolve the issue at the earliest to



create a suitable environment for education in the college.

In their appeal, the girls said the final examinations are nearing and the teaching process in the college is disturbed due to the presence of police and the media. The district administration should take immediate action to solve the issue raised only by six students in the college, they said in the appeal.

The issue started in early January at the government girls' pre-university (PU) college at Udipi, where six students attended classes wearing headscarves in violation of the dress code in classrooms.

The college had allowed hijab in the campus but not inside the classrooms. The students who protested against the directions were not allowed inside classes for about a month.

Udipi MLA and president of

Recap

The issue started in early January at the government girls' pre-university (PU) college at Udipi, where six students attended classes wearing headscarves in violation of the dress code in classrooms

The college had allowed hijab in the campus but not inside the classrooms. The students who protested against the directions were not allowed inside classes for about a month

The girls, however, continued their protest by sitting outside the classrooms for about a month

The school authorities later categorically announced that hijab-clad girls cannot be allowed inside the classrooms till an expert committee formed by the state government to study the issue comes out with its report

The government also gave directions to schools to maintain the status quo on dress code in PU colleges

the college development committee K Raghupathi Bhat held talks with the parents of the protesting girls, who also insisted that their children be allowed to wear hijabs.

The school authorities later categorically announced that hijab-clad girls cannot be allowed inside the classrooms till an expert committee formed by the state government to study the issue comes out with its report. The government also gave directions to schools to maintain

tain the status quo on dress code in PU colleges. One of the six protesting students at the Udipi college moved the Karnataka High Court January 31, seeking interim relief to attend classes wearing the hijab till the issue is settled.

In her petition, the student submitted that wearing a hijab is her fundamental right guaranteed under Article 14 and 25 of the Constitution. The high court is expected to hear the case February 8.

The incident was followed by another one at the pre-university college in Kundapur in the same district, with the authorities disallowing 28 girl students wearing hijabs from attending classes in the college, citing the government direction. The girls later protested against the order outside the classes as well.

The issue turned worse when around 100 boy students of the college wearing saffron shawls Wednesday protested against allowing girls wearing hijabs inside classrooms.

Kundapur MLA and college development committee president Halady Srinivas Shetty, who rushed to the college, called a meeting of the girls and their parents to discuss the issue. As the parents did not relent, the meeting failed to reach a consensus.

However, the authorities stuck to the position that the government direction will be followed.

MARD: Will form ministry for harassed men upon winning

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, Feb 4: A little known political party believes that men are a harassed lot and says it will set up a ministry for their welfare if voted to power.

The party 'Mera Adhikar Rashtriya Dal' (MARD), registered in 2018, had unsuccessfully contested the 2019 Lok Sabha elections from Lucknow and Varanasi. 'Mard' means man in Hindi. For the ongoing UP polls, it has declared candidates for the four assembly constituencies - Bareilly, Lucknow North, Handia in Prayagraj and Chauri-Chaura in Gorakhpur. It may announce more candidates later. "If voted to power, Ministry of



Men's Welfare and National Commission for Men will be constituted so that men's side could also be deliberated upon while forming any policy and law

party's manifesto, he said, "Policies concerning the well being, security and dignity of men will be made accordingly. Efforts will be made to bring the Men's Security Bill." He said, a "Men's Helpline" will also be introduced to pay attention to the ordeal faced by them

If voted to power, Ministry of Men's Welfare and National Commission for Men will be constituted so that men's side could also be deliberated upon while forming any policy and law

KAPIL MOHAN CHAUDHARY | NATIONAL PRESIDENT, MERA ADHIKAR RASHTRIYA DAL (MARD)

Listing salient points of the

given "some biased women's laws." Mentioning the reason for entering the poll fray, Chaudhary said, "It is to empathise and sympathise with half of the population. We are not against the women empowerment. But, when in the name of women empowerment, harassment of men starts, we take exception to it. We are definitely in favour of positive empowerment of women such as education."

"Provision will be made to make maintenance amount tax-free," Chaudhary said and added that alimony (maintenance) is a legal obligation on a husband to provide financial support to the spouse during or after marital separation or divorce under maintenance rules in India.



China first captured our land and is now abducting our citizens and torturing them. Modiji is silently waiting for achhe din. Shameful RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

PM'S RALLY CANCELLED

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's virtual rally, which was scheduled to be held in Uttarakhand Friday, was cancelled due to inclement weather, the BJP stated



of the day quote

Four women are judges in the Supreme Court against the total sanctioned strength of 34 judges and 83 women are judges in high courts against the sanctioned strength of 1,098 judges KIREN RIJU | LAW MINISTER

India has a policy of zero tolerance on terrorism and believes in collective global efforts to counter the menace V MURALEEDHARAN | MINISTER OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

21 monitoring centers have been activated across the country by office of Chief Labour Commissioner (Central). The states have also been asked to be wary of rumour mongering on exodus and take quick steps to counter such rumours. They have been advised to reassure migrant workers regarding their safety, security and livelihood BHUPENDER YADAV | UNION LABOUR MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Jagadesh new UGC chairman

New Delhi: JNU Vice Chancellor M Jagadesh Kumar, whose tenure was marred by controversies, has been appointed as Chairman of the University Grants Commission (UGC). According to the Ministry of Education, Kumar has been appointed as the chairman of the higher education regulator for a period of five years.

Tremor recorded in Kutch

Ahmedabad: A tremor of 3.1 magnitude hit Gujarat's Kutch district on Friday morning, but there was no report of any casualty or damage to property, officials said. Its epicentre was near Rapar village. "A 3.1 magnitude tremor was recorded at 10.16 am on Friday with its epicentre 16 km South-Southeast (SSW) of Rapar in Kutch. It was recorded at a depth of 19.1 km," said the Gandhinagar-based Institute of Seismological Research (ISR) in a statement.

Girl raped

Medinagar (Jharkhand): A three-and-a-half-year-old girl was allegedly raped by her 14-year-old cousin in Jharkhand's Palamu district Friday, police said. She is undergoing treatment at a state-run hospital here, and her condition is stated to be serious, a police officer said. The girl was playing in front of her house in Medinagar when her paternal cousin took her to a secluded place and raped her, Rehla police station officer-in-charge Nemdhari Rajak said.

Two cops booked

Mumbai: A case has been registered against three persons, including two police personnel, for allegedly attempting to extort money from a woman in the eastern suburb of Chembur here, police said Friday. An FIR was registered Thursday against assistant commissioner of police (ACP) Shalini Sharma, suspended inspector Anil Jadhav and one Raju Sontakke at Chembur police station, an official said.

Body found

Palghar: The body of an unidentified woman was found near Waghoba Khind in Maharashtra's Palghar district on the Mumbai-Ahmedabad highway, police said Friday. The highly decomposed body was found Thursday evening, they said.

Appoint nodal officers for Covid ex-gratia: SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 4: The Supreme Court Friday directed all states governments and Union Territories to appoint dedicated nodal officer to coordinate with the member secretary of the state legal service authority (SLSA) to facilitate payment of ex-gratia compensation to family members of COVID-19 victims.

