



IN HER OWN ZONE

Social media influencer and actor Ruhii Singh says all her favourite action heroes since childhood were women

LEISURE P2



MAHA TO PROBE TWEETS

State intel dept will probe allegations that some celebrities were forced to issue tweets in favour of the Centre

TWO STATES P7



NETANYAHU 'NOT GUILTY'

Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu pleaded not guilty as his trial on graft charges resumed weeks before natl elections

INTERNATIONAL P10

Centre revokes disputed bylaws

THE DRAFT BYLAWS FOR SRIMANDIR, ISSUED BY THE NATIONAL MONUMENT AUTHORITY, KICKED UP A STORM IN STATE

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi/Puri, Feb 8: Union Minister of Culture and Tourism Prahlad Singh Patel Monday announced the withdrawal of the draft heritage by-laws for Shri Jagannath Temple, Puri which had been issued by the National Monument Authority (NMA).

The Union minister announced withdrawal after delegations of the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MPs met the minister separately here and expressed opposition to the draft by-laws. The minister informed both the delegations that the draft notification was issued without the knowledge of the NMA chairman and the withdrawal of the notification has been ordered.

"Union Ministers Dharmendra Pradhan and Pratap Sarangi, BJD MPs led by Pinaki Misra and Bhartruhari Mahtab and BJP MPs met and informed me about the draft notification which was issued without the knowledge of the NMA chairman. This is withdrawn immediately. Any decision regarding Puri would be taken after consultation with the state government," Patel said.

After the meeting, Union minister Pratap Chandra Sarangi termed the draft by-laws as a bureaucratic error and said Prime Minister Narendra Modi government would never make such laws for Shri Jagannath Temple.



CM Naveen Patnaik taking stock of the Srimandir heritage corridor in Puri, Monday. ST Secretary VK Pandian is also seen

Meanwhile, senior BJD MP Pinaki Misra said that the Union culture minister told the BJD delegation that the government was going to initiate an inquiry into the matter. "The Union minister told us that they are setting up an inquiry to find out how could a junior officer issue such a draft notification in the absence of the NMA director and the secretary," Pinaki Misra said. Earlier, Chief Minister Naveen

Patnaik had also opposed the draft by-laws. Patnaik said nobody can stop the work of Lord Jagannath. The Chief Minister, who had visited the Jagannath temple in Puri Monday morning and offered his prayers to the deities for the first time since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, said the Union government must remove these by-laws. The NMA recently came up with heritage bylaws for Shri Jagannath

Temple which proposed to restrict constructions that did not conform with the heritage zone conditions.

"No construction or re-construction of any building within a radius of 100 metres, or such other higher distance from any archaeological site, as may be decided by the Archaeological Survey of India and the Orissa State Archaeology Department from time to time, from the outer boundary of a

declared protected monument shall be permitted," the draft bylaws stated.

The draft notification added that no construction above the first floor and above seven metres shall be allowed beyond a radius of 100 metres and within a radius of 300 metres. It is to be mentioned here that the bylaws would have hampered the grand infrastructure development plan around the 12th-century Shri Jagannath Temple to transform the Pilgrim City into a world class heritage site. The Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) Sunday strongly objected to the draft bylaw which talked about abolition of structures within 100 metres of the national monument.

SJTA chief administrator Krishan Kumar demanded that the draft rules be withdrawn and wider consultations with different stakeholders in Puri and the state held before taking a final decision. He apprised the NMA about the existence of SJTA established as per an Act passed by the State Assembly and its agreement with the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) for the conservation of Srimandir.

"A large number of habitations (Sahis) which are more than thousand years old also exist around the temple. These habitations are mainly of Sevayat families, who have been rendering service to the deities. As they are likely to be affected by any intervention, they must be consulted before initiating any process," he said.

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Coastal highway revised to 382km

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 8: Nearly four years after its announcement, the Centre strongly objected to the draft bylaw which talked about the length of the much-talked about coastal highway by 48 km. This was informed by Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari in a written reply to Rajya Sabha, Monday.

As per the requirement of the Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC), the alignment of 430 km long Gopalpur-Digha Coastal Highway was modified to 382 km, Gadkari said. A detailed project report along with the modified alignment has been taken up.

In April 2015, Gadkari had announced the coastal highway project during one of his visits to Odisha. After

that the project was delayed due to a political slugfest between the BJD and the BJP. Later the Ministry of Environment, Forest denied to accord approval to the alignment of the highway.

The projected road starts from NH-16 near Tangi in Khurda district and passes through Puri, Konark, Astarang, Naugaon, Paradip Port and ends at Ratanpur in Odisha and it will connect to Digha in West Bengal.

The approximate project cost is ₹2,765 crore. The EAC report stated that the new alignment would save 9,442 trees and would not pass through any wildlife sanctuary in the new road between Tangi and Ratanpur.

No land will be acquired from any forest or sensitive zones.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Sorry, I couldn't create a job for you but here is a list of things you can feel proud about...

Bus fares up again

Bhubaneswar: The state government once again hiked the fares of all categories of buses Monday. The state transport department hiked the fares following a steep hike in diesel price. The fares of ordinary buses went up by six paise per km while that of express buses went up by seven paise/km. In case of deluxe and AC deluxe buses, the fares were increased by two paise and eight paise, respectively. With the latest rise, the fare for the ordinary buses has gone up to 80p. The fares for express buses will be 84p. Commuters will now have to pay 109 p for travelling in deluxe buses and 139 p for AC deluxe buses. For travelling in super premium buses, commuters will have to pay ₹2.17. The bus fares had been increased January 20 this year.

MARKET WATCH	
INDEX	VARIATION
SENSEX	51348.77 ↑ 617.14
NIFTY	15115.80 ↑ 191.50
DOLLAR	73.37 ↑ ₹0.01
EURO	87.93 ↑ ₹0.22
GOLD	₹47,851 ↑ ₹595
SILVER	₹70,168 ↑ ₹1430

WEATHER		
	BHUB	CTK
TEMP	30.8°C	30.8°C
MIN	15.8°C	14.0°C
Humidity	86%	72%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Mainly clear sky	

After PM's invite, farmer unions ask govt to fix date

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 8: Farmer unions agitating against the three farm laws Monday asked the government to fix a date for the next round of talks, soon after Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged them to end their stir and invited them to resume the dialogue.

They, however, objected to Prime Minister Modi's remarks in Rajya Sabha that a new "breed" of agitators called "andolan jivi" has emerged in the country, and said that agitation has an important role in a democracy. Farmer leader Shiv Kumar Kakka, who is a senior member of the Samyukt Kisan Morcha which is spearheading the ongoing stir, said they are ready for the next round of talks and the government should tell them the date and time of the meeting.

"We have never refused to hold talks with the government. Whenever it has called us for dialogue, we held discussions with Union ministers. We are ready for

talks with them (government)," Kakka told PTI. Eleven rounds of talks have been held over the contentious farm laws but the impasse continues as the farmer unions remain firm on their demands - the repeal of the three laws and legal guarantee for Minimum Support Price (MSP). In the last round of talks, the government had offered to suspend the laws for 12-18 months, but the farmer unions rejected it.

Thousands of agitating 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. While replying in Rajya Sabha Monday to a debate on the President's address, PM Modi assured the farmers that Mandis will be modernised, saying "Not just this, MSP was there, it is there and will remain." We urge those sitting on the agitation that even though it is their right to agitate, the way the old people are sitting there, is not right, the PM said.



2016 FB malware blitz resurfaces, India top victim

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 8: A 2016 Facebook malware campaign, known to use a combination of Windows trojan, browser injections, clever scripting and a bug in the social network's platform, has resurfaced in India, targeting millions of users, a new report warned Monday.

According to an investigation by cyber security firm Kaspersky, India ranks first with 603 infections in January on the list of infected countries by this particular malware. Brazil (255 infections) and Indonesia (221) followed at sec-

ond and third position.

The social media malware campaign, run by a hacker group known as SilentFade gang in 2016, was a very sophisticated and rare modus operandi to target Facebook users. Facebook had revealed that the group managed to defraud infected users of more than \$4 million, which they used to post malicious ads across the social network.

Kaspersky experts recently recorded Frank rootkit and after having it analysed, they found it has many similarities to the campaign run by the SilentFade gang. A rootkit is cloaked software that

Glacier burst: 26 bodies recovered, 171 still missing

AGENCIES

Dehradun, Feb 8: Twenty-six bodies have been recovered and 171 people still missing after the Uttarakhand disaster apparently caused by a glacier burst, officials said Monday, as multiple agencies worked at rescuing over 30 workers feared trapped in a tunnel at a power project site.

Officials at the State Emergency Operation Centre reported the recovery of more bodies and feared the death toll would rise, a day after a portion of the Nanda Devi glacier possibly burst through its banks in Chamoli district. It appeared to have triggered an avalanche and a deluge that ripped through the Alaknanda river system in the upper reaches of the ecologically fragile Himalayas.

Experts, however, are still trying to determine the exact cause of the disaster in Joshimath. "It was due to lakhs of metric tonnes of snow sliding down abruptly from a trigger point on top of a naked hill," Uttarakhand CM Trivendra Singh Rawat told reporters after meeting ISRO scientists.

After a comprehensive analysis is undertaken to find out the reasons, "we will build an elaborate plan to avert any potential tragedy going forward", he said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi assured a delegation of Uttarakhand MPs of his



Rescue operations underway at Tapovan Tunnel, after a glacier broke off in Joshimath causing a massive flood in the Dhauliganga river, in Chamoli district of Uttarakhand, Monday

government's support to the people of the state and said it is working to strengthen infrastructure there to deal with any natural disaster in future. The missing people include those working at the hydel power project sites and villagers whose homes nearby were washed away, officials said.

Two power projects - NTPC's 480 MW Tapovan-Vishnugad project and the 13.2 MW Rishiganga Hydel Project - were extensively damaged with scores of labourers caught in tunnels as the waters came rushing in. Thirteen villages are cut off due to the damage to roads and bridges, Uttarakhand Director General of Police Ashok

Kumar said. Essential food supplies are being sent there by helicopters. Rescue efforts in the affected areas near Joshimath, about 295 km from here, gained momentum with teams of the Army, Indo-Tibetan Border Police, National Disaster Response Force and State Disaster Response Force coordinating to rescue 30-35 people feared trapped in a tunnel at the Tapovan-Vishnugad project. More teams have been sent to the site on Mi-17 helicopters, NDRF chief SN Pradhan said. Some teams from the Army, including from the Medical Corps, also reached the disaster spot, an official supervising the operation said. **MORE P8**



infiltrates an operating system or a database with the intention to escape detection, resist removal, and perform a specific operation.

Back in 2016, the purpose of SilentFade's operations was to infect users with the trojan, hijack the

user's browsers, and steal passwords and browser cookies so as to access their Facebook accounts.

Once the cybercriminals had access, the group searched for accounts that had any type of payment method attached to their target's profile.

For these accounts, SilentFade bought Facebook ads with the victim's funds. Then, the cybercriminals start promoting their ads through the Facebook advertising platform. Facebook had said that SilentFade was part of a larger trend and a new generation of cybercrime actors that appear to re-

side in China and have persistently targeted its platform and user base.

"It's 'Safer Internet Day' on February 9, and this year is all about enhancing digital communications and digital transformation. While we celebrate this digitalisation, it is also important to understand the perils of the World Wide Web," the company said in a statement.

"Cybercriminals primarily make use of social media platforms to target their victims and the easiest way for them to do this is, to show us an ad that we are likely to click on," it added.

India asks Twitter to block 1,178 accounts for spreading misinfo

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 8: The government has ordered Twitter to block 1,178 accounts with links to Pakistan and Khalistan supporters which were spreading misinformation and provocative content on farmers' protest, sources said.

The IT Ministry February 4 shared a list of these Twitter accounts that were flagged by security agencies as accounts of Khalistan sympathisers or backed by Pakistan and operating from foreign territories, and causing threat to public order amid the ongoing farmer stir, they said.

Many of these accounts were also automated bots that were used for sharing and amplifying misinformation and provocative content on farmers' protests, sources said adding that Twitter has not yet complied with the latest order.



Earlier, the government had ordered Twitter to take down handles and hashtags that suggested a farmer genocide was being planned, saying such misinformation and inflammatory content will incite passion, and impact public order.

It has also warned Twitter of penal action in case of failure to comply with its directive. Twitter had blocked those accounts for few hours before unilaterally unblocking them.

At that time, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology had asked the microblogging site to block 257 URLs (web addresses) and one hashtag under the relevant provision of the law as they were "spreading misinformation about (farmer) protests and has the potential to lead to imminent violence affecting public order situation in the country." Sources said while Twitter is yet to fully comply with the previous order, the government has issued another order asking the microblogging platform to block accounts backed by Pakistan and Khalistan supporters.



IGGY AZALEA WISHES SHE HAD LONGER LEGS

Iggly Azalea wishes she had longer legs. The rapper shared her desire with fans in a tweet she has posted. "I wish I had long a** legs but all I got is this long a** back," joked the singer in her post on the microblogging website.

CAMILLA KERSLAKE, CHRIS ROBshaw EXPECTING THEIR FIRST CHILD

Singer Camilla Kerslake and her husband, former England rugby captain Chris Robshaw, are set to become parents in May end. "Lockdown is why we decided to get pregnant. It seemed like a productive use of my time," Camilla told *Hello*.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
Your work and family will vie with each other for your attention. Merry-making will seem a good idea in the evening. Your desire for name and fame will meet with success shortly, maybe even today! Ganesh shows his blessings on you.

TAURUS
You must learn to get to the root of a routine to keep things fresh today, feels Ganesh. Just learn the basic psychology of people and analyse the facts. All action and decision has a motive, you will need to understand the chain to get the most out of things, advises Ganesh.

GEMINI
An extremely productive and fulfilling day awaits you. Along with your daily routine, you will also concentrate on your household issues. You will feel the need to have someone to call your own. You may find yourself in two minds over things like marriage and partnership. It is a good day to sell something, says Ganesh.

CANCER
An awareness of optimism and idealism will mark your activities this day. You may benefit by traversing from one terrain to another. You will be liberal and generous with ideas; your internal beauty will blossom.

LEO
Pack your bags, and don't forget the sunscreen and the shades. Look at the stars today - Ganesh foresees for you a strong prospect of going on a tour. If not an individual backpacking adventure, then an elaborate family holiday, but travel you shall.

VIRGO
It is not the time to rest on your past laurels, and you will have to carry on with your work unabated. You will have to keep your focus steady and remain organised to get the same level of success that you had in the recent past.

LIBRA
Ganesh says that today you shall make your competitors and enemies envious of your success in business. Beware, as they shall try to hurt or put down your reputation in varied ways. Instead of having a fight with them you should try to be politically correct and take care of matters using your intelligence.

SCORPIO
You are in a dilemma and feel like standing at a crossroads of life. Some important decisions of life need time and that's what you want right now. However, keep personal life and work separate to avoid confusion and disturbance.

SAGITTARIUS
Your ways to deal with your team mates and colleagues will be strict and disciplined. However, your perfect ways at work will leave them awestruck. Your personal equations will be least affected by your stern ways, says Ganesh.

CAPRICORN
A penny saved is a penny earned. Your strong belief in this will make you scrutinise your requirements and rearrange the priority list, so that you know where and how to utilise the resources. Your choice of friends will represent your approach and outlook towards life.

AQUARIUS
There is nothing like having a good time with your brothers and sisters. Generally, you plan out your routine and activities by yourself, but it is a different day today. Your siblings will make plans for you and you will just go along with the flow, predicts Ganesh. Spontaneity is something new to you, and you will enjoy the change.

PISCES
Some unknown fear could haunt you today. You will direct your energies to discovering the source of your worries and eliminate them. Lovers will find some precious time to cozy up with their partners. You will find yourself going out to the movies or to a concert.

'All my action heroes were women'

Mumbai: Social media influencer and actress Ruhii Singh said all her favourite action heroes since childhood were women, and she drew inspiration from them while essaying a no-nonsense cop in Ekta Kapoor's new web series *Bang Baang: The Sound Of Crimes*.
"While growing up all my action heroes were women. My favourite action hero was Xena the Warrior Princess and I also love Wonder Woman. I love Angelina Jolie and the kind of roles

she has played, and I have always wanted to play something similar. The *femme fatale*, I think, is a very interesting genre and an interesting zone to be in," Ruhii said.
Talking about her role, she said: "My character's name is Meera. She is a goal-oriented and ambitious girl, extremely hardworking and a no-nonsense cop out to get justice."
Jaipur girl Ruhii is trained in martial arts, kickboxing and parkour and hence performing her stunts was not difficult. **IAN S**



Ruhii Singh

Out of sight is out of mind: Shamita

Mumbai: Actress Shamita Shetty claims that right from the beginning of her career she was never into quantity when it came to signing films.
Although she started with the multi-starrer blockbuster *Mohabbatein* in 2000, Shamita saw only around a half a dozen releases that gave her acting roles over the last two decades, with her last big screen outing being the 2007 dud *Cash*. Shamita, whose strongest role is perhaps in the 2005 Emraan Hashmi-starrer *Zeher*, had a couple of hit dance numbers in her early years.
It took her 13 years since *Cash* to return with an acting role to the Hindi screen in the web series *Black Widows* last year. She now has Sushrut Jain's *The Tenant* lined up.

"Right from the beginning quantity was

really not something that I was attracted to and if I was, maybe staying relevant would have been an important factor for me," Shamita said.

"Unfortunately, you are in an industry that says out of sight is out of mind, and I think that happened with me so many times," she added. **IAN S**



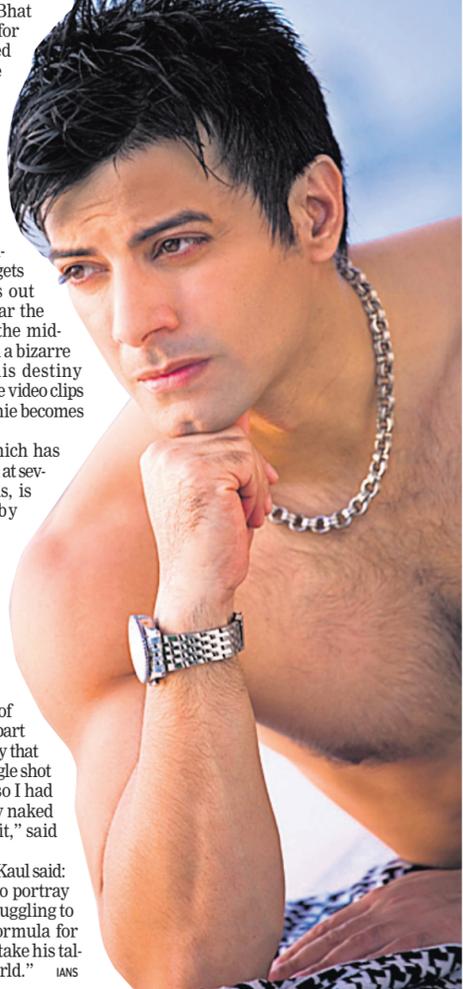
Rahul bares all for single-shot film *Man Naked*

Mumbai: Actor Rahul Bhat had to shoot in the nude for the upcoming film titled *Man Naked*. He says the challenge lay in the fact that the two-hour film was canned as a single shot project.

