



## TAAPSEE STAYS FOCUSED

Actor Taapsee Pannu is not letting her fight with Kangana Ranaut disturb her work, as she is focusing on shooting

LEISURE P2



## AMERICA IS BACK: BIDEN

US Prez Biden Thursday said his admin will repair relationships with allies and engage with the world once again

INTERNATIONAL P10



## ENGLAND IN CONTROL

Skipper Joe Root led from the front with an unbeaten century to help England reach 263/3 on Day 1

SPORTS P12

### IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Don't worry, dear. I will be fine. These days police are too busy with standup comedians, jurnos, environmentalists,...

## 'TAKE COVID JAB OR FACE SALARY CUT'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Feb 5: Healthcare and Anganwadi workers in the district will face a pay cut for refusing to take COVID-19 vaccine, district Collector Bhabani Shankar Chayani said Friday.

"It has been found that a large number of health/Anganwadi workers who have registered themselves under different establishments are not turning up for COVID-19 vaccination. As vaccination coverage in Cuttack is one of the lowest in the state, it is causing a great embarrassment," the Collector said in a letter to Cuttack Municipal Corporation commissioner, SCB Medical College and Hospital principal and dean, Cuttack chief district medical & public health officer and a few other officials.

Chayani also requested the top officials to sensitise the health/Anganwadi workers to come forward for vaccination. "Further, you may instruct the persons registered under different establishments under your jurisdiction to take COVID-19 vaccine positively by February 10 - the last date for vaccination of the health/Anganwadi workers - failing which their salary/remuneration/stipend for the month will not be drawn," the Cuttack Collector said in the letter.

### MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VAIATION
SENSEX	50731.63 ↑ 117.34
NIFTY	14924.30 ↑ 28.60
DOLLAR	73.36 ↓ ₹0.08
EURO	87.53 ↓ ₹0.25
GOLD	₹47,084 ↑ ₹369
SILVER	₹68,027 ↑ ₹1,209

### WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP. MAX	31.6°C	31.8°C
TEMP. MIN	13°C	12.6°C
Humidity	89%	72%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

Forecast: Fog or mist in the morning

# Farmers call pan-India 'chakka jam' today

THE BLOCKADE WILL NOT BE HELD IN NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION, UP AND UTTARAKHAND

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi/Ghaziabad, Feb 5: Protesting farmers will not block roads in Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand during the nationwide 'chakka jam' Saturday even as agitating unions asserted that peasants in other parts of the country will block national and state highways for three hours but in a peaceful way.

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha, an umbrella body of the farmer unions protesting the three farm laws, said emergency and essential services such as ambulance and school bus will not be stopped during the 'chakka jam' that is proposed to be held between 12 pm and 3 pm.

Bharatiya Kisan Union leader Rakesh Tikait said that there will no road blockade in Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand Saturday, but added that farmers in these two states can be called to the national capital any time and that they have been kept on standby.

Talking to reporters at the Ghazipur protest site, Tikait said that farmers in small groups will submit a memorandum to district headquarters in Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

Thousands of farmers, mostly from Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh, have been camping at three Delhi border points - Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur - for over 70 days, demanding a complete repeal of three Central farm laws.

"There will be no 'chakka jam' programme inside Delhi since all the protest sites are already in a 'chakka



Farmers plant flowers near the spikes fixed by the police, during their protest against new farm laws, at Ghazipur border in New Delhi, Friday

jam' mode. All roads for entering into Delhi will remain open except where farmers' protest sites are already located," the SKM said in a statement.

In a bid to avoid what happened during farmers' tractor parade on Republic Day, the Delhi Police has taken additional measures this time, including tightening security and intensifying vigil at the city's border points, to deal with any situation emerging out of the 'chakka jam', officials said.

Delhi Police Commissioner SN Shrivastava also held a meeting with

the senior officers of the force and reviewed the security arrangements.

After the January 26 violence that had left over 500 security personnel injured and one protestor dead, Shrivastava had accused the protesting union leaders of betrayal and breaching agreement as thousands of peasants deviated from their pre-decided routes for the tractor parade.

Tens of thousands of farmers atop tractors had broken barriers, clashed with police and entered the city from various points to lay siege to the Red Fort

## Probe into 'foreign hand' in farmers' stir

NEW DELHI: A multi-agency probe is currently underway to look into the allegations of involvement of foreign forces in the farmers' movement, especially in the collection of funds and its use in supporting the agitation in India. The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has sought information from at least five countries, including the UK, USA, Canada, Denmark and Sweden in connection with its investigation in the Gurupatwant Singh Pannu-led Sikhs for Justice (SFJ) and other Khalistani extremist groups. The move was confirmed by MEA spokesperson Anurag Srivastava when he said that a request has gone to the United States under the Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT).

and climb the flagpole on Republic Day. On Friday, Darshan Pal, a senior member of Samyukt Kisan Morcha, said that 'chakka jam' will remain completely peaceful and non-violent, adding that protesters have been asked to not to indulge in any conflict with government officials or any citizen.

The SKM had earlier this week announced this nationwide 'chakka jam' Saturday, saying that farmers would block national and state highways for three hours in protest against the Internet ban in areas near their agitation sites, harassment allegedly meted out to them by authorities, and other issues.

# CM launches ₹13cr projects in Kotia

AFTER ANDHRA ANNOUNCES POLLS, ODISHA LAUNCHES PROJECTS IN KOTIA

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 5: Amidst the border dispute with neighbouring Andhra Pradesh, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Friday inaugurated developmental projects worth ₹13 crore for Kotia Panchayat in Pattangi region of Koraput district. He also laid the foundation stone of a bridge estimated to cost ₹5 crore.

In the notification for the polls, it has included Talaganjeipadar, Phatuseneri and Phagnaseneri villages under Salur block. Inaugurating the projects through video-conferencing mode, Naveen said "Kotia will be transformed into an ideal Gram Panchayat." All-round development works in education, health, connectivity, drinking water and electricity supply will be undertaken in the region," he said. The Chief Minister said he will very soon visit Kotia area to meet the people.

Besides, social and food security are being provided to people in Kotia and initiatives have been taken to ensure a better livelihood of the people. Patnaik said the government has been initiating de-

velopmental activities across the state spanning from Malkangiri to Mayurbhanj and Koraput to Cuttack.

"Odisha is our mother, Odia is our language, Mahaprabhu Jagannath is our supreme deity, Jagannath culture is our culture and Koraput is our second Srikhetra," he said.

Highlighting on the pivotal role played by Koraput during India's freedom movement, the Chief Minister paid his homage to great freedom fighter Saheed Laxman Nayak. A special documentary on the developmental activities in Kotia region was also presented on the occasion.

The move came after Andhra Pradesh government announced panchayat elections in bordering villages of Kotia scheduled February 13 and 17. In view of the controversy, the state government Friday transferred Koraput Collector Madhusudan Mishra ahead of the polls.

In 2018, the CM had announced a special package worth ₹150 crore for development of Kotia panchayat. Both Odisha and Andhra Pradesh are claiming the Kotia region as their land.

# Victim was one-month pregnant: Sources

HIGH-LEVEL PROBE ORDERED TO IDENTIFY HEADLESS WOMAN'S BODY, KILLERS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 5: The Commissionerate Police Friday set up a special team headed by an Additional DCP rank official to probe the ghastly murder of an unidentified woman whose headless body was found in Chandaka area here Thursday. Speaking to the media, DCP Umashankar Dash said that the additional DCP will be assisted by five other senior officials of city police.

Meanwhile, the headless body was Friday sent to the AIIMS, Bhubaneswar, for further examinations. Earlier, medical officers at the Capital Hospital had Thursday conducted post-mortem of the body.

The investigating cops hope to get several vital clues from the autopsy report. Meanwhile, sources in the police revealed startling facts about the deceased lady. The cops suspect that the victim was probably one-month pregnant at the time of her murder.

The sources also claimed that the miscreants had reportedly strangled the victim to death several hours before bringing her body to the spot on Dasapur-Andharua road. The accused allegedly severed her head at the secluded spot near Dasapur village where the body was found Thursday morning.

Later, they fled from the spot along with the severed head, which they might have disposed somewhere else. The cops also found C-section surgery marks on the

torso of the victim. However, police are yet to ascertain the identity of the deceased. Senior police official told ORISSA POST that the lady might be a native of some other state. They have no clue to identify the woman apart from the one anchor-shaped branding mark on her arm.

The police also sent the details regarding the lady to police stations in the neighboring states to identify of the victim. The slum dwellers near the spot are also being questioned.



Myanmarese refugees in India participate in a protest against the ousting of Myanmar's elected government and its leader Aung San Suu Kyi in New Delhi, Friday

## HSC Matric exams to commence from May 3

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 5: The School and Mass Education department Friday announced the dates of the High School Certificate (HSC) Matriculation examination-2021. The exams will be conducted from May 3 to 15 and the students will answer their papers at their own school.

Similarly, Madhyama (Sanskrit) exam will be conducted from May 3-12, while Open School exam will be held from May 3-15, a statement issued by the department said.

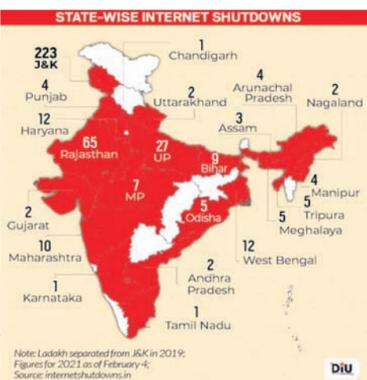


In an academic year marred by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Class X students will answer questions for 80 marks in each paper instead of 100 marks. This year, the Board of Secondary Education (BSE) had extended the last date for filling up of forms for matriculation examinations. The BSE said the last date for filling up and submitting of forms has been extended to February 10. Earlier, the BSE had announced February 2 as the last date for filling up of forms.

The state government has also decided to conduct parent-teacher meetings (PTMs) for Class X students across Odisha February 13 for the upcoming annual HSC examination-2021.

# Each Internet shutdown costs India ₹2 crore/hour

MORE THAN 400 INTERNET SHUTDOWNS IN 4 YEARS SHOW INDIA BLOCKS ITS INTERNET MORE FREQUENTLY THAN ANY OTHER DEMOCRACY



AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 5: The year 2021 has started with a series of Internet lockdowns in India. The country has seen seven incidences of internet shutdowns - including five cases at the farmers' protest site in Haryana and the national capital region in the last one month. The suspension of internet services around the protest site has attracted attention across the world even as the government has not extended the internet shut down at the farmers' protest site.

The US State Department said that it considers unhindered ac-

cess to information, including the internet, fundamental to the freedom of expression and a hallmark of a thriving democracy.

Jhajjar, Sonipat, and Palwal districts in Haryana have borne the maximum brunt of the recent Internet shutdowns. However, internet shutdowns are not uncommon in India. The country has witnessed more than 400 internet shutdowns in the last four years.

In fact, the world's longest Internet shutdown was also reported in India. The internet was shut down in Jammu and Kashmir after Article 370 was ab-

rogated in the Parliament between August 4, 2019, and March 4, 2020, for 223 days.

India shuts it's Internet down more frequently than any other democracy in the world, said a report by Forbes. Within India, Jammu and Kashmir faced the maximum Internet outage. Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Haryana, and Maharashtra follow Jammu and Kashmir. The shutdown lasts for days in many cases. 21 shutdowns in 2017, five in 2018, and six shutdowns in 2019 lasted for more than three days.

Indian laws include the provision to shut down the Internet.

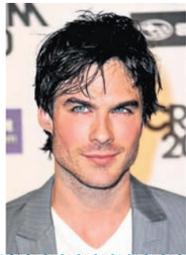
The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) provides 'Temporary Suspension of Telecom Services (Public Emergency or Public Safety) Rules, 2017,' which allows temporarily suspending the telecom services, including that of the internet in an area. The suspension order can either be issued by the Union Home Secretary or the State Home Secretary in an event of public emergency or in the interest of public safety.

Countries, such as India, which have laws that facilitate and legalise shutdowns tend to order more shutdowns, said a report

by AccessNow. The Internet shutdowns in India have not only been imposed due to undesirable events. Out of the 79 shutdowns in 2017, 61 were preventive while only 18 were reactive, according to InternetShutdowns.in. Further in 2018, 67 incidents of Internet shutdowns were preventive while the same number of shutdowns was reactive.

Internet shutdown also hurts the economy. A report by top10vpn revealed that the cost of the Internet shutdown in India was \$2.7 billion in 2020 as it continued for 8,927 hours, including hours of simultaneous shutdowns at different places.

# leisure



## IAN SOMERHALDER SHARES KEY TO A GOOD ROMANCE

Actor Ian Somerhalder says communication is the key to a healthy marriage. The actor also revealed that he and his wife Nikki Reed always make sure they speak to each other and make time for themselves as a couple.

## THE WHITE TIGER MAKES IT TO BAFTA LONGLIST IN SEVEN CATEGORIES

The White Tiger has found mentions across top categories in the longlist of the BAFTAs this year. The White Tiger has found mention in seven categories – Best Film, Best Director, Adapted Screenplay, Leading Actor, Supporting Actress, Cinematography and Editing.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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

**ARIES**  
You are deeply interested in the occult and the paranormal and today, you may indulge in something to do with it. So, you may buy a full colour 15x10 glossy on shamanic rites or the tantra! Ganesh suggests using such knowledge for peaceful ends.

**TAURUS**  
This day your mind is likely to be blissfully drawn towards your personal friends and family members. Your warm and intimate relationships will stay uppermost in your mind and fill the day, not leaving room for anything else.

**GEMINI**  
You will keep your emotions aside and concentrate solely on your work today. You will have to waste a lot of time in fulfilling the demands made by those around you. However, the more demands you fulfill, the more their expectations will rise, says Ganesh.

**CANCER**  
New positive turn in life of lovers. It may lead to marriage. You will play role in bonding all members of the joint family and will meet with success, you will respect tradition and custom. Adopt a careful approach, counsels Ganesh.

**LEO**  
You will be extremely serious about your work today and will work diligently to finish your tasks. You will be focussed and disciplined about your projects. You will feel the need to improve your style of functioning.

**VIRGO**  
Your ambitions and desire to undertake more work will be very prominent today. After working hard all day, try to get yourself some recreation and relaxation, perhaps at a private party, a social gathering or maybe even at a marriage reception, says Ganesh.

**LIBRA**  
You will be drawn towards those of the opposite sex today says Ganesh. You will meet people who share the same wavelength that you do in the afternoon, and this will lead to a lot of interesting discussions.

**SCORPIO**  
Expressing your feelings becomes important at some point of time. Today, you are in a mood to express emotions for your near and dear ones. And why not? After all, they need to be appreciated. Though your heart is full of emotions today, do not express in a way that you become vulnerable in eyes of general public.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
No wonder, if you feel like you are stuck in a rut. Your energy level and enthusiasm has gone for a toss due to mundane routine. Unfortunately, your stars too seem to be lazy today, and there's nothing on the cards that can cheer you up.

**CAPRICORN**  
At times you are very direct in your approach and often end up hurting your near ones badly. Today, you'll bandage some old wounds and make efforts to restore old relationships, says Ganesh.

**AQUARIUS**  
The cupid may strike you today! The singles may feel the energy and excitement of budding romance. Equally blissful day for the married couples, too, as they will spend quality time with each other. Go down the memory lane, go through some photo albums and cherish those long lost moments, says Ganesh.

**PISCES**  
Unexpected expenses are likely to crop up today. There are strong indications that you will set out upon a journey or a picnic to some nearby place, without too much prior planning. However, the journey will be comfortable and your travel plans will go off without a hitch.

## Ayushmann opens up on his look in Anek

**Mumbai:** National Award-winning Bollywood star Ayushmann Khurrana collaborates once again with filmmaker Anubhav Sinha in the upcoming film *Anek*, and his slit eyebrow in the first look stills has generated widespread interest among fans. The actor says the idea was to create a distinct look.

Opening about his character Joshua in the film, he said: "I have been fortunate to collaborate with filmmakers who encourage me to add my creative inputs to their vision of storytelling. The eyebrow slit I am sporting in *Anek* was an idea I discussed with Anubhav sir. It was about creating a distinct look that the audience has never seen me in, and I am glad that people have noticed and are discussing it."

Ayushmann, who is known to be Bollywood's Mr Disruptor for his unconventional roles, says he has found support within the industry to

take risks while portraying unusual roles.

"I have always been an eager artiste who wants to contribute towards building my characters and how it will look on screen," Ayushmann noted, adding: "I always make these mental notes and discuss them."

He falls back on recent instances to make his point. "In *Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan*, for instance, my character wears a nose ring. I had bounced this idea off (director) Hitesh (Kewalya) and (producer) Anand Rai sir. I am glad they took this input. Similarly, Shoojit (Sircar) sir was happy with the idea that I would have a lisp in *Gulabo Sitabo*," he recalled.

Ayushmann liked to be an 'active voice' when he teams up with someone.

IAN S



## Taapsee stays focused amid chaos

**Mumbai:** Actress Taapsee Pannu is not letting her fight with actress Kangana Ranaut come in the way of her work, and says she is focusing on the shoot of her upcoming film, *Loop Lapeta*, amid all the chaos. Taapsee Friday used Instagram to share her state of mind along with a picture where she looks at a scene being shot.

"When you are in between 2 perspectives, in middle of wired up chaos and what you do in the frame is going to matter..... chin up, feet up and just focus! Coz not everybody gets this privilege....(Also coz u r getting clicked by the lens man doubling up as producer @atulkasbekar) #LoopLapeta #SetDiaries #SaviTheChiller," she captioned the image.

*Loop Lapeta* is a Hindi adaptation of the 1998 German film *Run Lola Run*, starring Franka Potente and directed by Tom Tykwer. Bollywood has already adapted the concept in 2003, by way of late Anant Balani's *Ek Din 24 Ghante*, starring Nandita Das and Rahul Bose.

*Loop Lapeta* is directed by Aakash Bhatia and slated to release later this year.

Kangana Thursday had slammed Taapsee for supporting farmers. Taapsee had tweeted: "If one tweet rattles your unity, one joke rattles your faith or one show rattles your religious belief then it's you who has to work on strengthening your value system not become 'propaganda teacher' for others."

IAN S

## Saif on becoming father again

**New Delhi:** Bollywood actor Saif Ali Khan is looking forward to embrace fatherhood again as his wife Kareena Kapoor Khan is expected to deliver their second baby this month. Saif says fatherhood has made him stable, and that at the moment he is in a position to enjoy having children around.

"It was great fun, the entire process, especially the making!" Saif joked when we congratulate him. Asked how fatherhood has changed him, the 50-year-old actor told IANS: "I think there is a certain amount of more patience and stability in life. I was more impatient earlier, and little more concerned with what I'm doing and where I'm going, and (it was) unsettling generally. (I was) trying like most people to

balance, trying to be stable for children at the same time, the instability of your own career," he added.

The actor continued: "But now, I think I am more settled. I'm in a position to just enjoy having family around and having children around. It's a good phase."

Saif and Kareena, who are fondly called as Saifeena by their fans, got married in 2012. They also share a son, Taimur. Saif also has son Ibrahim and daughter Sara Ali Khan from his first marriage with actress Amrita Singh.

It is not just his personal life that seeing new beginnings. There has been redefinition on the professional front, too. His career found a new boost when he ventured into digital space, and wowed audiences with *Sacred Games*. He was also seen in the controversial web show, *Tandav*.

Opening up about the changing tone of entertainment space, he said: "Everything is in kind of flux (right now). The world is changing in many ways. We don't even know how it's going to change... But there is a lot of uncertainty!"