A bench comprising Justices M R Shah and B V Nagarathna also directed the state governments to give full particulars like name, address and death certificate to the concerned SLSA, as also complete details with respect to orphans, within one week from today (Friday) failing which the matter shall be viewed very seriously.

The top court reiterated that applications seeking compensation should not be rejected on technical grounds and if any technical glitch is found, the states concerned should give them opportunity to cure defects as the ultimate goal of the welfare state is to provide some solace and compensation to victims.

States should make all endeavours to pay the compensation to the victims within a maximum period of 10 days from the receipt of the claim, it said.

"Despite our earlier order di-



THE APEX COURT SAID THAT THE ENDEAVOUR OF LEGAL SERVICES AUTHORITY WOULD BE TO REACH TO THOSE SUFFERERS/VICTIMS WHO HAVE YET NOT APPROACHED FOR WHATEVER REASONS

recting all the state governments to give full particulars of the deaths due to Covid-19 registered with their portal and the number of persons to whom the ex gratia payment is made, it appears that most of the states have given only statistics and no full particulars are given.

"The object and purpose of our earlier order to give full particulars was to see that at least with respect to those cases which are registered with the state governments if they have not approached the appropriate authorities for compensation," the bench said.

"The legal services authority will reach them and see that they make an application and they act as facilitator as a bridge. Similarly the particulars with respect to or-

PHANS ARE NOT GIVEN. WE DIRECT ALL THE STATE GOVERNMENTS TO GIVE FULL PARTICULARS INCLUDING THEIR NAME, ADDRESS, DEATH CERTIFICATE ETC. TO THE CONCERNED STATE LEGAL SERVICE AUTHORITY INCLUDING FULL PARTICULARS WITH RESPECT TO ORPHANS WITHIN ONE WEEK FROM TODAY FAILING WHICH THE MATTER SHALL BE VIEWED VERY SERIOUSLY," IT SAID.

The apex court said that the endeavour of legal services authority would be to reach to those sufferers/victims who have yet not approached for whatever reasons. "We also direct the concerned state governments to appoint a dedicated officer, not below the rank of deputy secretary in Chief Minister Secretariat, who shall be in constant touch with the mem-

ber secretary of the state legal service authority so that he may coordinate with him and see to it that the applications are received from eligible persons.

"As and when the particulars are given on verification, the member secretary finds that out of the case registered, some of family members are yet not given compensation, the member secretary to reach to them through the secretary DLSA/ secretary Taluka and para legal volunteers. Their function would be to facilitate those who could not approach to make an application for compensation and see that they get compensation. Their role shall be of ombudsman as a bridge between the victims and the government. If there is any difficulty found by the member secretary he may immediately approach the concerned person hereinabove and all are directed to cooperate," the bench said.

The apex court also rapped the Maharashtra government for rejecting applications submitted of fine seeking compensation. "No application should be rejected for any application which is submitted offline. You are not doing charity. As a welfare state it is their duty. Why are you sending people from pillar to post. Do it from the bottom of the heart," the bench said.

5 workers killed in Pune



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Pune, Feb 4: Five labourers were killed and as many injured after the slab of a building under construction collapsed in Pune, police said Friday.

The incident occurred at Shastrinagar in Yerwada area of the city late Thursday night, an official said. Police detained three persons in this connection and also registered a case against a contractor, he said.

"A net of steel bars meant to build a slab at the basement level collapsed late Thursday night. Five labourers working at the time died on the spot and five others were injured," Rohidas Pawar, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Zone V), said. The injured were admitted to a hospital and they are out of danger, he added.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed grief over the loss of lives in the incident. "Pained by the mishap at an under-construction building in Pune. Condolences to the bereaved families. I hope that all those injured in this mishap recover at the earliest," he tweeted.

The incident occurred at Shastrinagar in Yerwada area of the city late Thursday night, an official said

According to the official, fire brigade and police personnel carried out an operation to rescue those trapped under the debris at the site. Pune police commissioner Amitabh Gupta and city civic chief Kunal Kumar visited the site.

"A raft foundation slab collapsed due to the absence of spacing and support. A committee has been formed under the supervision of the district collector to conduct an inquiry into the incident. The College of Engineering, Pune (COEP) has also been roped in to find faults, if any, in the construction. Based on the report, action will be taken," Kumar said. Gupta said, "We have registered a case against a contractor and detained three persons in connection with the incident."

Covid: India third in world to record five lakh deaths

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 4: India crossed the grim milestone of 5 lakh COVID-19 deaths Thursday, becoming the third country in the world to do so after the US and Brazil.

The country took 217 days to reach 5 lakh deaths from 4 lakh recorded on July 1 last year, the longest time taken to record 1 lakh fatalities. India was hit by a devastating second wave in April-May last year.

The country's death toll had crossed three lakh-mark on May 23 and two lakh-mark on April 27. The death toll went past one lakh on October 2, 2020.

The total deaths has climbed to 5,00,055 with 1,072 daily fatalities, Union Health Ministry data updated at 8 am stated. With over 9.2 lakh deaths, US has the highest number of fatalities due to the infection followed by Brazil with over 6.3 lakh, according to the Worldometers, which has been compiling global COVID-19 data.

India presently is facing a third wave of Covid driven by the highly transmissible Omicron variant. However, according to experts, cases are mostly mild this in comparison to the second wave.

The government on Thursday said the pandemic situation has improved and even though there are states and districts of concern, overall there is a contraction in the spread of COVID-19 infection.

At a press conference, Joint Secretary, Union Health Ministry, Lav Agarwal, said 34 states and Union territories, including Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Gujarat are recording a decline in cases and positivity week-on-week basis, while Kerala and Mizoram still remain two states of concern.

FESTIVE FEVER



Students sit in the back of a cart and hold an umbrella over an idol of Goddess Saraswati on their way to school amid a downpour, in Kolkata

DELHI EASES COVID RESTRICTIONS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 4: Schools in Delhi will reopen for all classes from nursery on wards as will gyms with certain restrictions and drivers travelling alone in cars will be exempted from wearing masks, the city government announced Friday while relaxing Covid restrictions in view of the dip in cases.

Night curfew will continue but from 11 pm instead of 10 pm, it said. The Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) decided to reopen higher education institutions and coaching centres along with schools for classes 9-12 from February 7, Deputy Chief Minister Manish

Sisodia said. At an online briefing, he said the panel has also decided to resume classes from nursery to 8 from February 14.

Sisodia said teachers, who are not vaccinated, will not be allowed to come to schools. The DDMA also allowed restaurants to remain open till 11 pm. "A number of key decisions were taken during the DDMA meeting on Friday. The decisions were taken keeping in mind the decline in coronavirus cases in Delhi. These decisions will help in ensuring that people's lives and businesses can come back on track," Sisodia said.