Man Naked revolves around a 40-year-old struggling actor named Ronnie who realises that his career is finished. He gets drunk and passes out naked, only to hear the doorbell ring in the middle of the night. In a bizarre turn of events, his destiny changes as his nude video clips go viral and Ronnie becomes a star.

The film, which has been screened at several festivals, is directed by debutant Sanjeev Kaul, who carved his niche in the theatre.
"The challenge of doing this part was not only that it was a single shot film but also I had to be totally naked in most of it," said Rahul.

Director Kaul said: "I wanted to portray an actor struggling to crack the formula for success and take his talent to the world." **IAN S**



Nandanik stages first play in Koraput after lockdown

The drama 'Asantu Banchiba' has been designed in a minimalist way so that it can be performed anywhere without much preparation and expenses, said troupe's secretary Monideepa Gupta

KORAPUT: In a bid to revive the spirit of theatre, Nandanik, a Koraput-based drama troupe staged a play for the first time in this district after the lock down. Titled *Asantu Banchiba*, the play was enacted at the Rabindra Sanskritik Parishad campus here Sunday.
Conceptualised by Sourav Gupta and designed by Monideepa Gupta, the play artistically depicted the process of Covid-19 virus affliction on the human body and the measures to be



taken to contain it. 'Nandanik is the first theatre group of Koraput and south Odisha to stage a play after the lockdown. We

are following government guidelines during rehearsals and performance. Audiences were also supplied with masks and sanitizers,' said Saumendra Swain, the treasurer of Nandanik.
"The play tells us not to live in fear but to learn to adjust to medical guidelines and live life positively. We intend to stage it in various villages of Koraput district to sensitise the tribal people of the pandemic. The drama has

been designed in a minimalist way so that it can be performed anywhere without much preparation and expenses, said Monideepa, also the secretary of the troupe.
"The theatre and performing arts sector is worst-hit by the pandemic and this performance is a way to revive the spirits of theatre, especially, in remote places like Koraput," explained Sourav, the playwright and the founder of Nandanik.

PEANUTS



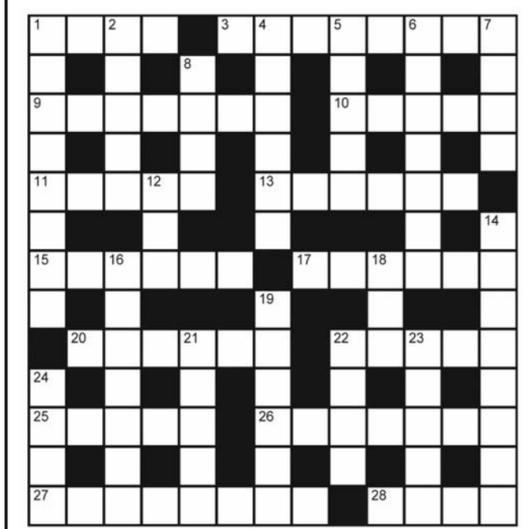
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



FUN post CROSSWORD



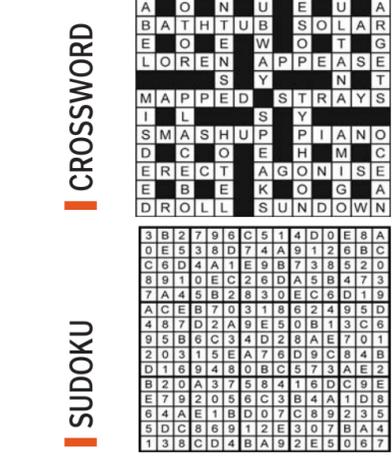
- Across**
- 1 Undertaking
 - 3 Gambling game
 - 9 Vitriolic
 - 10 Postpone
 - 11 Like draft beer (2,3)
 - 13 Sharp narrow ridges
 - 15 Fix
 - 17 Despot
 - 20 Between meal bites
 - 22 White heron
 - 25 Pressing
 - 26 Trade stoppage
 - 27 Complete
 - 28 Heidi's home
 - 6 Crisp fabric
 - 7 The Old Sod
 - 8 Stinging insect
 - 12 Cookbook phrase
 - 14 Depots
 - 16 Antarctic rock hopper
 - 18 Toupee, in slang
 - 19 Theatre guides
 - 21 Angler's basket
 - 22 Subsidies
 - 23 Not urban
 - 24 Metal spike

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS

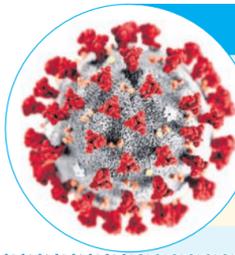


CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



IN MEMORIAM

Dignitaries pay tributes to former deputy CM Pabitra Mohan Pradhan on his birth anniversary at an event hosted by I&PR department at Sookhana Bhawan in Bhubaneswar, Monday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	10,67,68,538	7,84,62,411	23,28,940
India	1,07,91,123	1,04,79,508	1,54,742
Odisha	3,35,692	3,33,031	1,910

Kotia dispute can be resolved through talks: AP

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 8: The long-standing interstate border dispute over Kotia village in Koraput district on Andhra-Odisha border could be resolved through mutual discussions between the two states, Andhra Pradesh Legislative Council Chairman Mohammed Ahmed Shariff said here, Monday.

Shariff, who is also the chairman of the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Council Committee on Development of Telugu Language and Culture, held a meeting with Odisha's School and Mass Education (S&ME) Minister Samir Ranjan Dash and government officials on language-based education issue in bordering villages. Later, they also met Assembly Speaker SN Patro on a courtesy call.

Shariff, who is also the chairman of the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Council Committee on Development of Telugu Language and Culture, held a meeting with Odisha's School and Mass Education (S&ME) Minister Samir Ranjan Dash and government officials on language-based education issue in bordering villages. Later, they also met Assembly Speaker SN Patro on a courtesy call.



Speaker SN Patro and S&ME Minister Samir Ranjan Dash hold discussion with the delegation from Andhra Pradesh

good to do so," the minister said. He personally appealed to Andhra Pradesh government through the delegation to sort out the grave issue.

Besides, discussion was also held between two state governments on language-based education issue in bordering villages of Rayagada,

Gajapati, Malkangiri, Nabarangpur, Ganjam and Koraput districts.

Around 80 lakh Telugu people are residing in these districts. Even as teacher training centre has been set up in these districts, language teachers could not be appointed due to some issues.

Similarly, there are many Odia

people residing in Srikakulam and Vizianagaram districts of Andhra Pradesh. Around 4,000 children are studying in 120 schools in the neighbouring state where they face the same situation in schools. Shariff assured the state government that their government will take care of Odia students in Andhra Pradesh.

Depts to get HC orders via e-mail, WhatsApp

All departments asked to appoint nodal officers for timely compliance of HC orders

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 8: For timely compliance of Orissa High Court orders, now the Registry of the court will directly send its orders to the departments concerned through e-mail and WhatsApp.

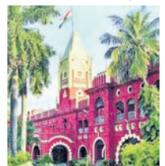
Therefore, the Law department has asked administrative departments to appoint nodal officer(s) for direct communication of court orders and instructions.

"A nodal officer or more than one nodal officer may be earmarked for every department and a list thereof be furnished to his (Advocate General) office along with their e-mail id and WhatsApp numbers to enable communication of orders di-

rectly by the High Court", Law secretary Sashikanta Mishra wrote to all departments, Monday.

A few days ago, in a letter to Chief Secretary SC Mahapatra, the Advocate General Ashok K Parija had said the Registry of Orissa HC has agreed to communicate the orders directly to the nodal officers of the departments.

Many a times, due to lack of communication on time or proper follow up, the government failed to comply with court orders, facing criticism of the High Court. Therefore, the new system was adopted so that there will be no gap in communication of court orders to the respective departments, sources said.



SLASH GST ON KENDU LEAVES: BJD TO CENTRE

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Feb 8: Biju Janata Dal (BJD) Rajya Sabha MP Subash Singh Monday urged the Union government to reduce goods and services tax (GST) on kendu leaves to 5 per cent.

Speaking during Zero Hour in the Upper House, the BJD MP said that kendu leaf is the financial lifeline of the tribal and poor people of Odisha. He said that about 10 lakh workers get employment and livelihood support during the lean season from March to June when no other

BJD MP Subash Singh urged the Centre to reduce GST on kendu leaves from existing 18% to 5%

agricultural activities and employment opportunities are available. He also said that 80 per cent of the people who get livelihood from kendu leaves are women.

Singh urged the Union government to reduce GST on kendu leaves from existing 18 per cent to 5 per cent.

Robbery bid foiled; 5 held

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 8: The Commissionerate Police foiled a robbery bid and arrested five anti-socials from Shantipalli Basti in Sahid Nagar police limits here late Sunday night. Earlier, the police had busted another robbers' gang targeting morning walkers from Chandrasekharpur area here.

The accused were identified as Biswajit Swain, 30, of

rently residing in various slum areas of the capital city.

According to sources, the patrolling team of Sahid Nagar police received information in connection with the assembly of antisocial persons at secluded spot at Shantipalli Basti. Following the tip-off, the Sahid Nagar police carried out a raid at the spot and arrested the accused who were reportedly hatching a plan to commit robbery in the nearby areas.



Chakeisiani under Mancheswar police station, Biswajit Dalua, 26, of Ghadimul area in Jagatsinghpur; Ranjan Sahoo, 45, of Nuahat area in Dhenkanal; Sina Jena, 26, of Dhamnagar area in Bhadrak and Ranjan Kumar Sahoo, 28, of Jankia area in Khurda.

The cops recovered one 9-mm semi-automatic pistol with three live ammunition, one white colour I-20 car (OD-02-AM-6569) and four iron rods from the spot.

The police later arrested the alleged robbers by registering a case (63/21) in this regard. They were Monday sent to judicial custody.

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Have faith on your talent, Naveen tells students

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 8: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik announced the renovation and infrastructure development package of Rs 18 crore for the state's first women's university - Rama Devi Women's University, during the inauguration of four new buildings at University premises here, Monday.

New buildings of Arts and Science block, a research students' hostel named 'Anvesha' and a new library named 'Kuntala Kumari Sabat Library'



after the colonial era Odia poet, were inaugurated on her birth anniversary (February 8). The total construction cost of these buildings was Rs 33.9 Crore. A reading room in the library is named after Shakuntala

The CM announced a renovation & infrastructure development package of ₹18 crore for the state's first women's university

Panda, an eminent Odia writer, who passed away in 2017.

The Chief Minister cited examples of several female personalities such as new vice president of the United States Kamala Harris, Olympic silver medal-

ist badminton champion PV Sindhu, Indian scientist Tessy Thomas, who is the first ever woman scientist to head a missile project in India and appealed to the students that they should take examples of them and have faith on their own talent for success.

On the occasion, Minister Arun Sahoo said that after the success of Mo School project, the government will launch the Mo College project in March. He added that the alumni of the schools and colleges should never forget from where they began. He said that

in other countries the alumni even run the colleges with their help. In the state there are lots of talented alumni who can help and make a change. He said that due to lack of education of some poor parents, their children fail to get necessary guidance from home. So at that time, the teachers and the alumni have a big role to play.

Bhubaneswar Central M.L.A and former BMC Mayor Ananta Narayan Jena said that the CM in a recent meeting directed to focus on three key things- 'Health, Education and Heritage'.

Curtains down on Dhauri-Kalinga Mahotsav

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 8: The 17th Dhauri Kalinga Mahotsav organized by state Tourism department in collaboration with Orissa Dance Academy, Bhubaneswar and Art Vision, Bhubaneswar concluded on a high note Monday. The valedictory evening was really a splendid one leaving the connoisseurs mesmerized as Indian classical dances, classical folk fusion and Chhau dance reverberated the ambience.

The programme started with Classical-Folk Fusion (Ananya Odisha) by Naivedya, Bhubaneswar. Ananya Odisha projecting Odisha with its vibrant colour celebrated her spirit. The lyrics were prepared by Kedar Mishra, music composition was by Guru Bijay Kumar Jena, Guru Sachikanta Nayak and Guru Sumanta Mohanty, rhythm composition made by Guru Dhaneswar Swain and Guru Bijay Kumar Barik and the dance was



IN SYNC: Artistes perform at the valedictory evening

OP PHOTO

choreographed by Guru Aruna Mohanty and Bijay Kumar Sahoo.

Second presentation was Kuchipudi dance by Shambhavi School of Dance from Bengaluru lead by Guru Vyjayanthi Kashi. Their first item was Kuchipudi

recital by meditating on the beautiful form of Lord Vithoba followed by Adivo Alladivo, a famous composition of Talapaka Annamma Chari where he brings alive the mesmerising beauty and uniqueness of the seven hills. Their next

item was Neela Megha Sareera followed by Kubje an ugly hunched woman became a beautiful woman by her love and dedication towards Lord Krishna. All presentation was choreographed by Guru Vyjayanthi Kashi.

The concluding item of the concluding evening was Sareikela Chhau dance presented by Acharya Chhau Nrutya Bichitra from New Delhi lead by Guru Shashadhar Acharya.

The dignitaries who graced the occasion were Asit Kumar Tripathy, Chairman, Western Odisha Development Council; Subroto Bagchi, Chairman, Skill Development Authority; Susmita Bagchi, Chairperson, Mo School; Sachin Ramachandra Jadhav, Director, Tourism; Guru Aruna Mohanty, Secretary, Orissa Dance Academy and Guru Ileana Citaristi, Secretary, Art Vision. The programme was anchored by En Srinivas Ghatuuri and Nazia Sayeed.

COP HONOURED



Transport Minister Padmanabha Behera felicitates a police personnel as part of the ongoing traffic awareness month celebrations at Traffic police station near AG Square in Bhubaneswar, Monday

OP PHOTO

Physical classes resume for IX, XI students



School and Mass Education Minister Samir Ranjan Dash meets a few Class IX students and a teacher of the state-run Girls' High School at Unit-I in Bhubaneswar, Monday

As per the government SOP, the physical classes of Class IX and XI will continue till April 30 from 8:30am to 10:30am (Monday to Saturday). Three periods will be taken up for these classes daily

Sitting arrangements in classrooms have been made keeping in view the size of the rooms, so as to ensure that social distancing is maintained

There will be one unit test for Class IX and XI students on 2nd week of March and annual examination will be conducted in the last week of April 2021

Bhubaneswar, Feb 8: After resumption of physical classes for standard X and XI students, the classes for IX and XI students also resumed Monday after more than 10 months of school closure due to Covid-19 pandemic. As per the government SOP, the physical classes of Class IX and XI will continue till April 30 from

8:30am to 10:30am (Monday to Saturday). Three periods will be taken up for these classes daily. There will be no recess. Sitting arrangements in classrooms have been made keeping in view the size of the rooms, so as to ensure that social distancing is maintained. There will be one unit test for Class IX and XI students on 2nd week of March and annual examination will be conducted in the

last week of April 2021. School and Mass Education Minister Samir Ranjan Dash had Sunday reviewed the preparedness of the schools ahead of their reopening for Class IX and XI students. Dash visited Utkal University High School Sunday and reviewed the situation and arrangements. The minister expressed happiness that more than 50 per cent students

were in attendance in the school even on Sunday. The minister also reviewed preparations of the school authorities for the commencement of classes for Class IX and XI students and said that teachers are mentally prepared to complete all courses in 100 days of classroom teaching. The state government February 1 decided to allow students of more classes to attend physical learning at schools. School and Mass Education Secretary Satyabrata Sahu stated that students of Class IX and XI will attend the physical learning at schools from February 8. The government has reopened Class X and XII from January 8 and the HSC matriculation examination will be conducted May 3 to 15 after 100 days of classes.



RECOGNISING COVID WARRIORS: Odisha Police personnel, who have donated plasma, being felicitated by DGP Abhay at the state police headquarters in Cuttack, Monday

State to have Covid Warriors Memorial

Bhubaneswar, Feb 8: The state government will construct a Covid-19 Warriors Memorial at the Biju Patnaik Park here to keep alive the memory of the supreme sacrifice made by them, an official said Monday. The proposed memorial will be inaugurated on the Independence Day this year, he said, adding the Works department has been assigned the job of constructing the structure. Many people including health workers, police personnel, teachers and sanitation workers have laid down their lives while working as frontline workers during the pandemic. Covid-19 is once in a century pandemic and in order to keep it

The first plasma donors of Odisha Police are two members of Odisha State Armed Police 3rd Battalion, Koraput (sacrifice) in the memory of people as well as to recognize the sacrifice and service rendered by the Covid-19 warriors who have lost their lives fighting the pandemic, the government has decided to construct a COVID-19 Warrior Memorial, additional chief secretary to the health and family welfare, P K Mohapatra said. DGP Abhay said that 48 police personnel have laid down their lives while fighting against the pandemic.

He said police personnel had also donated the highest number of plasma units for the treatment of the critical Covid-19 patients. The police personnel from 46 per cent of the total plasma donors in the state, he said. In a twitter post, he said there are 2,166 plasma donors in Odisha of which 1002 are the Odisha Police. The first plasma donors of Odisha Police are two members of Odisha State Armed Police 3rd Battalion, Koraput. They donated plasma at SCB Medical College and Hospital, Cuttack on 24, July 2020, the DGP said. AS police personnel are listed as frontline Covid-19 warriors, their vaccination drive began in the second phase February 6.

Council of Ministers' meet today

Bhubaneswar: A meeting of the state Council of Ministers is scheduled to be held Tuesday evening to give final shape to the annual Budget 2021-22. State Cabinet meeting will also be held soon after the completion of the council meet. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik will chair both the meetings. As Budget Session of the state Assembly is scheduled to begin February 18, important proposals would be discussed and approved by the Cabinet. Finance Minister Niranjan Pujari will present the budget in Assembly, February 22.

ESPLANADE ONE CELEBRATES 'LOVE FOR ODISHA'



Bhubaneswar, Feb 8: One of the favourite shopping destinations in Odisha, Esplanade One, took lead in expressing love for the local Odia culture and tradition during this month of love. According to sources at the shopping mall, during February, which is considered the month of love world over, Esplanade One has chosen to show everyone their love for the rich Odia culture through the month long 'Mo Odia' celebrations. The month will see several prominent artefacts and monuments on

display at the mall, which are significant to Odia culture. Parth Pratim Nayak, Centre Director at Esplanade One, said, "At Esplanade One, we have always taken great pride in celebrating the local festivities with our patrons. This month, as the world expresses love for their loved ones, we would like to encourage everyone to take pride and celebrate their love for local culture and traditions. Besides that, we have all our retail partners on board as well, who have joined hands with us and are giving special offers as a part of our 'Mo Odia' celebrations this month."