IAN S



## Rituparna plays blind woman in Antardrishti

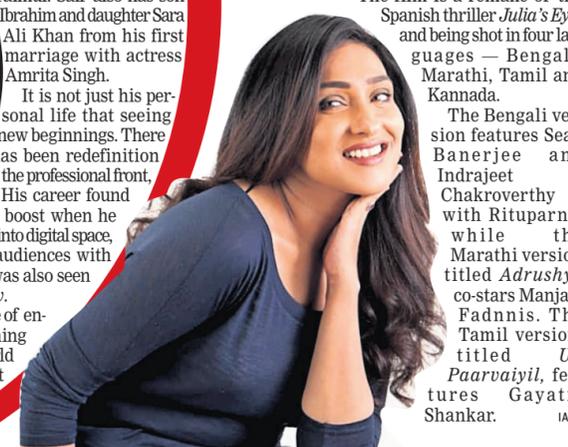
**Mumbai:** Bengali star Rituparna Sengupta is currently shooting for *Antardrishti* in Uttarakhand. The film marks the directorial debut of the veteran cinematographer Kabir Lal, and is a revenge thriller.

Speaking to IANS in between shots, Rituparna said: "The film is a thriller and the story of two sisters. It is a murder mystery in which the younger sister gets killed. The story follows the elder sister's (played by her) journey to find the truth behind the mysterious death. My character is visually challenged. So, it is very interesting to see how she navigates her way to uncover the truth."

The film is a remake of the Spanish thriller *Julia's Eyes* and being shot in four languages – Bengali, Marathi, Tamil and Kannada.

The Bengali version features Sean Banerjee and Indrajeet Chakroverthy with Rituparna, while the Marathi version titled *Adrushya* co-stars Manjari Fadnis. The Tamil version, titled *Un Paarvaiyil*, features Gayatri Shankar.

IAN S



### PEANUTS



### CALVIN AND HOBBS

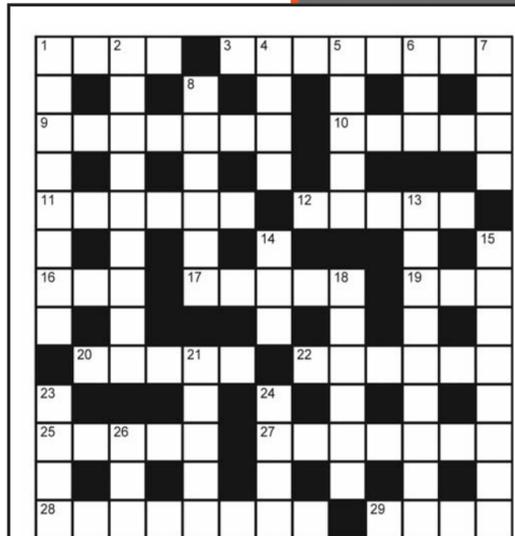


### BREVITY



### FUN post

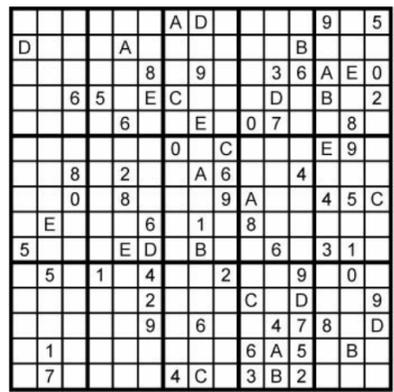
### CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Fortuneteller
  - 3 Disney was one
  - 9 Quick bread
  - 10 Place for a barbecue
  - 11 Hot spots
  - 12 Dog command
  - 16 Egg cells
  - 17 Tidal bore
  - 19 Feel flush
  - 20 Dabbling ducks
  - 22 Nook
  - 25 Discover
  - 27 Sudden increase
  - 28 Merits
  - 29 Creative spark
  - 8 Wine order
  - 13 Made loud demands
  - 14 Epoch
  - 15 Skin cream ingredient (4,4)
  - 18 Register
  - 21 Like some eclipses
  - 23 Musher's transport
  - 24 Hoodwink
  - 26 Commercial
- Down**
- 1 Kind of hare
  - 2 Followers
  - 4 Call for
  - 5 Syrup flavor
  - 6 Moppet
  - 7 Chess piece

### SUDOKU

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



### SOLUTIONS

#### CROSSWORD

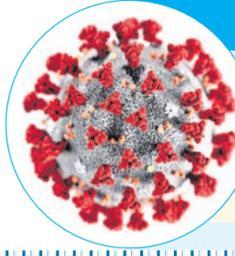


CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



## MATTER OF LIVELIHOOD

With the easing of Covid-19 restrictions, large number of vending stalls have come up on Puri beach



## COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	10,55,95,765	7,73,00,019	22,99,320
India	1,08,02,591	1,04,96,308	1,54,823
Odisha	3,35,466	3,32,611	1,908

# Rail Budget designed to loot Odisha: BJD

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 5:** A day after the Centre said that it has allocated around Rs 6,995 crore for the development of railway sector in Odisha, the ruling BJD Friday said that the Railway Budget was made with an intention to loot minerals from the state.

Addressing a presser here, BJD spokesperson Lenin Mohanty said Odisha was once again neglected by the Centre in the Railway Budget for the year 2021-22.

"During British rule, railway line was constructed in Odisha to loot minerals. Unfortunately, the incumbent government at the Centre is also doing the same thing 75 years after the Independence," Mohanty said.

If coal is not extracted from Odisha, power and steel sector in the entire country would suffer a lot, he said, adding, "In return, Odisha is getting nothing except for pollution." During past 75 years, only six new railway lines have been constructed in the state. These lines are—Cuttack-Paradip, Talcher-



BJD spokespersons Lenin Mohanty, Shreemayee Mishra and Sulata Deo address the media persons in Bhubaneswar, Friday

**During British rule, railway line was constructed in Odisha to loot minerals. Unfortunately, the incumbent government at the Centre is also doing the same thing 75 years after the Independence**

LEIN MOHANTY | BJD SPOKESPERSON

**The railway projects were delayed in the state due to delay in land acquisition by the state government**

GOLAK MOHAPATRA | BJP SPOKESPERSON

Sambalpur, Koraput-Rayagada, Daitari-Bansapani, Lanjigarh-Junagarh and Khurda-Bolangir, he said. Six districts namely, Kandhamal, Boudh, Mayurbhanj, Kendrapara, Deogarh and Malkangiri are yet to see trains, he said. The BJD leader further said the Union government has collected

approximately Rs 20,000 crore from Odisha in railway sector. "During past seven years, it had collected about Rs 1,40,000 crore. However, in return, the state has got Rs 14,000 crore in railways. Is it not step-motherly attitude towards Odisha?" he asked.

Another BJD spokesperson Shreemayee Mishra asked Bolangir MP Sangeeta Singhdeo and Bhubaneswar MP Aparajita Sarangi to reply why the Khurda-Bolangir railway project has emerged as a 'historic slow project'.

Rubbishing the allegations, BJP spokesperson Golak Mohapatra said, "The railway projects were delayed in the state due to delay in land acquisition by the state government. Had the state government allotted land for the railway projects on time, the projects could have been taken up expeditiously and money would not have been remained unutilised," Mohapatra said.

The BJD should rise above politics and help in development of railway sector in the state, the BJP leader added.

# Divyang training centre head detained for sexual harassment

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 5:** The Commissionerate Police Friday detained Suresh Behera, the prime accused in alleged sexual harassment of the differently-abled students and women staff of a divyang training institution at Palaspalli under Airport police limits here.

However, police refused to divulge the details of the matter.

Behera, the head of 'All Odisha Orthopedically Handicapped Welfare Association', had been absconding following the registration of a sexual harassment case by a woman a few months ago. Police nabbed Behera from Nayagarh.

On February 1, the police had also arrested one Madhu Manjari Dhal, an employee of the institute, for allegedly torturing and forcing an inmate to keep sexual relationship with a person.



Pic for representation

**Accused Suresh Behera had been absconding after a sexual harassment case was registered a few months ago**

Notably, a special team has been formed by DCP, Bhubaneswar to probe the allegations of sexual harassment in the training institution for divyngs.

On other hand, the State Commission for Persons with Disabilities also took suo motu cognizance of the matter and launched a probe into the allegations of running of a sex racket at training centre in Airport police station area. A team of the commission, led by its chairperson Sulochana Das, visited the centre and met inmates

and office bearers January 25. The incident of alleged sexual abuse of the inmates and operation of a sex racket in the disability centre came to the fore after a lady brought the matter before media persons recently.

The woman also named a senior functionary of the centre and accused him of running a sex racket and even engaging inmates in the immoral activities by luring money. The woman had lodged a complaint in the Airport police station November 23 last year.

## Koraput coffee a big hit at Adivasi Mela

**BHUBANESWAR:** The Adivasi Mela-2021 being organised in the city here is witnessing huge footfall each passing day. The organic products sold in the fair have become a major attraction for the people. The Koraput coffee which is branded as one of the exotic coffee variety has been attracting large number of people to the fair. The then king of Koraput, Raj Bahadur Rama Chandra Deo, had started coffee plantation in the tribal-dominated district in 1930s. The coffee plantation was taken over by the government in 1960. At present, a joint venture of TDCCOL and the coffee board is producing 100 per cent Arabica premium roasted filter coffee having a smooth taste and richness of dark coffee beans.

## ROW OVER FARM BILLS

# Chakka Jam in state today

NO PLAN TO CLOSE DOWN PETROL PUMPS IN STATE, SAY OUTFITS

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 5:** Several farmer outfits in the state have planned to organise 'Chakka Jam' to press for fulfillment of their demands for amendments to the controversial farm laws of the Union government.

This comes after the call from 'Sanyukta Kisan Morcha', the umbrella body of farmer outfits fighting on the issue at national level. The Navmirman Krushak Sangathan, the All India Kishan Sangarsh Samanwaya Samiti and others have

planned to organise their agitations. The Chakka Jam has been planned from 12pm to 3pm across the state. "As per the call given by the Sanyukta Kisan Morcha, the Navmirman Krushak Sangathan (NKS) in the state has decided to observe the bandh in around 23 districts of the state to press for amendments in the controversial farm bills. Some other farmer outfits are likely to join us for the cause," Akshay Kumar, Convenor of NKS, Odisha said.

"We have always believed in non-violence and the chakka jam will

also follow discipline. There is no plan to close down petrol pumps. In Bhubaneswar, the agitation will be organized near Hanspal square while in other areas, the same will be done at important points," Akshay said. Suresh Panigrahi, General Secretary of the State All India Kishan Sangarsh Samanwaya Samiti Committee said, "The protests have been planned to unite the farmers and demand for amendments in the laws. We have planned to mobilise the farmers for the protests in Odisha too after the call from the umbrella organization."

# State asks 12 varsities to implement e-office

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 5:** In a bid to ensure transparency, effectiveness, accountability as well as convenience in work culture, the state government Friday asked 12 universities in the state to implement 'e-office system'.

Higher Education (HE) department Principal Secretary Saswat Mishra wrote to the vice chancellors of Utkal University, Berhampur University, Sambalpur University, Rama Devi Women's University, Ravenshaw University, Gangadhar Meher University, Fakir Mohan University, Khallikote University, Kalahandi University, Rajendra University, Maharaja Sriram Chandra Bhanja Deo University and Shree Jagannath Sanskrit University in this regard.

According to Mishra, the Centre for Modernizing Government

## TRANSPARENCY BOOST

■ e-office, a digital workplace solution, aims at ushering in transparency and expediting the pace of movement of files from one department to another in government/semi-government offices

■ The system will not only come handy for employees to locate files easily, but also go a long way in achieving the goal of paperless office

Initiative (CMGI), a society under the administrative control of General Administration and Public Grievances department, is the authorised agency in Odisha to implement e-office in state government offices and establishments, including state public universities.

"As e-office implementation expenditure is borne by CMGI out of its budget, state public universities don't have to incur any expenses for it. Therefore, the universities are directed to kindly contact CMGI

for early implementation of e-office in the universities," the HE department Principal Secretary pointed out.

Sources said that e-office, a digital workplace solution, aims at ushering in transparency and expediting the pace of movement of files from one department to another in government/semi-government offices.

"Since government offices deal with a lot of files that pass through several stages physically, it is not

only cumbersome but also time consuming. By implementing e-office, paperwork will be reduced to a great extent," said a source familiar with the ultramodern workplace solution.

It added that the e-office system will not only come handy for employees to locate files easily, but will also go a long way in achieving the goal of paperless office.

The HE department also wrote to the Registrars of Utkal University, Sambalpur University, Gangadhar Meher University and Khallikote University to revert with the details of physical as well as financial progress of the varsities funded under Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) at the earliest.

The institutions were expected to turn up with the details by January this year, but they could not, said a source.

## ROAD SAFETY AWARENESS



Women traffic police personnel take part in a road safety awareness rally in Cuttack, Friday

OP PHOTO

# Min calls for massive plantation drive in City

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 5:** Housing and Urban Development (H&UD) Minister Pratap Jena reviewed the progress of various projects being executed under Bhubaneswar Smart City Limited (BSCL) at Lok Seva Bhawan here, Friday. The minister advised the city authorities to undertake massive plantation drives across the Capital city in order to increase the green cover.

The minister said that the civic authorities should launch a sustained and detailed campaign to make the citizens aware of the various projects completed successfully and those being undertaken under the umbrella of smart city initiative.

Jena took immense interest in assessing the capacity, deadline, facilities and other details of the ongoing projects like ICOMC-BMC Building whose work is completed up to 9th floor. The iconic structure, once completed, will house the BMC and Smart City offices and the Integrated City Operations and Management Centre (ICOMC), which is currently functioning at the Smart City office at Sahid Nagar-

## SMART CITY PROJECTS



► Jena took immense interest in assessing the capacity, deadline, facilities and other details of the ongoing projects like ICOMC-BMC Building whose work is completed up to 9th floor

► The iconic structure, once completed, will house the BMC and Smart City offices and the Integrated City Operations and Management Centre

and Sahid Nagar, Integrated Public Service Centre (IPSC) building at Bapuji Nagar, Socially Smart Bhubaneswar, Mission Awaas (taken up by BDA in convergence mode), Smart Traffic Management System, Smart Tracking System, Smart Parking Management, Smart Response and Incident Management System, Smart Governance and Smart Connect e-Governance, Solid Waste Management,

Communications Network and ICOMC were discussed at length.

This apart, several projects in the pipeline like Lake Neutral, Railway Station Multi-Modal Hub, Bhubaneswar Museum of Urban History and e-Rickshaw were also discussed at the review meeting. While chief executive officer (CEO) of Smart City Prem Chandra Chaudhary briefed the minister regarding the progress of each project, other senior officials of BSCL were also present during the discussion.

Among the completed projects of the Bhubaneswar Smart City initiative, Social Equity Centre at Kharvela Nagar, IPSC building at Sahid Nagar, Smart Park in Sahid Nagar, Adoptive Traffic Control System, Common Payment Card, I am Bhubaneswar initiative, Bhubaneswar Urban Knowledge Centre, Bhubaneswar One, Public Bicycle Sharing Scheme were also taken up for discussion.

Jena was briefed about the City Investments to Innovate, Integrate and Sustain (CITIIS) project under BSCL, which will focus on the development of open spaces across the city.

# Thrust on raising fish exports to ₹20,000 crore in 5 years

# Spar over Swaminathan panel advice

The Centre has not implemented all the recommendations of MS Swaminathan Commission, says BJD

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Feb 5: A day after Union Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan attacked the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) for allegedly not presenting facts regarding implementation of MS Swaminathan Commission recommendations, the BJD Friday retaliated by saying that the Centre has not implemented all the recommendations.

BJD MP Sasmit Patra, while speaking on the Motion of Thanks on President's Address in the Rajya Sabha, said that had the Swaminathan Commission Report been actually implemented, the minimum support price (MSP) of paddy would have been 1.5 times of Rs 1,560 per quintal, amounting to Rs 2,340 per quintal.

"Instead, the MSP was fixed at Rs 1,750 per quintal in 2018-19, thereby clearly proving that the Swaminathan Committee report has not been fully implemented," Patra said.

Quoting Swaminathan, the BJD MP said, "When we recommended

50 per cent increase on cost of production, we meant the C2 as the total cost of production." Patra said that even Swaminathan himself is not accepting the fact that the Swaminathan Commission report has been fully implemented.

Patra also explained the three components of cost of production of farming as mentioned in the commission report. He apprised the house that the first is A2 which

deals with the out of pocket expenses of a farmer such as the seeds, fertilisers, pesticides and other inputs.

"The second component is A2 + FL which includes the cost of A2 and includes Family Labour (FL) i.e. the cost of the human labour that the farmer and his family contribute to the farming.

The third component is C2 which is the total of A2+FL as well as includes the opportunity cost of land, the interest for the loans taken by the farmer as well as the imputed

## Process begins to fix paddy MSP

**Bhubaneswar:** The Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP), the nodal agency to recommend the Union government about fixation of minimum support price (MSP) for various crops, has initiated the process to fix paddy MSP for 2021-22 cropping season.

The CACP has prepared questionnaires and sent them to the state government for its response.

The Commission has sought reply from the state Water Resources, Agriculture and Food Supplies & Consumer Welfare departments. The Commission has

asked the state government to reply on number of procurement centres operated in the state during the last three Kharif Marketing Seasons (KMS), details of paddy procurement made in last three years from the farmers, availability of certified/quality seed, irrigated & un-irrigated area among others.

The Centre has fixed the paddy MSP at Rs 1,868 per quintal for 2020-21 while it was Rs 1,815 per quintal during the previous year. The Odisha Assembly had passed a resolution unanimously to move the Centre for fixation of paddy MSP at Rs 2,930 per quintal.

rentals for the land," said Patra adding that the

Swaminathan Commission Report had asked the government to implement the MSP at 1.5 times of this C2 value but the government has not done that.

"According to the Commission for Agriculture Prices and Costs, the C2 cost of production of paddy was fixed at Rs 1,560 per quintal," he added.

"BJD has been demanding that the Swaminathan Commission re-

port be implemented fully with the increase of 1.5 times on C2 cost of production be undertaken," Patra said.

It is to be mentioned here that Pradhan on the Motion of Thanks on President's Address Thursday had attacked BJD for allegedly not presenting facts regarding the implementation of Swaminathan Commission recommendations. He had asked both Prasanna Acharya and Sasmit Patra to read the recommendations properly.



**BLUE REVOLUTION!**  
More than 15 lakh people in Odisha are working directly and indirectly in the fisheries sector and the sector witnessed 57 per cent growth in last five years  
Twenty years ago, fish production in Odisha was 2.6 lakh tonne, but now it has gone up to 8.16 lakh tonne  
Now, Odisha is exporting fisheries products worth Rs 3,243 crore annually

from 7.71 kg in Odisha in last 20 years. Now, Odisha is exporting fisheries products worth Rs 3,243 crore annually, sources added.

The minister suggested that the officials should give priority on fish sperm production in state. Besides, steps should be taken for the development of fish sperm production centres.

He also directed the officials

to use more biofloc technology for fish production. Moreover, steps should be taken to facilitate more people availing benefits of entrepreneurship scheme in the fisheries sector, said the minister.

"In order to raise fish export from state, we must focus on improving the skills of the fish farmers," Sahoo added.

## Big push to school adoption plan

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 5:** The school adoption programme under 'Mo School' campaign has received a shot in the arm after Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik recently appealed to the MPs, MLAs and bureaucrats to adopt schools across the state.

Many ministers, IAS officers and others are coming forward to adopt schools for their holistic development.

**According to School and Mass Education department, over 144 schools have so far been adopted by 114 adopters including 13 ministers/MPs/MLAs, 53 IAS officers, 4 IPS officers and 2 IFS officers**

According to School and Mass Education department sources, over 144 schools have so far been adopted by 114 adopters including 13 ministers/MPs/MLAs, 53 IAS officers, 4 IPS officers, 2 IFS officers, 26 state service officers and others from different government departments and district administrations.

The ministers/MPs/MLAs have adopted 29 schools, while 53 IAS officers adopted 59 schools.

The ministers include Finance Minister Niranjan Pujari, Panchayati Raj Minister Pratap Jena, Higher Education Minister Arun Sahoo, School and Mass Education Minister Samir Ranjan Dash, Energy Minister Dibya Shankar Mishra, Women and Child Development Minister Tukuni Sahoo, Sports and Youth Affairs Minister Tusharkanti Behera and others. Apart from this, several corporations, institutions and others adopted the schools under the programme.