In another important decision, the panel exempted drivers



who are alone in vehicles from wearing masks and also gave its nod to resumption of offices

with 100 percent attendance, Sisodia said. "Schools will reopen for classes 9-12 from

February 7 and for nursery to 8 from February 14. The classes will continue to be in a hybrid mode," Sisodia said.

The deputy chief minister, who also holds the education portfolio, said institutions of higher education and coaching institutes will also be permitted to open from Monday. "However, colleges will be discouraged to hold online classes and should start offline teaching," he said.

During the DDMA meeting, chaired by Lt Governor Anil Bajjal, it was decided that gyms, spas and swimming pools will be permitted to open, he said, adding that the panel also gave its nod to organising B2B exhibitions.

UP best state tableau at Republic Day parade

NDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 4: Uttar Pradesh has been selected as the best state tableau at the Republic Day parade this year and the Indian Navy marching contingent has been adjudged as the best marching contingent among the three Services, the Ministry of Defence said Friday.

Three panels of judges were appointed for assessing the performance of the marching contingents from the three Services, Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF), other Auxiliary forces and tableaux from various states and Union Territories (UTs) and Central Ministries and Departments.

On the basis of the assessment of the panels, the Indian Navy marching contingent was adjudged as the

best marching contingent among the three Services. The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) has been named as the best marching contingent among CAPF/other auxiliary forces.

The tableau of Uttar Pradesh was selected as the best tableau among the 12 states/UTs which participated in the Republic Day parade on January 26. The tableau of Uttar Pradesh was based on the theme 'One District One Product' and Kashi Vishwanath Dham'.

The second place went to Karnataka for its tableau based on 'Cradle of Traditional Handicrafts'. The third position went to Meghalaya for its tableau on 'Meghalaya's 50 years of Statehood and its tribute to women-led cooperative societies & SHGs'.



The tableaux of Ministry of Education and Ministry of Civil Aviation have been declared as the joint winners in the category of Central Ministries and Departments. The theme of the tableau of Ministry

of Education & Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship was 'National Education Policy', while the tableau of the Ministry of Civil Aviation was based on the theme 'Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik'.

Nine tableaux of Central Ministries and Departments had participated in the parade. The tableaux of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (CPWD), based on the theme 'Subhash @125' and the 'Vande Bharatam' dance group have been selected for the special prize category.

In addition, for the first time, the general public was invited to vote for the best marching contingents and best tableaux in the popular choice category through the MyGov platform. The online poll was conducted between January 25-31, 2022.

As per popular choice, the marching contingent of the Indian Air Force has been picked as the best marching contingent among the three Services. The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) received max-

imum votes on MyGov as the best marching contingent among CAPF/other auxiliary forces.

Maharashtra was voted as the best tableau among the States/UTs in the popular choice category. The tableau of Maharashtra was based on the theme 'Biodiversity and State Bio-symbols of Maharashtra'. The second place went to Uttar Pradesh (popular choice), while the tableau of Jammu and Kashmir, on the theme 'Changing face of Jammu & Kashmir', finished third.

The tableau of the Ministry of Communication and Department of Posts was adjudged as the best tableau among Central Ministries/Departments based on people's selection. The theme of this tableau was 'India Post: 75 years @ Resolve - Women Empowerment'.

international



The successful opening of the Beijing Winter Olympics despite the worldwide health crisis and unprecedented severe circumstances is another great victory won by socialist China
KIM JONG UN | LEADER, NORTH KOREA

VIRUS ENTERS TONGA AFTER 2 YRS
For more than two years, the isolation of the Pacific archipelago nation of Tonga helped keep Covid-19 at bay. But last month's volcanic eruption and tsunami brought outside deliveries of desperately needed fresh water and medicine — and brought the virus. Now the country is in an open-ended lockdown



of the day quote

When it comes to the India-China border situation, we continue to support direct dialogue and a peaceful resolution of the disputes

NED PRICE | STATE DEPARTMENT SPOKESPERSON, US

Foreign investment is especially important for large-scale projects, industries requiring modern technological know-how and new ventures that open up global market opportunities for us

If Germany escalates (media row), we will respond in the same way. If Germany goes for a normalisation of the situation, we will respond in the same way, we're just as ready to normalise the situation

MARIA ZAKHAROVA | FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESPERSON, RUSSIA

SHORT TAKES

Price reacts to Rahul's remarks

New Delhi: The US has reacted over Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's remarks in Lok Sabha that Pakistan and China have come closer due to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's policies, The News reported. US State Department spokesperson Ned Price categorically said that Washington would not "endorse" such a statement. "I'll leave it to Pakistanis and PRC (People's Republic of China) to speak to their relationship. I certainly won't endorse those remarks," he said during a regular White House press briefing.

Pakistan to lend Sri Lanka \$200mn

New Delhi: Pakistan has decided to lend Sri Lanka a \$200 million loan for the purchase of rice and cement, The News reported. The decision was made during a recent visit of the Sri Lankan Trade Minister to Islamabad, the report said. However, the terms and duration of the loan were being finalised by the authorities from both the countries, it added. Sri Lanka will use the amount for the import of rice and cement from Pakistan.

Turkey 'neutralises' 43 Kurdish ultras

Ankara: Turkish security forces have "neutralized" 43 members of Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) in Syria, the Defence Ministry in Ankara said. The move came in retaliation for a bombing in the Syrian town of al-Bab that killed nine people and after the YPG opened fire on Turkish bases in al-Bab, Dadat, Kil Cibrin, and Tall Malid areas, Xinhua news agency quoted the Ministry as saying. The killing of a Turkish soldier by a mortar attack on Wednesday at a border post with Iraq in the southeastern city of Sirkak also prompted the retaliation, the Ministry added.

Bali reopens to foreign travelers

Denpasar: Direct international flights to Bali have resumed for the first time in two years as Indonesia opens the resort island to foreign travellers from all countries, but mandatory quarantine remains in place for all visitors. Officials had said in October that Bali would welcome foreign arrivals from 19 countries that meet World Health Organization criteria, such as having their Covid-19 cases under control.

NATO EXPANSION

Russia, China show united front

THE JOINT STATEMENT, INCLUDING HARSH CRITICISM OF THE UNITED STATES, WAS ISSUED DURING RUSSIAN PRESIDENT VLADIMIR PUTIN'S VISIT TO CHINA FOR THE WINTER OLYMPICS

REUTERS

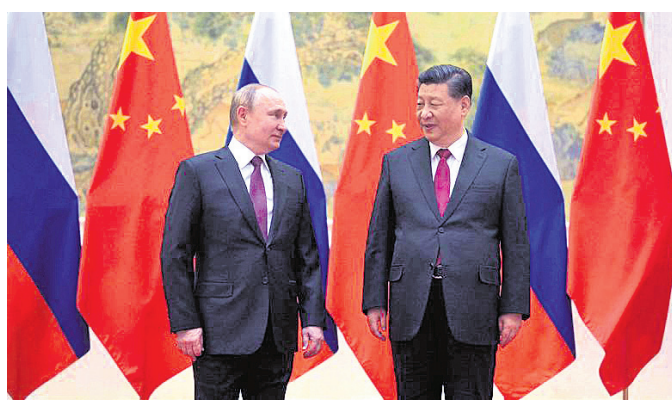
Moscow, Feb 4: Russia and China called in a joint statement Friday for NATO to halt its expansion while Moscow said it fully supported Beijing's stance on Taiwan and opposed Taiwanese independence in any form.