IPSC LIBRARY IN CAPITAL CITY TO BOOST READING HABIT

Bhubaneswar, Feb 8: At a time when the habit of book reading has taken a back seat, a public library inside Integrated Public Service Centre (IPSC) Sahid Nagar has started functioning from Monday due to a collaborative effort of Bhubaneswar Smart City Limited and Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation. Currently, 20 newspapers and 15 periodicals/magazines are available for the readers at the library of IPSC Sahid Nagar. Books on Odia/English literature, various competitive and entrance examinations, health, well-being, fitness, history, contemporary Indian literature, religion, poetry and other subjects are available at the library. More and more titles will also be added and more space will also be provided to the library in coming days. With opening of this library, local residents, students, senior citizens and aspirants of compet-



itive exams and people from the nearby slums will be greatly benefited as the facility will remain open from 10am to 2pm. In near future it will also remain open from 4pm to 7pm. A good collection of books on various engineering and medical entrance examinations are also available to attract young readers. The IPSC, under Smart City Mission, is aimed at providing a bouquet of citizen-centric services and there is a ward office currently functioning there at Sahid Nagar.

The facility has come up under the leadership of BMC Commissioner and CEO Smart City and a similar library will also be included in the IPSC Bapuji Nagar, which is still under construction. General Manager (Administration) Bhubaneswar Smart City Limited Kamaljit Das said that the citizens of the nearby areas in Sahid Nagar and especially students, youth, senior citizens, job aspirants and youth and others from nearby slums should come to the library and utilize the facility to their best.

Nandankanan welcomes 18 new guests

Barang, Feb 8: Nandankanan Zoological Park (NZP), located on the outskirts of the Capital city here, has welcomed 18 new guests from Aizawl Zoological Park in Mizoram as part of an exchange programme. A pair of Himalayan black bears, a pair of wild dogs, a pair of Assamese macaques, three pairs of stump-tailed macaques and three pairs of brown tortoises arrived at NZP Sunday, a senior zoo official said, adding that the new arrivals are healthy, but have been kept under active supervision of zoo veterinarians. The new arrivals include a pair of Himalayan black bears, 2 wild dogs, a pair of Assamese macaques and 3 pairs of stump-tailed macaques



Utkal hostel fee hike irks students

Bhubaneswar: Students of Utkal University Monday protested near PG council office against the hike in hostel fees by the authorities. The students alleged that due to the lockdown, the hostels remained shut for several months and now when the hostels were allowed to reopen the authorities have increased the hostel fees substantially. They called off the protest after getting an assurance of no fee hike after they met the PG council chairman and hostel warden.

Cold-wave warning for 9 districts

Bhubaneswar, Feb 8: The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has predicted cold wave for nine districts in the next 24 hours even as Phulbani was the coldest place in the state at 7.5 degree Celsius Monday. The districts which would experience cold wave conditions in next 24 hours are: Sundargarh, Jharsuguda, Deogarh, Keonjhar, Kandhamal, Bolangir, Kalahandi and Nabarangpur; the IMD said in a bulletin. Apart from Phulbani, the other places which recorded minimum temperature below 10 degree Celsius are Daringbadi in Kandhamal district (9) and Kirei (10), an IMD official said. The official said dry weather prevailed over the districts of Odisha while shallow fog has occurred at one or two places over the districts of Malkangiri and Koraput of South Interior region. In its minimum temperature forecast, the IMD said that the night temperature is very likely to fall by 1-2 degrees Celsius during next two days and gradually rise by 2-3 degree Celsius thereafter over the districts. Minimum temperature will be below normal by 3-4 degree Celsius at many places.

Girija Babu - a visionary and rationalist

REMEMBERING LATE GIRIJA BHUSAN PATTNAIK ON HIS 90TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY

Indeed one lives in deeds and not in years. Girija Babu's indomitable spirit, his zest for life and optimism for living, gave him the drive to hope for a life span of at least 'a 150 years', for he knew that for the realisation of his vision on average life span would be too small a playground for him. A product of 30s of the 20th century, Girija Bhusan Pattnaik justifiably groomed himself in the mould of revolutionary socialist. Rejecting all forms of conservatism and orthodoxy, he was charmed with the success of socialism in the Soviet Union and the triumph of revolution in the People's Republic of China, Cuba and Vietnam. Yet he did not reconcile with the muzzling of free speech and thought in Communist countries. He could never be a votary for an omnipotent, muscular or militant State. A true adherent of Ramakrishna Paramahansa's philosophy of allowing the flowering of, and multiplicity of thoughts, he respected and empathised individual liberty and opinion. In every sense a democrat, he championed the idea of dissent, for he believed that the dissent was the essence of democracy. In that sense, though democracy flourished in the Capitalist west



Even though Girija Babu was a great admirer of former President and nuclear scientist Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, he was inherently opposed to the idea of a nuclearized India

spectrum that rooted for the individual and aspired for the 'Universe'. A monument to his sagacity and a

master-stroke of his creative thinking was his brainchild- The Universe. It was not merely the premier socio-cultural organization of Odisha, it was also the means through which he dreamt of peace and friendship and the mechanism through which he was in constant touch with the world at large. The horrors of nuclear holocaust had left a deep impact on his mind. Even though he was a great admirer of former President Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, he was inherently opposed to the idea of a nuclearized India. A humanist to the core, he dedicated his life towards humanitarian causes. His commitment to the downtrodden and the depressed was fostered through an undying bond with Naba Krushna Choudhury and his wife Malati Choudhury. With them he worked for the rehabilitation of Chambal Valley Dacoits. He was an activist in Chipko Environment Movement. An intellectual par excellence, and a prolific writer, his flair for literature was remarkable. His autobiography 'Jeebanara Bateghate' won him the Odisha Sahitya Academy Award. As a freelance columnist, he contributed to Blitz-India's first weekly tabloid, which focused on inves-

tigative journalism and political news. Though not the mouthpiece of the Communist Party, Blitz was undoubtedly left oriented. Only prominent journalists wrote for this news magazine published from Bombay. Besides, Girija Babu carved a niche for himself as a journalist through his writings in India Press Agency and for almost all Odia newspapers and journals. He was a voracious reader. Girija Babu had an intense fascination for 'Katakia' culture and his 'Baun Bazaar Tejan Gali' says it all. He singlehandedly took up the task of bringing recognition to Silver City of Odisha -- the politico-socio-economic and cultural hub of Odisha down the ages -- as the Millennium City 'Hajare Barashara Katakia' brought the city on par with the grandeur of the ancient city of Rome. He pioneered the excavation of the Barabati Fort which was witnessed to the trials and tribulations of successive invasions by the Afghans, Mughals, Marathas and the British. It was his tenacity that made the ASI resurrect the glory of Barabati, where history lay buried for a long time. Girija Babu bequeathed a legacy that needs to be perpetuated. Dr. Kharavela Mahanti

A six-member team of Nandankanan, led by assistant conservator forests (ACF) Banmali Sahoo, had gone to the Aizawl zoo January 28 to bring the new guests. Stump-tailed macaques and brown tortoises are new to Nandankanan. However, wild dogs, Assamese macaques and Himalayan black bears were already among the big draws at the nature's paradise, the official pointed out. In return, NZP had to give 12 birds -- two pairs each of common peafowl, golden pheasants and silver pheasants -- to Aizawl Zoological Park. According to Nandankanan ACF (visitor management) Amulya Kumar Parida, the new guests will not only add to the appeal of NZP, considered among the best zoological parks of the country, but will also help draw animal enthusiasts to the nature's paradise from far and wide. Sources said that the animal exchange programme, touted to be the first of the year, follows the approval of the Central Zoo Authority. "The approval was granted under Section 381 of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, for the purpose of breeding, pairing and conservation," said a senior official of Nandankanan.

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Learning Maths, English soon to be fun and easy

Mission Suvidya scheme aims at providing quality services in safety and security, health, hygiene and food provisions for the students

POST NEWS NETWORK

Semiliguda, Feb 8: Learning Mathematics and English will soon become fun for the students of upper primary schools in Koraput and Mayurbhanj districts with the introduction of 'Learning by Doing' method under the newly-launched Mission Suvidya scheme of the state government.

The students of Class-II to Class-V will no more fear to learn Mathematics and English as they will be able to learn the subjects in a playful manner of 'learning and doing'. The students will be taught the subjects through playful learning methods which will facilitate mathematical thinking and love for English among the students.

This will also increase the interest for the subjects among the students. The scheme was launched by the Scheduled Tribe and Scheduled Caste Development, Minorities and Backward Classes Welfare Department on a pilot basis in Mayurbhanj and Koraput districts under Mission Suvidya scheme. The ST & SC Development department runs as many as 6,500 hostels with over 5.7 lakh students in the state.

Mission Suvidya scheme aims at providing a congenial atmosphere to all the inmates in a phased manner. It will guarantee quality services in safety and security, health, hygiene and food provisions for

the students. The matter came to fore after a five day training camp for the teachers concluded at Ekalavya Residential Model School under Kunduli panchayat of this block, February 5. The camp was launched February 1 by the district welfare department in association with Akshara Foundation and People for Action, two voluntary outfits which cooperate and collaborate with the department to improve the learning outcomes of the students.

Over 40 teachers in Koraput district participated in this training programme. The teachers who underwent training will further impart the training to their counterparts in 14 blocks in the district. Bijay Kumar Mohanty, Nalinikanta Mishra, Rajesh Kumar Biswal and Bhagirathi Satapathy joined as resource persons and imparted training to the participating teachers.

DWO Madhusmita Mohapatra, zonal head Gadadhar Behera, block extension officer Subrat Parida, district programme officer Santosh Kumar Das, DEO Pranab Kumar Pattanik, Principal Golak Chandra Mallick of Ekalavya Model Residential School attended the programme. Rajesh Sarangi, Kartik Sahu represented People for Action, Manas Kumar Swain and Prakash Kumar Sahu as technical consultants also participated in the programme.



Over 40 teachers in Koraput district participated in a training programme

Kendrapara locals fear water bodies drying up



POST NEWS NETWORK

Kendrapara, Feb 8: The Mahanadi water dispute concerning sharing of the river water between Odisha and Chhattisgarh is getting murkier day by day as the tribunal hearing the case is yet to pronounce its order, a report said.

However, the Mahanadi water dispute has its ripple effect in Kendrapara district as locals apprehend that the dam construction by the Chhattisgarh government might dry up the distributaries and water bodies flowing in the district. A decline in water flow in Mahanadi due to dam construction might also lead to closure of the proposed first riverine port project at Akhadasi under Mahakalpara block in the district, sources said.

The residents also fear that the dam construction will seriously affect agricultural works and drinking water supply in the district and turn the district into a saline zone. A Zilla Parishad member (zone no-26) Ganesh Chandra Samal said that the Mahanadi water nourishes several distributaries and canals flowing in the district. He added that the dam construction will lead

to a decline in water flow from the upstream and result in serious damage in Kendrapara district which is on the downstream.

He said that the Mahanadi river is stretched from Mahanangal under Mahakalpara block for 10 km till Gadaromit. The Chitrotapala river, a distributary flowing in the district emerges from Mahanadi at Gualinasi in neighbouring Cuttack district.

The Luna river also flowing in the district originates from Chitrotapala at Barpada. The Paika river near Tendakura in the district and the Birupa river near Chowdwar in Cuttack district also draw their water from Mahanadi.

The Kendrapara canal which starts from Jagatpur in Cuttack district draws water from Mahanadi and supplies them to Gobari canal and its extension as well as Pattamundai canal flowing in the district. The river water also helps in cultivation of crops on 41,681 hectare of farmlands in the district.

The fresh water of Mahanadi is used as drinking water by the residents of Kendrapara town and in saline areas of Rajnagar and

Chitrotapala (river) is the lifeline for the local residents and helps in raising paddy and vegetable cultivation on the farmlands near the Mahanadi river basin. The river will become dry and extinct if the water flow in Mahanadi declines due to dam construction

SK. FAZRUL HAQUE | PRESIDENT, PATKURA ANCHALIK BIKASH COMMITTEE

Mahakalpara blocks. Former councillor Hiranya Kumar Panda alleged that the unilateral move by the Chhattisgarh government in dam construction will seriously affect power production, agriculture and drinking water supply in the state and might lead to closure of proposed riverine port project in the district.

Sk. Fazrul Haque, president of Patkura Anchalik Bikash Committee said that Chitrotapala river is the lifeline for the local residents and helps in raising paddy and vegetable cultivation on the farmlands near the Mahanadi river basin. The river will become dry and extinct if the water flow in Mahanadi declines due to dam construction. This will have catastrophic effect on the life of the residents, he alleged.

Farmer leader Gayadhar Dhar demanded an early settlement to Mahanadi water dispute. He said that if the tribunal ruling supports Chhattisgarh it will have serious consequences on agriculture, drinking water supply and environment affecting the residents. He called all political parties not to politicise the issue and work towards an early settlement of the issue to safeguard the interest of the state.

TITILAGARH SHOCKER

Undertrial booked for affair with woman prisoner



POST NEWS NETWORK

Titilagarh, Feb 8: In a shocking incident that is bound to raise eyebrows over the safety of jail inmates in the state, an under-trial prisoner (UTP) allegedly tricked a woman inmate after developing physical relationship with her on the pretext of marriage at Titilagarh sub-jail in Bolangir district, a report said.

The matter came to fore after the survivor lodged a complaint at Titilagarh police station, late December 19 night, last year. The woman was released from the jail the same day and lodged the complaint in the police station at late night. Titilagarh SDPO Surendra Nath Satapathy confirmed the development.

According to the FIR, the woman was lodged in the Titilagarh sub-jail after she was arrested on charge of domestic violence with her husband and in-laws. She had been lodged in the jail for around 45 days and was released after a court granted her bail. The accused Tirthankar Putel alias Papu has been lodged in the jail for over a year after his arrest in a case of GST fraud. The victim has alleged that

AS ALLEGED

- The victim came in contact with the accused during her stay at Titilagarh sub-jail
- Later, the accused established physical relation with the woman on the promise of marrying her
- Two staffers of the jail and a person working at the ADJ court were aware about the matter
- The complainant says she was talking to the accused over mobile phone after her release from the jail and has the call recordings in her possession

during her stay in the jail she came in contact with Putel.

Later, Putel established physical relation with the woman on the promise of marrying her, she mentioned in the FIR, adding that two staffers of the jail and a person working at the ADJ court were aware about the matter.

The complainant further alleged that she was talking to Papu over mobile phone after her release from the jail and has the call recordings in her possession.

The woman was also visiting him in the jail at regular intervals. However, the accused suddenly started avoiding the woman, contrary to his promise of marrying her.

5 persons escape from burning car

POST NEWS NETWORK

Salipur, Feb 8: Five members of a family, including two children, had a miraculous escape as the car they were travelling in caught fire near Madhupur in Cuttack district Monday. The flame engulfed the vehicle ditched in the middle of the road in a matter of seconds.

A resident of Purushottampur village under Badchana block in Jajpur district, Dillip Biswal along with his family members had been to a friend's

place at Mahanga in Cuttack district a few days ago. Monday morning, the family was returning in a car. While Biswal was on the driver's seat, there were four other occupants in the car, including two children. As they were nearing Madhupur, Biswal noticed smoke coming out from the engine. Thanks to his presence of mind, he did not lose a moment and stopped the vehicle in the middle of the road and asked the other occupants to come out of the vehicle quickly.

Abhay Pathak, son booked in 3 new fraud cases

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, Feb 8: Tainted and suspended IFS officer Abhay Kant Pathak and son Akash Pathak have been booked in three new fraud cases registered against them in Golanthara police station here, Monday.

Reports said Golanthara police in Ganjam district Monday included the father-son duo in the fraud cases which were earlier registered against Gopalpur MLA Pradeep Panigrahi, who was arrested last year on the charges of defraud-

The father-son duo has been included in the fraud cases which were earlier registered against Gopalpur MLA Pradeep Panigrahi

ing youths on the pretext of providing them jobs in Tata Motors. Panigrahi was accused of collecting money from the youths on behalf of Akash Pathak on the pretext of false job promise.

Police after registering the cases prayed before the Berhampur sub-divisional judicial magistrate (SDJM) court to allow them to summon Pathaks for further questioning in the case. The court admitted the appeal and issued a letter to the Bhubaneswar SDJM to allow custody of the father-son duo to Berhampur police.

GOVT. OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, RURAL WORKS DIVISION, NAYAGARH
At/P.O.- Nabaghanpur, Dist.- Nayagarh, Ph. 06753-252049, E-mail: nayagarhrw2006@yahoo.in
No. Tender-Online-Nayagarh Divn.-05/2020-21
No. O-1050
Date: 01.2021

e-Procurement NOTICE

- Name of the Work : Construction of Bridge Work
- Total No. of Project : 01 (One) No. of Project
- Class of Contractor : "B" & "A" Class (Of Orissa PWD) or relevant class of other licensing authorities
- Estimated cost more than Rs.40.00 lakhs & upto Rs.300.00 lakhs
- Estimated cost more than Rs.20.00 lakhs & upto Rs.40.00 lakhs
- Estimated cost more than Rs.1.00 lakh & upto Rs.20.00 lakh
- Estimated Cost : Rs.30.66 lakh
- Time for Completion : 01 (One) Calendar Month
- Other details

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender Online for Bidding		Date & Time of Opening of Tender
		From	To	
Executive Engineer, Rural Works Division, Nayagarh	No. Tender-Online-Divn. NAYAGARH-05/2020-21	10.02.2021 at 10.00 A.M.	19.02.2021 upto 5.00 P.M.	22.02.2021 at 11.00 A.M.

Further details can be seen from the website: www.tendersorissa.gov.in.
OIPR-25106/11/0008/2021
Executive Engineer, Rural Works Divn. Nayagarh

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
TELENGIRI CANAL DIVISION, AT/P.O. BARINIPUT, JEYPORE, DIST.- KORAPUT - 764006
e-PROCUREMENT NOTICE No. EE-TC-06/2020-21 Dtd.08.02.2021

- No. of Work : 01 (One) No.
- Value of Work : Rs.14.11 lakh (Excluding GST)
- Bid Security/EMD : Rs.14,200/-
- Class of Contractor : "D" & "C"
- Period of Completion : 2 (Two) Calendar months (including rainy season)
- Type of Contract : Percentage Rate (Single Cover)
- Cost of Tender Paper : Rs.6,000/- (Non-refundable)
- Availability of tender online for bidding : From 10.00 hrs on 10.02.2021 to 17.00 hrs. on 20.02.2021
- Date & time of Online bid submission : From 10.00 hrs. on 10.02.2021 to 17.00 hrs. on 20.02.2021
- Date & time of opening of Technical/Financial Bid : 12.00 hrs. on 22.02.2021 in Office of the Executive Engineer, Telengiri Canal Division, Bariniput

Further details can be seen from the Govt. website: www.tendersorissa.gov.in/www.dowrodisha.gov.in. Addendum/Corrigendum/Cancellation if any required will be published in Govt. website only.