## AIMING HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT



Puri Collector Samarth Verma, who has adopted Biswambhar Bidyapitha in Puri for its holistic development under the state government's 'Mo School' campaign, takes stock of the institution, Friday

## Cyber crooks dupe man of ₹75L

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 5:** Cyber criminals duped an elderly person here of around Rs 74.97 lakh on the pretext of covering him under an insurance policy of Rs 2 crore. The victim was identified as Ramaballav Rath of Forest Park area in the Capital city.

According to sources, Rath has lodged a complaint with the cybercrime police station at Cuttack. According to the complaint, Rath received a phone call reportedly from a man who identified himself as the agent of a central government employee in June.

The caller asked the victim to get

the benefit of an insurance policy by reputed private firm. Though the victim initially refused to buy it, later he budged to the repeated requests and various allurements by the cyber fraudsters.

Rath alleged that several persons identifying themselves as staff of departments and Ministries like Union Finance Ministry contacted him and produced fake documents of the government agencies.

The victim has reportedly deposited around Rs 74.97 lakh in various accounts provided by the fraudsters.

Police have started an investigation into the matter after registering a case.

## Prashanti Exp to be cancelled partially

**BHUBANESWAR:** Bhubaneswar-Bangalore-Bhubaneswar Prashanti Express will be cancelled partially in view of safety related modernisation work February 7 and 8, 2021. The non-interlocking work would be undertaken at Baiyyappanahalli station west cabin. Bhubaneswar-Bangalore Prashanti Special from Bhubaneswar will run between Bhubaneswar and Satya Sai Prashanti Nilayam (SSPN) station February 6 and 7 and will remain cancelled from SSPN to Bangalore. Bangalore-Bhubaneswar Prashanti Special from Bangalore will originate from SSPN instead of Bangalore on these days.

## One fresh death pushes toll to 1,908

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 5:** State's Covid-19 tally mounted to 3,35,466 Friday as 97 more people tested positive for the infection, while one fresh fatality pushed the death toll to 1,908, a senior Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department official said.

Of the fresh cases, 58 were reported from quarantine centres and 39 detected during contact tracing, said the official.

Nine districts—Bhadrak, Boudh, Jagatsinghpur, Kandhamal, Koraput, Malkangiri, Nayagarh, Nabarangpur and Subarnapur—did not report any fresh case in the last 24 hours. Sundargarh and Cuttack districts recorded 16 new cases each, followed by Bargarh (12). The coastal state now has 894 active cases. Two districts—Kandhamal and Nabarangpur—have become 'Covid free', while Boudh, Bolangir, Dhenkanal, Keonjhar, Koraput and Malkangiri have active cases in single digits.

Taking to Twitter, the H&FW department said, "Regret to inform the

demise of 83-year-old COVID positive patient of Cuttack, who was also suffering from diabetes mellitus & hypertension (sic)."

Of the total 1,908 fatalities, Khurda accounted for 335, followed by Ganjam (248), Sundargarh (173), Cuttack (142) and Puri (117).

Altogether, 3,32,611 patients have recovered from the disease in the state.

According to the official, 2,36,923 health workers have been vaccinated till Thursday.

Health department's additional chief secretary PK Mohapatra became the first IAS officer in the state to receive the shot of Covid-19 vaccine. He was administered 'Covaxin' at the Capital Hospital here.

Mohapatra urged health workers, who are reluctant to receive the shots of Covid vaccine, to come forward without any hesitation.

The state has conducted over 78.19 lakh sample tests for Covid-19, including 23,688 Thursday, and the positivity rate stands at 4.29 per cent.

## 8,937 CITY COPS TO GET JOBS

**BHUBANESWAR:** Commissionerate Police has made elaborate arrangements for the second phase of vaccination drive beginning Saturday. Speaking to the media persons, Police Commissioner Sudhanshu Sarangi Friday said that 8,937 cops and home guards from the Commissionerate Office, Bhubaneswar DCP office, 7th battalion, and state intelligence department, SOG training centre and Biju Patnaik State Police Academy are likely to receive vaccination doses Saturday. The vaccination programme will be carried out at three places in Bhubaneswar that includes the hospitals in Reserve Police line, the 7th battalion and at the head quarters of commissionerate police. Similarly, 6,867 cops and home guards from 11 departments will get the shots at Netaji Indoor Stadium in Cuttack. The vaccination programme will commence at 9.30am and DGP Abhay will be the first to take the jab.

ers and employees from the revenue department. Microplanning has been done to ensure a smooth drive from Saturday," he said.



A training session for employees of 108 ambulance service in progress at Puri Youth Hostel, Friday

## CLASSIFIED

### LOST

I, Sri Nirakara Nayak, S/o- Srikantha Nayak of Village- Baulagadia, P.O.- Iswarpur, P.S.- Nilgiri, Via-Bahanaga, Dist.- Balasore. Mob: 9437201085 my deed No.- 3653, 3899 and urgent papers with Bag have lost while I am returning by Bus after finishing my daily work at Nilgiri. Please inform me if a kindhearted person has received the same.

## HONING SKILLS

## IMD issues cold-wave warning for 3 days

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 5:** The India Meteorological Department (IMD) Friday issued cold-wave warning for several districts.

Cold-wave is likely to prevail at one or two places in Sundargarh, Jharsuguda, Deogarh, Keonjhar, Kandhamal and Kalahandi, Sunday

Similarly, a few places in Sundargarh, Jharsuguda, Bargarh, Sambalpur, Deogarh, Angul, Dhenkanal, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Balasore, Bhadrak, Boudh, Sonepur, Bolangir, Kalahandi, Kandhamal, Nuapada and Nabarangpur would witness cold-wave condition during



February 8 and 10, the IMD said. The Met department said cold would be tolerable but warned of mild health concerns for infants/elderly people. It has advised

to avoid prolonged exposure to cold during night/early morning. Keep live stocks indoors and shaded areas during night and early morning, the weather department said.

Meanwhile, mercury plummeted below 10 degrees Celsius at five places of the state during past 24 hours.

Phulbani recorded the lowest of 5.5 degrees Celsius while it was 6.5 degrees Celsius at Daringbadi, 9.5 degrees at Koraput and 9.8 degrees at both of Bolangir and Bhawanipatna. Cuttack and Bhubaneswar recorded a minimum temperature of 12.6 and 13 degrees Celsius, respectively.

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# Farmers await revival of Nayagarh sugar mill

Legal tangle continues as HC admits intervenor's petition over its revival



The next hearing of the case will be held April 12. During the hearing, the HC had admitted intervenor's petition (1869/1/2/2021) moved by lawyer Ranjit Das. Admitting the case, the HC has issued notices to UCO Bank authorities, the Collector and the managing director of the sugar mill to submit their replies

Lawyer Ranjit Das, in his petition, stated that over 30,000 farmers in the district depended on Nayagarh Sugar Mill at Panipola. The mill was capable of crushing 1.2 lakh tonnes of sugarcane. The sugar mill played a significant role in bolstering the agrarian economy of Nayagarh and its adjoining districts. But the sugar mill got closed while farmers and staff of the mill have not received their dues

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Nayagarh, Feb 5:** A legal tangle and growing uncertainties over closed Nayagarh sugar mill are yet to be resolved even as thousands sugarcane growers in the district have been waiting for the reopening of the mill. Many farmers, who depended on the sugar factory, have migrated to other states in search of jobs, a report said.

The High Court held a hearing of the case Thursday through video conferencing mode. Nayagarh Collector Poma Tudu and managing director of the sugar mill Sabir Panda had submitted their affidavits detailing assessment of the sugar mill's properties (made on January 28) to the HC through their counsels.

On the other hand, owner of Naya Sugar Complex Ltd Trailokya Mishra has sought permission of the

two-member HC bench to file fresh replies on the affidavits of the Collector and the managing director of the sugar mill.

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Lawyer Ranjit Das, in his petition, stated that over 30,000 farmers in the district depended on Nayagarh Sugar Mill at Panipola. The mill was capable of crushing 1.2 lakh tonnes of sugarcane. The sugar mill played a significant role in bolstering the agrarian economy of Nayagarh and its adjoining districts. But the sugar mill got closed while farmers and staff of the mill have not received their dues.

Later, machinery of the sugar mill worth ₹25 crore has been stolen due to lack of security. Das also pointed out that the HC had directed formation of a task force to investigate the theft and deploy police as a security measure to the factory. But the HC order has not been executed, he alleged.

The HC was urged to direct the state government for taking immediate steps for revival of the sugar factory and recover the stolen machinery.

In the intervenor's petition, the HC was urged to direct the parties concerned to clear the dues of the farmers and the sugar factory staff. The lawyer has submitted a copy of the FIR filed against the Collector January 19, 2021 at Nayagarh police station and a copy of the asset list of the sugar mill prepared by the administration March 12, 2020.



ROW OVER ROAD

People of 17 panchayats under Sadar block of Nayagarh district stage protests over a bid to lay a PMGSY road through a forest. The three-year old row took an ugly turn Friday. As tension flared up, police were deployed in the area.

# Maoist threat: 85 tribal families leave homes in Malkangiri dist

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Malkangiri, Feb 5:** Eighty five families belonging to 12 villages of Swabhimani Anchal under Chittrakonda block in Malkangiri district have been forced to leave their homes due to threats issued by the Maoists. This shocking and painful development came to the fore Thursday.

Sources said the families from villages in Panasput, Jodamba, Andarapali and Nakamamudi panchayats had been receiving death threats from the Maoists.

Unable to take the risk anymore, the panicked families left



their ancestral houses and properties two days back. The frightened villagers have taken refuge in an orchard near Rajulkonda village in the district.

Some residents of Rajulkonda village who have been carrying out farming activities in the orchard faced problems after it was

occupied by the displaced families. The villagers of Rajulkonda informed in writing to Chittrakonda tehsildar T Padmanav about the incident.

"We were scared to live in our own villages and used to stay awake all night fearing attack from the Maoists. But finally we decided to leave village when we could not bear fear anymore," said a family head.

Meanwhile, Malkangiri district administration and local police have started discussions with the families for their rehabilitation and safe return to villages, Padmanav informed.

# 3 minor bike riders fined ₹29K in SBP

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Sambalpur, Feb 5:** Intensifying vehicle checking, Sambalpur RTO has cracked down on violators of new MVI Act Friday. RTO officials imposed a fine of ₹ 29,000 on minor bike riders at Tabala under Sasan police limits. Three minors were going on a bike with registration no-OD-15-L2049 when RTO officials caught them from triple riding. They were fined ₹29,000 in total for multiple violations such as riding without helmets, insurance, triple riding.

A chalan was issued against the bike owner Jamant Hati of Khulia village. RTO Trilochan Patra said that one of the riders is a class-VIII student while the bike had no insurance.

# Petrol gift to newlywed couple

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Jharsuguda, Feb 5:** Ever heard of petrol being given as a gift to a newlywed couple? Debasish Patnaik from Jharsuguda district, whose wedding reception party was organised Thursday, did not expect such a bizarre gift from his friends either.

At the venue, the couple was busy meeting and receiving guests at the dais. Just then, Debasish's friends arrived with a container. 'Petrol, highly inflammable' was written on it.

Not only the couple but all the guests were taken aback seeing the unusual gift.

Justifying their act, the friends said the price of petrol is skyrocketing. Now, people belonging to middle-income group have started feeling the pinch. This apart, every household has either two-wheelers or four-wheelers that make petrol an essential commodity. That is why they decided to gift five litres of petrol to their friend.

Some guests took it as a token of protest against the government's failure in reigning in the price of petrol which is a burden on the already burdened middle-class families.

In the past, when the price of onion hovered around ₹100 a kilogram in the past, many newlyweds were gifted with onion packets.

# Satabhaya victims still await farmlands

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Kendrapara, Feb 5:** Climate change is taking a heavy toll on Satabhaya villages under Rajanagar block in Kendrapara district. Panchubarahi temple in the area is close to vanishing amid sand owing to sea erosion. Some coconut trees that towered over the coastal landscape have lost their existence. Gobindapur, Mohanpur, Kharikula, Chintamanipur and Badagahiramatha have vanished into the sea while Kanpur disappeared in 2011.

A tube well near the temple is buried under a growing sand dune. Acres of farmlands in these seven villages which were main sources of livelihood are sand cast.

On the other hand, 571 families of the picturesque seven coastal villages who were victims of climate change and massive coastal erosion engulfing major areas have been shifted and resettled at Bagapatia - a low lying area close to the troubled site, by 2018. Only a few families are clinging to their traditional homeland at Barahipur.

But they are facing crisis in the livelihood as they have not been provided farmlands till date. Reports said, their farmlands have not been compensated with provision new lands eligible for farming.

Environmentalists like Biswajit Mohanty, Hemanata Rout and Laxmidhar Swain said Satabhaya is a small sample of climate change-induced coastal erosion for about 12 km. Mangrove forests at Satabhaya



571 families of the picturesque seven coastal villages who were victims of climate change and massive coastal erosion engulfing major areas have been shifted and resettled at Bagapatia - a low lying area close to the troubled site, by 2018. Only a few families are clinging to their traditional homeland at Barahipur

and Kanpur have vanished, using in coastal erosion. They observed that the forest department should take steps for creating mangroves in the area so as to prevent sea erosion. Besides, the government should

Residents are facing livelihood crisis as they have not been provided farmlands till date. Reports said, their farmlands have not been compensated with provision new lands eligible for farming

Environmentalists like Biswajit Mohanty, Hemanata Rout and Laxmidhar Swain said Satabhaya is a small sample of climate change-induced coastal erosion for about 12 km. Mangrove forests at Satabhaya and Kanpur have vanished, using in coastal erosion

make use of the area for the tourism sectors by setting up cottages at Habelikhati.

Despite sea erosion, new mangrove forest is being generated from Pentha to Satabhaya, he added.

DFO Bikash Ranjan Das said plantation has been undertaken in Satabhaya.

On the other side, many other villagers, who were earlier dependent on catching fish for their livelihood, have also suffered setbacks as many of them are now bound to buy the products from the market.

It is said that most farmers have lost their agriculture lands in the process, but most of them still continue to visit their lost habitats at Satabhaya by boats.

As for land, ADM Basant Kumar Rout said 148 families of Satabhaya had applied for relocation at Bagapatia. After investigation, they will be rehabilitated, he added.

# Non-procurement of paddy: BJP stages stir

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Kesinga, Feb 5:** Protesting against non-procurement of paddy at Pastikudi procurement centre under Kesinga block in Kalahandi district, BJP leaders Friday staged a sit-in at the centre.

According to BJP leaders, 9,000 quintals of paddy belonging to 103 farmers have been lying in open at Pastikudi mandi for 15 days now. As a result, the farmers have also been at the mandi for the same period guarding their paddy sacks round the clock, experiencing extreme weather conditions.

According to distressed farmers, the mill owners are not lifting paddy from Pastikudi mandi. There is a delay in procuring paddy by Primary Agriculture Cooperative Society as more than the targeted quantity of paddy has already been procured, it is learnt.

Showing solidarity with the farmers, Bhawanipatna MLA and Leader of Opposition in Odisha Legislative Assembly Pradipta Kumar Naik, Zilla Parishad vice-chairman Bhaba Sindur Mangaraj and some others staged a sit-in at the paddy procurement centre.

# ITI student earns lakhs from farming

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Phulbani, Feb 5:** Prakash Chandra Dehuri, an ITI student of Budhdani village under Phulbani block in Kandhamal district, did not like to run after government jobs. He rather preferred plantain and banana farming and has scripted success setting an example for others.

He is earning lakhs of rupees annually from it. People do not like doing banana cultivation in the hilly areas of the district. But Prakash took it as a challenge and wanted to get it done.

He has grown 3,086 banana plants on his 2.5 acres of land. "I hope, if things go right, I will get ₹6 lakh this season," he asserted.

Prakash's father Harischandra eked out his living by farming banana and other crops on this land. Prakash completed ITI and unsuccessfully tried to seek a job in private and government sectors, but he did not feel encouraged.

Covid lockdown and restrictions



COVID LOCKDOWN AND RESTRICTIONS MADE LIFE MISERABLE FOR HIM. HE WANTED TO GO IN FOR BANANA FARMING ON HIS LAND

made life miserable for him. He wanted to go in for banana farming on his land. Prakash sought the help of the horticulture department about high-yielding variety of banana. The department provided him technical knowhow and G-9 variety of banana saplings from a Maharashtra-based company with

40 per cent subsidy. With the help of his father, he planted the saplings. Most banana plants have borne fruits. They have already earned ₹50,000 by selling banana.

"A bunch of bananas is being sold for ₹500 to ₹600. My father sells the banana bunches in Phulbani market," he said.

He observed that many youths are frustrated after unsuccessfully running after jobs. They should do farming banana which is a lucrative crop. Many farmers fail to do farming for shortage of input funds. The government should provide financial support to the unemployed youths to make them self-reliant, he suggested.

**WALK IN INTERVIEW**  
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RFP No. 7818 Date: 04.02.2021  
**NOTICE INVITING EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EoI)**  
No. C-409: Sealed proposals are invited for "Selection of a Non-profit organization for Household Door to Door Collection & Transportation of Solid Waste and Operation & Maintenance of Vehicles in 67 Wards of BMC" in conformity with the Terms & Conditions of the Detailed EoI from intending bidders fulfilling the terms of eligibility laid down in the EoI document. Please refer to website [www.bmc.gov.in](http://www.bmc.gov.in) for complete details and downloading the document. The EoI document is available from 06.02.2021 with last date of submission being 16.02.2021 till 3.30 P.M.  
For any queries please contact [dc-sanitation@bmc.gov.in](mailto:dc-sanitation@bmc.gov.in).  
Sd./- Deputy Commissioner (Sanitation)  
OIPR-13002/11/0090/2021

**Government of Odisha "e" Procurement Notice**  
**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, KORAPUT (R&B) DIVISION, KORAPUT**  
Bid Identification No. E.E. (R&B) KPT - 15/2020-21  
1. Name of the work : Building & Road Works  
2. Total No. of works : 3 Nos.  
3. Estimated Cost : Rs.22.10 lakhs to 70.62 lakhs  
4. Period of Completion : 02 (Two) months & 04 (Four) months  
5. Date & time of availability of bid document in the portal : From 08.02.2021 at 11.00 hours to 22.02.2021 upto 17.00 hours  
6. Last date/time for receipt of bids in the portal : 22.02.2021 upto 17.00 hours  
7. Date of opening of tender : 23.02.2021 at 12.00 hours  
8. Name and address of the Officer Inviting Bid : Executive Engineer, Koraput (R&B) Division  
Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal <https://tendersorissa.gov.in>.  
Sd./- Executive Engineer, Koraput (R&B) Division  
OIPR-34096/11/0010/2021

**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER POTTERU CANAL DIVISION, MV - 79**  
e-Procurement Notice No. EE-PCD-MV.79-02/2020-21  
No. A-549 e-mail Id: [eepcdhuba65@gmail.com](mailto:eepcdhuba65@gmail.com)  
1. Type of Works : System Improvement works  
2. Total No. of works : Seventeen (17) Nos.  
3. Estimated Cost : Varies from Rs.6.42 lakh to Rs.17.42 lakh  
4. Period of Completion : 45 (Forty five) days  
Procurement Officer : Executive Engineer, Potteru Canal Division, MV-79, Malkangiri  
Bid Identification No. : EE-PCD-MV.79-24/2020-21  
Bid Amount in Lakh Rs. : Varies from Rs.6.42 lakh to 17.42 lakh  
Availability & Submission of Bids Online : From 10.02.2021, 10.00 A.M. to 19.02.2021, 5.00 P.M.  
Date of opening of the Tender/Bid : 20.02.2021 at 11.30 A.M.  
Further details can be seen from the Govt. website [www.tendersodissa.gov.in](http://www.tendersodissa.gov.in).  
Sd./- Executive Engineer Potteru Canal Division, MV-79  
OIPR-32100/11/0006/2021

A hero fears nothing, complains of nothing and never gives away.