The Kremlin said Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping held warm and substantive talks in Beijing and described the relationship as an advanced partnership with a special character.

Putin also unveiled a major new gas deal with China, a further sign of the deepening of the relationship between the two neighbours at a time of high tension in their relations with the West.

"The Russian side reaffirms its support for the One-China principle, confirms that Taiwan is an inalienable part of China, and opposes any forms of independence of Taiwan," the joint statement said. United States and other countries have declined to send dignitaries to Beijing, citing alleged human rights abuses.

The two countries expressed concern about "the advancement of US plans to develop global missile defence and deploy its elements in various regions of the world, com-



Moscow's ties with Beijing are developing progressively along the path of friendship and strategic partnership. They are of a truly unprecedented nature and an example of a dignified relationship

VLADIMIR PUTIN | PRESIDENT, RUSSIA

I am ready to work with President Putin to plan the blueprint and steer the course for Sino-Russian relations under new historical conditions

XI JINPING | PRESIDENT, CHINA

combined with capacity building of high-precision non-nuclear weapons for disarming strikes and other strategic objectives." They said they opposed further enlargement of US-led NATO and called on the alliance to abandon its "ideologised Cold War approaches".

They also discussed the need to broaden trade in national currencies because of unpredictability

surrounding the use of the dollar. A halt to NATO's eastwards addition of new member states is a key demand of the Kremlin in its stand-off with the West over Ukraine. The United States has rejected some of Moscow's key proposals but said it is willing to discuss other topics such as arms control.

China supports Russia's proposals to create legally binding se-

Moscow backs Beijing on Taiwan and opposed Taiwanese independence in any form

The leaders called on US-NATO alliance to abandon its "ideologised Cold War approaches"

They also discussed the need to broaden trade in national currencies; a blow to use of the dollar

Macron to lead new Russia-Ukraine talks amid war fears

security guarantees in Europe, the joint statement said. US President Joe Biden has said Russian companies could be cut off from the ability to trade in dollars as part of sanctions if Russia invades Ukraine.

In the days leading up to the trip, a Kremlin aide said the two leaders also would sign a document that reflected their "common views" on security and other issues.

French President Emmanuel Macron will meet Russian leader Vladimir Putin in Moscow Feb 7 and the leader of Ukraine Feb 8.

Macron has said that finding a negotiated path towards de-escalating tensions over Ukraine was a priority, even as the United States has said it was sending 3,000 extra troops to Poland and Romania as Russia amassed troops near Ukraine.

MIRED IN SCANDAL

'50/50 chance Boris will be forced out'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 4: UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson has been rocked by another Downing Street resignation after a fifth aide quit as Cabinet Ministers said they believe there is a "50/50" chance that Johnson will be forced out of office, the Daily Mail reported.

Elena Naroanski, a member of the Number 10 Policy Unit, resigned Friday, according to the Conservative Home website.

Some senior ministers believe "it feels like the end" after Thursday's exodus amid mounting fears in Downing Street that more staff and even ministers could resign.

Senior Conservative MPs Friday issued a fresh warning to Johnson that he must "shape up or ship out", the Daily Mail report said.

Number 10 was in meltdown as the Prime Minister ordered a brutal clearout in a desperate attempt to shore up his troubled premiership as Rishi Sunak primed himself for a leadership bid.

Downing Street announced that the Prime Minister's chief of staff Dan Rosenfield and private secretary Martin Reynolds will be leaving.

That announcement came after it emerged the PM's communications chief, Jack Doyle, was also departing. Johnson had already been hit by the shock resignation of one of his closest allies, policy chief Munira



UK PM was in more trouble after a top aide resigned over his false claim that the opposition party leader failed to prosecute a notorious child sex abuser

Mirza, Thursday, the report said.

It then emerged Friday morning that Naroanski, a former Team England boxer and former adviser to Michael Gove, had reportedly followed Mirza in quitting the policy unit.

Johnson was also publicly criticised Thursday by the Chancellor who questioned the Prime Minister's conduct over his explosive claim that Labour Party leader Keir Starmer had failed to prosecute Jimmy Savile.

Afghan faces tsunami of hunger: US SIGAR

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kabul, Feb 4: The US government's Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) has said that the war-torn nation is currently facing a "tsunami of hunger" amid the ongoing humanitarian crisis and the collapsed economy.

On Thursday, SIGAR released its 44th quarterly report to the US Congress examining the \$145.87 billion reconstruction effort in Afghanistan, which said that "record drought, rising food prices, internal displacement" as well as economic breakdown and collapse of public services constitute a "humanitarian emergency", reports TOLONews.

The authority underscored the findings of Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, an organisation active under the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), saying nearly 19 million Afghans experienced acute food insecurity in "September and October 2021".

"Some 22.8 million Afghans will be at potentially life-threatening

WHO and WFP estimate that 3.2 million Afghan children under age five will suffer from acute malnutrition this winter, with one million at risk of dying

levels of hunger this winter, 8.7 million of whom will face near-famine conditions," said the report from Integrated Food Security Phase Classification.

SIGAR's cited the UN Development Programme report released in September 2021 that said that up to 97 per cent of Afghanistan's population was at risk of slipping below the poverty line by mid-2022 as a result of the worsening political and economic crises.

"As of January 2022, the US was providing \$782 million in humanitarian aid in Afghanistan and for Afghan refugees in the region," SIGAR's report cites the UN Office on Drugs and Crime that opiate production in 2021 was the third highest recorded since surveying began in 1994.



BOYCOTT CALL



People from China's Uyghur Muslim ethnic group shout slogans during a rally against the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympic Games over China's treatment of the minority, near the Chinese consulate in Istanbul, Turkey

Pak disparages Naravane's claim

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 4: Major General Babar Iftikhar, the Director General of the Pakistan military's Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), has categorically rejected the Indian Army chief's, General MM Naravane, claim that the ceasefire along the Line of Control (LoC) was holding because they negotiated from a "position of strength", and termed it as "misleading", Geo News reported.

The military spokesperson Friday said it was agreed only due to Pakistan's concerns for the safety of the people of Kashmir living



along the LOC, the report said.

"Ceasefire with Pakistan continues to hold as we negotiated from a position of strength," Indian Army chief General Manoj Mukund Naravane had said.

However, the Pakistani military spokesperson rejected the claim and said no side should misconstrue it as their strength or other's weakness.

The Director-Generals of military operations of India and Pakistan, after reviewing the situation along the LOC and all other sectors, had agreed to reinforce the ceasefire which went into effect from February 25, 2021.