Sd./- Executive Engineer
Telengiri Canal Division, Bariniput
OIPR-32080/11/0010/2021

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
SAMBALPUR (R&B) DIVISION NO.-II, SAMBALPUR
E-mail: eesbprndivision2@gmail.com, Phone: 0663-2410104
BID IDENTIFICATION No. EE/R and B/SBP II/13 (Online)/2020-21
e-Procurement Notice

No. 364 Dated: 02.02.2021

No. B-722: The Executive Engineer, Sambalpur (R&B) Division No. II, Sambalpur on behalf of Governor of Odisha, invites Percentage Rate bids in single cover system in ONLINE MODE.

- No. of Work : 01 (One) No. Electrical Work
- Tender Cost : Rs.6000/- (Online Per each)
- Class of Contractor : "HT" Electrical Contractor
- Availability of bid document in the website : 10.00 hours of 11.02.2021 to 17.00 hours of 20.02.2021
- Date of Opening of tenders : 11.30 hours on Dt.22.02.2021

The bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in in only. Any Corrigendum/Addendum/Cancellation of tender will be displayed in the website said only.

Executive Engineer
Sambalpur (R&B) Division No. II
OIPR-34136/11/0014/2021

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
RWS&S DIVISION, BHANJANAGAR - 761126
Phone No. 06821-241026(O)/241079(R), Fax No. 06821-241026/240056
e-mail: eerwss_bnj@nic.in<eerwssbnj2009@gmail.com>

Govt. of Orissa "e" Procurement Notice
Bid Identification No. E.E. RWS&S 61/2020-21

The Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Bhanjanagar, Ganjam on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites percentage rate bid in Double Cover System according to the norm of "e" Procurement system in Online mode for providing 100% functional TAP connection for different PWS Schemes in Ganjam district from the eligible contractors as per DTCN.

- Nature of Work : Supplying all labour T&P and materials for construction, testing, Commissioning of RCC ESR construction of valve chamber, 100% house connection laying of distribution of pipeline etc. for different PWS schemes in the Ganjam District.
- No. of Tender : 03 Nos.
- Tender Paper Cost : Rs.10,000/-
- Tender Cost : Rs.52.33 lakhs to 71.15 lakhs
- Class of Contractor : B & A
- Date and time of availability of bid document in the portal : Dt. 10.02.2021 at 11.00 A.M. to 22.02.2021 upto 5.00 P.M.
- Date of Opening of Bid : Dt. 23.02.2021 at 11.00 A.M.
- Period of Completion : 180 (One hundred eighty) days.
- The bidders have to participate in Online bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website <https://tendersorissa.gov.in>.

Sd./- Executive Engineer
RWS&S Division, Bhanjanagar
OIPR-25021/11/0037/2021

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
RWS&S DIVISION, BHANJANAGAR - 761126
Phone No. 06821-241026(O)/241079(R), Fax No. 06821-241026/240056
e-mail: eerwss_bnj@nic.in<eerwssbnj2009@gmail.com>

Govt. of Orissa "e" Procurement Notice
Bid Identification No. E.E. RWS&S 60/2020-21

The Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Bhanjanagar, Ganjam on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites percentage rate bid in Single Cover System according to the norm of "e" Procurement system in Online mode for providing 100% functional TAP connection for different PWS Schemes in Ganjam district from the eligible contractors as per DTCN.

- Nature of Work : Supplying all labour T&P and materials for construction, testing, Commissioning of RCC ESR construction of valve chamber, 100% house connection laying of distribution of pipeline etc. for different PWS schemes in the Ganjam District.
- No. of Tender : 16 Nos.
- Tender Paper Cost : Rs.6,000/-
- Tender Cost : 5.69 lakhs to 49.21 lakhs
- Class of Contractor : D, C, B & A
- Date and time of availability of bid document in the portal : Dt. 12.02.2021 at 11.00 A.M. to 20.02.2021 upto 5.00 P.M.
- Date of Opening of Bid : Dt. 22.02.2021 at 11.00 A.M.
- Period of Completion : 180 (One hundred eighty) days.
- The bidders have to participate in Online bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website <https://tendersorissa.gov.in>.

Sd./- Executive Engineer
RWS&S Division, Bhanjanagar
OIPR-25021/11/0036/2021

OFFICE OF THE PANCHAYAT SAMITI, NIMAPARA
Letter No. 276 Date: 01.02.2021
DETAIL TENDER CALL NOTICE

The Block Development Officer, Nimapara on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites sealed percentage (%) rate basis tender for construction of additional classrooms and major repair of school buildings of Nimapara Block in single cover system from registered and eligible 'B', 'C' and 'D' class contractors of the state. Tender documents will be available from 03.02.2021 to 17.02.2021 at cash section of Nimapara Block during office hours from 10.00 A.M. to 5.00 P.M. Bids received shall be opened at 11.00 A.M. on 18.02.2021 in the Office of Block Development Officer, Nimapara in the presence of the bidders or their authorised representatives. For further details, interested bidders are requested to visit the official website:- <http://www.puri.nic.in>

Sl. No.	NAME OF THE PROJECT	VALUE OF WORK (in Rs.) (Lakhs)	EMD to be Deposited 1% (In Rs.)	Cost of Tender paper/ Bid document (in Rs.)	Class of Contractors	Time of Completion
01	02	03	04	05	06	07
1	Construction of addl. Class rooms of Balanga Girls High School	11.20	11200	6000	C&D	4 Calendar Months
2	Construction of addl. Class rooms & major repair of Arisandha High School	29.48	29480	6000	B&C	6 Calendar Months
3	Construction of addl. Class rooms of Bantu Gram High School, Miteipur	11.30	11300	6000	C&D	4 Calendar Months
4	Construction of addl. Class rooms of Bamanal High School	16.34	16340	6000	C&D	6 Calendar Months
5	Construction of addl. Class rooms of Bhatbandh High School, Chanrapada	11.54	11540	6000	C&D	4 Calendar Months
6	Construction of addl. Class rooms of Amareswar High School, Tulashipur	11.37	11370	6000	C&D	4 Calendar Months
7	Construction of addl. Class rooms of Chintamani Bidyapitha, Rench	11.54	11540	6000	C&D	4 Calendar Months
8	Construction of addl. Class rooms of Govt. High School, Balanga	21.83	21830	6000	B&C	6 Calendar Months
9	Construction of addl. Class rooms of Dahijanga High School, Dhaleswar	11.90	11900	6000	C&D	4 Calendar Months
10	Construction of addl. Class rooms and major repair of Denua High School	23.22	23220	6000	B&C	6 Calendar Months
11	Construction of addl. Class rooms of Damodar High School, Tampalo	16.58	16580	6000	C&D	6 Calendar Months
12	Construction of addl. Class rooms of Bhadra High School, Bhodar	16.58	16580	6000	C&D	6 Calendar Months
13	Construction of addl. Class rooms of Prachi Balika Bidyapitha, Tulashipur	11.37	11370	6000	C&D	4 Calendar Months
14	Construction of addl. Class rooms of Nahantara High School, Antuara	11.54	11540	6000	C&D	4 Calendar Months
15	Construction of addl. Class rooms of Sri Rama Ch. High School, Bhanigram	16.63	16630	6000	C&D	6 Calendar Months
16	Construction of addl. Class rooms of Nilakanthswar MP High School, Dighalo	15.96	15960	6000	C&D	6 Calendar Months
17	Construction of addl. Class rooms of Pabitra High School, Alanda	11.54	11540	6000	C&D	6 Calendar Months
18	Construction of addl. Class rooms of Panchayat Hight School, Bhanapur	11.87	11870	6000	C&D	6 Calendar Months
19	Construction of addl. Class rooms of SSP High School, Dakshinaradas	16.91	16910	6000	C&D	6 Calendar Months
20	Construction of addl. Class rooms of Utkalmani High School, Nuasantha	17.30	17300	6000	C&D	6 Calendar Months
21	Construction of addl. Class rooms of JBR Govt. Girls High School, Nimapara	16.90	16900	6000	C&D	6 Calendar Months
22	Construction of addl. Class rooms of Nimapara High School	23.00	23000	6000	B&C	6 Calendar Months

Sd./- Block Development Officer, Nimapara

FOCUS BUDGET & DEVELOPMENT

DEBT STALKS GROWTH



The Union Budget 2021-22 is being viewed as a document to consolidate, spend and revive on the one hand and on the other an extravaganza without expanding the kitty that gives little and takes more from every citizen

the life of over 80,000 crore people and they cannot live on dole for long. The government has lowered disinvestment target to ₹1.75 lakh crore from ₹2.1 lakh crore in 2020-21 as pandemic affected government's disinvestment plans. It has put on the platter the strategic sale of IDBI Bank, BPCL, Shipping Corp, Container Corporation, Neelachal Ispat Nigam Ltd, Pawan Hans, Air India, GAIL, oil pipelines, seven ports and some others, including two public sector banks through setting up Asset Management and Asset Reconstruction Company.

The move to go through the sale of two banks and diluting stake in LIC to 74 per cent is beyond comprehension. The LIC is in good shape and is the only honest insurance company. The decision needs to be rolled back. The bank NPAs are not their own creation. It happened because of interference in the work of banks since 2009. The present step can be the beginning of selling out stakes in other banks too. So is the nation changing tack of nationalising the banks in 1969 or going into a cycle of another nationalisation in a few years? It calls for reviewing such Manmohanomics decisions at a time when the Reserve Bank of India itself is concerned about its own health.

The government's ideological group in Swadeshi Jagaran Manch (SJM) is opposed to such sales. The SJM had put a brake on NDA-1 too. For it and trader body efforts the retail sector has got a small boost as the online companies now would be taxed 2 per cent for their sales.

The stake sale in PSUs built over decades calls for a scrutiny. Some of the finest PSUs like HMT, Indian Airlines and Air India were victims of machinations of their private sector rivals. The concept that government should not own ventures is misplaced and incorrect. The US and many European Union countries are known to owe their progress to the PSUs. India has been taking too many flip-flop decisions over the years. INFRA

The Union Budget 2021-22 is being viewed as a document to consolidate, spend and revive on the one hand and on the other an extravaganza without expanding the kitty that gives little and takes more from every citizen. It doesn't suit the needs of these times of crisis, which follow two years of economic slowdown and a year of severe recession.

It is viewed as debt-funded huge expansion that may be good for the stock market but not for the overall development of the people. Borrowings constitute 36 paise of the rupee earned by the government and are bound to shoot inflation. Expenses should have been cut on many construction and euphoric projects like new ornamental constructions and super-speed trains. A decision that merits praise is the increase in healthcare allocations.

But it is also being seen as moving from off-balance-sheet funding to the headline-deficit funding of 9.5 per cent and shows that new spending increases by ₹1.9 lakh crore over the ₹1.2 lakh crore Food Corporation of India food subsidies. Incremental spending will be about ₹2.9 lakh crore.

There is a catch. The budgeted Central government's total expenditure of ₹34.8 lakh crore in 2021-22 is identical in nominal terms to that in 2020-21 - which amounts to slashing expenditure in real terms. Debt servicing takes a larger cake that has risen in 2020-21 to over ₹6.9 lakh crore. In short, the government would be left with ₹26 lakh crore for its expenses.

The borrowings in 2020-21 were at ₹18.48 lakh crore and are slated to be ₹15.06 lakh crore in 2021-22, provided disinvestments of ₹1.75 lakh crore is realised. Despite such huge borrowings, the allocations for projects and many other expenses were being cut mid-year since December 2019.

The tax system has gone through too many changes and confusing in terms of new no-concession income-tax and conventional I-T sys-

tem that allows some deductions. The tax on EPF investment is beyond comprehension. Even the benefit of no-filing of return for those above 75 is superfluous because if one has two bank accounts or has any income other than interest accrual or pension, he may forfeit the benefit.

The Budget should have been kinder to the lowest 30 per cent people in the unorganised, small and medium industry, and labourers who trekked hundreds of kilometers to reach their homes and save their lives. Despite clamour from depositors not to tax their meager interest accruals, the poor savers, retirees and pensioners are losing a large chunk to TDS on bank deposits. It is not a prudent policy to tax the aged or push them to penury. The new car scrapping policy is to burden them more.

It also sends mixed signals to the farmers. The Budget allocation for the department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare is slashed 8.5 per cent in 2021-22. The flagship PM-KISAN scheme, meant to provide income support to farmers, sees a 13 per cent drop

in its budget, which is ₹10,000 crore lower than last year's initial allocation. However, the budget says state-run Agricultural Produce Marketing Committees (APMCs) would now have access to the ₹1 lakh crore Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF). The AIF cess has been raised to 4 per cent and would impact almost every walk of life as it is dumped on petrol and diesel prices. The nation should have looked for providing cheaper fuel to the people at a time when international prices are at its lowest.

Various cesses on petroleum products raise over ₹3 lakh crore a year, but erode the economy through cost rise on transportation and farm inputs, leading to severe inflation and overall hardship. A government committed to development should realise that a nation progresses on low expenses on fuel.

The Budget should have given some novel thought to supporting agriculture. The government has to think out-of-the-box to take the opportunity to have a fresh look at the farm sector that encompasses



Shivaji Sarkar

THE BUDGETED CENTRAL GOVERNMENT'S TOTAL EXPENDITURE OF ₹34.8 LAKH CRORE IN 2021-22 IS IDENTICAL IN NOMINAL TERMS TO THAT IN 2020-21 - WHICH AMOUNTS TO SLASHING EXPENDITURE IN REAL TERMS

Foreign Hand

Our actual enemy is not any force exterior to ourselves, but our own crying weaknesses, our cowardice, our selfishness, our hypocrisy, our purblind sentimentalism.

SRI AUROBINDO



An expression coined by former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was 'foreign hand'. Her successors - Rajiv Gandhi and Manmohan Singh - also used it aplenty. It was essentially a bogey resorted to whenever the former PMs found public criticism of their internal policies too hot to handle. It came handy for them to deflect public attention from the raging domestic issues of the day and hide their ineptitude behind it. The BJP leadership, from top to bottom, has been a very vocal opponent of the Congress and has constantly derided the myth of foreign intervention which, according to Indira Gandhi, required the promulgation of Emergency in the mid 1970s.

That was then and this is now. Today, the world is greatly influenced by 'new media' in which different social media platforms are invading the inner consciousness of every individual account holder. While Tik Tok and Facebook can handle big corporates as well as uneducated or semi literate users, Twitter is known for its limitation on letters, which compels the user to make the thoughts concise. No doubt, some use it for abuse and other regressive purposes which results in labeling those users as trolls. Like Google, which has, in its usage, become a verb where people say 'Google it', Twitter is probably the only social media platform where you can "Tweet it".

In such a backdrop comes the international support for the farmers' agitation in India. One of the early tweets was by international pop star Rihanna followed by climate activist Greta Thunberg and many other celebrities, who supported the farmers' movement. Rihanna started the deluge by asking in her tweet - 'Why aren't we talking about this?' With #farmersprotest in reference to the farmers protest in India. Now it seems she has amply succeeded. The reason for her success in highlighting the issue at an international level should be closely analysed. One of the earliest responses to Rihanna's tweet was by the Ministry of External Affairs. The Government of India used diplomatic but strong words to deride Rihanna. This was followed by a whole horde of trolls who used filthy language against her. It went as far as claiming that Rihanna was paid a hefty sum by a separatist Sikh for this tweet. Once the floodgates of criticism opened up, many others are following suit. Meanwhile, some Indian celebrities took to Twitter to bash their international counterparts. Sadly, an aged Lata speaking out against Rihanna could not find much resonance elsewhere. Maybe, people like Sachin Tendulkar and others should not have responded. That might have slowed the ignition process of the issue.

In other words, and especially after the events played out during the Arab Spring revolt and the role of social media, digitization can both be a bane or a boon. Handling such platforms and staying relevant globally has become a huge challenge to administrations across the world. More recently, the military coup in Burma or Myanmar and the widespread public protests across that country is a point to note. While the military has preferred to shut down the internet at various locations, the movement and public disenchantment has become known across the world due to social media. The recent US Presidential elections brought to the fore the importance of the role played by Twitter in moulding public opinion. While former President Trump had initially been spreading falsehood through Twitter, the platform started flagging the tweets enabling readers to take a considered view about each tweet. It was the first social media platform to do so against a sitting POTUS.

The Indian government had asked Twitter, some days ago, to block about 200 tweets and accounts. Twitter, it seems, ignored this directive. Now again, the Indian government has asked Twitter to block 1,178 accounts, claiming they are from Pakistan. While Twitter is yet to respond to this latest order, its founder CEO Jack Dorsey has 'liked' a few tweets supporting the farmers protests in India. The Indian government has questioned the neutrality of Twitter on this issue. It may be noted that PM Modi is known to be followed by a massive number of Twitteratis from across the world. This goes to show that social media cannot be wished away now. The old style of 'kadi ninda' or strong condemnation being issued when things turn out unmanageable has become an action of the past. Using foul language and abusing others on Twitter also does not solve any problem. A government's actions can be reviewed internationally because of the free flow of information available through social media currently. While banning the internet may seem like an answer, yet the criticism that follows can be very damaging. The best case study again happens to be Donald Trump. Trump constantly raging on Twitter proved detrimental for to own interest. It is best for political leaders to know about the pulse of their people rather than bother about social media. Whether one likes it or not, platforms like Twitter are truly global and geographically limited governments or the courts of law of a particular country cannot hold the reins of such massive social media giants. Focusing and solving domestic issues should be of prime importance for any government, India included.

SPECTRUM PRISON REFORMS

Solving the prison dilemma of COVID-19



Nurul Izzah Anwar

FEW GOOD THINGS WILL COME OUT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, WHICH HAS NOW KILLED MORE THAN 2.2 MILLION PEOPLE WORLDWIDE. BUT ONE POSSIBLE SILVER LINING COULD BE SERIOUS PRISON REFORM

Few good things will come out of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has now killed more than 2.2 million people worldwide. But one possible silver lining could be serious prison reform - including in Malaysia.

In September 2020, an initially small COVID-19 cluster, centered around the Lahad Datu police headquarters and Tawau prison on the island of Borneo, quickly exploded into the biggest cluster of Malaysia's second COVID-19 wave, infecting 1,146 people. And in the current third wave, at least 23 of the country's prisons have reported a disproportionately high rate of COVID-19 infections.

As of December 2020, 1,160 of Malaysia's 66,791 prisoners were infected, along with 125 prison staff and family members. By the first week of 2021, Malaysia's overall caseload had doubled, with new prison clusters occasionally accounting for up to 20% of daily new cases.

Prison-related infection clusters in Malaysia and elsewhere appear to share one common cause: overcrowding. According to the World Prison Brief, at least 118 countries have exceeded their maximum occupancy rate. Such congested environments, with poor sanitation and overstretched medical facilities, are hotbeds of communicable disease. Trapped behind bars, prisoners are helpless to protect themselves from outbreaks of both mild

and severe infections, ranging from the common flu and scabies to tuberculosis and now COVID-19.