THE MOTHER



## NGT flak for Kerala

Kerala's Chief Secretary Vishwas Mehta came under fire from the National Green Tribunal (NGT) over the continued ineffective solid waste management in Kochi.

According to sources, the tribunal made scathing remarks against the state government while criticizing the affidavit filed by Mehta and threatened to prosecute officers responsible for ensuring that parameters of environmental safety are met. The tribunal lamented that the chief secretary's affidavit did not show any effective action being taken on the ground, despite several directives issued in the past two years.

The tribunal, quoting a report by the State Pollution Control Board, noted that the municipal authorities in Kochi were continuing unauthorized operations and were yet to start work for bio-mining.

The directive came while the tribunal was hearing a case seeking direction to take effective steps for infrastructure development for collection, storage, segregation and disposal of tonnes of waste, termed legacy waste, that has accumulated over the years in Kochi's Brahmapuram area.

Ironically, the adverse comments come at a time when the state government claims that it is strictly following the "green protocol" and Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan declared more than 11,000 government offices and public sector undertakings as "green" on Republic Day!

### Nitish to weed out deadwood in Home Dept

The Nitish Kumar government in Bihar is moving ahead with its announcement last year of retiring identified 'inefficient' employees. The state Home Department headed by the Chief Minister has set up high-level committees to implement the order.

According to sources, a committee headed by Additional Chief Secretary of the Home Department Amir Subhani will deal with Group A employees of the department. The panel also includes Special Secretary Vikash Vaibhav, among others. The other committee will be headed by Secretary of the Home Department K Senthil Kumar and include joint secretary Bimlesh Kumar Jha, among other senior officials. It has been tasked with identifying the deadwood from among Group B, C and D employees. Both committees will meet every year in June and December to consider the proposals to retire identified officers.

Further, the department has instructed all offices and directorates under it to set up such panels at their level.

Previously, in 2017, the state government had announced to compulsorily retire non-performing education department officials, school headmasters and teachers after disappointing matric and intermediate exams. But the decision was not followed through, say sources. Will it be any different this time?

### Return of the prodigal?

Is Shah Faesal, the former IAS officer from Jammu & Kashmir, contemplating a return to the civil service that he had quit in protest against "unabated killings" in Kashmir? A tweet by the ex-babu, who was the first Kashmiri to top the civil service exam, in response to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "Mann Ki Baat" programme seems to hint a change of mind, say some observers. In his tweet, Faesal praised the PM's radio program and wrote that "communication can build solidarities..."

The buzz around Faesal's plans has only grown, especially when he quit Jammu and Kashmir People's Movement, the political party he had set up barely a few months later.

Interestingly, his resignation as an IAS officer in January 2019 has been kept in abeyance all this while. The government has not accepted it, pending the investigation into some of his social media posts.

That it was never accepted means that the door is still open for him to re-join the IAS. Watch this space for updates!

Share a babu experience! Follow dilipthecherian@twitter.com. Let's multiply the effect

## WISDOM CORNER

- Kindness in words creates confidence. Kindness in thinking creates profundness. Kindness in giving creates love. **LAO TZU**
- The teacher who is indeed wise does not bid you to enter the house of his wisdom but rather leads you to the threshold of your mind. **KAHLIL GIBRAN**
- One must still have chaos in oneself to be able to give birth to a dancing star. **FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE**

## WORDSWORTH

### Mad as cheese

This is mainly a British expression, now very common. However, examples have started to appear in American publications, suggesting it is making inroads there. Mad here is used in the sense of crazy or deranged, not angry. An example was heard in the BBC Radio 4 programme Start the Week on 27 March 2006, when the presenter, Andrew Marr, described the painter Van Gogh's mental state in this way. The Sunday Mirror mentioned that it appeared in the British film Confetti: "Naturists Michael (Robert Webb) and Joanne (Olivia Colman) want to tie the knot in the nude. They are helped by the wonderfully camp wedding planners - 'we're mad as cheese, us!'" Hallmark has had a line of greeting cards in the UK called Mad as Cheese since July 2003. There are plenty of examples available online, showing it dates back to the middle 1990s at least. Logically minded readers may wonder why cheese should be less sane than any other comestible, but such considerations have no place in the creation of new expressions. You can tell that from related sayings, such as mad as a pink balloon, mad as a box of frogs, and that old Northern standby, daft as a brush.

### Mad as hops

There are indeed a number of old expressions using the word hops in the sense of the plant. One was as thick as hops, referring to the dense mats of creeper you can get when hops grow wild and unchecked, and another was as fast as hops, because the plant dies back in winter and then grows very rapidly from its base each spring. These were both known by 1630 at the latest. The phrase hopping mad also dates from the seventeenth century, but it uses a different sense of hop, the one of jumping up and down on one foot, in other words of being so angry that one is literally unable to keep still. It seems that sometime in the nineteenth century in the US somebody punned by combining these phrases to create as mad as hops. The expression is first recorded in Harper's Magazine in 1884, but is probably older. So there's nothing mad about the plant at all.

## LOL

### I JUST HAD A DREAM ABOUT IT

A young woman was taking an afternoon nap. After she woke up, she told her husband, "I just dreamed that you gave me a pearl necklace for



Valentine's day. What do you think it means?" "You'll know tonight," he said. That evening, the man came home with a small package and gave it to his wife. Delighted, she opened it -- only to find a book entitled "The meaning of dreams."

# TIME TO REGULATE BIG TECH

## FOCUS DIGITAL PLATFORMS

If the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us anything, it is that the speed of government decision-making can be just as important as the decisions themselves. If democracies are to retain their authority in the twenty-first century, they must combine the debate and consensus-building at which they excel with the efficiency and agility they often lack.

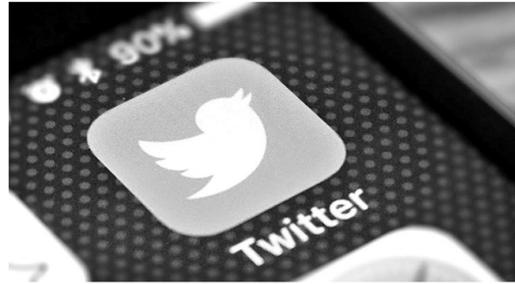
When we resign ourselves to the belief that democratic systems must move slowly, we risk allowing undemocratic actors to challenge these systems' effectiveness and legitimacy. And when we delegate the administration of public debate to such actors -- as we have done with social-media platforms -- we compound that risk.

This has been starkly apparent since the storming of the US Capitol on January 6. Because then-President Donald Trump incited the insurrection, Twitter suspended his account, instantly cutting him off from his 89 million followers -- a base built over several years and tens of thousands of false, misleading, and incendiary tweets. Other social-media platforms, including Facebook, followed suit. And Amazon terminated its web-hosting services for Parler, the unmoderated platform where Trump would have found many adoring supporters.

These decisions were taken in a matter of hours, and implemented in a matter of seconds. Meanwhile, US Democrats were still drawing up articles of impeachment.

To be sure, Trump was impeached within days -- a dramatic acceleration of usual democratic procedure. But his Senate trial has yet to take place, and appears unlikely to result in any lasting consequences (namely, a ban on Trump holding office in the future). At the rally preceding the insurrection, Trump's loyal attorney, Rudolph Giuliani, called for "trial by combat" to dispute the election results. What Trump will probably end up getting is a damnatio memoriae.

That matters. But, in the immediate term, deplatforming Trump matters more.



While suspending Donald Trump's social media accounts was the right move for democracy, deplatforming a sitting President is a highly consequential decision. It should be a cause for serious concern that a few tech companies were able to make it, based not on an impartial rule of law, but on proprietary terms of service and the will of their top bosses

Trump's Twitter account, in particular, was integral to his presidency, public image, and personality cult. His tweets always offered a glimpse into his mood. They often contained hateful, divisive, and deceptive messages. And they sometimes issued major announcements, from firing senior officials to threatening foreign countries. Trump's Twitter account thus directly fueled the uptick in volatility and instability, on both Wall Street and Main Street, that characterized his presidency.

Given this, Trump's expulsion from social media should be welcomed. One might even argue that it should have happened long before the Capitol insurrection. Nonetheless, deplatforming a sitting president is a highly consequential decision. It should be a cause for serious concern that a few tech companies were able to make it, based not on an impartial rule of law, but on proprietary terms of service (and personal intervention by their top bosses).

The digital giants' James Bond-like "license to kill" a user's account (and not only that of a president who came "from Russia with love") is only one expression of their ex-

orbitant power. For years, these companies have shaped -- or distorted -- public debate with algorithms designed to immerse users in "echo chambers," where they are exposed primarily (or only) to views similar to their own, thereby fueling polarisation.

Moreover, for years, digital platforms refused to flag or remove false, misleading, or incendiary content. Instead, seeking to maximize user engagement (and thus the user data they could sell to advertisers), they allowed the likes of Trump to spread lies, stoke resentment, and encourage violent movements. Parler, Gab, DLive, and others were used to orchestrate and execute the Capitol insurrection. The message is clear: digital platforms now play a central role in the destabilisation of democracies.

Europe, for one, recognizes this. The European Commission's new Digital Services Act, unveiled in December 2020, will impose greater responsibilities on social-media companies for policing their platforms for hate speech and other illegal material. But, again, timing poses a serious problem: the European Parliament will take

six months to sign off on the DSA, and member states will take at least 18 months to implement it.

Of course, we should leverage Europe's diverse perspectives and expertise to develop the most comprehensive, innovative, and effective strategies. And we must engage in democratic debate and consensus-building. But that does not mean we can delay solutions to urgent problems. It took about a year for Trump to go from political outsider to US president-elect. How much can happen while the DSA is being deliberated and implemented?

With technology transforming the world at an unprecedented rate, and forecasting trends becoming more difficult than ever, regulatory and legislative processes must become far more agile. One possible solution is the introduction of temporary "pop-up regulations."

With an expiration date set from the start, such regulations could be enacted far more quickly than comprehensive legislation -- possibly in a matter of days. They can be extended, adapted, or made permanent if they prove to be effective, constructive, and compatible with a society's values. But they don't have to be.

One regulation that should be implemented urgently is a form of government oversight for social-media bans. Trained judges or some other politically independent official agency could uphold or impose bans on politicians who defy or undermine the rule of law.

The "digital bill of rights" that some advocate may have its merits, but it cannot rein in Big Tech and protect democracy during a time of unprecedented transformation. The only way to do that is by developing new, more agile institutions. After all, every day spent devising, debating, and implementing new rules is a day that increases the volume of misinformation, hate speech, and other destabilising narratives that benefit antidemocratic forces.

The writer is a technology investor and Speaker of the Joint European Disruptive Initiative. @PROJECTSYNDICATE

## SPECTRUM URBAN PLANNING

# When are we going to invest in cycling?



Piyush Ranjan Rout

IN EUROPE, MORE THAN 2,300 KM OF NEW BICYCLE LANES HAVE BEEN ROLLED OUT SINCE THE PANDEMIC BEGAN

Did we miss something in the year of COVID-19 pandemic from the Union Finance Minister? Even though we've heard a lot about the 'historic Budget 2021' what was the investment provision in cycling around India, and what about Smart Cities? Well, we might need Right to Information Act to get an answer.

But let's look at Europe. They too are redesigning their cities. More than £907 million has been spent on cycling infrastructure and 2,300 km of new bicycle lanes have been rolled out since the pandemic began. Cycling has come out as a big winner and the pandemic has shown the potential that cycling has to change our cities and our lives.

But what has all this money been spent on? And what might the long-term impacts of this investment be? This is what four major cities have been doing in Europe.

The industrial hub Milan in northern Italy was one of the first cities in Europe to invest in cycling as a way to get the people moving around again. There are 35km of new cycle paths, although many of these are temporary. Milan tried to build bicycle lanes before, but car drivers protested. Someone



rightly said Milan needed the coronavirus pandemic to introduce bicycle lanes.

In an attempt to prepare the people, the regional government in Milan has spent €115m to stimulate cycling. The government has pledged subsidies of up to €500 if citizens want to buy a new bicycle or an e-scooter in a bid to keep people off public transport and out of cars.

More than 800km away from the Italian fashion capital, the French capital Paris invested €20m since the start of the pandemic. The most iconic change is on the notoriously busy Rue de Rivoli, which stretches across Paris from east to west. Some sections of this road

are now completely car-free. The more space you give for bicycles the more they will be used it is what Paris believes.

Cycling levels have increased by 27 per cent compared to last year. This is partly due to the extensive approach taken by the French government, which is offering a €60 subsidy towards the cost of bicycle repairs.

Further north in Brussels, 40km of bicycle lanes have been created along some of the city's busiest roads. In order to free up space so that social distancing rules can be adhered to, there is a zone where pedestrians and cyclists have priority over cars. Speed limits have also been rein-

troduced across the entire city. It seems the latest measures have encouraged people to take up cycling as bicycle use is up by 44 per cent compared to last year.

Many cities across the globe are preparing for an uncertain future - unsure if the old way of living will be possible again. A pandemic really shifts mindsets quickly. Cycling is proving to be a solution for more and more people.

But the question is whether they will keep it up once the fear of the coronavirus subsides and whether the move to bicycle is permanent.

It takes political will, it takes investment, and it takes activism on the part of citizens who want that. Further it will need courage from politicians to make the changes glued in ground.

The 'historic Budget 2021' did miss what cities across the globe were able to put in place. Cycling at the core of urban mobility during the pandemic and post crisis would have lessened the burden on petrol and diesel, and improved air quality.

The writer is an urban management practitioner. He can be reached on Twitter @piyushrout.

## Letters

### TO THE EDITOR

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

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

### Job creation

Sir, The state government is going to launch a wage scheme named Mukhya Mantri Karma Tatpara Abhiyan (MUKTA) for creating employment opportunities for the urban people, informal and migrant labourers. This initiative will help create ecologically sustainable and climate resilient community assets. The state government had introduced the urban wage employment initiative in April last year to provide rapid and immediate employment to urban poor after they were rendered jobless due to the lockdown. While 13 lakh man-days were generated, sustainable livelihood opportunity was provided to 3.5 lakh urban poor, 40 per cent of whom were women, under the scheme and more than 6,000 projects of Rs 70 crore completed in the last nine months. The informal workforces in the state's 114 urban local bodies will be benefited from the scheme and it will empower women, SHGs and slum development associations. The wages of beneficiaries will be directly credited into their bank accounts. As per the scheme, community centres, Parichaya centres, Mission Shakti Gruhas will be built and activities like storm water drainage and rainwater harvesting, peripheral development around water bodies, sanitation, increase in green cover and beautification and open space development are undertaken. An estimated 35 lakh man days per year will be generated under the scheme. It will create community assets worth more than Rs 150 crore primarily in the form of Parichaya Centres and Mission Shakti Gruhas.

Hitesh Kumar Parida, PANIKOILI (JAJPUR)

### Migrants' welfare

Sir, The Surat Urban Development Authority has decided to provide nearly 400 houses under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) on rent to migrant workers. The Affordable Rental Housing Scheme (ARHC) has recently been approved by the Union Ministry of Urban Affairs and Housing. The ARHC is a sub-scheme of the PMAY announced last year, and Surat will be the first to be implementing it. The proposal is to convert 396 houses built under the PMAY (urban). The labourers can stay in rented premises sharing rooms with other labourers in the colonies to reduce the expenses of house rent. This is a welcome initiative. Hope that all state governments will construct more houses for the migrant workers. Such housing facilities may also help to prevent reverse migrations of workers.

Amit Singh Kushwaha, SATNA (MP)

# Regional parties may play a big role in Assam polls

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Guwahati, Feb 5:** In the run-up to the Assam Assembly elections, the state's regional parties are consolidating themselves to ensure multi-cornered fight and diminishing chances of the traditional bipolar politics.

The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) already announced to continue its alliance with the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and to forge a coalition with new ally United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) after discarding present ally Bodo Peoples' Front (BPF).

Meanwhile, the main opposition Congress also formed a "Mahagathbandhan" (grand alliance) with three Left parties -- the CPI-M, the CPI, the CPI-MLL -- as well as the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) and the Anchalik Gana Morcha, regional parties having a political base among the Muslims and indigenous people respectively.

In the latest development, Thursday, two major regional parties -- the Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP) and the Rajbor Dal (RD) -- announced they would fight the ensuing polls together, leaving the other two combinations wary. Both the AJP and the RD are offshoots of the violent agitations against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) in 2019.

Former All Assam Students' Union (AASU) leader Lurinjyoti Gogoi, who recently floated the AJP, announced the alliance, after



A file picture of Assam Jatiya Parishad leader Akhil Gogoi.

a three-hour-long meeting Thursday with the jailed leader Akhil Gogoi, also the supremo of Rajbor Dal.

Gogoi, who was jailed immediately after he led the agitations against the CAA in December 2019, is currently undergoing treatment for his various ailments at the Gauhati Medical College and Hospital.

Gogoi also said Thursday said that his party is in touch with the BPF and Autonomous State Demand Committee from Karbi Anglong, both have substantial base among the indigenous people in central-western Assam.

"Our regional party alliance would field candidates in all the 126 seats," he said. The AJP and RD leaders have so far rejected offers to join the Congress-led grand alliance. After the outcome of the

Bodoland Territorial Council polls in early December last year, the BJP dumped the BPF and announced to support its new allies the UPPL and Gana Suraksha Parishad (GSP) to take power in the politically

significant autonomous body. After announcing their alliance, Congress leaders, including state unit President Ripun Bora, had claimed that "a tsunami of votes"

would be cast in favour of the "Mahagathbandhan". However, BJP leader and Assam Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had retorted that "only Bangladesh can help the Congress get a tsunami of votes in the upcoming Assembly elections".

Only Bangladesh can help the Congress get a tsunami of votes in the upcoming Assembly elections  
HIMANTA BISWA SARMA | ASSAM MINISTER

# Vizag steel plant staff oppose privatisation move

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Visakhapatnam, Feb 5:** Hundreds of Visakhapatnam steel plant employees, political parties' cadres, among others in Andhra Pradesh's Visakhapatnam are protesting against the recent decision announced by the Central government in Union Budget 2020-21 to privatise the steel plant.

"This is the worst decision taken by Modi government. Making a 100 per cent strategic sale of the steel plant is wicked. Andhra Pradesh developed because of Visakhapatnam Steel plant," said Communist Party of India (CPI) leader Narsing Rao.

The Left leader said the steel plant was the reason for Visakhapatnam to develop so well and complained that a profitable steel plant has been pushed into losses.

Rao said that the city has the history of salvaging the Dredging Corporation of India Limited (DCI) by fighting with the Central government.

If the need arises, he threatened that agitators would stall the state to save the steel plant from privatisation.

Rao alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi wants to sell all the government companies and recalled that this steel plant was obtained after a major struggle.

CPI leader JV Satyanarayana Murthy said people of Visakhapatnam need not be taught how to fight, reminding that the steel plant itself was procured after a big movement.

"Though Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman came as a daughter-in-law to Andhra Pradesh, she has now thrown chilli powder into her mother-in-law's eyes. She is attempting to plunder the riches



Visakhapatnam Steel Plant employees take part in a massive bike rally to protest against the move to privatise the steel plant, in Visakhapatnam, Friday.

of this state or dole them out to the people the Centre likes but we will retaliate," Murthy added.

Not only the steel plant employees, he added, people in Andhra Pradesh would repeal the move to sell the steel plant.

He advised Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy to mount a united front, taking all the political parties into confidence to salvage the steel plant.

Meanwhile, an employee of the steel plant advised that all the MPs of the state should resign if necessary to save the steel plant.

He demanded that the Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister deputise his MPs to Delhi to fight and save the plant and highlighted that an action plan is being worked out to fight under the leadership of Nara Lokesh, the son of former Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister and

**This is the worst decision taken by Modi government. Making a 100 per cent strategic sale of the steel plant is wicked. Andhra Pradesh developed because of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant**

NARSING RAO | COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA LEADER

Telugu Desam Party chief N Chandrababu Naidu.