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Elizabeth the Steadfast: Queen marks 70 years on the throne

From her early days as a glamorous young royal in glittering tiaras to her more recent incarnation as the nation's grandmother, the queen has witnessed the end of the British Empire, the advent of multiculturalism, the rise of international terrorism, and the challenges posed by Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic

ASSOCIATED PRESS

London, Feb 4: Elizabeth Alexandra Mary Windsor wasn't born to wear the crown. But destiny intervened. The woman who became Queen Elizabeth II will mark 70 years on the throne Sunday, an unprecedented reign that has made her a symbol of stability as the United Kingdom navigated an age of uncertainty.

In a world of relentless change, she has been a constant — representing the UK's interests abroad, applauding the nation's successes and commiserating in its failures, and always remaining above the fray of politics.

That constancy should earn Elizabeth a royal epithet like those of her predecessors such as William the Conqueror, Edward the



Confessor and Alfred the Great, said royal historian Hugo Vickers. "I've always thought she should be called Elizabeth the Steadfast," Vickers told The Associated Press. "I think it's a perfect way of de-



scribing her. She wasn't necessarily expecting to be queen, and she embraced that duty."

As the elder daughter of King George V's second son, Elizabeth, now 95, was expected to live the

I declare before you all that my whole life, whether it be long or short, shall be devoted to your service and the service of our great imperial family to which we all belong

QUEEN ELIZABETH II

life of a minor royal when she was born April 21, 1926. Dogs and horses, a country house, a suitable match — a comfortable but uneventful life — seemed her future.

But everything changed a decade later when her uncle, King Edward VIII, abdicated so he could marry the American divorcee Wallis Simpson. Elizabeth's father became King George VI, making the young princess her apparent.

George VI, whose struggles to

overcome a stutter were portrayed in the 2010 film "The King's Speech," endeared himself to the nation when he refused to leave London as bombs fell during the early months of World War II.

In the intervening seven decades, the queen has shared confidences with 14 Prime Ministers and met 13 US presidents. For the queen, Sunday is likely to be bittersweet, marking both her long reign and the 70th anniversary of her father's death.

"I've always thought that one of her philosophies really was that, you know, she just wanted to be a really good daughter to her father and fulfill all his hopes for her," Vickers said. "And, you know, assuming that there is an after-life and they meet again, my goodness he will be able to thank her for doing just that."

of the day quote

Promoting exports through subsidies has not really given the desired results, but the government's RoDTEP scheme is helping grow exports which is expected to reach a record \$400 billion this year

PIYUSH GOYAL | COMMERCE AND INDUSTRIES MINISTER

The government is examining proposals from three telecom companies keen to opt for converting interest on deferred spectrum and adjusted gross revenue (AGR) dues into equity

ASHWINI VAISHNAW | TELECOM MINISTER

The government has received complaints from trader and industry associations against marketplace e-commerce entities alleging violation of the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Policy on the e-commerce sector

SOM PARKASH | MINISTER OF STATE FOR COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

SHORT TAKES

Forex reserves down by \$4.531bn

Mumbai: The country's foreign exchange reserves declined by \$4.531 billion to stand at \$629.755 billion in the week ended January 28, RBI data showed Friday. In the previous week ended January 21, the reserves had decreased by \$678 million to \$634.287 billion. It touched a lifetime high of \$642.453 billion in the week ended September 3, 2021. During the reporting week ended January 28, FCAs tumbled by \$3.504 billion to \$566.077 billion, as per RBI data.

BoE hikes rates to curb inflation

London: The Bank of England (BoE) has raised interest rates for the second time in seven weeks to fight a surge in inflation. At its meeting late Wednesday, the bank's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) voted to increase the so-called "Bank of England base rate" by 0.25 percentage points to 0.5 per cent, citing "the current tightness of the labour market and continuing signs of greater persistence in domestic cost and price pressures", reports Xinhua news agency. Thursday's announcement came as the UK's annual consumer price index (CPI) inflation jumped to a 30-year high of 5.4 per cent in December 2021.

CCI penalises seven entities

New Delhi: Competition Commission has slapped penalties on seven entities and their officials for bid-rigging activities and cartelisation with respect to supply of signage for branches, offices and ATMs of State Bank of India. Besides imposing fines totalling over ₹1.29 crore on the 7 entities and 9 officials, they have also been directed to cease and desist from indulging in anti-competitive practices.

Hyundai's Jan sales fall 12%

Seoul: Hyundai Motor, South Korea's biggest carmaker, has announced its sales fell 12 per cent last month from a year earlier amid global chip shortages. Hyundai Motor sold 2,82,204 vehicles in January, down from 3,21,068 units a year earlier, the company said. "We will adjust vehicle production schedules to ride out ongoing semiconductor shortages, while focusing on boosting sales of new models and enhancing profitability," the company said in a statement.



This number of ₹6.6 lakh crore net borrowing... The government is committed to it and we will adhere to that. The borrowing would be done in a non-disruptive manner and it would not crowd out the private sector

AJAY SETH | SECRETARY, ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

NEW RANGE OF BMW BIKES SOON

German automaker BMW on Friday said it has commenced bookings for its new range of touring motorcycles in the country. The company said it has opened bookings for the R 1250 RT, K 1600 GTL, K 1600 Bagger and K 1600 Grand America. The new range of touring motorcycles is scheduled to be launched in India in May 2022



IN A FIRST CIL plans bulk exports

The state-run company plans to export to Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan, as a part of India's "neighbourhood first" policy, which seeks to counter China's growing economic influence in South Asia



REUTERS

Bangalore, Feb 4: Coal India Ltd, the world's largest coal miner, plans to directly export output to neighbouring countries, according to a draft policy sent to the secretary of India's coal ministry and reviewed by Reuters, after decades of exclusively supplying domestic consumers.

The proposal was presented at an internal board meeting on corporate strategy in October 2020 and was confirmed by Coal India's chairman to Reuters this week, although a critical coal shortage in India now means the first such shipments would be unlikely until the end of this year.

"We would have ideally wanted to start exporting this financial year (ending March 2022), if not for the energy crisis," Coal India Chairman Pramod Agrawal told Reuters, noting the current priority was to address domestic demand.

Under the proposal "3% of Coal India's annual production will be earmarked separately for exports" with the main focus on encouraging bulk trade for the long-term.

The export push is seen as a longer-term pivot that would help Coal India diversify its revenue streams and boost New Delhi's push to firm up ties with strategic

Coal India plans to export 3% of its output
Exports unlikely this year due to energy crisis
Chairman says India energy crisis unlikely to end till Oct
CIL aims to ramp up output to 1 billion tonne by 2024

ally important neighbours.

However, the proposal has more recently been overshadowed by India's own coal shortage at home, which means the first shipments would be unlikely until the end of 2022, according to Agrawal.

India - which relies on coal for nearly three quarters of its electricity supply - is yet to fully recover from the crunch that forced power cuts, which lasted up to 14 hours a day in some northern states.

Compounding those woes, international coal prices have soared due to a surprise temporary export ban by top exporter Indonesia and large purchases from European buyers concerned that any invasion of Ukraine by Russia could sever gas flows to Europe.