But a pandemic can be an opportunity to right systemic wrongs. In January 2021, the COVID-19 crisis prompted members of Malaysia's parliament from across the political spectrum, including me, to establish the first All Party Parliamentary Group (APPGM) on Reform of Prisons and Detention Places.

Risk-mitigation strategies such as enhanced cleaning protocols and hygiene, efficient COVID-19 testing, and access to vaccination programs are vital to tackling the pandemic in prisons. Encouragingly, the Malaysian government's joint committee on vaccine procurement has announced its intention to include high-risk groups such as prisoners among the first cohorts to be vaccinated - one of the APPGM's top priorities.

But prison overcrowding renders other pandemic-mitigation measures - especially physical distancing - almost impossible. Decarceration, or early release, then becomes just about the only option for managing overcrowding and rapid COVID-19 transmission in prison.

The pandemic has led to the release of a significant number of prisoners in some countries, including Indonesia (39,000), Turkey (45,000) and Iran (70,000). Similarly,

the Malaysian government has announced a scheme to release about 11,108 prisoners. Other than release through the Licensed Release of Prisoners mechanism, prisoners are also being absorbed into rehabilitation centers, where, with private-sector support, they will receive training in construction, carpentry and plantation work.

Moreover, to reduce systemic overcrowding, the Malaysia Prison Department has, since 2019, wanted to release on parole at least 75% of the country's 22,000 eligible inmates. But the power to act resides with the minister of home affairs, and despite pronouncements made, so far only 500 prisoners are known to have been released.

Plans and targets notwithstanding, policymakers often do too little too late on prison reform. Longstanding systemic challenges reflect chronic underfunding and policy neglect. Improving prison infrastructure and upgrading medical facilities are necessary steps, but need time, planning, and additional resources. Overcrowding, on the other hand, can be solved relatively efficiently with available means.

Above all, policymakers should couple immediate prisoner releases with coordinated training and support programmes to prevent recidivism and re-incarceration. Several projects in Malaysia have shown promise. Countries with

prison systems that focus strongly on rehabilitation, such as Norway and Sweden, boast some of the world's lowest recidivism rates. Norway, for example, applies "restorative justice," which seeks to remedy the harm caused by the crime. Inmates are given opportunities to train and learn new skills in a supportive environment, with prison officers acting as role models and mentors. Similarly, in Sweden, rehabilitation centers on the need to treat inmates "like human beings, not like criminals," which has resulted in the closure of many prisons across the country.

The COVID-19 pandemic has not only highlighted systemic inequities, but also provided governments with an opportunity to change their approaches to tackling them. Malaysia and other countries should seize the chance to reverse the trend of prison overcrowding, promote restorative justice, rehabilitate prisoners, and change societies' mindsets.

We are duty bound to protect the dignity of all human lives, and ensure that incarceration during a pandemic is not tantamount to a death sentence. Instead, the COVID-19 crisis could offer a much-needed second chance to those behind bars - as well as to those in power.

The writer is a member of the Malaysian parliament. ©PROJECT SYNDICATE

WISDOM CORNER

- If you hear a voice within you say 'you cannot paint,' then by all means paint and that voice will be silenced. VINCENT VAN GOGH
- How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world. ANNE FRANK
- Some people want it to happen, some wish it would happen, others make it happen. MICHAEL JORDAN

WORDSWORTH

Brown as a berry

This has long puzzled people and readers have asked me about it in the past. The simple truth is that nobody really knows, though there are theories. The first thing to say about the expression is that it's ancient. It appears twice in Geoffrey Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, dating from the 1380s, firstly in the Prologue ("His palfrey was as brown as is a berye", referring to a horse ridden by a monk) and then in the unfinished Cook's Tale as a description of the cook ("Broun as a berye, a propre short felawe", which in modern English is "brown as a berry, a good-looking small fellow".) We may reasonably presume that as a conventional simile it is even older in speech. A suggestion often made is that it refers to coffee beans. It can't, because coffee hadn't been introduced into England in Chaucer's day. Another idea is that in the English of the time berry could refer to a nut, but there's no suggestion in the Oxford English Dictionary or the Middle English Dictionary that people used it that way. The OED does remark that in Old English, four centuries before Chaucer, berry was most commonly used of grapes, which then grew quite well in southern Britain in the warm climate of the time. But it would be a stretch for us to describe any variety of grapes as brown. Curiously, brown was also used of armour or glass to mean shining bright - a text of about 1330 described a "sword of brown steel".

LOL



NBA FINALS
It's game 7 of the NBA finals and a man makes his way to his seat at center court. He sits down and notices that the seat next to him is empty. He leans over and asks his neighbour if someone is sitting there. He responds, "No, the seat's empty." "The first man exclaims, "What!?! Who in their right mind would have a seat like this for

the NBA finals and not use it?" The neighbor responds, "Well the seat is mine, but my wife passed away and this is the first NBA finals we haven't been together." The first man responds, "I'm sorry to hear that. Wasn't there anyone else, a friend or relative, who could've taken that seat?" The neighbour responds, "No, they're all at the funeral."

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

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

Sasikala factor

Sir, VK Sasikala has returned to Chennai to join her nephew TTV Dhinakaran. It may be recalled that in the 2019 general elections, Sasikala's AMMK garnered 5% of vote share, not bad at all. Though Sasikala briefly threatened to run away with Amma's legacy, her going to jail in corruption cases early 2017 put paid to her hopes of making it big in state politics. No doubt, EPS and deputy CM O Panneerselvam (OPS) are political veterans; but Sasikala, having spent most of her life watching and feeling the astute moves of her Amma, can prove to be more than a match for the seasoned duo. It does not need a political pundit to be predicting the AIADMK votes being divided by Sasikala's AMMK. Though her party lost out to the AIADMK on the issue of the "two leaves" symbol, nobody is willing to take her lightly. More importantly, with the AIADMK set to lose power to the DMK, there is all likelihood of Sasikala emerging as a 'kingmaker' or even a 'king' in an uncertain political game if a hung assembly looms large. If not now, may be later because of all politicians in Tamil Nadu, she was the closest to Amma. **Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA**

Who is responsible?

Sir, In Chamoli district of Uttarakhand, the fury of nature on February 7 reminded one of the memories of devastating game experienced seven years ago. It is being said that the Dhauliganga river has been flooded due to the breaking of a glacier. This is the result of changing the natural pattern of rivers and rivers. If you recall the past incident at the same place, we have all heard from the experts about the results of messing with the environment and the causes and consequences of global warming. There was a lot of discussion on the disaster, but our understanding is not there. Natural disasters are forgotten after an interval, we do not take any lessons. Scientists in Uttarakhand warned about such a disaster eight months ago. They warned that many areas of Uttarakhand, Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal have such glaciers, which can burst anytime. Here too, it was warned that in the entire Himalayan region, many lakes have been formed when glides prevent the river's flow. There is still time, if the government honors the warnings of the scientists and follow their advice then more terrible situation can be avoided in the near future. **Asit Mohanty, JAJPUR**

Maha to probe tweets of celebs on farmers' protest

CONGRESS ACCUSES UNION GOVERNMENT OF PRESSURISING CELEBRITIES, "LIKE THE UNDERWORLD" ONCE USED TO DO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 8: Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh Monday said the state intelligence department will conduct a probe into allegations that some celebrities were pressurised recently to issue tweets in connection with the ongoing farmers' protest.

Deshmukh made the remarks on an online platform after the Congress, a ruling coalition partner in Maharashtra, sought an investigation into the BJP's alleged connection with tweets of some celebrities and whether the saffron party "arm-twisted" them.

Maharashtra Congress spokesperson Sachin Sawant and some other party leaders Monday raised the demand before Deshmukh in a meeting via video conference. Deshmukh is currently in isolation as he recently tested positive for COVID-19.

A number of prominent personalities, including cricket icon Sachin Tendulkar and legendary singer Lata Mangeshkar, recently rallied around the central government on social media using hashtags #IndiaTogether and



#IndiaAgainstPropaganda.

This came after tweets by American pop star Rihanna and climate activist Greta Thunberg backing farmers who are protesting near Delhi's border points against the Centre's three new farm laws.

After the virtual meeting with Deshmukh, Sawant in a tweet said, "Demanded investigation of BJP connection into the tweets of celebrities & security to be provided to our national heroes if needed & find out whether these celebrities were arm-twisted by BJP."

Responding to the demand, Deshmukh said the objection of the Congress leaders is in connection with the timing of the tweets and whether they were issued under pressure. Deshmukh noted that the tweets issued by badminton player Saina Nehwal and actor Akshay Kumar were similar.

The Congress' question is whether they (celebrities) were forced to issue tweets of the same kind simultaneously, the minister said. "You may have seen what kind of pressure is there on the media, how

'Is Maha govt mentally stable?'

Mumbai: The BJP Monday slammed the Shiv Sena-led Maharashtra government after Home Minister Anil Deshmukh said the state intelligence department will probe allegations that some celebrities were pressurised recently to issue tweets in connection with the ongoing farmers' protest. In a stinging attack, senior BJP leader Devendra Fadnis termed the move as "disgusting and highly deplorable" and said the ruling Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) should feel ashamed while using the word "probe" for Bharat Ratna awardees. He also said that it seems necessary to probe the "mental state" of those who demanded the investigation and those who ordered it. "Has this MVA Govt lost all its senses? MVA should feel ashamed while using the word 'probe' for BharatRatnas! Actually, now it seems necessary to probe the mental state & stability of the ones who made such demand & of people who ordered probe against our BharatRatnas!" Fadnis tweeted.



a politician is threatened with ED or CBI probe if he/she speaks against the BJP. We have all seen this. As far as your objection (about celebrities' tweets) is concerned, we will definitely probe into those. Our intelligence agency will probe it," Deshmukh assured.

Meanwhile, addressing reporters here, Maharashtra Congress chief Nana Patole Monday accused the central government of pressurising celebrities, "like the underworld" once used to do. He also asked celebrities to not

fall prey to such alleged pressure tactics because they are youth icons. Patole said there was a time when the underworld used to pressurise celebrities to behave in a certain way.

But, the Narendra Modi-led government is using celebrities to divert attention from the issues concerning farmers, the poor, unemployed and small industrialists, he alleged.

"The BJP government is doing what the underworld used to do," Patole charged, saying it is not a matter of pride for the country.

'Farmer on tractor' most sought-after symbol in Punjab civic body polls



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, Feb 8: A "farmer riding a tractor" remained the most in-demand symbol among independent candidates for the February 14 civic body polls in Punjab, according to officials.

Some contestants opting for the symbol said it will help them get votes of those who expressed solidarity with the farmers camping at the Delhi borders against the Centre's new farm laws.

According to former Mohali mayor Kulwant Singh, 26 of 43-member Azad Group led by him opted for the symbol. The rest are contesting on the 'bucket' symbol. For 19 wards of the Nawanshahr municipal committee, at least seven independent candidates are contesting on the symbol, said an official.

Kuldeep Singh Sidhu, whose wife is contesting as an independent

from Ward No. 13 in Mohali's Kharar, said the symbol of a "farmer driving a tractor" will help them get votes in the elections. He said the symbol represented farmers and farm labourers. "This symbol was the first choice of each Independent candidate in the wake of the farmers' agitation," said Sidhu, who belongs to a farming family.

According to officials, in the wards where the number of candidates seeking the symbol was more, draws were taken out.

A total of 9,222 candidates are in the fray for the February 14 municipal polls in Punjab. Of them, 2,832 are contesting as independents, 2,037 are from the ruling Congress while 1,569 are Shiromani Akali Dal nominees.

The number of candidates from the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Aam Aadmi Party are 1,003 and 1,606, respectively.

HC quashes Navlakha's bail plea in Elgar Parishad case

HC bench says the 34 days that Navlakha spent under house arrest in 2018 could not be counted as period spent in custody for consideration of statutory bail

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 8: The Bombay High Court Monday dismissed a statutory bail appeal of activist Gautam Navlakha, an accused in the Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case, saying it sees no reason to interfere with a special court's "well reasoned order" which earlier refused him bail.

A bench of Justices SS Shinde and MS Karnik said the 34 days that Navlakha spent under house arrest in 2018 could not be counted as the period spent in custody for consideration of the statutory bail.

The civil rights activist was arrested by the Pune police on August 28, 2018, but not taken in custody.

Between August 28 and October 1, 2018, Navlakha was kept under house arrest. He also spent 11 days in the NIA's custody from April 14 to April 25 last year, after he surrendered following re-registration of an FIR against him in January 2020.

Since then, he has remained in judicial custody and is lodged at the Taloja jail in neighbouring Navi Mumbai.

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) is conducting a probe



into the case. Navlakha approached the HC last year, challenging the special NIA court's order of July 12, 2020 that rejected his plea for statutory bail.

He had sought statutory or default bail on the ground that he had been in custody for over 90 days, but the prosecution failed to file a charge sheet in the case within this period.

His counsel, senior advocate Kapil Sibal, had argued that Navlakha already spent 93 days in custody, including 34 days of

house arrest between August 28 and October 1, 2018, and the HC must count house arrest as the period of custody.

Additional Solicitor General SV Raju, appearing for the NIA, had opposed the application, contending the special court had rightfully held that Navlakha's house arrest did not constitute detention.

He had said that during such house arrest, Navlakha was not available for interrogation as he would have been in regular custody.

100% door-to-door solid waste collection in Punjab

STATE WOULD INTENSIFY ITS EFFORTS FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF SOLID WASTE, COMPRISING BIOMEDICAL AND PLASTIC

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chandigarh, Feb 8: Punjab has achieved almost 100 per cent door-to-door collection and segregation of municipal solid waste, Chief Secretary Vini Mahajan has said.

Besides, the state has prepared 14 district environment plans to address the problem of pollution at the district level.

The Chief Secretary said she has assured the NGT-appointed monitoring committee for the Sutlej and Beas rivers, under the chairmanship of Justice (ret'd) Jasbir Singh, that the state was committed to provide clean and safe potable water to the residents.

Mahajan also assured that the state would intensify its efforts for the management of solid waste, comprising biomedical and plastic. The panel, comprising former Chief Secretary S.C. Aggarwal, environmentalist Baba Balbir Singh Seechewal (both members) and technical expert Babu Ram, briefed the Chief Secretary about environment related issues concerning the state with specific reference to improving the water quality



in the rivers and waste management in urban and rural areas.

The committee was constituted at the behest of the National Green Tribunal to specifically look into various environmental issues in 2019.

The most significant achievement in the last two years was the improvement in the water quality to the desired level (Class-B) in two stretches of the Beas river, which has become the only river in the entire country to achieve such standards, an official statement said. Apart from this, the work to the

tune of Rs 500 crore, pertaining to setting up of sewage treatment plants and effluent treatment plants for dairy waste to address the problem of pollution in the Budha nallah, one of the dirtiest tributaries of the Sutlej river, passing through most parts of Ludhiana.

It is expected that after commissioning of these plants, the river water quality of the Sutlej will improve significantly. Besides, 105 MLD capacity common effluent treatment plants have been set up to check industrial pollutants entering into Sutlej river.

Farmers' protest forces BJP to cancel meeting

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Nawanshahr: Farmers here Monday forced their way through police barricades to protest outside the venue of a meeting called by the BJP, leading to the cancellation of the event which was to be attended by state party chief Ashwani Sharma.

Despite heavy police presence, the protesting farmers broke police barricades put up at several places and reached the meeting venue at Pandora Mohalla here. Punjab BJP chief Ashwani Sharma was scheduled to meet party leaders, said officials. Farmers led by activists of the Kirti Kisan Union staged a sit-in outside the venue and accused the BJP of spoiling the atmosphere by organising meetings despite the ongoing agitation against the Centre's new farm laws. The farmers said they will continue to oppose the BJP till the Centre repeals its farm laws. Later, the meeting was cancelled. BJP's district president Poonam Manik described the incident as a "murder of democracy" and accused the ruling Congress of "orchestrating" such protests to "hide its failures". Meanwhile, a group of farmers raised slogans against BJP leader and former Union minister Vijay Sampla in Moga.

Punjab govt supporting 'gangster' Ansari, SC told

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta tells the Supreme Court that Ansari is getting five-star treatment in a Punjab jail

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 8: The Uttar Pradesh government Monday unleashed a barrage of charges against the Punjab government for providing shelter to gangster-turned-politician Mukhtar Ansari, who is accused in several heinous cases in UP.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta told the Supreme Court that Ansari is getting five-star treatment in a Punjab jail, and questioned why state government is supporting a gangster?

Mehta, representing the Uttar Pradesh government, did not mince words in criticising the Punjab government before a bench comprising Justices Ashok Bhushan and R. Subhash Reddy. "He (Ansari) is happy in Punjab jail and he is enjoying," Mehta said.

The Solicitor General added that Ansari is being vociferously defended by the Punjab government. He said the Punjab government claims that he (Ansari) is suffering from depression, but in reality he is enjoying his time in jail.

"The Punjab government is supporting a gangster. There are very serious cases pending against Ansari and the trials of the same are pending in Uttar Pradesh," Mehta contended before the top court.

The Uttar Pradesh government has moved the top court seeking Ansari's transfer from Punjab to UP. However, the Ropar jail authori-



ties have refused to hand him over citing medical grounds.

Mehta added that summons were issued against Ansari, but then he got an FIR registered against himself in Punjab and did not even file for bail, rather he is enjoying his time in Punjab. The Uttar Pradesh government has termed the FIR as a complete sham and a design to help Ansari escape the law in UP. Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, representing Ansari, said that his client can appear through video conferencing in cases in Uttar Pradesh. Mehta rebutted that Ansari cannot choose a forum and he cannot sit in five-star accommodation and then appear for trial in Uttar Pradesh.

Mehta told senior advocate Dushyant Dave, representing the Punjab government, "You are supporting Ansari." In an affidavit, the Uttar Pradesh government said that Ansari has been sheltered in Punjab for the past two years on the basis of two FIRs filed against him.

Don't link farmers' stir with religion, Sukhbir urges PM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Fazilka (Pb), Feb 8: Shiromani Akali Dal chief Sukhbir Singh Badal Monday urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi not to link the agitation against the farm laws with any religion or community and said he should instead focus on giving "justice" to farmers.

The SAD chief told reporters here that farmers are on one platform against the Centre's three contentious agricultural laws. "We should all be clear that farmers are fighting for the welfare of the 'annadaata' at large and we should not try to divide this struggle by trying to limit it to one religion or community," Badal appealed to the PM while adding that he should instead focus on ensuring "justice" to farmers.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi Monday had slammed those abusing agitating Sikh farmers, saying it won't do the country any good as he went on to appeal to the protesting farmers to withdraw their over two-month-long stir and give the new agriculture reform laws a chance.

Thousands of farmers have been protesting since late November at the Delhi borders with Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, demanding a rollback of three farm laws.