Meanwhile, in a deviation of stance within the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) at the Centre and its Andhra Pradesh wing, party state president Somu Veerajulu said AP BJP leaders will definitely fight for Visakhapatnam steel plant on Friday.

"We will definitely fight for

Visakhapatnam," said Veerajulu, assuring about the steel plant located in the port city, which the Central government has decided to privatise. Veerajulu said he agrees with the locals' contention against privatizing Vizag Steel Plant.

"In the current atmosphere, AP BJP completely agrees with it. Yesterday, Madhav met Nirmala Sitharaman and tomorrow external affairs minister is coming, GVL (Narasimha Rao) is here. On Feb 14 we are going to attend a meeting in Delhi, then we will meet the president (party) and convey the thoughts on the steel plant," said Veerajulu.

He reminded that the steel plant came to Visakhapatnam after a massive movement some decades ago when he was a school boy and invoked Amruta Rao's name, a Dalit MLA who fought for it.

# Andhra SEC annuls TDP manifesto for rural polls

The SEC ordered the party to withdraw the copies of its manifesto as it defeats the very purpose and objective of apolitical nature of gram panchayat elections



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Amaravati, Feb 5:** Andhra Pradesh State Election Commissioner (SEC) Nimmagadda Ramesh Kumar has annulled the Telugu Desam Party's (TDP) Panchayat elections manifesto, and ordered it to withdraw its copies as it defeats the very purpose and objective of apolitical nature of gram panchayat elections.

"TDP Panchayati Ennikala Manifesto - 2021 is a suggestive affiliation of political party in the context of gram panchayat elections held on non-party basis, which is a clear violation of the commission's order dated October 25, 2018 and it defeats the very purpose and object of apolitical na-

ture of gram panchayat elections," said Kumar.

Lella Appi Reddy, a leader of the ruling Yuva Jana Sramika Rythu Congress Party (YSRCP), complained to Kumar January 29 about the party-affiliated manifesto announced by TDP national president Nara Chandrababu Naidu.

Incidentally, Kumar was not satisfied with the explanation given by the TDP leaders as to why it released a party manifesto banned in rural local bodies elections. The SEC invoked his plenary powers, conferred upon him by the Constitution of India under Article 243 K and Section 200 of AP Panchayat Raj Act, 1994 to annul the manifesto.

# PM Modi to inaugurate slew of projects in poll-bound Assam

AGENCIES

**Guwahati, Feb 5:** Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal Thursday visited Dhekiajuli in Sonitpur district to review the arrangements being made for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's scheduled visit on February 7.

The prime minister would ceremoniously launch the 'Assam Mala' project for the upgradation of state highways and also lay the foundation of two medical colleges of Biswanath and Charaideo from the same venue Sunday.

The chief minister reviewed the security arrangements and instructed Director General of Police to have close surveillance along with installations of CCTVs at the programme venue.

Sonowal assessed preparedness of the helipad which is adjacent to the meeting venue, an official release said.

Sonowal also took stock of preparations made so that the large crowd congregating at the venue do not experience any hassle.

He also reviewed the traffic arrangements and route lining for the Prime Ministers programme.

The chief minister also directed the district and health authorities to ensure compliance of COVID-19 safety protocols during the event.

Sonowal, later while talking to me-



**The Prime Minister would ceremoniously launch the 'Assam Mala' project for the upgradation of the state highways**

diapers at the venue, said that people of Assam especially from Sonitpur and its adjoining districts are eagerly waiting for the prime minister's visit.

A series of special packages have been announced as a result of which Assam is doing well not only in India but in the larger landscape of South East Asian nations.

Modi's love for the state has also been eloquently translated in the

budget announcements which allotted Rs 34,000 crore for the construction of 1300 km of highways and district roads, Rs 300 crore for the infrastructure development of Kamakhya temple and Rs 1097 crore for construction of roads and embankments for Majuli, Sonowal said.

He also thanked the prime minister for allocation of Rs 1000 crore for the welfare of tea communities.

The chief minister was accompanied by Industry and Commerce minister Chandra Mohan Patowary, Handloom and Textile minister Ranjit Dutta, Panchayat and Rural Development minister Naba Kumar Doley, Chief Secretary Jishnu Baruah, DGP Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta and other senior officials.

# 32 in soup for scholarship fund misappropriation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Guwahati, Feb 5:** Assam Police Thursday submitted a chargesheet against 32 accused in the misappropriation of government fund for pre-matric scholarship for minority community students.

The CID submitted the 7836-page chargesheet in the court of Kamrup Metropolitan Chief Judicial Magistrate holding the accused responsible under various sections of the IPC and the Information Technology Act, a police spokesperson said.

The case diary is 1880 pages long. The chargesheet has been submitted in 86 days since the date of the first arrest made in the case, the spokesperson said.

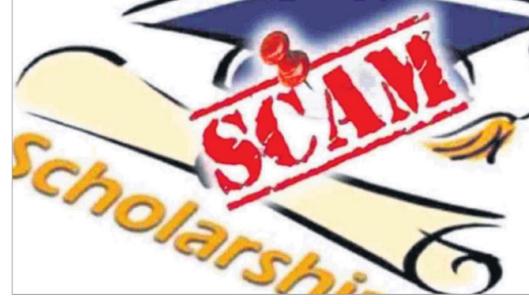
The accused, who are currently in judicial custody, include four

headmasters, two electronic data processors, two assistant teachers, two presidents of school management committees, eight owners of customer service points of banks and 14 middlemen.

The CID during investigation seized 65 objects including 14 laptops, 13 mobile phones, two hard disks, one CPU, one DVR and a finger print scanner along with documents from several districts of the state.

Altogether 220 persons have been named as prosecution witness in the chargesheet, while the statement of ten witnesses have been recorded by the Judicial Magistrate.

The case was registered on the basis of an FIR lodged August 28 last year by the director of Assam Minorities Development Board Mahmood Hassan.



# TIRUPATI SHRINE GETS AN UNUSUAL OFFERING

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Tirupati, Feb 5:** An unusual offering of two tonnes of pickles was made by a devotee to the shrine of Lord Venkateswara at Tirumala, near here, Friday, an official of the temple said.

After offering worship at the temple, the devotee Kaaturi Ramu from Chirravuru village in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh handed over the pickles to TTD (Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam) Board chairman YV Subba Reddy at the temple-run pilgrims free meal canteen, the official told PTI.

Different varieties of vegetable pickles, including mango, lemon, tomato, and gongura were packed in plastic canisters, the official said.

Ramu requested the TTD to utilise pickles at the canteen where

**The devotee has requested the TTD to utilise pickles at the canteen where over a lakh meals were served daily to the visiting devotees**

over a lakh meals were served daily to the visiting devotees. Meanwhile, TTD press release said the foundation stone would be laid on February for the construction of a replica of the temple of Goddess Padmavathi to be built by the TTD in Chennai.

The foundation stone would be laid by the seer of Kanchi Kamakota Peetham Vijayendra Saraswati, the release quoted the TTD Board chairman as saying

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Hyderabad, Feb 5:** A cyclist and mountaineer, she is out to prove to the world that girls are capable of doing anything without family support.

After losing mother when she was just nine and her father, a tailor, few years ago, P. Sameera Khan overcame all odds to come up in life and is now looking for sponsors to fulfill her ambition of scaling Mount Everest, the highest peak in the world.

A solo traveller, she has already cycled her way to 20 countries. The 30-year-old from Anantapur in Andhra Pradesh has already scaled four mountains, the highest being 6,858 meter high Ama Dablam in Nepal. "I want to tell the world that a girl in India needs lot of support from her parents. I am trying to pursue my dream, earning for it, spending for it, everything on my own but now I have come to a point where I need some financial support to attain my ambition. I want to tell the world that girls are capable of



doing everything despite not having family support," Sameera told IANS. The backpacker's Mt Everest expedition requires Rs 30-35 lakh. "I have some money and I need sponsorship. The kind of work I do should be getting lot of support," she said. She wants to scale Mt Everest from Tibet side and not Nepal, which she said is commercial and easy. "From Tibet side, it is tough and also very

technical. Rather than doing just for the sake of doing, I want to do something which makes me feel I have done the whole thing beyond my ability," she said.

Sameera said she approached the government authorities for help but they refused as they don't consider mountaineering as a sport.

Youngest among five siblings, she lost her mother at the age of nine

and was brought up by her father, a tailor. While pursuing medical lab technology course after 10th standard, the family finances forced her to take up a job in BPO in Bengaluru.

During Srinagar floods of 2014, she travelled to Kashmir as a volunteer. She went on a solo Pahalgam valley trek for two days and soon she started learning how to survive in

tough conditions.

Sameera, who lost her father in 2015, started undertaking solo travels with her savings. She cycled across South Asian and South East Asian countries. In India, she cycled for over 1,000 km covering various states. Her trekking expedition started with Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand and later extended to Nepal, Tibet, Bhutan, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh. She has already covered 550 km high altitude trekking.

She has have not done any course in mountaineering. "I was already cyclist. I cycled in 20 countries. I think that boosted my confidence to become a high-altitude trekker," said Sameera currently an entrepreneur at Kepler Home Cinema in Hyderabad. Always ready to accept new challenges, Sameera started high altitude mountaineering. "Mountaineering is very down thing. It's toughest of all sports. People who are into mountaineering have to be mentally and physically tough. Only those people who are not afraid of death can survive," she said.



The government of India claims these farm laws are in the interest of farmers but across the country they are being opposed. On Delhi's borders, farmers are sitting for months and many have passed away

SACHIN PILOT | CONGRESS LEADER

### WORLD RECORD

Authorities at Ratlam district in Madhya Pradesh have set a world record by administering oaths to more than 52,000 people online in the fight against drug addiction in the state



### of the day quote

Obscene content is being served on OTT platforms. Young children are also getting affected due to Internet and mobile phones



SHIVRAJ SINGH CHOUHAN | MADHYA PRADESH CM

When Babar came to India he chose to destruct Ram temple in Ayodhya as he understood that the living force of the country rested there



PRAKASH JAVADEKAR | UNION MINISTER

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



ASHOK CHAVAN | CONGRESS LEADER

## LS proceedings hit for 4th consecutive day

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 5: Lok Sabha proceedings were a virtual washout Friday as relentless protest by Opposition members against the Centre's three farm laws continued for the fourth consecutive day, even as signs emerged that normal functioning could resume from Monday.

The government has always been ready for discussion and we are hopeful that Lok Sabha will function smoothly from Monday, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi said. On February 3, Locket Chatterjee of the BJP had initiated the discussion on the Motion of Thanks but she could not complete her speech due to disruptions. She has not yet resumed her speech. While demanding repeal of the three laws, Opposition parties are also insisting on a stand alone debate on the farmers' issue. The government has maintained that Opposition can raise the farmers' issue during the debate on the Motion of Thanks.

On Friday, Lok Sabha was adjourned first till 6 pm after Opposition members disrupted the proceedings demanding repeal of the laws and shouted slogans from the Well of the House. As soon as the House convened at 4 PM, members from the Congress, Left parties and the DMK rushed to the Well raising slogans against the new agri laws and holding placards. Speaker Om Birla continued with the Question Hour with Health Minister Harsh Vardhan responding to supplementary questions on COVID-19 vaccination. As Opposition members continued to



raise slogans, Birla appealed to them to participate in the Question Hour as an important issue related to vaccination was being discussed.

While Congress, DMK and Left members were in the Well, members from the TMC did not participate in raising slogans. Trinamool Congress members remained seated on their benches. Around 4.15 PM, Birla adjourned the House till 6 PM. With no letup in the protests when the House reconvened in the evening, the Speaker adjourned its proceedings till Monday after his plea to opposition members to go back to their seats went unheeded. The government Friday strongly defended the farm laws in Rajya Sabha and said its offer to amend them should not be viewed as if they had any flaws, even as the Opposition demanded that the legislations be repealed and fresh ones brought after consultations. The government also launched a fierce attack on the Congress and other Opposition parties for trying to instigate the farmers with wrong information. Thousands of farmers, mostly from Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh, have

### Tomar defends farm laws in Rajya Sabha

Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar Friday asserted that the government's offer to amend the new farm laws to assuage farmers' sentiments did not mean they had any flaws even as opposition parties demanded fresh legislations with one Congress MP describing the acts as "death warrants" for farmers. Putting up a vigorous defence of the three new agri laws in the Rajya Sabha in the face of a strident demand for their repeal and continuing protests by farmers, Tomar also said none from the protesting unions or their sympathisers have been able to point out any lacuna. Those opposing the farm laws are not willing to say what is black in these 'black laws' as termed by them for the government try to rectify it, he added.

been camping at three Delhi border points - Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur - for over 70 days, demanding a complete repeal of three central farm laws.

### SC grants interim bail to comedian Munawar Faruqui

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 5: In a relief to comedian Munawar Faruqui, arrested in a case for allegedly hurting religious sentiments by passing objectionable remarks about Hindu deities during a show, the Supreme Court Friday released him on an interim bail.

The top court also stayed the Madhya Pradesh High Court order of January 28, which had refused to grant him bail noting that to "promote harmony" is one of the constitutional duties.

It also stayed the production warrant issued against Faruqui by a trial court in Allahabad in Uttar Pradesh in connection with the FIR lodged in the state. A bench of Justices R F Nariman and B R Gava said issued notice on two petitions filed by Faruqui seeking bail in a case lodged in Indore in Madhya Pradesh and clubbing and quashing of FIRs lodged for the same alleged offence in different States.



The top court sought response from Madhya Pradesh government on both the pleas filed by Faruqui and from Uttar Pradesh, Delhi and Maharashtra governments on the plea seeking clubbing and quashing of FIRs. "This being the case, we issue notice in both the petitions, and stay the Judgment of the High Court. The petitioner is released on ad-interim bail on conditions to the satisfaction of the trial court."

## India's aeronautics sector to double by 2024: Rajnath



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bangalore, Feb 5: The growth of the country's aeronautics sector will double from Rs 30,000 crore to Rs 60,000 crore by 2024, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said Friday. Speaking at the valedictory function of the 13th edition of AeroIndia here, Singh said the Indian aerospace industry, both military and civil, stood uniquely poised on the threshold of catapulting itself into the global arena.

At the ongoing AeroIndia 2021, at least 128 MoUs and 19 transfers of technology were signed, and 32 major announcements were made along with 18 product launches. Further, 45 MSMEs participating in AeroIndia have already bagged orders worth Rs 203 crore.

"India has a great potential to emerge as a global and regional MRO (maintenance repairs and overhaul) hub given the cost competitiveness of its manpower resources, the availability of abundant, specialist capabilities and geographical advantages," he said.

The Defence Minister also said

that India much achieve the targets of domestic defence production of \$25 billion and exports of \$5 billion by 2025.

He said that in the last five years, defence exports grew from Rs 2,000 crore to Rs 9,000 crore and the majority of these exports has been spearheaded by the private sector.

While maintaining that a robust domestic manufacturing base relates directly to the potential for defence exports, the minister said, "We plan to move from a \$11 billion defence base to \$25 billion by 2025. We further intend to create an export component of \$5 billion."

"We realise, appreciate and understand that in a highly specialised and technology driven environment, a collaborative, cooperative and collective approach to defence production and exports is the way forward." President Ram Nath Kovind, who was the chief guest at the closing ceremony of AeroIndia, said the event has exhibited that global confidence in India's capabilities is growing steadily.

### SHORT TAKES

#### Elderly couple found murdered

Greater Noida: An elderly couple was found murdered at their residence in Greater Noida Friday and the police are suspecting the role of 'house guests' who had come for a party on Thursday night. The bodies of Suman Nath, aged around 65, and her husband Narendra Nath, aged around 70, were found at their residence in Sector Alpha 2, a senior police officer said Friday.

#### Farmers in Bihar refuse to join stir

Patna: Opposition parties' leaders in Bihar have organised human chains, tractor rallies, Raj Bhavan march, dharnas and protests in support of the farmers' agitation at the Delhi borders, but have failed to entice the farmers here to join the stir. They are still maintaining a distance from the protests.

#### Three killed in road mishap

Jalaun (UP): Three people were killed and two others injured when a car hit a tractor on Auraiya road here, police said Friday. Mahendra Kumar (35), who was driving the tractor, died on the spot while car driver Vivek Kumar Dohre (30) and his friend Mukesh (32) succumbed to injuries during treatment, SHO, City Police Station Anil Kumar said. The condition of the injured is stated to be critical, he said.

#### 80-yr-old woman raped

Mahoba (UP): An 80-year-old woman was allegedly raped in a village in Kharela area here, police said Friday. The incident took place February 2 when the woman was alone in the house as her family members were out attending a religious function, SHO, Kharela, Anil Kumar said. A complaint was lodged by the victim's grandson who alleged that two people entered the house from the terrace and one of them identified as Phoolchandra alias Phullu raped the woman, Kumar said.

#### Leopard shot dead

Pithoragarh: A leopard, which had killed three women in Uttarakhand's Devalthar area, has been shot dead by a professional hunter hired by the forest department, an official said Friday. The seven-year-old leopard was killed by Nainital-based hunter Harish Dhami on Thursday night, Divisional Forest Officer, Pithoragarh, Vinay Bhargava, said here.

## 4G mobile Internet service being restored in entire J&K

The internet services were shut by the government on August 5, 2019 when the special status of the erstwhile state was revoked in Parliament and it was bifurcated into union territories J&K & Ladakh



AGENCIES

Jammu, Feb 5: The Jammu and Kashmir government on Friday announced restoration of 4G mobile

Internet services in the entire Union Territory.

"4G mobile Internet services being restored in entire J&K," government spokesman Rohit Kansal said in a tweet.

At present, 4G mobile services are available in only two districts of J&K - Udhampur in the Jammu division and Ganderbal in the Kashmir division.

All other 18 districts of the union territory have only 2G mobile Internet services.

Mobile telephony and Internet services were suspended on August 5, 2019 when Article 370 was abrogated and the state bifurcated and downgraded to a Union Territory.

While mobile telephony was restored after five months, restrictions on Internet services have since continued.

There has been growing demand from businesses, students and professionals for the restoration of 4G mobile Internet services.

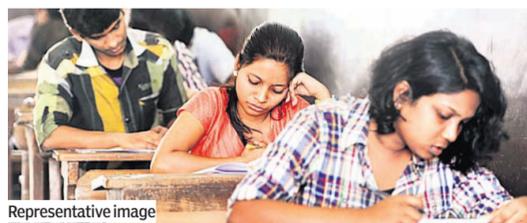
## Centre to give another chance to UPSC aspirants who exhausted their last attempt

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 5: The Centre told the Supreme Court on Friday that it is agreeable to give UPSC aspirants, who exhausted their last attempt for the civil services examination in October 2020 amid the Covid-19 pandemic but are not age-barred, another shot at clearing the test in 2021.

"Relaxation, only to the extent of providing one extra attempt for Civil Service Examination (CSE), specifically limited to CSE-2021, may be granted to only those candidates who appeared for CSE-2020 as their last permissible attempt and are otherwise not age-barred from appearing in CSE-2021," the Centre told a bench headed by Justice A M Khanwilkar.

In a note filed in the apex court, the Centre said that no relaxation shall be granted for CSE-2021 to those candidates who have not exhausted their permissible number of attempts or to those who are otherwise age-barred from appearing in CSE-2021 as per the prescribed age limits of different categories,



Representative image

or to any other candidate for any other reason whatsoever.

"This relaxation for the candidates and to the extent as prescribed above, shall be a one-time relaxation only and shall apply only for appearing in CSE-2021 and shall not be treated as a precedent," it told the bench, also comprising Justice Dinesh Maheshwari.

The Centre said that the relaxation "shall not create any vested right whatsoever or any other purported right on ground of parity or otherwise, in favour of any other set/class of candidates at any time in the future." "As per the suggestion of this court, the Union of India is agreeable for the follow-

ing ex-gratia, one-time, restricted relaxation to be granted to the prospective candidates, subject to the same being part of a consent order, disposing off the petition," the note, filed by Additional Solicitor General S V Raju, said. The bench told Raju to circulate the note and asked the petitioners to file their responses to it.