Though domestic coal supplies

have improved, inventories at nearly half the fully operational utilities in India are under 25% of federally mandated levels.

"I don't expect the energy crisis in India to be fully resolved until at least October," Agrawal said.

India is the second largest producer, consumer and importer of coal. Coal India has previously exported small quantities to neighbouring countries on an ad-hoc basis, but never in commercial bulk.

Last year, Coal India also allowed domestic customers to export coal bought from the miner through e-auctions for the first time.

At Coal India's October 2020 board meeting, it was suggested that the miner should overhaul its marketing department and sell coal at lower-than-current prices to make its output attractive for foreign buyers.

In the draft proposal sent to the coal secretary, Coal India suggested offering coal to its neighbouring countries at prices it offers to non-power sector consumers in India. The policy recommended the miner export 15-20 million tonne by 2024-25.

All retro-tax cases to be settled this month

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 4: The government will settle almost all the retrospective tax cases this month, closing a chapter that plagued India's reputation as an investment-friendly destination, a top official said Friday.

A 2012 amendment that gave taxmen powers to go back 50 years and slap capital gains levies wherever ownership had changed hands overseas but business assets were in India, was used to raise ₹1.1 lakh crore demand against multi-nationals such as telecom group Vodafone, pharmaceuticals company Sanofi and brewer SABMiller, now owned by AB InBev; and Cairn Energy Plc. Such demands brought uncertainty in the minds of investors.

To repair India's damaged reputation as an investment destination, the government in August 2021 enacted a new legislation to drop all such demand and refund about ₹8,100 crore collected on the condition that any pending lawsuit or legal challenge against the government anywhere in the world



would be dropped.

Cairn, from whom ₹7,900 crore was seized to enforce the retrospective tax demand, as well as Vedanta Group, have dropped lawsuits. Cairn is now eligible for the tax refund.

"In the month of August, we abolished the retrospective taxation and we would be settling almost all the cases this month itself. So, we will close that chapter once and for all," Revenue Secretary Tarun Bajaj said.

The move will help restore investor confidence by providing a predictable and stable tax regime.

"So stability, predictability and not giving any surprise is a matter of tax policy which we have implemented," he said at a PHD chamber event here.

TikTok is future of social media, agree Meta, Snapchat

USERS SPENT APPROXIMATELY \$2.3 BILLION LAST YEAR IN THE MOBILE APP. THE FIGURE REPRESENTS 77 PER CENT YOY GROWTH FROM \$1.3 BILLION IN 2020

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 4: As more and more people, especially the millennials and Generation Z, watch videos on social media, both Meta (now formerly Facebook) and Snapchat have indicated that the future of social media looks more like Chinese short-

video making app TikTok.

In an earnings call, Snap CEO Evan Spiegel said that less time is being spent watching Stories from friends on Snapchat.

Instead, Snapchat users are increasingly moving to watch videos on Spotlight, a TikTok feature and Snapchat rival.

"This is a continuation of the trend we have observed throughout the pandemic, and friend story posting and viewing per daily active user have not returned to pre-pandemic levels," Spiegel told the analysts late Thursday.

"While we are hopeful our community will in time return to the friends story behaviours that we observed prior to the pandemic, we are focused on innovating on our content offerings to better serve our community today," he added.

Earlier, Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg said that TikTok

Bank of India net profit zooms 90.02% YoY

Bhubaneswar: The Board of Directors of Bank of India (BoI) approved the financial results for the quarter ended 31 December, 2021 at its meeting held Friday. Bank of India announced its Q3FY22 results indicating net profit for Q3FY22 at ₹1,027 crore which is up by 90.02% YoY. Return on Assets (ROA) stands at 0.51%, improved by 23 bps YoY. Return on Equity (RoE) stands at 11.59%, improved by 205 bps YoY. CRAR is at 16.66% with CET-1 ratio of 13.16%. Net NPA ratio stands at 2.66% down by 13 bps sequentially. Provision Coverage Ratio (PCR) stood high at 86.86%. CASA deposits increased by 10.74% YoY with CASA ratio at 44.07%. Net Interest Income (NII) stood at ₹3,408 crore for Q3FY22 against ₹3,739 crore in Q3FY21. Non-Interest Income stood at ₹1,835 crore for Q3FY22 against ₹1,897 crore in Q3FY21. NIM (Global) stood at 2.27% and NIM (Domestic) at 2.51% in Q3FY22. Global Business increased by 3.28% YoY from ₹10,26,866 crore in December 2020 to ₹10,60,519 crore in December 2021. In December last year, Bank's Capital Adequacy Ratio (CRAR) stood at 16.66% against 17.05% in September 2021 and 12.51% in December 2020.



FRESH BLOW TO MUSK

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 4: The Indian government has turned down a demand of tech billionaire Elon Musk's electric vehicle (EV) company Tesla for tax breaks to import electric cars, saying rules already allow bringing in partially-built vehicles and assembling them locally at a lower

Govt junks Tesla's call for tax benefits

levy, Bloomberg reported Friday. "We looked at whether the duties need to be re-jigged, but some domestic production is happening and some investments have come in with the current tariff structure," Vivek Johri, Chairman of the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC), was quoted as saying in an interview with Bloomberg.

"So, it is clear that this is not a hindrance," Johri added. Recently, a report said that Musk, who has been trying to launch Tesla in India for the past couple of years, is still haunted by the "key challenges" at the government's end that have grounded his electric cars from running on domestic roads. Despite the government luring

him with various schemes and promises and repeated "come and manufacture/assemble your cars here" calls from the top ministers, Musk is "still working through a lot of challenges with the government," the report had said. According to industry experts, the main challenge for Tesla to enter the Indian market is import duty.

Zuckerberg lost \$29 bn in a day

Mark Zuckerberg lost \$29 billion in net worth Thursday as Meta Platforms Inc's stock marked a record one-day plunge, while fellow billionaire Jeff Bezos was set to add \$20 billion to his personal valuation after Amazon's blockbuster earnings. Meta's stock fell 26%, erasing more than \$200 billion in the biggest ever single-day market value wipeout for a US company. That pulled down founder and Chief Executive Officer Zuckerberg's net worth to \$85 billion, according to Forbes. Zuckerberg owns about 12.8% of the tech behemoth formerly known as Facebook. Zuckerberg's one-day wealth decline is among the biggest ever and comes after Tesla Inc top boss Elon Musk's \$35 billion single-day paper loss in November.

reached \$824.4 million in Q4 2021, more than double the \$382.4 million generated during the same period in 2020.

Although China remains TikTok's largest market in terms of consumer spending, its share has diminished significantly. In Q4 2021, 57 per cent of spending came from Chinese users, whereas China's App Store repre-

mented 85 per cent of in-app spending in Q4 2020.

The US maintained its rank as the number two revenue-generator for TikTok, with its share in spending growing Y/Y. In June 2020, the Indian government banned the popular short-form video app TikTok along with several other Chinese apps amid border tensions with China.



is growing fast. "People have a lot of choices for how they want to spend their time, and apps like TikTok are growing

very quickly," he said during Meta's earnings call this week.