The protesting farmers have expressed apprehension that these laws would pave the way for the dismantling of the minimum support price (MSP) system, leaving them at the "mercy" of big corporations. SAD chief Sukhbir Singh Badal, who was here to address ward-level meetings ahead of the February 14 civic body polls in the state, also slammed the ruling Congress, accusing it of unleashing "goondaism". He urged the SAD workers to be resolute and ensure the victory of Akali candidates. He alleged that even though there was a "complete collapse" of the law and order and the State Election Commission had "abrogated" its constitutional duty, the SAD will not be cowed down by such "tactics". He said the officers who "murdered democracy" and its institutions at the instance of the Congress party will be taken to task once the SAD formed a government in the state.

Police constables pose for photographs after being administered Covid-19 vaccine shots at Rajawadi Hospital in Mumbai, Monday.



Modi said that they are protesting without knowing what is there in the three farm laws. Can it happen like this? Farmers who till their lands and all the opposition parties know everything about the three farm laws

MALLIKARJUN KHARGE | CONGRESS RAJYA SABHA MEMBER

CONG LAUNCHES 'JOIN SOCIAL MEDIA' CAMPAIGN

The Congress on Monday launched a 'Join Congress Social Media' campaign with an aim to have five lakh online "warriors" who, former party chief Rahul Gandhi said, will counter hate and "defend the idea of India"



of the day quote

Mid-day meal scheme has proven to be an incentive for students to attend school, these cuts are not only alarming with regard to child nutrition but also with regard to education

GAURAV GOGOI | CONGRESS LOK SABHA MP

We are consuming poisonous food due to extensive usage of pesticides. The present farming system has to be changed by encouraging organic farming

SRI SRI RAVISHANKAR | ART OF LIVING FOUNDER

MVA in Maharashtra has a unique model of governance - hail noises of anarchy from overseas who show India in poor light but harass patriotic Indians who stand for the nation. It is difficult to decide what is more feared: their priorities or their mindset?

J P NADDA | BJP PRESIDENT

SHORT TAKES

K'taka gets 31st district

Bangalore: Karnataka got its 31st district with the state government Monday issuing an official gazette notification carving out a new Vijayanagara district from the mine-rich Ballari. The new district will have six taluks and Hosapete will be its headquarters. Kudligi, Hagari, Bommana halli, Kotturu, Hoovina Hadagali, and Harapanahalli are the other five taluks. Ballari district will have five taluks - Ballari, Kurugodu, Siraguppa, Kampli, and Sanduru.

Warmest Jan in 62 years: IMD

New Delhi: The minimum temperature recorded in the country in January was the warmest for the month in 62 years, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said Monday. South India was particularly warm. The month was the warmest in 121 years, with 22.33 degrees Celsius in south India, followed by 22.14 degrees Celsius in 1919 and 21.93 degrees Celsius in 2020 as the second and third warmest months. Central India was the warmest (14.82 degrees Celsius) in the last 38 years after 1982 (14.92 degrees Celsius), while 1958 with 15.06 degrees Celsius was the warmest in the 1901-2021 period.

Three NLFT insurgents held

Agartala: Three insurgents of the banned National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) were arrested from Arjun Thakur Para in West Tripura district, police said on Monday. Acting on a tip-off, police raided the tribal hamlet in the Takarjala police station area on Sunday night, and made the arrests, they said. Those arrested have been identified as Prasenjit Debbarma, Ramu Debbarma and Rathindra Debbarma.

1,300 turtles seized

Kanpur (Uttar Pradesh): The Uttar Pradesh Special Task Force has seized 1,300 Indian flap shell turtles from a truck in Kanpur while they were allegedly being taken to West Bengal for smuggling out of the country. Senior police official T.B. Singh said that the truck driver Rambhush Yadav and helper Vinod Kumar Savira have been arrested for their alleged involvement in the smuggling racket.

ISRO STUDYING CAUSE OF GLACIER BURST: CM



AGENCIES

New Delhi/Dehradun, Feb 8: As multi-agency relief operations continue in Chamoli and adjoining areas of Uttarakhand, Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat Monday said a comprehensive analysis of the entire incident is being carried out to avert future tragedies, and asserted the immediate priority was to provide food and other assistance to the affected people.

In an interview with PTI, he said the incident appeared to have happened due to the breaking of the glacier and the Chief Secretary has been instructed to find out the real reasons.

Preliminary estimates show that around 200 people are still missing, while 11 bodies have been found, he said. "A DRDO team is already studying the cause of this tragedy and we have also sought the help of ISRO scientists and experts for the same," he said.

After a comprehensive analysis is undertaken to find the reasons of this incident, "we will build an elaborate plan to avert any potential tragedy going forward", Rawat said. Asked about the ongoing relief operations, he said they are continuing in full swing.

"We have made all arrangements needed for the rescue and relief operations along with providing healthcare facilities to the affected people. Most importantly, we are working on re-establishing the connectivity to the affected villages,"

he said. Rawat said while the extent of economic loss will be ascertained in due course, the top most priority for now is to save as many lives as possible and to rehabilitate those who have got displaced from their homes.

Multiple agencies coordinated efforts to search for survivors on Monday, a day after a portion of the Nanda Devi glacier possibly burst through its banks at Joshimath, triggering an avalanche and a deluge that rippled through the Alaknanda river system in the upper reaches of the Himalayas.

Rawat Monday quoted scientists to say that the areas where avalanches struck Sunday was not prone to such activities, and the calamity might have been caused by an "abrupt sliding down" of millions of tonnes of snow from a hill, rather than due to a glacier burst.

He also appealed to people to not make the tragedy an occasion for building an "anti-development narrative", as he left for the flood-hit areas of Chamoli for an on-the-spot assessment of relief and rescue operations.

He made the statement on the cause of the tragedy after holding a meeting here with ISRO scientists and officials of the Army and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) on finding out the exact reason for the calamity that has left at least 20 dead and over 150 missing. He said ISRO officials showed him pictures in which no glacier is visible at the place where the burst started, but only a naked hill can be seen.

FRAUDULENT INSTANT LOAN APPS

Google removes 100 apps in India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 8: Google has so far removed about 100 instant loan apps from its PlayStore in the country that were involved in alleged collection of personal data and its misuse, fraudulent and unlawful practices of physical threats and use of other coercive methods for recovery of loans, according to the Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY).

Answering a query in the Lok Sabha, the IT Ministry said that upon being notified by law enforcement agencies of the availability of certain money lending apps that were possibly not in compliance with the applicable legal and regulatory framework, Google has already removed about 100 such apps since December 2020 till January 20, 2021.

The IT ministry said it received a number of public grievances against frauds and the malpractices by few online instant loan applications available on internet including on Google PlayStore. Google last month informed that

it reviewed hundreds of personal loan apps in India and pulled down several of them found to be violating its app policies.

The company said it has asked the developers of the remaining identified apps to demonstrate that they comply with applicable local laws and regulations in India.

"We have reviewed hundreds of personal loan apps in India, based on flags submitted by users and government agencies," said Suzanne Frey, Vice President, Product, Android Security and Privacy.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in December said that legitimate public lending activities can be undertaken by banks, NBFCs registered with RBI and other entities who are regulated by the state governments under appropriate statutory provisions such as Money Lending Acts.

"Members of the public were cautioned not to fall prey to such unscrupulous activities and were requested to verify the antecedents of the company/firm offering loans online or through mobile apps," the RBI had said.

RS passes J&K Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 8: The Rajya Sabha Monday cleared The Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill, 2021 that seeks to replace the ordinance to merge the Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) cadre of civil services officer with the Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Mizoram Union Territory (AGMUT) cadre.

The bill was introduced in the Upper House of the Parliament last week and it was approved with voice vote before Rajya Sabha chairman and Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu.

"The complete integration of both UTs along with one nation one constitution, holistic development and public welfare are being

ensured at each level. Through amendment of this bill, the merger of J&K cadre with AGMUT cadre is an important step in that direction," Minister of State for Home Affairs G Kishan Reddy said in Rajya Sabha.

He said that the Constitution of India is now fully applicable in Jammu and Kashmir, and that the bill will enable availability of officers in Jammu and Kashmir who have experience of running union territory administration.

He said around 170 central laws are being implemented in Jammu and Kashmir.

"For smooth implementation of these laws, application of schemes and effective execution of projects and for better strength of cadre, officers with experience of UT ad-

ministration are very important. "Through merger of J&K cadre with AGMUT Cadre, services of All India Services officers of AGMUT cadre can be taken in Jammu and Kashmir union territory," Reddy said.

Opposing the Statutory Resolution and Legislative Business (Bill for Consideration and Passing) - the Jammu and Kashmir (Amendment) Bill 2021 Leader of the Opposition in Rajya Sabha Ghulam Nabi Azad said it was perhaps his last speech in the House and he didn't want to use harsh language but contrary to the government's tall promises behind converting J&K into UT, development had been stalled, industry couldn't enter the region and unemployment was on the rise. Azad's Rajya Sabha tenure will

end February 15. He said that the House was informed by the PM and Home Minister that J&K has been given the status of UT for sometime and after that statehood of Jammu and Kashmir will be restored.

"I want to ask Home Minister Amit Shah if the present cadre was working well then what was the need to merge it? You had promised that the statehood will be restored...But bringing this bill creates a suspicion that GoI wants to keep J&K permanently a union territory," Azad said.

Participating in the debate, BJP leader Shamsheer Singh Manhas said no development could take place earlier despite maximum central funds going to Kashmir as compared to Jammu, Leh and Ladakh.

HUMANITY



Security men offer drinking water to a calf at Singhu border

PTI PHOTO

Gujarat will never rule Bengal: Mamata

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Feb 8: Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Monday slammed the Centre calling it "a cruel government" for its meagre advance to the state after Cyclone Amphan and said "Gujarat will never be able to rule Bengal".

Speaking on the concluding day of the last session of the 16th West Bengal assembly, Banerjee also took on the Opposition for criticising the vote-on-account presented by her and saying it was done with an eye on the coming state polls.

The fiercest Trinamool Congress supremo, who was speaking at the debate on the Rs 2.99 lakh crore vote-on-account, said even if it was so it was done for the welfare of the people and claimed that her party would return to power in the state in the coming assembly poll.

'Stone pelting incidents dropped in J&K in 2020'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 8: The law-and-order situation in Jammu and Kashmir is improving with a reduction in the number of violent incidents in the Union Territory and development works going on, Minister of State for Home G Kishan Reddy said in Rajya Sabha Monday.

He said stone-pelting incidents in the Union Territory have come down to 327 in 2020 from 2,009 in 2019 and the number of terrorists neutralised has gone up to 221 in 2020 from 157 the previous year. Reddy said ceasefire violations from Pakistan have increased. "Jammu and Kashmir is on the development path. People of Jammu and Kashmir are not asking for Article 370. People of J&K want development and employment for youth. Pakistan frequently tries to infiltrate and violates ceasefire to stop construction and development work," he said.

The minister said 127 people were injured from ceasefire violations in 2019 but that dropped to 71 in 2020. There were 216 infiltration attempts in 2019, but it has reduced to 99 in 2020, he said.

Terrorist violence also reduced to 244 in 2020 from 594 in 2019, the MoS Home said.

Govt considering objections to 12-hr work shift: Labour Secy

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 8: Senior IAS officer and Secretary in the Ministry of Labour and Employment, Apurva Chandra, said on Monday that the government is considering the objections raised by the trade unions to 12-hour daily work shift.

"See, there will be a maximum of 48 hours of work in a week. If someone works for 8 hours a day, then there will be 6 working days per week. If a company opts for 12-hour working per day for its employees, it means four-day working and three holidays," Chandra told IANS at the Shram Shakti Bhawan here on Monday.

The senior 1988-batch IAS officer of the Maharashtra cadre, who has been Secretary in the Ministry of Labour and Employment since October 2020, said: "If daily working hours are increased, you will have to give the workers similar holidays also. There will be 5 or 4 working days if duty hours are increased. It will now be mutually agreed to by the employees and employers as to what is appropriate for them. No one will be



able to work for 12 hours a day."

The Ministry is engaged in formulating relevant rules and regulations to implement the four new Labour Codes in the next few weeks to usher in labour reforms. The new labour laws will not compromise the interests of labourers and employees in any way, Chandra said. "Rules and regulations are now being framed on provisions related to working hours. There is no final word as yet. Once the rules are formulated, things will become more clear. The Ministry wishes

to assure that establishments will not be able to exploit their employees at any cost." "For the first time, all types of workers in the country will now get minimum wages. New schemes are being brought in for migrant labourers. Provident fund facility will be given to ensure social security to all kinds of labourers. All workers - in organised and unorganised sectors - will be covered by ESI. Women will be allowed to work in all kinds of trade, and allowed to do night shifts."

Govt liberalises income criteria for grant of family pension

THE RELAXATION IS GRANTED FOR FAMILY PENSION TO DIFFERENTLY-ABLED SURVIVORS AS THEY REQUIRE GREATER MEDICAL CARE AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 8: The Centre has issued instructions to liberalise the income criteria for eligibility of a deceased government servant or pensioner's family member for pension, Union minister Jitendra Singh said Monday.

The relaxation is granted for family pension to differently-abled survivors as they require greater medical care and financial assistance. "The government is of the view that the income criteria for eligibility for family pension, appli-

cable in the case of other family members, may not be applied in the case of a child/sibling suffering from a disability," he said.

The government has reviewed and decided that the income criteria for eligibility for family pension to such children/siblings shall commensurate with the amount of the entitled family pension in their case, the minister of state for personnel. The Department of Pension and Pensioners' Welfare has issued instructions on Monday for a child/sibling of a deceased government servant/pensioner suf-



fering from a mental or physical disability, according to a Personnel Ministry statement. They shall be eligible for family pension for life if the overall income is less than the

entitled family pension at ordinary rate - 30 per cent - of the last pay drawn by the deceased government servant/pensioner; plus the dearness relief admissible thereon, the state-

ment said. As per Rule 54(6) of the CCS (Pension) Rules, 1972, a child/sibling of a deceased government servant or pensioner, who is mentally or physically challenged, is eligible for family pension for life if he or she is suffering a disability that renders him unable to earn his livelihood, it said. Presently, family member, including a child/sibling suffering from a disability, is deemed to be earning his livelihood if the income from sources other than family pension is equal to or more than the minimum family pension - Rs 9,000 - and the

dearness relief admissible thereon, the statement said. In the case of a child/sibling, who is mentally or physically challenged, is presently not in receipt of a family pension due to non-fulfilment of the earlier income criteria, family pension shall be granted on the fulfilment of the new income criteria and other conditions for grant of family pension, it said.

The financial benefits, shall, however, accrue prospectively and no arrears for the period from the date of death shall be admissible, the statement said.

national

of the day quote

Having the vaccine does not mean that we should be complacent. In fact, all the preventive measures must be followed by all of us now and in the near future, as well. Considering this, it is praiseworthy that IRCS is continuing the distribution of masks from the prevention perspective



HARSH VARDHAN | UNION HEALTH MINISTER

The whole country is with Uttarakhand. The most important thing right now is that relief operations are not hindered in the next few days



RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

There is no place for those who give patronage to the mafias, criminal and other rogue elements in the new Uttar Pradesh of 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat'



YOGI ADITYANATH | UTTAR PRADESH CM

SHORT TAKES

2nd phase of J&K DDC polls held

Srinagar: The second phase of elections to the posts of chairpersons for District Development Councils (DDC) in Budgam and Kupwara districts of Jammu and Kashmir was held Monday, officials said. However, the polls in Baramulla district were postponed, they said. In Budgam district in central Kashmir, Nazir Ahmad Khan—an independent DDC member—was elected as the chairperson, while Nazir Ahmad Jahara of National Conference (NC) was elected as vice-chairperson of DDC, officials said.

Teacher held for raping student

Navsari: A school teacher was arrested from Gujarat's Valsad town for allegedly raping a 17-year-old Class XI student on the promise of marriage, Navsari police said Monday. Statistics teacher Mayur Rana (27) raped the teen girl, a student of a school in Bilimora in Navsari, on several occasions, an official said.

Schools in Nagaland reopen

Kohima: Schools in Nagaland which were closed since March last year due to COVID-19 pandemic reopened Monday for students of Class 6 to 12, an official said. Principal Director of School Education Shanavas C said both government and private schools have to follow the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) issued by the government to ensure the safety of teachers, students and employees.

Major fire at shopping mall

Guwahati: A major fire broke out at a shopping mall in the heart of Guwahati in the early hours of Monday, officials said. Eight fire tenders doused the blaze after fire-fighting operations that went on for more than eight hours, they said.

Labourer stabbed to death

Kota (Raj): A daily wage labourer was allegedly stabbed to death by a property sales manager at borkhedha police station area here over a monetary dispute, police said Monday. The deceased has been identified as Manish Sharma (36), they said.



So in India, despite the pandemic, nobody was deprived of education and online education

PRAKASH JAVADEKAR | UNION MINISTER

PAK INTRUDER SHOT DEAD

The Border Security Force (BSF) Monday shot down one Pakistani intruder in Samba sector of Jammu and Kashmir's Kathua district along the International Border



'India to have 17 Rafale jets by March'

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 8: India will have 17 Rafale jets by March this year and the entire fleet of the fighter aircraft bought by the country will reach by April 2022.

In 2016, India had signed an inter-governmental agreement with France to procure 36-Rafale Jet aircrafts at a cost Rs 59,000 crore. "I want to inform that till 11 Rafale have arrived and by this March 17 Rafale will be on our land. I also inform that all Rafale will reach India by April, 2022," the minister said while replying a question in the Rajya Sabha.

Singh said all new aircraft types in IAF are traditionally inducted through a befitting ceremony. The first five Rafale aircraft of IAF were formally inducted into IAF on September 10, 2020. The arrangements for this event were made mostly through local resources of IAF. The total expenditure on the event was Rs 41.32 lakhs including Rs 9.18 lakh of GST.

To another supplementary query



whether the government will privatise few aspects of defence in the coming days, the minister said. "We are giving special focus on indigenisation". He said 101 items have identified which will manufactured locally and not imported.

PAK'S MISCHIEF NOW LIMITED TO BORDER: RAJNATH

The Indian Army has limited Pakistan's mischief to just the border, giving a befitting reply to their misadventures, Defence Minister

Rajnath Singh said in the Rajya Sabha on Monday. "Now Indian Army has restricted Pakistani mischief to the border. No praise is enough for the actions taken by the Army, BSF and other security forces in containing (Pakistan sponsored terrorist activities)," he said while replying during the Question Hour.

The minister stressed that there was no question of any lethargy while dealing with ceasefire violations by the neighbouring country.

ARMS PROCURED TO THWART THREAT FROM 'NORTHERN ADVERSARY'

Emergency procurement of certain arms and equipment have been undertaken by the armed forces to beef up combat potential in view of the eastern Ladakh border standoff, the government said in Rajya Sabha on Monday. Minister of State for Defence Shripad Naik said the armed forces are procuring terrain and weather specific equipment to thwart the likely threat from India's "Northern adversary", in a clear reference to China. To a specific query, the minister also said no special allowance is given to families of the armed forces personnel who are posted along the border with China.