The top court said it would hear the matter on February 8. The bench is hearing a plea seeking grant of one more chance in the UPSC's civil services exam to those aspirants who could not appear in their last attempt in 2020 due to the pandemic. On February 1, the Centre had told the top court that it cannot

grant an extra chance to civil services aspirants who could not appear or prepare well for their last attempt in the UPSC civil service exam in 2020 due to the pandemic, while reiterating that it would amount to extending "differential treatment" to similarly placed candidates.

However, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta had on February 1 sought time to discuss the issue once again. The Centre had furnished a chart in the apex court giving details of relaxation given by Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) in civil services exams since its inception and had said that in 1979, 1992 and 2015 relaxations were given to the candidates due to change in patterns of examination.

The bench had observed that one-time relaxation would benefit over 3,300 students without even increasing the age-limit.

The top court on September 30 last year had refused to postpone the UPSC civil services preliminary exam because of the COVID-19 pandemic and floods in several parts of the country.

### JOVIAL MOOD



Visitors at the display area during the last day of Aero India 2021 at Yelahanka air base in Bangalore

UNI PHOTO

### Maratha quota: SC to hear pleas from March 8

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 5: The Supreme Court on Friday said it would hear from March 8 in a hybrid manner, a combination of physical and virtual hearings, the pleas pertaining to the 2018 Maharashtra law granting reservation to Marathas in education and jobs.

A five-judge constitution bench headed by Justice Ashok Bhushan said if physical hearing would resume in the apex court then the parties can make arguments physically and if anyone wants to argue virtually he can do that.

"Be that as it may, the hearing in these matters will start from March 8, 2021 by physical or virtual mode," the bench said in its order.

The top court is presently hearing matters through video-conferencing since March last year amid the COVID-19 pandemic and it is likely to resume physical hearing in a hybrid manner soon.

## 64 people from Pak receive Indian citizenship certificates

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Indore, Feb 5: Sixty four people belonging to the Sindh community of Pakistan and residing in Indore have finally received Indian citizenship certificates.

Pardeep Lajomal Talreja, one of the persons who received the citizenship certificate and living in Indore, said that with the help of Bharatiya Janata Party MP Shankar Lalwani and the district administration, not only he but also his wife Lata Kumari Talreja and Narayandas Lajomal Talreja have received their Indian citizenship certificates.

Talreja said he used to live in the Sindh province of Pakistan. After being a victim of atrocities in minority communities in Pakistan, he along with his family moved to India from Pakistan about 13 years ago in 2008. After coming to India, he was regarded as a refugee by the Central government and since then he has been residing in Indore.



He said he is happy to be in India. He thanked the Government of India and the district administration for their support. Meanwhile, the Central government has informed the Rajya Sabha about the number of Indian citizens jailed in foreign countries for various criminal offences.

Minister of State for External Affairs V. Muralidharan, in response to an unstarred question asked in the Upper House, said a total of 7,139 Indian citizens are lodged in foreign jails. The government is providing them with legal options and other assistance through its embassies.



The Lonar lake is very popular with scientists who visit in large numbers. Arrangements should be made to attract all kinds of tourists

UDDHAV THACKERAY | MAHARASHTRA CHIEF MINISTER

## CHILLING, DRY WEATHER IN SRINAGAR

For the second consecutive day Friday the minimum temperature remained above the freezing point in Srinagar city as the weather office forecast dry weather for the next seven days



## of the day quote

Farmers do not know about Twitter. This Twitter politics has started recently and everyone is doing it. What do the farmers know about Greta Thunberg or Rihanna?



SHIVNAND TIWARI | RID LEADER

Ram Temple fund collection by @NSUI underscores once again need for a candid and conceptual discussion within @INCIndia on host of core ideological issues



MANISH TEWARI | CONGRESS LEADER

Some of our nationalists pleaded in the US that 'Abki baar, Trump ki sarkar'. What did it mean? When we protested in chorus against the brutality on George Floyd, nobody questioned



ADHIR RANJAN CHOWDHURY | CONGRESS MP

## SHORT TAKES

### Patole appointed Maha Cong chief

New Delhi/Mumbai: The Congress Friday appointed Nana Patole as the party's Maharashtra state committee president, replacing Balasaheb Thorat. Patole, 57, a four-time MLA currently representing Sakoli seat in Bhandara district of the state, had resigned as Speaker of Maharashtra Assembly on Thursday. A former BJP MP from the Bhandara-Gondiya constituency in Maharashtra, he switched over to the Congress in January 2018. Patole said his aim is to restore the numero uno position of the Congress party in the state.

### Govt docs go on strike in Kerala

Kochi: A section of government medical college doctors in Kerala on Friday staged a relay hunger strike demanding the state government to rectify anomalies in the pay revision of the college lecturers. Led by the Kerala Government Medical College Teachers Association (KGMCTA) and the Kerala Government Postgraduate Medical Teachers Association (KGPMTA), the doctors staged the one-day relay hunger strike.

### 11 cybercriminals held in J'khand

Deoghar (Jharkhand): Eleven people allegedly involved in phishing activities have been arrested in Jharkhand's Deoghar and Jamtara districts, police said Friday. Twenty-one mobile phones, 32 SIM and 15 ATM cards, ten passbooks of various banks and a chequebook were seized from their possession, they said. Acting on a tip-off, a team of police personnel apprehended ten people from Deoghar district and one from Jamtara Thursday, Deoghar Superintendent of Police Ashwini Kumar Sinha said.

### Himachal Budget session from Feb 26

Shimla: The budget session of the Himachal Pradesh assembly will begin on February 26 with Governor Bandaru Dattatreya's address, an official said here Friday. The session will have 17 sittings and will conclude March 20 with no break. Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur, who also holds the Finance portfolio, will present the budget for 2021-22 on March 6, Vidhan Sabha Secretary Yash Paul Sharma told IANS.

# Pfizer withdraws application for nCoV vax in India



AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 5: Pharma major Pfizer on Friday said it has decided to withdraw its application for Emergency Use Authorisation (EUA) of its COVID-19 vaccine in India.

Pfizer was the first pharmaceutical firm to seek an emergency use authorisation from the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) for its COVID-19 vaccine in the country after it secured such clearance in the UK and Bahrain.

"In pursuance of the Emergency Use Authorisation of its COVID-19 vaccine, Pfizer participated in the Subject Expert Committee meeting of the Drug Regulatory Authority of India on February 3.

Based on the deliberations at the meeting and our understanding of additional information that the regulator may need, the company has decided to withdraw its application at this time," a company spokesperson said in a statement.

Pfizer will continue to engage with the authority and resubmit its approval request with additional information as it becomes available in the near future, the statement said. "Pfizer remains committed to making its vaccine

available for use by the Government in India and to pursuing the requisite pathway for emergency use authorisation that enables the availability of this vaccine for any future deployment," the spokesperson said.

Pfizer in its application submitted to the drug regulator in December 2020, had sought permission to import the vaccine for sale and distribution in India, besides waiver of clinical trials on Indian population in accordance with the special provisions under the New Drugs and Clinical Trials Rules, 2019, official sources had said.

Nearly 50 lakh beneficiaries vaccinated:

Nearly 50 lakh beneficiaries have been inoculated under the country-wide COVID-19 vaccination exercise, while India's total active cases have dropped to 1.51 lakh, the Union Health Ministry said on Friday. India's total active cases continues to follow a consistent downward slide consisting of just 1.40 per cent of total infections. Following a downward trajectory, 12,408 daily new cases were recorded in a span of 24 hours. India's cases per million population (7,828) are amongst the lowest in the world.

# '3rd phase to cover those above 50'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 5: The third phase of vaccination against the coronavirus is likely to commence in March and will cover 27 crore people aged 50 years and above and those with co-morbidities, Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said in Lok Sabha on Friday.

Replying to questions on vaccines and the vaccination drive against the coronavirus during the Question Hour, Vardhan said nearly five million people have been inoculated in the country so far. He added that the vaccination drive for frontline workers has begun this week. "In coming days, 27 crore people who are of above 50 years of

age and those under 50 with co-morbidities will be vaccinated," Vardhan said.

The vaccination drive began on January 16, starting with healthcare workers and then the frontline workers, both estimated to be around three crore. "After the completion of first and second phases, the third phase could be launched from any week next month," Vardhan said.

He added that the third phase will cover people above the age of 50. "It is not possible to give an exact date, but we estimate that this process can start in the second, third or the fourth week of March," he said. Vardhan said the finance minister has allocated Rs 35,000 crore for vaccination in the budget and she has



assured that it could be increased if required. He said two vaccines - Covishield, manufactured by the Serum Institute, and indigenously developed Covaxin of Bharat Biotech - have been approved for emergency use authorisation.

Besides these, work is in progress on seven vaccines. Of the seven, three vaccines are in phase 3 clin-

ical trial stage. Two vaccines are in phase 1 and 2 clinical trial stages and the remaining two are in advanced pre-clinical stage. He said India has received requests for vaccines from 22 countries. These countries include Afghanistan, Algeria, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brazil, Egypt, Kuwait, Maldives, Mauritius, Morocco, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Nicaragua, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Seychelles, South Africa and the UAE. There is also request from the Pacific Island countries, he said. Vaccines have already been given to 15 countries through grant assistance and contracted doses. He said 56 lakh doses have been sent through grants and five lakh doses through contract.

## FOR A CAUSE



Para-teachers stage a protest over pay scale and other issues in Kolkata

PTI PHOTO

## WHATSAPP'S NEW PRIVACY POLICY

### SC refuses to entertain plea

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 5: The Supreme Court Friday refused to entertain a plea which had sought a direction to instant messaging platform WhatsApp to roll back its new privacy policy on grounds that it is allegedly violative of laws and can impact the country's security.

A bench headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde observed that this issue is already being heard by the Delhi High Court and the petitioner can choose the suitable remedy. The bench, also comprising justices A S Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian, was hearing a plea filed by the Confederation of All India Traders which had sought a direction to the Centre to intervene in the matter and frame guidelines to govern large technology-based companies such as WhatsApp Inc., Facebook Inc. And Facebook India Online Services Private Limited.

### Overground JeM worker arrested

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, Feb 5: A most-wanted overground worker of the Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) terrorist outfit was arrested Friday at the Indira Gandhi International Airport in New Delhi after his deportation from Qatar, police said here.

Muneeb Ahmad Sofi, a resident of the Bijbehara area in south Kashmir's Anantnag district, was arrested by a police team from Kulgam district, the police said on Twitter. Sofi was a militant associate or overground worker (OGW) for Pakistani militant Waleed Bhai who was killed in an encounter with security forces in Kulgam last year.

"Today a police party from Kulgam has arrested a most wanted terrorist associate, namely Muneeb Ahmad Sofi...Linked with proscribed terror outfit JeM from Indira Gandhi International Airport New Delhi after his deportation from Qatar," a police spokesman said. He said Sofi was involved in a case registered under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act regarding collection of funds for the terror outfit JeM.

# ISRAELI FIRM TO HARD SELL DRONES IN INDIA

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bangalore, Feb 5: Israeli defence and homeland security solutions firm, Spear UAV forayed into India to hard sell its micro-tactical unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) or drones for meeting the needs of defence and paramilitary sectors, an official said Friday.

Spear has signed an agreement with Paras Aerospace, a subsidiary of the city-based Paras Defence and Space Technologies Ltd, to market its drones (Ninox-40) for use by military forces, paramilitary, internal security and law enforcing agencies.

"The Indian defence sector faces many challenges in surveillance of its borders, in jungles and wooded areas as well as in dealing with natural forces, including monsoon storms, cyclones and earthquakes," said Spear chief executive Yishai Amir on the margins of the 13th biennial Aero India 2021 expo at the Yelahanka air force base on the city's outskirts.

The four-year-old Tel Aviv-based Spear has domain expertise in drones, aerospace, Artificial Intelligence (AI), software and communications.

"Designed for single-user operation, Ninox 40 is a micro-tactical, cost-effective UAV, featuring an en-



Representative image

capsulated drone and control unit," Spear and Paras said in a joint statement issued here.

Weighing under 250 grams, the lightweight Ninox-40 can be fitted into a soldier's vest and carried on person during combat.

"Our drone (Ninox-40) has a flight capacity of up to 40 minutes, extensive Istar (intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance) capabilities, day and night camera for enhanced situational awareness and automatic tracking," said the statement.

The drone can be launched on the move, from under cover and in harsh environmental conditions. The partners will jointly address

the needs of special forces, defence services and national disaster response team by providing their warriors an Istar capability to complete their mission and save lives.

As a technology provider, Paras caters to state-run Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), defence public sector units and private firms across the country and to firms in other Asian and Gulf countries.

"We are collaborating to enhance the military preparedness of our special forces with Ninox-40 and leverage Spear's technologies to deepen its use in India," said Paras Managing Director Munjal Shah on the occasion.

## Indo-US combat drill to kick off in Rajasthan

The drill comes nearly two-and-a-half months after India carried out the Malabar naval exercise with the US, Japan and Australia, which are the member nations of the Quad or Quadrilateral coalition

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 5: Troops from the Indian and the US armies will carry out war-fighting drills in a combined operational environment and exchange expertise on conventional, unconventional and hybrid threats at a two-week exercise in Rajasthan beginning Monday.

The 'Yudh Abhyas' exercise is taking place at a time both the countries have renewed their resolve to further expand strategic and defence cooperation to effectively deal with common challenges including China's aggressive military posturing in the Indo-Pacific region. The US Embassy said around 250 soldiers from each side will participate in the exercise from February 8-21 at Mahajan field firing range in Rajasthan.

The embassy said a field training exercise will involve company-strength elements from each nation exercising combined,



fundamental war-fighting skills to enhance combined operational capacity.

The Indo-US defence ties have been on an upswing in the last few years. In June 2016, the US had designated India a "Major Defence Partner".

The two countries have also inked key defence and security pacts over the past few years, including the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) in 2016 that allows their militaries use each other's bases for repair and replenishment of supplies as well as provides for deeper cooperation.

# ISRO's 1st mission of 2021: A milestone for Brazil, India

THE SATELLITES ARE SLATED TO BE LAUNCHED ONBOARD THE POLAR SATELLITE LAUNCH VEHICLE (PSLV) C-51 AT 10:24 AM FROM THE SRIHARIKOTA SPACEPORT, OVER 100 KMS FROM CHENNAI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, Feb 5: In its first mission in 2021, India's space agency ISRO planned to launch February 28 Brazilian satellite Amazonia-1 and three Indian payloads, including one built by a home-grown start-up.

The satellites are slated to be launched onboard the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) C-51 at 10:24 am from the Sriharikota spaceport, over 100 kms from Chennai.

Secretary in the Department of Space and Chairman of Bengaluru-headquartered ISRO (Indian Space Research Organisation) K Sivan

confirmed the PSLV-C51 schedule to PTI Friday. Amazonia-1, reportedly the first earth observation satellite entirely developed by Brazil, is the primary payload.

'Anand', 'Satish Dhawan' satellite and 'UNITYsat' will be the co-passengers. 'Anand' is built by Indian space startup, Pixxel, and 'Satish Dhawan Satellite' by Chennai-based Space Kidz India.

UNITYsat is a combination of three satellites designed and built as a joint development by Jeppiaar Institute of Technology, Sriperumpudur (JIITsat), G. H. Raisoni College of Engineering,



Representative image

Nagpur (GHRCEsat) and Sri Shakthi Institute of Engineering and

Technology, Coimbatore (Sri Shakthi Sat). "PSLV-C51 marks the launch

of the country's first commercial private remote-sensing satellite (Anand) on an ISRO PSLV rocket", an ISRO official said.

Sivan had earlier described the upcoming mission as "special for us, special for the entire country" and beginning of a "new era of space (sector) reforms". Pixxel CEO, Awais Ahmed had said: "We are elated with the fact that India's first commercial private satellite will now launch on an Indian rocket. This is not only a proud moment for us as an organisation but also as citizens to work with our nation's capabilities". Bengaluru-based Pixxel has said

it plans to build a constellation of 30 satellites by 2023. The company inaugurated its new facility here last month.

According to Space Kidz India, Satish Dhawan satellite (SD SAT), named after former ISRO chairman Satish Dhawan, aimed to study space radiation and Magnetosphere and demonstrate the indigenously designed and developed nanosatellite components. "The satellite also tests the capabilities of LoRa technology in Space which could be helpful for many applications in the future in short and M2M communication", it said.

# international



I am being detained for sedition, which carries a maximum penalty of life imprisonment. They don't like what I've been talking about. They are afraid of what I'm saying  
WIN HTEIN | EX-CABINET MINISTER, MYANMAR

## RANA OPPOSES EXTRADITION

Pakistani-origin Canadian businessman Tahawwur Rana, a key accused in the 2008 Mumbai terror attack, has opposed his extradition to India



## of the day quote

Google Fit will allow you to measure your heart rate and respiratory rate using just your phone's camera. These features will be available in the Google Fit app for Pixel phones  
SHWETAK PATEL | DIRECTOR OF HEALTH TECHNOLOGIES, GOOGLE HEALTH

Although previous studies have indicated that compression-only CPR delivered by bystanders may be as effective as compressions and ventilation combined, this may not apply to cases with COVID-19  
ARAZ RAWSHANI | PHYSICIAN

Representation matters, especially at the ballot box, and the inauguration of Kamala Harris as the first woman, and first woman of colour, to serve as vice president of the United States is a landmark moment  
HOLLY HOTCHNER | PRESIDENT AND CEO, OF THE NATIONAL WOMEN'S HISTORY MUSEUM

# America is back, says Biden

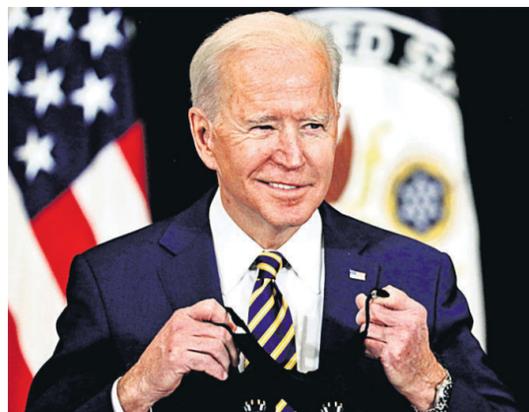
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, Feb 5: Asserting that America and its diplomacy are back, US President Joe Biden on Thursday said his administration will repair the relationship with allies and engage with the world once again.

We will repair our alliances and engage with the world once again, not to meet yesterday's challenges, but today's and tomorrow's. American leadership must meet this new moment of advancing authoritarianism, including the growing ambitions of China to rival the United States and the determination of Russia to damage and disrupt our democracy, Biden said in his remarks to State Department employees.

The US, he said, must meet the new moment accelerating global challenges - from the pandemic to the climate crisis to nuclear proliferation - challenging the will only to be solved by nations working together and in common. We cannot do it alone, he said.

We must start with diplomacy rooted in America's most cherished democratic values: defending freedom, championing opportunity, upholding universal rights, respecting the rule of law and treating every



person with dignity. That is the grounding wire of our global power. That is our inexhaustible source of strength. That is America's abiding advantage.

Though many of these values have come under intense pressure in recent years, even pushed to the brink in the last few weeks, the American people are going to emerge from this moment stronger, more determined and better equipped to unite the world in fighting to defend democracy, because we have fought for it ourselves, Biden said.

In his maiden address to the employees of the State Department, the president said he has come to the building to send a clear message to the world America is back. America is back. Diplomacy is back.

You are the centre of all that I intend to do. You are the heart of it. We are going to rebuild our alliances. We are going to re-engage with the world and take on the enormous challenge we face dealing with a pandemic, dealing with global warming and again, standing up for democracy and human rights, he said.

## Senate approves budget bill

The Senate early Friday took a key step toward fast-track passage of President Joe Biden's \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief plan without support from Republicans. Vice President Kamala Harris was in the chair to cast the tie-breaking vote, her first. Democrats in the chamber applauded after Harris announced the 51-50 vote at around 5:30 am. The action came after a grueling all-night session, where senators voted on amendments that could define the contours of the eventual COVID-19 aid bill.