Consumer spending in ByteDance's short video platform



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India colts eye 5th crown

Dhull and co. on course to extend India's undisputed dominance at ICC U-19 World Cup as they face England in a blockbuster final



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

North Sound (Antigua), Feb 4: Eight finals and four trophies in 14 editions make India the most successful team in the U-19 World Cup history.

And come Saturday, they look on course for a record-extending fifth title given the depth of talent and form but standing in the way is a driven English team, chasing its own piece of history in what promises to be an enthralling summit clash.

Yash Dhull and co. will aim to add to India's rich legacy when they take on England at the Sir Vivian

Richards Stadium here.

India have had a rather smooth run into the final despite a massive off the field setback when skipper Dhull and his deputy Shaik Rasheed missed two of the three league games due to COVID-19.

Dhull, who had the worst symptoms among the infected players, has lived up to his highly rated talent in the three innings he has played so far including the sublime hundred in the semifinal. Rasheed has also shown his brilliance with the bat and is certainly the one to watch out for in the future.

Opener Angkrish Raghuvanshi

and Harnoor Singh were extra cautious in their approach in the semifinal against Australia and the duo will need to change their approach for the summit clash.

What makes India's bunch of teenagers look the part is their unexpected maturity. The way Dhull and Rasheed batted after a poor start against Australia was a lesson in pacing the innings.

Only a few out of the current

lot are likely to graduate to the highest level in the years to follow but in the short term, a special performance Saturday afternoon can land them a life changing IPL deal at the upcoming mega auc-

tion.

While the batters have put up individual performances, the bowling department has fired in unison. The extra pace of Rajvardhan Hangarekar and swing of left-arm Ravi Kumar has rattled the top order batters while the Vicky Ostwal-led spin attack has stifled the opposition in the middle overs. He is India's leading wicket-taker with 12 scalps at 10.75.

Summing up team's confidence ahead of the final, Rasheed said: "We are a very good team. We are looking to win the finals."

The U-19 stars are also getting to learn from the best. Virat Kohli, who

went on to become a world beater after captaining India U-19 to the title in 2008, gave a pep talk to the class of 2022 on how to approach the high pressure final.

They face England, a team which last reached the title clash way back in 1998 when it won its sole trophy till date. After a tense finish in the semifinal against Afghanistan, England will be more than keen to end their title drought of the last 24 years.

Like India, England too remain unbeaten in the tournament. Captain Tom Prest has led from the front with 292 runs at an average of 73 while left-arm pacer Joshua Boyden has taken 13 wickets at a stellar average of 9.53.

India batters will also need to be wary of wrist spinner Rehan Ahmed who is tasked with providing breakthroughs in the middle overs.

Irrespective of the result on final, the Indian boys have had their moment in the sun in the Caribbean but given the high expectations they set for themselves, they will settle for nothing less than a trophy.

THE SQUADS

India: Yash Dhull (C), Harnoor Singh, Angkrish Raghuvanshi, Shaik Rasheed, Nishant Sindhu, Siddarth Yadav, Aneeshwar Gautam, Manav Parakh, Kaushal Tambe, Rajvardhan Hangarekar, Vicky Ostwal, Garv Sangwan, Dinesh Bana, Aaradhya Yadav, Raj Bawa, Vasu Vats & Ravi Kumar.

England: Tom Prest (C), George Bell, Joshua Boyden, Alex Horton, Rehan Ahmed, James Sales, George Thomas, Thomas Aspinwall, Nathan Barnwell, Jacob Bethell, James Coles, William Luxton, James Rew, Fateh Singh & Benjamin Cliff.

AGARKAR'S RECKONING

'Being fit till 2023 WC, a challenge for Rohit'



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 4: Former pacer Ajit Agarkar reckons the biggest challenge for India's new white-ball skipper Rohit Sharma is to remain fit ahead of T20 and ODI World Cup scheduled over the next 24 months.

Rohit was appointed skipper after Virat Kohli stepped down as captain from T20Is and was removed from the leadership role in ODIs.

"I think it's a good thing and the right thing to do - to have one captain for white-ball format and now Rohit actually can fly" Agrakar said on the Star Sports.

With the T20 World Cup later this year in Australia and ODI World Cup next year looming large, Agarkar feels the captain should be present with the team, something he believes worked for former skipper Kohli and MS Dhoni.

"So, the challenge for Rohit Sharma - in my opinion - is to stay fit and play everything that is there, from now to the World Cup in white-ball cricket, because you want the captain - that was one of Virat Kohli's strengths or MS Dhoni before that, they rarely missed games, and both were very fit," Agarkar said.

Rohit had missed the Test series against South Africa due to a left-hamstring injury. He was subsequently also forced to skip the ODIs against the Proteas as he couldn't attain full fitness before the selection committee announced the team.

The hamstring has been a recurrent problem which also forced him to miss the first two Test matches as well as the white-ball leg of the tour of Australia in 2020-21. However, Rohit is back in charge for the series against West Indies that starts with ODIs in Ahmedabad from February 6.

Athletic Bilbao knock Real out

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Madrid, Feb 4: It took a goal near the end for Athletic Bilbao to finally get the better of Real Madrid and reach the Copa del Rey semifinals for the third straight season.

Alex Berenguer scored in the 89th minute to give Athletic a 1-0 victory in the quarterfinal at San Mamés Stadium Thursday, ending a three-match losing streak for the Basque Country team against Madrid.

It was the fourth meeting between the clubs in two months, with Madrid winning in the final of the Spanish Super Cup last month in Saudi Arabia and twice in Spanish league matches in December.

Athletic reached the last two Copa finals, losing to Basque Country rival Real Sociedad in 2020 and Barcelona last season.

Madrid, the only top club still



Alex Berenguer (R) reacts after scoring against Real Madrid, Thursday

left after Barcelona and Atlético Madrid were eliminated in the last 16, hasn't made it to the semifinals since 2018-19, when it lost to Barcelona. It hasn't won the competition since 2014.

Real Betis earlier Thursday won 4-0 at Sociedad and returned to

the last four for the first time since 2018-19. Wednesday, 2019 champion Valencia reached its second Copa semifinal in four years by defeating Cádiz 2-1, while Rayo Vallecano made the last four for the first time in four decades by beating Mallorca 1-0.

OCA HOPES TO HOST INDIA-SA T20I IN JUNE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Feb 4: The iconic Barabati Stadium here is likely to be among the hosts for one of the T20I matches against South Africa in June this year, said Odisha Cricket Association (OCA) secretary Sanjay Behera.

The preliminary discussion for hosting the match has already been held with the BCCI president Sourav Ganguly, said Behera, Friday.

"We are planning to organise the forthcoming T20 match between India and South Africa in June. We have held talks with the BCCI president in this regard," said Behera.

The news nullified the setback of missing out on the T20I against West Indies, which was supposed to be played at the Barabati Stadium, but later moved to the Eden Gardens in Kolkata due to the Covid wave.