Asked why the government was "lethargic" and not taking stern action to stop the ceasefire violations, Singh said, "There is no question of lethargy. I want to make it clear that our Army has taken effective steps. They have done earlier also and I am not saying the Army is taking action after our government came to power."

The minister also said it would not be appropriate to go into details about the steps being taken and weapons used to deal with ceasefire violations. "But I would like

to say this much that Pakistan violates ceasefire to infiltrate terrorists into Indian borders and also to bring them back. They keep trying this," Singh said. "You should have faith that our Army is taking effective steps at borders and responding to ceasefire violations," he said, and added only Pakistan knows about the actions being taken against them by Indian security forces. The minister said ceasefire violations rise when just when a terrorist strike is planned on Indian soil.

DAILY DEATHS AGAIN FALL BELOW 100 IN FEBRUARY



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 8: India's tally of COVID-19 cases rose to 1,08,38,194, with 11,831 new infections, while the daily deaths fell below 100 for the fourth time this month, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated Monday. The death toll increased to 1,55,080 with 84 daily new fatalities, the data updated at 8 am showed.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 1,05,34,505 pushing the national COVID-19 recovery rate of 97.20 per cent, while the COVID-19 case fatality rate stands at 1.43 per cent. The total COVID-19 active cases remained below 2 lakh.

There are 1,48,609 active cases of coronavirus infections in the country which comprise 1.37 per cent of the total cases, the data stated. India's COVID-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark August 7, 30 lakh August 23, 40 lakh September 5 and 50 lakh on September 16. It went past 60 lakh September 28, 70 lakh October 11, crossed 80 lakh October 29, 90 lakh November 20 and surpassed the one-crore mark December 19.

According to the ICMR, 20,19,00,614 samples have been tested up to February 7 with 5, 32,236 samples being tested Sunday. The 84 new fatalities include 30 from Maharashtra and 19 from Kerala, 6 from Chhattisgarh, 5 from West Bengal, 4 from Uttarakhand, 3 from Karnataka, 2 each from Delhi, Goa, Haryana and Punjab.

A total of 1,55,080 deaths have been reported so far in the country including 51,310 from Maharashtra followed by 12,383 from Tamil Nadu, 12,236 from Karnataka, 10,879 from Delhi, 10,207 from West Bengal, 8,687 from Uttar Pradesh and 7,159 from Andhra Pradesh.

Sasikala returns to Tamil Nadu

Sasikala's return to Tamil Nadu is being keenly watched for political impact as it comes at a time when the assembly elections in the state are to be held in the next few months

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Krishnagiri (TN)/Bangalore, Feb 8: Expelled AIADMK leader V K Sasikala Monday returned to Tamil Nadu to a grand reception, days after completing her four-year jail term in Bangalore in a corruption case, amid indications of a confrontation with the ruling party which she once controlled.

Sasikala, a close aide of late Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa, crossed into Tamil Nadu at Athipalli in Krishnagiri district bordering Karnataka, around 10 am as her supporters broke into celebrations, dancing to drum beats and showering flower petals on her convoy.

She later offered prayers at a Goddess Mariamman temple in Hosur town in the district, about 40 kms from Bangalore.

Her nephew T T V Dhinakaran, who accompanied her, said she would visit the residence of AIADMK founder and late Chief Minister M G Ramachandran in Chennai later.

He claimed several AIADMK functionaries turned up to welcome Sasikala and that she was travelling in the vehicle of one of the ruling party functionaries after her car developed some issue.

She underwent her sentence in the Rs 66.65 crore disproportionate

assets case at the Parapana Agrahara central prison in Bangalore since February, 2017 and was set free January 27.

However, she remained at the Government Victoria Hospital, where she had been admitted after testing positive for COVID-19 while under judicial custody.

She was discharged from the hospital January 31 after which she stayed at a resort, about 35 km from Bangalore.

The AIADMK has recently petitioned the Tamil Nadu police seeking to restrain 'non-members' of the party from using its flag after Sasikala travelled in a car sporting the flag on her discharge from a hospital in Bengaluru January 31.

However, Dhinakaran has defended it, saying she continued to remain the AIADMK general secretary, pointing to petitions pending in court over her 'expulsion'.

Post Jalalithaa's death, Sasikala was elected the AIADMK's interim general secretary and as its legislature party leader in February 2017, paving the way for her elevation as chief minister.

However, with the apex court restoring her conviction in the assets case, she chose her then loyalist K Palaniswami to be the chief minister before proceeding to Bengaluru for serving the sentence.

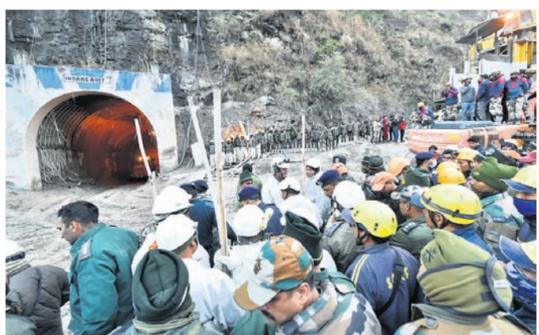


GLACIER BURST

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Joshimath, Feb 8: They had lost hope of survival when one of them found his mobile phone network working, helping them contact the authorities who rescued them from an underground tunnel at Tapovan in Uttarakhand's Chamoli where flash floods wreaked havoc following a glacier burst.

"We heard people screaming at us to come out of the tunnel but before we could react, a sudden gush of water and heavy silt swamped upon us," rescued Tapovan power project worker Lal Bahadur said. He, along with 11 of his other colleagues, was rescued by the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) from an underground



tunnel in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district on Monday evening.

According to officials, they re-

BACK ON TRACK



A teacher takes class at a school, that reopened after remaining shut since March 19, 2020 due to pandemic, in Gurugram

Army's ban on FB, other apps successful

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 8: The ban imposed by the Indian Army on the usage of 89 smartphone applications, including social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram, since June last year, has been highly successful. Of the 1.3 million strong Indian Army, only eight personnel were found to have violated the ban.

Official sources told IANS that at least 730 Army officers have been authorised to enforce the ban which came into effect last year, on July 15. The apps included 59 Chinese apps banned by the government for general public. But strikingly, the Army also banned the usage of common apps like WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Ella, Snapchat, PubG, Messenger, TrueCaller, anti-virus 360 Security, Tinder, Tumbler, Reddit, Hungama, Songs.pk, Cam Scanner, Ok Cupid, Daily Hunt, and others. Most of the applications are American and Chinese.

Indo-US joint military exercise begins

The drill comes days after the air forces of India and France held a five-day joint exercise in Rajasthan in January

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bikaner, Feb 8: The 16th edition of the Indo-US joint military training exercise 'Yudh Abhyas' commenced at the Mahajan Field Firing Ranges in the western sector of Rajasthan Monday.

Brigadier Mukesh Bhanwala, Commander of the 170 Infantry Brigade of the Indian Army, welcomed the US contingent at the firing range and impressed upon both the armies to achieve optimum cohesion and interoperability during the exercise.

He laid stress on the importance of free exchange of ideas, concepts and best practices between the troops and the necessity to learn from each other's operational experiences, defence spokesperson Lt Col Amitabh Sharma said. "The exercise will enrich both the contingents from each other's rich experience in



counter-insurgency operations. Besides counter-insurgency operations, exchange of experiences in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief will also be a part of the exercise," the spokesperson said in a statement.

The official said a number of aerial platforms, including the

newly inducted indigenous Advance Light Helicopter WSI 'RUDRA', MI-17, Chinooks, Stryker Vehicles of the US Army and BMP-II Mechanised Infantry Combat Vehicles of the Indian Army, will be utilised in the exercise, which will go on till February 21.

How a phone call saved their lives, recount survivors

rescuers. The ITBP provided their recorded video accounts to the media. They are now being treated at an ITBP hospital in Joshimath, about 25 km from the incident spot. This is also the base of the ITBP's Battalion No. 1, tasked with guarding the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China that runs along the state.

At least 11 bodies have been recovered while 202 are still missing since the disaster struck in the upper reaches of Chamoli district, according to the ITBP. "We were 300 metres deep in the tunnel when the water gushed in. We got trapped. The ITBP rescued us," Nepal resident Basant said.

Another unidentified worker

who hails from Dhak village in Chamoli and worked at the Tapovan project said as the water gushed in, the only thing they could do was to lunge onto the crown of the tunnel. "We lost hope...But then we saw some light and felt some air to breathe...Suddenly one of us found he had network on his mobile and then he called up our general manager informing him about our situation," the man said from the hospital bed.

Officials said the project GM subsequently informed the local authorities who requisitioned ITBP rescuers to save them. The ITBP teams, armed with ropes, pulleys and carabiners, rappelled down a steep slope and brought out these men from

the narrow snout of the tunnel on Sunday evening.

Vinod Singh Pawar, a resident of Joshimath, said they climbed up half-way inside the tunnel through the rods but got stuck as a gush of water came in. "We are thankful to the ITBP rescuers for saving us," he said in the video.

The border force began air-dropping food packets on Monday in at least nine villages that have been cut off due to the floods.

"Beyond the Raimi bridge (which was swept away by the floods), there are nine villages and choppers are dropping food packets after picking them up from our base in Joshimath," ITBP spokesperson Vivek Kumar Pandey said in Delhi.

international



We are supportive of them (interim Libya government). ... We are ready to cooperate with them for Libya's recovery and to prepare for the elections in Libya
ABDEL FATTAH EL-SISSI | EGYPT'S PRESIDENT

GEORGE SHULTZ, WHO HELPED USHER OUT COLD WAR, DIES

George Shultz, Ronald Reagan's Secretary of State who identified a diplomatic opening that helped end the Cold War but contributed to a new brand of conflict by advocating pre-emptive strikes, has died



of the day quote

The country is still in a deep hole with millions of lost jobs but that President Joe Biden's \$1.9 trillion relief plan could generate enough growth to restore full employment by next year
JANET YELLEN | US TREASURY SECRETARY

China is committed to developing a relationship with the US that is non-conflictual, based on non-confrontation, mutual respect and win-win cooperation
WANG WENBIN | CHINESE FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESMAN

In order to consolidate the Nepal-India ties in a cordial manner, we had to print the map and talk to India. Our relations could turn cordial by only returning our territory through dialogue
KP SHARMA OLI | NEPAL PRIME MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

20 dead as Houthis step up attacks

Sanaa: Yemen's Houthi militia has intensified military operations against the government-controlled oil-rich province of Marib, leaving at least 20 people killed. An official of Marib's local authority told Xinhua news agency that "the Houthis stepped up their military operations against military sites manned by the government forces in different areas of the northeastern province", reports Xinhua news agency. He said that the Houthi fighters on Sunday simultaneously launched on-ground military operations and missile attacks against the strategic Yemeni province.

Avalanche kills 4 in Utah

Salt Lake City: Four backcountry skiers in their 20s died when one of the deadliest avalanches in Utah history hit a popular canyon, police said Sunday. Four other people were also buried in the Saturday slide but managed to dig themselves out and didn't suffer serious injuries, according to Unified Police of Salt Lake County. The skiers were from two separate groups, and all eight had prepared with the necessary avalanche safety gear.

Now, mysterious monolith in Turkey

Istanbul, Feb 8: Turkish authorities are investigating the appearance of a mysterious monolith in southeastern Turkey. The metal block was found by a farmer Friday in Saniurfa province with old Turkic script that reads "Look at the sky, see the moon." The monolith, 3 meters high (about 10 feet), was discovered near the UNESCO World Heritage site named Gobekli Tepe, which has megalithic structures dating to the 10th millennium B.C., thousands of years before Stonehenge.

Quake hits Philippines

Manila: An offshore earthquake measuring 5.7 on the Richter scale jolted the Davao Oriental province of the Philippines Monday morning, authorities said. The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology said the quake, which struck at 8 a.m., hit at a depth of 44 km, about 211 km southeast of Governor Generoso town in the province, reports Xinhua news agency.

South Africa halts AstraZeneca vax roll out

REUTERS

London, Feb 8: South Africa halted Monday's planned rollout of AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccinations after data showed it gave minimal protection against mild infection from one variant, stoking fears of a much longer cat-and-mouse battle with the pathogen.

The coronavirus has killed 2.3 million people and turned normal life upside down for billions but new variants have raised fears that vaccines will need to be tweaked and people may have to have booster shots. Researchers from the University of Witwatersrand and the University of Oxford said in a prior-to-peer analysis that the AstraZeneca vaccine provided minimal protection against mild or moderate infection from the South African variant among young people.

"This study confirms that the pandemic coronavirus will find ways to continue to spread in vaccinated populations, as expected," said Andrew Pollard, chief investigator on the Oxford vaccine trial. "But, taken with the promising results from other studies in South Africa using a similar viral vector, vaccines may continue to ease the toll on health care systems by preventing severe disease."

Britain and Australia urged calm, citing evidence that the vaccines prevented grave illness and death, while AstraZeneca said it believed its vaccine could protect against severe disease.

But if vaccines do not work as ef-



VACCINE SHOCK

The coronavirus has killed 2.3 million people and turned normal life upside down for billions but new variants have raised fears that vaccines will need to be tweaked

The roll out was stopped after data showed it gave minimal protection against mild infection from one variant, stoking fears of a much longer cat-and-mouse battle with the pathogen

fectively as hoped against new and emerging variants, then the world could be facing a much longer - and more expensive - battle against the virus than previously thought.

The AstraZeneca vaccine was the big hope for Africa as it is cheap and easier to store and transport than the Pfizer shot, making South Africa's move a major blow, with sweeping implications for other regions. The so-called South African variant, known by scientists as 20I/501Y.V2 or B.1.351, is the dominant one in South Africa and is circulating in 41 countries around the world including the United States. An analysis of infections by the South African variant showed there was only a 22% lower risk of developing mild-to-moderate COVID-19 if vaccinated with the AstraZeneca shot versus those given a placebo.

Protection against moderate-severe disease, hospitalisation or death could not be assessed in the study of around 2,000 volunteers who had a median age of 31 as the target population was at such low risk, the researchers said.

While thousands of individual changes have arisen as the virus mutates on replication and evolves into new variants, only a tiny minority are likely to be important or change the virus in an appreciable way, according to the British Medical Journal. While the lead investigator on the trial said that recent data indicated that protection against severe disease was likely from the vaccine, the study raised the prospect of repeated vaccination against a changing virus.

Professor Shabir Madhi, lead investigator on the AstraZeneca trial in South Africa, said the vaccine's

similarity to another produced by Johnson & Johnson, which reduced severe disease by 89%, suggested it would still prevent serious illness or death.

"There's still some hope that the AstraZeneca vaccine might well perform as well as the Johnson & Johnson vaccine in a different age group demographic that I address of severe disease," he told BBC radio.

Sarah Gilbert, professor of vaccinology at the University of Oxford, said efforts were under way to develop a new generation of booster shot vaccines that will allow protection against emerging variants.

"This is the same issue that is faced by all of the vaccine developers, and we will continue to monitor the emergence of new variants that arise in readiness for a future strain change," she said.

Australian journalist arrested in China



CHENG LEI, 49, ARRESTED ON SUSPICION OF ILLEGALLY SUPPLYING STATE SECRETS OVERSEAS

REUTERS

Sydney, Feb 8: An Australian journalist who has been detained for nearly six months in China where she worked for a state-television channel has been formally arrested on suspicion of illegally supplying state secrets overseas, the two countries said Monday.

The announcement came as the family of Cheng Lei, 49, pleaded with authorities to grant the former high-profile news anchor access to her two school-age children.

"We are absolutely convinced of her innocence," a family representative said in an emailed statement to Reuters. "We respect China's judicial process and urge the au-

thorities bring this matter to a swift, compassionate and timely conclusion."

Cheng was arrested February 5, Australia's Foreign Minister Marise Payne and Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said separately Monday.

The journalist was born in China but moved with her parents to Australia as a child, and attended university in Queensland. Her children, aged nine and eleven, were visiting their grandparents in Australia during school closures in Beijing caused by the COVID-19 pandemic when she was detained.

Tensions between Australia and China have been high for the past year after Canberra called for an international investigation into the source of the pandemic and Beijing responded with trade reprisals.

Cheng, a former business news anchor on Chinese state media's English-language channel CGTN, where she had worked for almost a decade, had regularly attended business functions and embassy events for the Australian community while working in Beijing.

Payne said the Australian government "has raised its serious concerns about Cheng's detention regularly at senior levels, including about her welfare and conditions of detention."

Wang, the Chinese spokesman, said that all of Cheng's rights were being "fully guaranteed".

He told a regular news briefing in Beijing that China hoped Australia could respect China's judicial sovereignty and not interfere in China's handling of the case.



People wear carnival masks by the Bridge of Sighs to celebrate Venice's annual colorful carnival, which has been cancelled this year due to the coronavirus in Venice, Italy

British boy wakes from coma unaware of Covid

REUTERS

Nottingham, Feb 8: A British teenager is slowly emerging from a coma nearly a year after being hit by a car, and he has no knowledge of the coronavirus pandemic even though he has caught the virus twice.

Joseph Flavill, 19, suffered a traumatic brain injury when he was hit by the car in the central English town of Burton-on-Trent March 1 last year, about three weeks before a first national lockdown was imposed to curb the spread of the virus.

During that time his family has been largely unable to hear him



and hold his hand due to coronavirus restrictions, mostly trying to communicate with him via video link. "Recently Joseph has started to show small signs of recovery, which we are thrilled about... We know now he can hear us, he responds to small commands," his aunt, Sally Flavill, told Reuters.

"When we say to him 'Joseph, we can't be with you, but you

are safe, this is not going to be forever', he understands, he hears you, he just can't communicate," she said, adding that he now signalled 'yes' with a blink and 'no' with two blinks. Since Joseph's accident, Britain has registered nearly four million COVID-19 cases, including more than 110,000 deaths, in a pandemic that has turned life upside down worldwide, shuttering schools, universities, shops and many other places.

"I don't know how Joseph will ever understand our stories of this lockdown," his aunt said, adding that he was still very ill and faced a "very, very long journey."

Water canon fired at anti-coup protesters in Myanmar

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Yangon, Feb 8: Police fired a water cannon Monday at hundreds of protesters in Myanmar's capital who are demanding the military hand power back to elected officials, as demonstrations against last week's coup intensified and spread to more parts of the country.

The demonstrations in Naypyitaw, ongoing for several days, are especially significant since the city whose population includes many civil servants and their families, has no tradition of protest and has a heavy military presence. A protest also swelled at a major downtown intersection in the country's largest city, Yangon, with people chanting slogans, raising a three-finger salute that is a symbol of resistance and carrying placards saying, "Reject the military coup" and "Justice for Myanmar."

There were also reports of new demonstrations in towns in the north, southeast and east of the country, as well as in the city of Mandalay, where there was a procession of marchers and motorbikes. "We do not want the military junta," said Daw Moe, a protester in Yangon. "We never ever wanted this junta. Nobody wants it. All the people are ready to fight them." State media for the first time Monday made reference to the protests, claiming they were endangering the country's stability.