Biden said his administration will work with partners to support restoration of democracy and the rule of law, and impose consequences on those responsible.

Over the past two weeks, I have spoken with the leaders of many of our closest friends - Canada, Mexico, the UK, Germany, France, NATO, Japan, South Korea, Australia - to begin reforming the habits of cooperation and rebuilding the muscle of democratic alliances.

# Low point in ties with Russia: EU

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Moscow, Feb 5: The European Union's top diplomat told Russia's foreign minister Friday that the treatment of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny represents "a low point" in the relations between Brussels and Moscow.

EU foreign affairs chief Josep Borrell met with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov several days after Navalny was ordered to serve nearly three years in prison, a ruling that elicited international outrage.

"Certainly, our relations are under a severe strain, and the Navalny case is a low point in our relations," Borrell said ahead of his talks with Lavrov in Moscow.

Navalny, 44, an anti-corruption investigator and Russian President Vladimir Putin's most prominent critic, was arrested last month upon returning from Germany, where he spent five months recovering from a nerve-agent poisoning that he blames on the Kremlin. Russian authorities have rejected the accusation.

After the meeting, Borrell said he had relayed to Lavrov his con-



Certainly, our relations are under a severe strain, and the Navalny case is a low point in our relations

JOSEP BORRELL | CHIEF, EU FOREIGN AFFAIRS

cerns over Navalny's jailing and the arrests of thousands of people who demonstrated on his behalf.

The EU official said he also communicated the bloc's support for Navalny's release and for an investigation of the August poisoning. The Russian foreign minister, in turn, once again accused European officials of refusing to share evidence of the poisoning. The Kremlin has said it won't listen to Western criticism of Navalny's sentencing and police action against his supporters. Navalny's Jan. 17 arrest triggered massive protests across Russia.

## SHORT TAKES

### US virus deaths surpass 450K

Washington: Coronavirus deaths in the United States surpassed 450,000 on Thursday, and daily deaths remain stubbornly high at more than 3,000 a day, despite falling infections and the arrival of multiple vaccines. Infectious disease specialists expect deaths to start dropping soon, after new cases hit a peak right around the beginning of the year. New COVID-19 deaths could ebb as early as next week, said the new director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

### US halts troops cuts in Germany

Washington: President Joe Biden has formally stopped the planned withdrawal of US troops from Germany that was ordered last year by the Trump administration but had never actually begun. Speaking at the State Department on Thursday, Biden said the troop pullout would be halted until Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin does a review of America's troops presence around the globe.

### Mexico arrests ex-governor

Mexico City: The arrest of a former Mexican governor on charges that he ordered the torture of a journalist gave hope to activists who believe the case could reveal the ties between powerful businessmen, politicians and organised crime and strike a blow against Mexico's notorious impunity. Mario Marin, who governed the central state of Puebla from 2005 to 2011 for the Institutional Revolutionary Party, was arrested on Wednesday in Acapulco and transported to a jail in Cancun.

### Aussie convicted in currency scam

New York: An Australian man pleaded guilty Thursday to securities fraud for cheating investors of over USD 90 million by squandering money they spent on his cryptocurrency fund, prosecutors said. Stefan He Qin, 24, entered the plea to a single count of the fraud charge in Manhattan federal court. Authorities said the fraud occurred from 2017 to 2020 as Qin operated the fund titled Virgil Sigma. "Stefan He Qin drained almost all of the assets," US Attorney Audrey Strauss said in a release.

# China takes aim at BBC on TV licence

REUTERS

Shanghai, Feb 5: The BBC came under renewed fire from Chinese officials Friday in a diplomatic dispute a day after Britain's media regulator revoked the TV licence of Chinese state media outlet CGTN.

Britain and China have exchanged barbs for months over China's crackdown on dissent in the former British colony of Hong Kong, concern over the security of Huawei technology and the treatment of ethnic Uighur Muslims in China's Xinjiang region.

On Thursday, Britain's Ofcom revoked the licence of CGTN, the English-language sister channel of state broadcaster CCTV, after concluding that China's ruling Communist Party had ultimate editorial responsibility for the channel. Minutes later, China's foreign ministry accused the British Broadcasting Corp of pushing "fake news" in its COVID-19 reporting, demanding an apology and saying that the broadcaster had politicized the pandemic and "rehashed theories about covering up by China". ADVERTISEMENT The BBC said its reporting is fair and unbiased.

On Friday, Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin

criticised the Ofcom ruling as "politicising the issue on a technical point" and warned that China reserves the right to make a "necessary response".

Britain's Daily Telegraph newspaper separately reported on Thursday that Britain had in the past year expelled three Chinese spies who were there on journalism visas. RELATED COVERAGE China opposes Britain's decision to revoke CGTN license China's state media has ramped up attacks on the British public broadcaster in recent weeks.

"I highly suspect that the BBC has been closely instigated by the intelligence agencies of the US and the UK. It has become a bastion of the Western public opinion war against China," Hu Xijin, editor-in-chief of the Global Times, said on Twitter.

## Barbs exchanged

Britain and China have exchanged barbs for months over China's crackdown on dissent in the former British colony of Hong Kong

The two nations have also clashed over the security of Huawei technology, and the treatment of ethnic Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang



Supporters of Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Oli participate in a rally in support of the government in Kathmandu, Nepal, Friday

# 'INDIA ESSENTIAL TO TACKLE MYANMAR'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

United Nations, Feb 5: India engaged constructively and acted as an important bridge during deliberations over the UN Security Council's statement on the situation in Myanmar, ensuring it strongly underlined the importance of the democratic process and transition while not being condemnatory in nature, sources said.

In a press statement, agreed by consensus, the 15-nation Council expressed "deep concern" at the declaration of the state of emergency imposed in Myanmar by the military on February 1 and the "arbitrary detention" of members of the Government, including State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and President Win Myint.

The Council, the most powerful organ of the world organisation, is-



sued the press statement on the situation in Myanmar on Thursday, three days after the military seized power in a bloodless coup and detained top political leaders.

The Council members called for the immediate release of all those detained. India, into the second month of its tenure as non-permanent Council member, engaged "very constructively" during deliberations over the press statement.

Sources told PTI that India played the role of an "important bridge", bringing together various views and wanted to ensure an outcome which was balanced. It also wanted a statement which was not "condemnatory" in nature, but one which helped the process and not become counter-productive.

Sources pointed out that India engaged actively with all the parties, a role that has been appreciated by the UK and others.

India's articulated positions on the situation, stated publicly as well, have been taken on board in the press statement.

In the first reaction after the coup, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) had said in New Delhi that India noted the developments in Myanmar with "deep concern" and has always been steadfast in its support to democracy.

# House impeachment managers ask Trump to testify

THE LETTER COMES AFTER TRUMP'S LEGAL TEAM FILED AN ANSWER TO THE ARTICLE OF IMPEACHMENT, DENYING INCONTROVERTIBLE FACTS ABOUT THE PRESIDENT'S CONDUCT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, Feb 5: House impeachment managers asked former US president Donald Trump on Thursday to testify during the

Senate impeachment trial about his conduct on January 6. The move was immediately described as a public relations stunt by his lawyers.

In a letter, lead impeachment manager Jamie Raskin requested Trump to provide testimony under oath, either before or during the Senate impeachment trial, about his conduct on January 6.

The letter comes after Trump's legal team filed an answer to the Article of Impeachment, denying incontrovertible facts about the president's conduct on and leading up to January 6 and asserting that... The 45th president of the United States performed admirably in his role as

president, at all times doing what he thought was in the best interests of the



American people.

Trump's lawyers Bruce L. Castor and David I. Dchoen were quick to decline the ask. We are in receipt of your latest public relations stunt, they wrote. As you know, there is no such thing as a negative inference in this unconstitutional proceeding, they said.

Your letter only confirms what is known to everyone you cannot prove your allegations against the 45th president of the United States, who is now a private citizen, the letter continued. The use of our Constitution to bring a purported impeachment proceeding is much too serious to play these games, it said.

In his letter to Trump, Raskin

wrote, Two days ago, you filed an answer, in which you denied many factual allegations set forth in the article of impeachment. You have thus attempted to put critical facts at issue notwithstanding the clear and overwhelming evidence of your constitutional offense.

In light of your disputing these factual allegations, I write to invite you to provide testimony under oath, either before or during the Senate impeachment trial, concerning your conduct on January 6, 2021. We would propose that you provide your testimony (of course including cross-examination) as early as Monday, February 8, 2021, and not later than Thursday, February 11, 2021. We would be pleased to arrange such testimony at a mutually convenient time and place.

If you decline this invitation, we

reserve any and all rights, including the right to establish at trial that your refusal to testify supports a strong adverse inference regarding your actions (and inaction) on January 6, 2021, he said.

In a statement, Jason Miller, a senior adviser to the former president, said Trump would not participate. The president will not testify in an unconstitutional proceeding, he said.

Reacting to Miller's statement, Raskin said, Today, we offered President Trump the opportunity to testify about the events of January 6 and he refused to do so. Despite his lawyers' rhetoric, any official accused of inciting armed violence against the government of the United States should welcome the chance to testify openly and honestly -- that is, if the official had a defence.

# business

## of the day quote

There is a decline of about 3.2 per cent in the amount of exports (rupees) during April-October 2020-21 in comparison to the same period in 2019-20, which is attributed to the COVID-19



SAIVEE KUMAR BALYAN | UNION ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND DAIRYING

Our goal is to build the easiest US investing platform for Indian investors...Our focus following this seed round is on accelerating product development to create a seamless and cost-effective end-to-end US investing experience



VIRAM SHAH | CEO, CO-FOUNDER VESTED FINANCE

We are looking at new areas of cooperation and exports to countries which Rolls-Royce and HAL together contribute to in aerospace application



R MADHAVAN | CMD, HAL

## SHORT TAKES

### ICICI Lombard gets nod for IFSC unit

**Mumbai:** Private non-life firm ICICI Lombard on Friday said it has received approval from international financial services centre (IFSC) to open an offshore insurance office in Gift City in Gandhinagar, making it the first private general insurer to do so. The offshore unit will enable ICICI Lombard to harness new opportunities in direct insurance and reinsurance areas by offering offshore direct insurance solutions, especially to domestic corporates and individuals located overseas, thus expanding its international business, the company said. "We are excited to set up an office in the IFSC, making us the first player in the private insurance sector to do so. This will enable us to expand our distribution reach and offer a range of risk management solutions to our customers based across the world," ICICI Lombard MD & CEO Bhargav Dasgupta said.

### M&M's PAT slips

**New Delhi:** Homegrown farm equipment and utility vehicles major Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd (M&M) on Friday reported a 6 per cent fall in its consolidated profit after tax from continuing and discontinued operations to Rs 159.6 crore for the December 2020 quarter. The company had posted a consolidated profit after tax from continuing and discontinued operations of Rs 170.69 crore in the corresponding period last fiscal, M&M said in a regulatory filing. Its consolidated revenue from operations during October-December 2020 stood at Rs 21,625.95 crore, against Rs 19,430.29 crore in the year-ago period, it added.

### REIT issue closes

**New Delhi:** The initial public offer of Brookfield India Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT) got subscribed 8 times on the final day of subscription Friday. It received bids for 60,59,44,400 units against 7,62,78,200 units on offer. The category meant for institutional investors was subscribed 4.80 times and those for other investors 11.78 times. Brookfield India hit the capital market with its REIT public issue on Wednesday to raise up to Rs 3,800 crore. Brookfield India's REIT mopped up Rs 1,710 crore from anchor investors. The IPO had a price band of Rs 274-275. Brookfield REIT will become third such trust to be listed in the country.



The recovery signs are getting stronger, and the guidance provided by the central bank reflects its commitment towards supporting growth

UDAY SHANKAR | FICCI PRESIDENT

## 3 OFFERS RECEIVED FOR PMC BANK RESOLUTION

Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das Friday said three investors have submitted their offers for reconstruction of crisis-ridden Punjab and Maharashtra Co-operative (PMC) Bank and evaluation for those are underway



# RBI opens endless tap for govt to borrow from retail investors

AGENCIES

**Mumbai, Feb 5:** Reserve Bank governor Shaktikanta Das Friday said there is no way the move to allow small investors to directly enter government bonds market will starve banks of their deposits - their cheapest source of funds - saying the size of the pie is big enough to be pooled.

RBI, tasked with managing a whopping Rs 12 lakh crore of government borrowing next fiscal, in its bid to widen the investor base for government bonds, has made a major policy shift by deciding to allow small investors direct entry into this market to help deepen the financial markets in general and gilt market in particular.

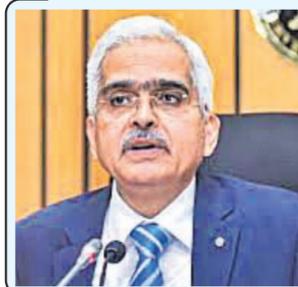
"I don't feel that it (allowing retail investors direct entry into the gilt market) will in any manner cut into bank deposits. I think the size of the pie is too large to support," governor Das told reporters during the customary post-policy presser.

The move makes India the first Asian country to allow direct entry of small investors in government debt market, while the US and Brazil allow indirect entry, Das said. As GDP grows and as the economy comes back to a higher growth trajectory, total volume of savings and deposits naturally expands. We feel that it will not undermine the flow of deposits to banks and mutual funds. It is one more avenue which is made available though a much easier process, he noted.

Moreover, even though small savings rates offer much higher rates than bank deposits, bank deposits have grown 11.3 per cent so far this year, the governor argued. In effect RBI has opened a long, endless tap for the government to borrow from - just as is done in the stock market now with the only difference is that this will be under direct watch of RBI.

Currently, RBI allows small investors to buy gilts via the Goid platform on BSE and NSE but this has not gained any traction. This is the second major step that RBI is taking to encourage retail investors to enter the gilt market.

Under the new plan, all an investor needs to do is to open a gilt securities account (retail direct) with the RBI as all what it said, as details of the facility will be issued separately. It can be noted RBI has been encouraging retail participation in G-secs for long with several initiatives like introduction of non-competitive bidding in primary auctions, permitting stock exchanges to act as aggregators/facilitators for retail investors and allowing odd-lot segment in the NDS-



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OM (negotiated dealing system-order matching) secondary market, among others, in the past.

He governor described it as a major structural reform as the world over only very few countries have done it. "As far as I know, very few countries like the US and Brazil allow this. In Asia, we are the first country to do it," the governor said, adding that it has been RBI's endeavour to make the G-secs market accessible to retail investors.

"We have this aggregator model through stock exchanges and other kinds of access. Now, we are giving a direct access to investors," he said. Deputy governor BP Kanungo, said this is a very significant development as for so many years we have been trying to broad-base the G-secs market. "With the ever growing size of government borrowing, it is absolutely necessary that the investor base is broadened," he said. So far, retail investors were in a position to access the NDS-OM through an aggregation model.

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## DPIIT PREPARES DRAFT CABINET NOTE

# Expenditure finance panel okays PLI plan for LEDs, ACs

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Feb 5:** The expenditure finance committee has approved the proposal of the commerce and industry ministry for providing incentives to ACs and LED lights under the PLI scheme, which aims at boosting domestic manufacturing in the country, according to the DPIIT.

In November, the Union Cabinet had approved Rs 6,238-crore outlay for these two sectors, air conditioners and LED lights, under the production linked incentive (PLI) scheme, which aims at making Indian manufacturers competitive globally.

Based on the recommendations of the committee, the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) has prepared a draft cabinet note.

The scheme would extend an incentive of 4 per cent to 6 per cent on incremental sales over the base year 2019-20 of goods manufactured in India and covered under target segments, to eligible companies, subject to fulfilment of threshold conditions of cumulative incremental investment and sales of manufactured goods, for a period of five years.

DPIIT Secretary said that all the



proposals would be approved by the union cabinet and then notified. "PLI is a game changer scheme. It will promote global champions in India," he told reporters here.

The scheme will be launched on April 1, and it will be open for applications for six months initially, which could be extended, if required. The scheme was launched for 13 sectors with an outlay of Rs 1.97 lakh crore over the next five years. The other sectors include telecom, textile products, food products and advanced chemistry cell battery.

The final proposal of the PLI scheme for individual sectors would have to be approved by an empowered finance committee and Union Cabinet. The departments concerned would have to implement the scheme.

## DPIIT working on new e-commerce policy: Govt official

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Feb 5:** The commerce and industry ministry is "definitely" working on a new e-commerce policy which will have various features such as those related to data and consumer rights, a senior government official said Friday.

The other issues which need to be looked upon while formulating the policy are about the problem of counterfeit products, packaging and rules of origin, the official of the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) said.

DPIIT is arm of the Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry "Who should be accountable for counterfeit products sold through an e-commerce company. Data is an important issue. The entire data issue will be governed by what actually the data law will be, which is before Parliament. That is why we are not in a hurry to finalise it (the policy)... So, whatever will be the final outcome of that data bill, it will apply to everybody who will deal with data," the official said a regulator for the sector may come if required.

The official said that e-commerce sector is not only about foreign direct investment (FDI) in the sector, as a large number of e-commerce firms are outside FDI. "We are definitely working on the policy," the official said.

## Centre identifies four clusters from Odisha for export promotion

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 5:** As part of the Agriculture Export Policy (AEP), the Centre has identified four clusters from across Odisha for export promotion. Clusters for marine products are identified from districts of Jagatsinghpur, Bhubaneswar, Balasore and a cluster for turmeric is selected from Kandhamal

Several unique product-district clusters have been identified for export promotion, based on factors like existing production and export endowments, scalability of operations, size of the export market / India's share, and the potential for increase in exports.

About 18 clusters from different parts of the country have been identified for same purposes.

The government introduced a comprehensive Agriculture Export Policy with an aim to harness export potential of Indian agriculture, through suitable policy instruments, to make India a global power in agriculture, and raise farmers' income. The AEP has been introduced to diversify our export basket, destinations and boost high value and value added agricultural exports, including focus on perishables. The government also targets to promote novel, indigenous, organic, ethnic, traditional and non-traditional agriculture products exports through the policy.

It was said that government eyes to provide an institutional mechanism for pursuing market access, tackling barriers and dealing with sanitary and phytosanitary issues.

# FDI easing in defence production to attract investments

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Feb 5:** Various projects are expected to come in the defence production as the government has liberalised foreign direct investment (FDI) norms in the sector, a top official said Friday. The FDI limit in the defence manufacturing under automatic route has now been raised to 74 per cent from 49 per cent.

"Our FDI regime is most liberalised in the world. FDI in defence production has been liberalised and I expect this to be a major game-changer in India and lots of investments coming into the defence production. We see a lot of projects coming in the sector," Secretary in the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) Guruprasad Mohapatra told reporters here.

Mohapatra also said the government has proposed hiking FDI cap in the insurance sector in the Budget. The increase in FDI limit from 49 per cent to 74 per cent in insurance companies will have a positive impact on the Indian economy, he added.

It will enable global insurance companies to take more strategic and long-term view on the sector in India, thereby bringing in a greater inflow of long-term capital, global technology, processes, and international best practices, Mohapatra noted.

The secretary said, "...The end consumer will also be benefited from it as it will boost competi-



tion, enable consolidation and increase insurance penetration, leading to more innovative and affordable products for the end-consumer".

Scaling up of insurance operations will lead to significant employment of semi-skilled insurance agents as well as sales force, and the vibrant insurance sector will also support long-term investments in infrastructure projects, which have a long gestation period.

"The proposed increase will bring the insurance sector at par with the private banking sector, where FDI up to 74 per cent is allowed. Higher FDI limits will enable insurance companies to meet their capital requirements, thereby reducing the burden on banks, NBFCs to raise capital for insurance companies," Mohapatra said.

About promoting the growth of startups, the secretary said the department is working on a credit guarantee fund scheme, which would provide comfort to banking and non-banking financial institutions to lend to budding entrepreneurs.