Peng free to move in China: IOC



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Beijing, Feb 4: IOC President Thomas Bach says Peng Shuai has told Olympic officials she can move freely in Beijing and spend time with family and friends.

Bach's promised dinner with the tennis player is widely anticipated amid global concern for her safety after she accused a former Chinese Communist Party official of sexual assault.

Peng's brief public appearances



in the three months since have not assured tennis officials and human rights activists of her well-being. The IOC and Bach have been criticized for taking part in video conferences with her that could not be independently verified.

Bach says "we will know better about her physical integrity and about her mental state when we can finally meet in person." No details about the dinner during the Beijing Olympics have been given.

The IOC president says if Peng

wants an official Chinese investigation into her allegations "we would also support her in this."

Czech hockey star David Krejci tested positive for the coronavirus upon arrival in Beijing and missed the team's first full pre-Olympic practice. Coach Filip Pesan says Krejci is still in the athletes village awaiting more COVID-19 test results. Pesan voiced optimism about Krejci being cleared Friday after a similar situation unfolded with another player.

The 35-year-old longtime Boston Bruins center is expected to be among the best players in the tournament without NHL players. Krejci won the Stanley Cup with Boston in 2011 and has 854 points in 1,118 regular-season and playoff games.

Krejci was almost a point-a-game player last season for the Bruins. He left to go home and play in the Czech Extraliga so friends and family could watch him up close before he retired.

CA approves first tour of Pakistan in 24 years

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Karachi, Feb 4: Cricket Australia (CA) Friday approved its first tour of Pakistan in 24 years with a revised itinerary being announced by both the boards amid lingering security concerns. Australia will play three Tests in Rawalpindi, Karachi and Lahore. They will also play three one day internationals and a T20I during the full tour.

The tour will now start and end in Rawalpindi with the opening Test to be played from 48 March and the four white-ball matches to be played from 29 March to 5 April.

Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chief executive Faisal Hasnain said: "We are pleased that the Cricket Australia Board has formally approved their side's five-week tour itinerary and confirmed that their best available players will visit Pakistan for the first time in 24 years."

"We are really excited to host Pat Cummins and his players, and look forward to a competitive series that will comprise three Tests, three ODIs and a T20I."

The tour comes as a huge boost for Pakistan, which was hit hard when New Zealand and England abruptly pulled out from their scheduled tour of the country last year over security concerns.

Top-flight international cricket



did not take place in Pakistan for nearly a decade since the 2009 terrorist attack on the Sri Lankan team bus in Lahore.

The schedule has been revised to ease logistical and operational challenges as well as to avoid Pakistan Day rehearsals, which usually commence in Islamabad in the second week of March.

The two cricket boards have also agreed that the Australia Test side will complete its isolation in Australia, before arriving in Islamabad February 27 on a chartered flight. After a one-day hotel isolation, they will hold training sessions at the Pindi Cricket Stadium.

The Tests will be part of the ICC World Test Championship, while the ODIs are linked to the World Cup Super League.

Ganguly opens up on rumours, criticisms

From COVID-19 disruptions to allegations that he has tried to influence selectors to criticism that not enough has been done for women's cricket during his tenure, Sourav Ganguly has endured a challenging 26 months as BCCI President. But in an exclusive interview with PTI, the former India captain not just rejected the accusations thrown at him but also offered a gentle reminder to his critics. Excerpts...

■ There have been allegations that you have been influencing the selection committee and you sit in the meetings to put pressure on the selectors?

● I don't think I need to answer anybody anything (on this) and dignify any of these baseless accusations. I am the president of BCCI and I do the job of what the president of BCCI should be doing. Also just to let you know, I see a picture doing the rounds (of social media) showing me sitting in a selection committee meeting. I want to make it clear; that picture (where Ganguly can be seen sitting with secretary Jay Shah, skipper Virat Kohli and joint secretary Jayesh George) wasn't from a selection committee meeting. Jayesh George isn't a part of selection committee meetings. (I have played) 424 international matches for India. Not a bad idea at times to remind peo-

ple about it, isn't it? (laughs)

■ How has been your working relationship with Jay Shah in the last 26 months in the Indian cricket board?

● I share a fantastic relationship with Jay. He is a very dear friend and a trusted colleague. Me, Jay, Arun (Dhuma) and Jayesh (George), we have all been working together to get the board going in these difficult times especially with COVID-19 in these two years. To make sure that cricket happens. I would say it has been a fantastic two years. We have all done it as a team.

■ What kind of a new Test captain are you looking at after Virat Kohli's decision to step down?

● Obviously, there are certain parameters of leadership and whoever fits the bill will be the next Indian Test captain. I believe selectors will have a name in mind and they will discuss it with of-

fice-bearers - President and Secretary - and it will be announced in due course of time.

■ You had recently said that Rahane and Pujara will be playing Ranji Trophy. But does that mean they can get dropped for Sri Lanka Tests although that is now pushed to March?

● What I meant was that they will play Ranji Trophy as it starts before the Sri Lanka series. After that, the selectors will take a call. Ranji Trophy Elite group starts in third week of February and Sri Lanka Tests are in March. It will completely be the call of selection committee and whatever they decide.

■ Let's talk about Ranji Trophy. The BCCI is finally getting it started but even after increasing match fee to up to ₹2.4 lakh per game for a certain bracket, most teams would end up playing only three first-class



T20 club meet?

● We are at the level of formulation to have a full-fledged WIPL. It is certainly going to happen. I strongly believe that next year i.e. 2023 will be a very good time to start a full-fledged women's IPL which will be as big and grand a success as men's IPL.

■ Any special celebrations for India's 1000th ODI, which will be against the West Indies Sunday?

● No, nothing as such as everything is being held in the bubble. We have to maintain the COVID-19 protocols so yes elaborate celebrations won't be possible and in any case matches are being held closed doors.

■ The state government has allowed 75 per cent spectators at the Eden Gardens for the three T20Is. But isn't BCCI wary given Motera is having closed-door ODIs?

● Let me put this on record. We are not allowing spectators at the Eden Gardens for the three T20Is. There will not be any tickets for general public. The only people allowed are CAB officials and representatives of the various units. No tickets for the stands of Wife or Associate members will be issued. Obviously, we have the clearance of West Bengal government but BCCI doesn't want to risk the health safety of players.

games. Isn't it a financial loss and an issue for all stakeholders?

● They have played Vijay Hazare and Syed Mushtaq Ali also where the match money has increased. You have to understand that after we discussed with the medical team, it was decided to keep four teams in a group in a particular city as that was the only way we could probably maintain the sanctity of a bio-bubble in COVID times. More number of individuals in any particular place would increase the rate of infections. That's why venues are more and teams are less. The time-frame, as we had postponed the mid-January start due to spike in cases, was also a factor.

■ Why isn't BCCI starting the women's IPL straightaway? Why again a T20 Challenge when a state unit like CAB is having a six team 90-player women's