# NBFCs to get funds under on tap TLTRO

AGENCIES

**Mumbai, Feb 5:** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday proposed to provide funds to non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) from banks under the 'on tap' TLTRO scheme for incremental lending to some stressed sectors.

In October last year, RBI had announced on tap targeted long term repo operations (TLTRO) scheme for banks. It had said the on tap TLTRO will be conducted with tenors of up to three years for a total amount of up to Rs 1 lakh crore at a floating rate linked to the repo rate. The scheme is available till March 31, 2021.

"NBFCs are well recognised conduits in reaching out to the last mile in various sectors, it is now proposed to provide funds from banks under the TLTRO on tap scheme to NBFCs for incremental lending to the specified stressed sectors," RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said during the monetary policy announcement.

In addition to the five sectors announced under the scheme on October 21, 2020, 26 stressed sectors identified by the Kamath Committee were also brought within the ambit of sectors eligible under the on tap TLTRO on December 4, 2020, RBI said.

The initial five eligible sectors for deployment of funds were agri-



culture, agri-infrastructure, secured retail, MSMEs, drugs, pharmaceuticals and healthcare.

The 26 stressed sectors identified by the Kamath Committee include power, construction, roads chemicals, gems and jewellery, hotels, restaurants, tourism and auto components, among others.

RBI said liquidity availed by banks under the scheme is to be deployed in corporate bonds, commercial paper and non-convertible debentures issued by entities in these sectors. The liquidity availed under the scheme can also be used to extend bank loans and advances to these sectors.

Investments made by banks under this facility can be classified as held to maturity (HTM) even above the 25 per cent of total investment permitted to be included in the HTM portfolio, it said.

The central bank said all exposures under this facility are exempted from reckoning under the large exposure framework (LEF).

## DRM-Khurda visits JSPL Angul

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 5:** Divisional Railway Manager of East Coast Railway's Khurda Road Division Sashi Kant Singh visited Jindal Steel & Power Ltd (JSPL)'s integrated steel complex at Angul to discuss mutual cooperation and growth.

"JSPL steel plant is having a plan for expansion and today's visit was to synergise the plan of JSPL with the ECoR so that we can extend necessary support to JSPL in its plan to augment steel production and make the country proud," said Singh.

He stressed on working together and long term planning to meet the growing traffic. "Our focus is to work simultaneously inside JSPL plant as well as on railway track so that there are no constraints in movement of the raw material and finished products of JSPL," Singh added.

As per the discussion, representatives of JSPL and East Coast Railway will meet every month alternatively at Angul and Khurda to discuss the freight requirement and better coordination for mutual business growth.

Also, JSPL's MD VR Sharma said that the effective support from East Coast Railway will help JSPL, Angul to achieve its growth plan and contribute to Atmanirbhar Bharat.

# Indian advertising industry to grow 10.8 pc at ₹62,577 cr

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Feb 5:** The Indian advertising industry is expected to grow 10.8 per cent to reach Rs 62,577 crore by the end of this year, mainly helped by a rapid growth in digital advertising, according to a report.

The advertising sector, which had witnessed a degrowth in 2020 due to the pandemic, is expected to touch Rs 70,343 crore by 2022, as per dentsu Digital Report 2021.

"The advertising industry is expected to make a comeback and will grow by 10.8 per cent to reach Rs 62,577 crore by the end of the year 2021. Furthermore, it is expected to grow with a CAGR (Compound Annual Growth Rate) of 11.59 per cent to reach Rs 70,343 crore by 2022," the report said.

The Indian advertising industry currently stands at Rs 56,490

crore and it witnessed a de-growth of 17.5 per cent over 2019 due to the pandemic, it added.

Most of the sectors like manufacturing, trade, tourism, transportation, real estate and automobile were impacted during the initial phase of the lockdown in India.

While the digital advertising industry had witnessed a 15.3 per cent growth in 2020 despite the pandemic to Rs 15,782 crore from Rs 13,683 crore by 2019, this space is expected to reach Rs 23,673 crore by 2022.

"Digital media will grow at 20 per cent to reach a market size of Rs 18,938 crore by 2021 and with a CAGR of 22.47 per cent to reach Rs 23,673 crore by 2022," the report said.

In 2020, television media, which has a wide reach, remained the largest contributor with 41 per cent market share with Rs 23,201 crore



in 2020, followed by spends on digital with 28 per cent (Rs 15,782 crore) and print with 25 per cent (Rs 13,970 crore).

Currently, FMCG segment has the highest expenditure on advertising with a contribution of 21 per cent

(Rs 11,554 crore), followed by e-commerce with 17 per cent (Rs 9,788 crore) and consumer durables with 10 per cent (Rs 5,751 crore).

"FMCG spends a large majority of its advertising budget on television (64 per cent) while retail,

## GOOD DAYS AHEAD

Currently, FMCG segment has the highest expenditure on advertising with a contribution of 21 pc (Rs 11,554 cr), followed by e-com with 17 pc (Rs 9,788 cr) and consumer durables with 10 pc (Rs 5,751 crore)

Digital media in the country will grow at 20 per cent to reach a market size of Rs 18,938 crore by 2021 and with a CAGR of 22.47 per cent to reach Rs 23,673 crore by 2022, the Dentsu report said

consumer durables at 45 per cent, telecommunications at 40 per cent and e-commerce at 39 per cent.

Dentsu CEO India Anand Bhadkamkar said, "2020 presented a monumental challenge to us - as individuals, business and society. It made us witness time and space in ways that many generations had only read about in textbooks or had heard of from ageing bystanders of yester-history".

"... More than 50 per cent of our revenue comes from digital at a time when the market average in India is still 10-12 per cent. We, at dentsu, expect 2021 to witness a colossal rise in digital advertising.

"We also recognise the need for a business intelligence report that can give directions toward which this industry is moving with ever-changing client demands and market scenarios," he said.

ENGLISH SKIPPER HITS TON ON HIS 100TH TEST AS THE VISITORS DOMINATE OPENING DAY REACHING 263/3 ON A FLAT WICKET

# England deep-Root-ed

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chennai, Feb 5:** Skipper Joe Root won the battle of attrition against Indian spinners with a classy century in his 100th Test as England reached a comfortable 263 for three at stumps on the opening day of the first match here Friday.

A modern-day great, Root (128 batting, 197b, 14x4, 1x6) showed his mastery over slow bowlers during his 20th hundred and third in as many Tests, becoming the ninth player in the history of the game to score a ton on his 100th appearance.

He also admirably guided young opener Dom Sibley (87, 286b, 12x4), who showed commendable game awareness and enormous doggedness during their 200-run partnership for the third wicket before Jasprit Bumrah (2/40) got him in the final over of the day.

Root's innings was an exhibition of how to construct an innings on a low, slow track while countering a hostile post-lunch spell from Ishant Sharma (0/27) where he got the ball to reverse swing.

Root's speciality, the sweep shot, was also brought out of the closet once Indian spinners started altering the length.

There were full-blooded slog sweep in front of the square, conventional sweep towards square, the paddle sweep behind the square and also switch-hit sweep where he changed the grip against Shahbaz Nadeem.

And towards the end, first six of the match, was also a slog sweep off Ashwin. This was after he had almost lost five litres of fluid in sipping Chennai heat.

Root and Sibley knew that they had to tire Ishant, Ravichandran Ashwin (1/56) and Bumrah out as Virat Kohli at some point would

Dom Sibley congratulates a smiling Joe Root after the latter completes his century in Chennai



have to pay the price for Washington Sundar and Nadeem's relative inexperience.

With no purchase from the track, it became easier for Root and Sibley to use their feet and big stride to dominate the two spinners, who looked clueless.

Unlike a lot of batsmen, who in a pre-meditated fashion, come down the track, Root and Sibley waited for the Indian spinners to toss up the ball before they took the plunge.

An on-drive off Ashwin and a

pull shot when he dropped one short along with a late cut off Nadeem were for the keeps. There were 14 boundaries in all and each one aesthetically brilliant.

Nadeem and Sundar for most part couldn't hit the right length and the abrasive surface of the track meant that the Red SG Test ball, which as per media reports was supposed to retain its hardness and seam for a longer duration, got soft and scuffed up by the 40th over.

The softness meant that both

England batsmen got extra time to adjust their footwork against both spin and pace. Save the two dismissals in the first session, England controlled the game during the next two sessions on a lifeless track, which will certainly become difficult for batting as the game progresses.

With India slated to bat fourth in the game, the first innings score by both teams will go a long way in deciding the course of this game.

The Chepauk track with its red clay soil content usually offers good bounce on the first day which becomes variable as the cracks start opening and spinners coming into the play.

But this was one such track, which was devoid of any pace and the edges were not even carrying half the distance to first slip or keeper Rishabh Pant. Such was India's plight that Rohit Sharma got his helmet and came up half way to Ishant's deliveries which weren't medium pace by any means.

Ashwin was brought into the attack as early as seventh over but Sibley and Rory Burns during the first 90 minutes were solid, putting on 63 runs for the opening stand.

## Post Day 1 play reactions

JASPRIT BUMRAH

**Helpless wicket for bowlers:** The ball did become soft after a while and the wicket is on flatter side with the bounce being less. You are left with limited options (to shine ball). We are trying to figure out what we can do with the limited things on hand, at that time.

**Saliva ban:** Yes, it becomes difficult when the ball becomes soft and doesn't shine really well because of new COVID-19 rules, we can't use saliva, very difficult during that time to maintain the ball.

**Sweat no help:** In India, the ball gets scuffed up easily. So to make the ball heavy, you have to shine one side sometimes, with sweat and it doesn't really serve the

purpose. You can't make one side heavy with sweat and it doesn't really work that way. But these are the rules and we have to make do with what we have at the moment.

JOE ROOT

**Ready for more:** I am ready for more tomorrow. Hopefully get back, a bit frustrating, very kind of Virat (Kohli) to help me out (with cramps), good sportsmanship from him. It's just like a long day and then after a few overs I get some fluids and cooled down.

**Surface talk:** We have got to look and try and get as many as we can 600-700 if we can, really trying to make most of the first innings make it good and those four overs trying to work quickly.

So if we can bat into whole of tomorrow or maybe day three then things could speed up quite quickly for us and you never know what can happen for that point onwards.

**On his knock:** Playing the 100th Test was special and I mean coming in with some good form and I need to make sure I cash in on. Over the course of my career I've not always gone to make really big scores, so for me to be going and doing that currently is really pleasing.

OTHER COMMENTS

**MICHAEL VAUGHAN:** Ridiculous decision by India not to play Kuldeep Yadav!!! If he isn't going to play at home with the injuries they have when is he going to play!!!

## AXAR INJURED

**CHENNAI:** Spin bowling all-rounder Axar Patel was Friday ruled out of the first Test against England after complaining of pain in his left knee. Left-arm spinner Shahbaz Nadeem, who found a place in the playing XI, from Jharkhand and Rajasthan leg-spinner Deepak Chahar have been included in the main squad from the list of standby players. "Axar Patel has been ruled out of the first Paytm Test against England. The all-rounder complained of pain in his left knee during Team India's optional training session Thursday," BCCI secretary Jay Shah stated in a press release. "He is being monitored by the BCCI Medical Team and while his detailed reports are awaited, he will not be available for selection for the opening match," Shah further stated. Axar was picked as a replacement for star all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja, who is recovering from an injury and was in line to make his Test debut.



SPORTSMANSHIP AT ITS BEST: Virat Kohli helps Root, who was struggling with a cramp late in the day in Chennai, Friday

Sibley in particular would shuffle towards off-stump to cover the line of the deliveries while waiting for the loose ones. Burns was ready to tuck anything on his pads as there was no juice in the track to assist the new ball bowlers.

It was a moment's indiscretion on

the part of Burns that brought about his downfall. Burns tried a non-existent reverse sweep which lobbed off his gloves for Pant to complete the formalities after having dropped him down the leg-side.

As Sachin Tendulkar had predicted, there was reverse swing on

offer as early as first session with Bumrah getting the shiny side to dart in, trapping Dan Lawrence (0) plumb.

But things turned for worse during the next two sessions as Indian bowlers with three spinners in their line-up bowled as many as 11 no-balls.

### SCORECARD

England 1st innings

Rory Burns c Pant b Ashwin 33, Dom Sibley lbw b Bumrah 87, Dan Lawrence lbw b Bumrah 0, Joe Root batting 128; Extras: 15 (lb-4, nb-11); Total: 263/3 (89.3 overs).  
Fall: 1/63 (Burns), 2/63 (Lawrence), 3/263 (Sibley).  
Bowling: Ishant Sharma 15-3-27-0, Jasprit Bumrah 18.3-2-40-2, Ravichandran Ashwin 24-2-68-1, Shahbaz Nadeem 20-3-69-0, Washington Sundar 12-0-55-0.



Jasprit Bumrah (L) reacts after dismissing an English batsman

## 1097 PLAYERS REGISTER FOR IPL 2021 AUCTION

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chennai, Feb 5:** As many as 1097 players have registered for the much-awaited IPL auction to be held here on February 18 with most entries coming from the West Indies (56) followed by Australia (42) and South Africa (38).

The player registration deadline closed Thursday and the list comprises 207 international players including 21 capped Indians. Twenty seven players will represent the associate nations and 863 uncapped cricketers, including 743 Indians and 68 overseas. The number of uncapped Indians who have played at least one IPL game stands at 50 and two for overseas uncapped players.

"If every franchise were to have the maximum of 25 players in their

**KXIP have the biggest purse available with ₹53.20cr, followed by RCB (₹35.90cr), RR (₹34.85cr), CSK (₹22.90cr), MI (₹15.35cr), DC (₹12.9cr) and ₹10.75cr each for KKR and SRH**

squad, 61 players will be taken in the auction (of which up to 22 may be overseas players)," read the IPL statement, Friday.

Country-wise breakdown of 283 overseas players who have registered: Afghanistan (30), Australia (42), B'desh (5), England (21), Ireland (2), Nepal (8), Netherlands (1), NZ (29), Scotland (7), South Africa (38), Sri Lanka (31), UAE (9), USA (2), West Indies (56), Zimbabwe (2).

## Chennaiyin FC, Bengaluru play out drab draw

AGENCIES

**Goa, Feb 5:** Chennaiyin FC and Bengaluru FC huffed and puffed but neither could put the ball in the back of the net as their Indian Super League (ISL) encounter ended goalless, Friday.

Chennaiyin could have sealed a win had the woodwork not denied them a goal in the 85th minute. Memo Moura took a free-kick 30 yards from goal. He hit the ball hard as he shot for a goal from this distance. Gurpreet Singh Sandhu dived to his right but couldn't get to the ball. Luckily for Sandhu, the ball hit the upright of the post and the sheer force it was hit with, took the deflection outside the box. Enes Sipovic then blasted the ball off target.

## Mighty ATKMB test ahead of Odisha FC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bambolim, Feb 5:** Their coach sacked after an unsavoury comment, bottom-placed Odisha FC (OFC) will look to regroup and get their campaign back on track when they take on ATK Mohun Bagan (ATKMB) in a must-win Indian Super League game here Saturday.

Rooted at the bottom of the table after 14 games with just eight points, Odisha have struggled all season. They have won just one match besides conceding 21 goals, which is the second-worst record in the league.

Their attackers haven't been clinical enough. Barring own goals, Odisha have netted just 11 - the joint-least by a team.

On top of it, their head coach Stuart Baxter was booted out for making comment on rape to criticise a refereeing decision after the team's



loss to Jamshedpur FC, Monday.

There will be additional pressure on the team as it looks to snap a winless run of five games under the guidance of Gerald Peyton, who took the charge on an interim basis.

"In the last six games, we're going to show a positive attitude, a de-

termination to win as many games as possible and take the club forward," said Peyton.

"If you look at nearly all the games we've played, we've been a fraction away (from getting results). It's been one goal in every game and finding that combination to go and win games, I'm sure we are

going to find that," Peyton added. Club captain Steven Taylor will remain suspended for the game as Odisha will be desperate for a turnaround, while second-placed Bagan will look to close in the gap on leaders Mumbai City FC.

The last time the two teams met earlier this season, a goal from Roy Krishna proved to be the difference despite Odisha carving out multiple opportunities and threatening Bagan.

ATKMB coach Antonio Lopez Habas is aware Odisha will be even hungrier this time, as they prepare for life without Baxter.

"We have to play against Odisha the same way we play against Mumbai," said Habas. "They are in a special situation because the coach is out. Maybe when the team changes or the coach changes, the motivation increases," he added.

## Serena, Osaka drawn in same half

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Melbourne, Feb 5:** Serena Williams has been drawn into the same quarter at the Australian Open as No.2-ranked Simona Halep and the same half as Naomi Osaka in her latest bid for a record-equaling 24th Grand Slam singles title.

First up for the seven-time Australian Open champion will be Laura Siegemund of Germany. And that's her immediate focus.

US Open champion Osaka will face Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova in the first round and has major winners Angelique Kerber, Garbine Muguruza, last year's runner-up in Australia, Venus Williams and Bianca Andreescu in her quarter. Defending champion Sofia Kenin is on the top half of the women's draw along with No.1-ranked Ash Barty and they could potentially meet in the semifinals again. Kenin won that encounter last year on her



way to a breakthrough major title.

Novak Djokovic's bid for a third consecutive Australian title, and ninth overall, could get tricky. He has an opener against Jerome Chardy and three-time major winner Stan Wawrinka, Milos Raonic and Alexander Zverev are in his quarter. Top-ranked Djokovic and Zverev

## Nagal draws Berankis in Australian Open

**MELBOURNE:** Sumit Nagal was expecting a clash against a top 10 player in his opener but the India tennis player on Friday drew Lithuania's Ricardas Berankis as his first round opponent at the Australian Open here. It will be Nagal's second clash against the World No.72 in as many weeks after losing to the Lithuanian early this week in the build-up event. If Nagal, a wild card entrant and World No.139, can cross the first hurdle, he will run into either 19th seed Russian Karen Khachanov or local wild card Aleksandar Vukic. It will be Nagal's third Grand Slam men's singles appearance, having competed in US Open (2019, 2020) twice. In the men's doubles, Rohan Bopanna and Divij Sharan will compete with their respective partners.

were playing against each other in an ATP Cup doubles match when the draw was made Friday for the season-opening major: Djokovic edged Zverev in the second singles match to pull defending champion Serbia level at 1-1 with Germany with the winner advancing to the final.

Rafa Nadal, aiming to win a record 21st major singles title — he moved equal with Roger Federer by winning

the French Open last year — will open against Laslo Djere and could face fifth-seeded Stefanos Tsitsipas in the quarterfinals.

The official draw was delayed by a day because all play was suspended Thursday while 160 players had to isolate and get tested for COVID-19 after a worker in one of the tournament hotel quarantine hotels tested positive.

## Jose ends up in wrong side of history

AGENCIES

**London, Feb 5:** Jose Mourinho had a humbling night Thursday as Thomas Tuchel matched his own benchmark as Chelsea manager while handing out a historic defeat to the Tottenham boss.

Jorginho scored the only goal of the game from the penalty spot after Eric Dier needlessly fouled Timo Werner in the area. The result took Chelsea up to sixth in the Premier League, three points clear of Spurs but having played a game more.

Spurs had also lost their last home game when they were seen off 1-3 by Jurgen Klopp's Liverpool. It was the first time in Mourinho's entire managerial career that he has suffered back-to-back home league defeats, an incredible run spanning 326 home league games at eight different clubs. Earlier in his career, Mourinho's



home record at Chelsea was without compare, as he started an 86-game unbeaten run at Stamford Bridge.

New Blues boss Tuchel has gotten his own tenure off to a good start, with two wins and a draw from his first three matches. He has also become the first Chelsea manager since Mourinho in 2004 to keep a clean sheet in each of his first three league games.

The game added to a miserable run for Mourinho against his former side. He hasn't won any of his last seven games against Chelsea, drawing three and losing four.

It is his joint-longest winless run against any opponent in his managerial career, matching another spell of seven games without a win against Barcelona between 2011 and 2012 while manager of Real Madrid.