"Democracy can be destroyed if there is no discipline," according to a statement from the Ministry of Information, read on state television station MRTV. "We will have to take legal actions to prevent acts that are violating state stability, public safety and the rule of law."

Ensure democracy's norms, allow peaceful protests: US Caucus to India

IT IS UNDERSTOOD THAT THE CONGRESSIONAL INDIA CAUCUS LEADERSHIP ENCOURAGED CONTINUATION OF DISCUSSIONS AMONG INDIAN STAKEHOLDERS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, Feb 8: A powerful India Caucus in the US Congress has urged the Indian government to ensure that the norms of democracy are maintained and protesters be allowed to demonstrate peacefully and have access to the Internet as it held a meeting with New Delhi's envoy here.

India's Ambassador to the US Taranjit Singh Sandhu, who regularly interacts with India Caucus members on a number of issues, had a virtual meeting with the top leadership of the Congressional India Caucus last week.

The members included Congressmen Brad Sherman and Steve Chabot who are the two Co-

Chairs of the Congressional India Caucus along with Indian-American Congressman Ro Khanna, who is the Vice Chair of the Caucus.

"During this discussion, the caucus leadership welcomed reforms in the Indian economy, including in agriculture," sources told this news agency.

During the meeting, the leadership of the India Caucus, which is the largest country-specific caucus in the House of Representatives, condemned the violence January 26 in Delhi.

Among other things "they were appreciative of the government's perspective on the farm reforms," according to those familiar with the meeting.

Sherman tweeted that they urged



India to ensure that the norms of democracy are maintained and the protesters are allowed to demonstrate peacefully and have access to the Internet.

"I urged the Indian government

to make sure that the norms of democracy are maintained and that protesters are allowed to protest peacefully and to have access to the Internet, and to journalists. All friends of India hope that the par-

ties can reach an agreement," Sherman said.

The Indian ambassador, who over the last one year has met over 100 American lawmakers, mostly virtually due to the COVID-19 restrictions, briefed lawmakers on the necessity and objectives of the agriculture laws, negotiations as well as sensitive handling of the agitation. During the meeting, it is understood that the leadership of the Congressional India Caucus encouraged continuation of discussions among Indian stakeholders.

The members strongly supported strengthening of India-US relations across different fields, particularly in healthcare and appreciated India's efforts to provide affordable medicines and vaccines to other countries.

After the meeting, Sandhu tweeted that he has detailed discussions on varied issues with the leadership of the Congressional caucus.

"Held detailed discussions on varied issues with the leadership of the House Caucus on India and Indian Americans for the 117th Congress. Look forward to working closely with them to further strengthening India-US ties," he said. 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.

Multiple rounds of talks between the Government and the farmer unions have remained deadlocked.



The year 2020 was a challenging one for the financial consumers vulnerable to the adverse consequences of the pandemic and commended the Ombudsmen offices for being functional through the difficult period

MK JAIN | DEPUTY GOVERNOR, RBI

HCL TECH DECLARES BONUS

HCL Technologies has announced a special one-time bonus worth over ₹700 crore for its employees, as the IT giant marked \$10 billion revenue milestone. The special bonus will be paid to employees in February, amounting to nearly \$90 million



of the day quote

As on December 31, 2020, notices have been issued in 475 cases under the Black Money (Undisclosed Foreign Income and Assets) and Imposition of Tax Act, 2015, involving undisclosed foreign assets and income of over ₹14,300 crore

ANURAG THAKUR | MOS FOR FINANCE

Q3 has been positive for us with sales number being the highest in recent past, as we see site mobilisation improve post Covid. The teams are working relentlessly to rapidly accelerate execution of projects

PRASHANT JAIN | MD, GE POWER INDIA

This initiative (Amp Energy India commissioning solar project) will help us in reducing our carbon footprint and using green energy to partly power our operations. We are happy to partner with Amp for this project that has helped achieve our sustainability objectives

KVB REDDY | MD & CEO, L&T METRO RAIL (HYDERABAD)

SHORT TAKES

Domestic air travel demand falls 41%

Mumbai: Domestic air travel demand contracted by 41% y-o-y to around 76 lakh passengers in January with sequential growth also slowing down to 3.5% during the month over December 2020, a report said Monday. Indian carriers had flown a total of 1.27 crore passengers on domestic routes in January 2020. Indian aviation industry has witnessed a continued recovery in domestic passenger traffic in January 2021. However, the pace of growth slowed down in the reporting month, with a sequential growth of around 3.5%.

CIL nods infusion of ₹1,594 crore

New Delhi: State-owned CIL has approved an aggregate investment of ₹1,593.84 crore as a part of its equity capital towards setting up of three natural gas-based fertiliser plants. The plants would be set up in Gorakhpur (Uttar Pradesh), Barauni (Bihar) and Sindri (Jharkhand), Coal Minister Pralhad Joshi said in a written reply to Rajya Sabha. The diversification areas which include new and renewable energy and solar power value chain "are currently under feasibility study stage" the minister said.

Hyundai, Kia 'not in talks' with Apple

Seoul: Hyundai Motor and its affiliate Kia said Monday they are not in talks with Apple over an electric car manufacturing project in response to reports of their suspended discussions. In separate regulatory filings, Hyundai and Kia, which together form the world's fifth-biggest carmaker by sales, said they are "not in talks with Apple over developing an autonomous vehicle". In a statement, Hyundai said that it "has received requests to co-develop autonomous EV from multiple companies".

Voda case: India moves S'pore HC

New Delhi: India has challenged in the Singapore High Court an international arbitration tribunal's verdict that overturned its demand for ₹22,100 crore in back taxes from Vodafone Group Plc, and the order passed in Cairn Group's case is under consideration of the government, Parliament was informed Monday.

'TikTok takes on FB with US e-comm push'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

San Francisco, Feb 8: Chinese short-video making app Tiktok is reportedly planning an expansion into e-commerce in the US, where it will go head-to-head with Silicon Valley giant Facebook.

The company has briefed advertisers on a number of new features for 2021, according to several people who have seen its plans, such as a tool that lets its most popular users share links to products and automatically earn commis-

sion on any sales.

"It's old-school affiliate marketing," one senior advertising executive said, adding that video makers would be able to link to any products they liked, even if they were not formally sponsored by the brand, the Financial Times reported late Sunday. Tiktok, which is owned by China's ByteDance, is also aiming to roll out the ability for brands to showcase catalogues of their products on the platform, the report said.

The app is also said to be rolling out "livestreamed" shopping, a mo-



bile phone version of television shopping channels, where users can buy goods with a few taps after

TikTok, which is owned by China's ByteDance, is also aiming to roll out the ability for brands to showcase catalogues of their products on the platform, the report said

seeing them showcased by TikToks stars. This follows testing of the live shopping feature with Walmart

announced late last year.

The tools will bring TikToks, which has already announced a partnership with e-commerce platform Shopify, further into competition with Facebook.

Last year, Facebook introduced tools on its photo-sharing app Instagram in some countries to make it easier for people to buy goods, and a digital shopping channel on its main Facebook site.

Instagram has, meanwhile, made a copy of TikToks's scrollable video feed called Reels.

Bitcoin surges to all-time high as Tesla invests \$1.5bn



REUTERS

New York, Feb 8: Tesla Inc said Monday it had invested around \$1.5 billion in bitcoin and expected to begin accepting payment for its cars and other products with it in the near future, prompting a 7% jump in the electronic currency.

The announcement came after two weeks in which comments from Chief Executive Elon Musk encouraged small-time investors to buy bitcoin and meme-based digital currency Dogecoin as well as shares of US video game chain GameStop.

Musk said a week ago in a tweet that bitcoin was "on the verge" of being more widely accepted among investors.

Analysts said the move by Tesla was liable to prove a game changer for the currency.

"I think we will see an acceleration of companies looking to allocate to Bitcoin now that Tesla has made the first move," said Eric Turner, vice president of market intelligence at cryptocurrency research and data firm Messari.

"One of the largest companies in the world now owns Bitcoin and by extension, every investor that owns Tesla (or even just an S&P 500 fund) has exposure to it as well."

Moody's upgrades power sector outlook to 'stable'



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 8: Rating agency Moody's Monday upgraded the outlook on the power sector to stable from negative, citing the fifth consecutive month of generation growth in January.

The Central Electricity Authority last week reported a 3.1% y-o-y growth in power generation in January, making it the fifth consecutive month of generation growth after six months of decline driven by coronavirus pandemic.

For the first 10 months of the fiscal 2021, power generation growth declined 2.9% y-o-y, compared to earlier expectations of a minimum 4-5% decline. But renewable energy generation (excluding hydro power) grew 43% during the same period, and wind the weakest down 12%.

"We have changed the outlook for the power sector to stable from negative, recognising the better prospects for the sector as a result, amid an improved macro-economic backdrop," Moody's said in a note.

Sustaining generation growth indicates stabilisation of the operating environment, which was severely impacted by the lockdowns. Our expectations of a rebound real GDP growth to 10.8% in fiscal 2022 further underpins the potential for improving power demand, it said.

FUTURE-RELIANCE DEAL

'Delhi HC lifts hold on Future's \$3.4bn deal in setback for Amazon'

A two-judge bench hearing Future's appeal Monday put on hold the previous ruling, which had effectively stalled the mega retail deal

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 8: The Delhi High Court Monday overturned an order that had stalled Future Group's \$3.4 billion deal to sell its retail assets, two sources said, in a setback for Future's partner Amazon.com Inc, which has challenged the sale.

The court had last week sided with the US online retailer and put Future's asset sale to Reliance Industries on hold, leading to an appeal from the Indian retail group.

A two-judge bench hearing Future's appeal on Monday put on hold the previous ruling, which had effectively stalled the mega retail deal, two sources familiar with the proceedings said.

Future in its appeal had said its creditors would be at "significant risk" if the Reliance deal failed.

A detailed written order has yet to be made public.

Amazon and Future did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

"It is a major setback for Amazon,"



In a fight between two of the world's richest men - Jeff Bezos and Mukesh Ambani, the US giant has argued that Future breached certain contracts by agreeing to the deal with Reliance. Future has denied any wrongdoing

said one of the sources. In a fight between two of the

world's richest men - Amazon's Jeff Bezos and Reliance's Mukesh Ambani - the US giant has argued that Future breached certain contracts by agreeing to the deal with Reliance. Future has denied any wrongdoing.

Future is India's second-largest retailer with over 1,700 stores and agreed to sell its retail businesses to market leader Reliance last year.

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Govt monitoring fiscal deficit carefully: FM

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 8: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Monday said the government is taking steps to carefully monitor the fiscal deficit, which is estimated at 9.5 per cent of the GDP for the current financial year.

The 'mool mantra' now is that fiscal deficit is something that one cannot escape, but at the same time, it needs to be carefully tackled, she said in her post-Budget address to members of PHD Chamber of Commerce.

India has exceeded its fiscal deficit target of 3.5 per cent in the current fiscal by a wide margin, due to higher spending to stimulate the economy amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The fiscal deficit - the excess of government expenditure over its revenues - has been pegged at 9.5 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) in the current fiscal ending March 31, as per the revised estimate.

For the next fiscal, the deficit has been pegged at 6.8 per cent of GDP, which will be further lowered to 4.5 per cent by fiscal 2025-26. Emphasising that the government has made the Union Budget transparent, she said there was nothing under wraps or swept under the carpet.

"Whatever the government is



Whatever the government is borrowing or spending is open for everyone to see. The government has spent big on those areas that provide a big multiplier effect

NIRMALA SITHARAMAN | FINANCE MINISTER

borrowing or spending is open for everyone to see," she said.

The government has spent big on those areas that provide a big multiplier effect, the minister added.

Observing that funding the long term infrastructure financing is the job of the Development Finance Institution (DFI) she said it is not the job of just one DFI, but it is an opportunity for private DFIs to come into play.

With many private DFIs competing, the entire process would become competitive, she added.

Vedanta's Nand Ghar sensitises on cancer



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 8: Vedanta Limited, Lanjigarh, India's premier producer of metallurgical grade alumina, observed World Cancer Day. The company organised two-day programme and conducted knowledge-sharing and sensitisation sessions covering 50 Nand Ghars (Anganwad Kendras modernised by Vedanta) from Kalahandi and Rayagada districts.

During these sessions, the cluster coordinators of Nand Ghars interacted with women beneficiaries and front-line workers about various types of cancer, especially breast cancer and lung cancer.

The participants were made aware that the disease is potentially curable if diagnosis and treatment are done on time and with proper medical consultation. The precautionary measures to be taken

to prevent the disease were also elaborated during the programme. Dr Ruchi Mishra, Medical Officer, District Early Intervention Centre, Hindustan Latex Family Planning Promotion Trust, Uttar Pradesh, interacted with the participants virtually and gave consultations regarding breast and lung cancer.

Rakesh Mohan, Chief Operating Officer, Vedanta Limited, Lanjigarh unit said, "As part of this effort, we have come forward to make people aware about different diseases on different occasions. I am confident that these knowledge-sharing sessions organised on World Cancer Day have been effective in imparting important and relevant information to the community members about the disease. We will continue to conduct such sensitisation programs in the future as well to make our communities aware and informed for leading a healthy life."

'Govt confident of keeping borrowing costs below 6%

REUTERS

New Delhi, Feb 8: The government is confident that it can obtain funds for its massive 2021-22 borrowing programme at below 6%, as the central bank has given assurances that it will provide liquidity, two senior officials told Reuters.

Holding policy interest rates unchanged at record lows on Friday, Reserve Bank of India Governor Shaktikanta Das assured investors that its stance on liquidity remained accommodative and that the government's 12.06 lakh crore borrowing programme for the fiscal year starting April would be managed in a smooth and orderly manner. "RBI has assured us that the borrowing for 2021/22, yields will be comfortable and we expect it to not top 5.9% for the fiscal," one of the two sources said.

He added that the government's long-term average borrowing cost is expected to be between 5.8-5.9% in the fiscal year starting April.

Despite the pledge from the RBI, bond yields had surged on Friday as investors had been hoping for a more clarity in the form of a bond



purchase calendar. Yields on most bonds however retreated later Friday, following the debt auction results. "The RBI has shown that it will not blink as was evident in the auction results," a second source who asked not to be named as he was not cleared to discuss the matter publicly said.

The central bank sold only 9,000 crore of bonds versus 31,000 crore it had set out to sell on Friday, with underwriters to the auction buying 8,810 crore worth of the paper, after the market de-

manded higher yields.

"The RBI has done whatever the market has needed and wanted all of last year, so they need to trust the central bank. There is no question of an open market operations (OMO) calendar," the source added.

RBI's OMOs are dependant on its dollar buying interventions in the foreign exchange market, as it would automatically release rupee liquidity and not a tool to tame bond yields, thus providing a calendar is not feasible, the source explained.

Visa announces grants for women-owned businesses in India

Access to funding, educational resources and a digital presence are fundamental building blocks that will help small businesses get back to not only surviving, but thriving

KEVIN PHALEN | GLOBAL HEAD OF BUSINESS SOLUTIONS, VISA

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, Feb 8: Visa Monday announced the recipients of its grant programme in India to boost women entrepreneurship globally and empower budding businesswomen.

As part of Visa's first global grant

programme in partnership with IFundWomen, Bunko Junko, My Chapter One and MoWo Social Initiatives each received a ₹7,00,000 grant from Visa and resources from Instamojo to grow their businesses digitally, in a continued effort to offer better services to their communities.

"Access to funding, educational resources and a digital presence are fundamental building blocks that will help small businesses get back to not only surviving, but thriving," Kevin Phalen, global head of business solutions, Visa, said in a statement.

"We are proud to provide businesses around the globe with the cap-



Women-owned enterprises in India have grown from 14% to 20% in the past decade and employ around 27 million people

Highlighting this growth, Visa received applications from hundreds of businesses across the country in sectors including apparel and fashion, healthcare and wellness, food and beverages and art and events. The company evaluated 16 semi-finalists by a jury panel comprising senior leaders across Visa, FICCI FLO (FICCI Ladies' Organization) and Instamojo.

The final winners were selected based on the count of jury votes. In addition to the grants, Instamojo, the digitisation partner, is providing the winners with tools and resources to help build their digital presence.

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A mountain to climb

India lose Rohit early as they chase world record target of 420 in the fourth innings of first Test against England on a tricky Chepauk wicket

SCORECARD

ENGLAND 1ST INNINGS 578
INDIA 1ST INNINGS
(overnight 257/6)

Washington Sundar not out 85, R Ashwin c Buttler b Leach 31, Shahbaz Nadeem c Stokes b Leach 0, Ishant Sharma c Pope b Anderson 4, Jasprit Bumrah c Stokes b Anderson 0; Extras: 6 (b-4, lb-1, nb-1); Total: 337 all out (95.5 overs).

Fall: 1/19 (Rohit), 2/44 (Gill), 3/71 (Kohli), 4/73 (Rahane), 5/192 (Pujara), 6/225 (Pant), 7/305 (Ashwin), 8/312 (Nadeem), 9/323 (Ishant), 10/337 (Bumrah).

Bowling: James Anderson 16.5-5-46-2, Jofra Archer 21-3-75-2, Ben Stokes 6-1-16-0, Jack Leach 24-5-105-2, Dominic Bess 26-5-76-4, Joe Root 2-0-14-0.

ENGLAND 2ND INNINGS
Rory Burns c Rahane b Ashwin 0, Dom Sibley c Pujara b Ashwin 16, Daniel Lawrence lbw b Ishant 18, Joe Root lbw b Bumrah 40, Ben Stokes c Pant b Ashwin 7, Ollie Pope c Rohit b Nadeem 28, Jos Buttler st Pant b Nadeem 24, Dom Bess lbw b Ashwin 25, Jofra Archer b Ashwin 5, Jack Leach not out 8, James Anderson c & b Ashwin 0; Extras: 7 (nb-7); Total: 178 all out (46.3 overs).

Fall: 1/0 (Burns), 2/32 (Sibley), 3/58 (Lawrence), 4/71 (Stokes), 5/101 (Root), 6/130 (Pope), 7/165 (Buttler), 8/167 (Bess), 9/178 (Archer), 10/178 (Anderson).

Bowling: Ravichandran Ashwin 17.3-2-61-6, Shahbaz Nadeem 15-2-66-2, Ishant Sharma 7-1-24-1, Jasprit Bumrah 6-0-26-1, Washington Sundar 1-0-1-0.

INDIA 2ND INNINGS
Rohit Sharma b Leach 12, Shubman Gill batting 15, Cheteshwar Pujara batting 12; Total: 39/1 (13 overs).

Fall: 1/25 (Rohit).

Bowling: Jofra Archer 3-2-13-0, Jack Leach 6-1-21-1, James Anderson 2-1-2-0, Dominic Bess 2-0-3-0.

R Ashwin bagged a six-wicket haul in the second innings

India were left with the herculean task of chasing a world record 420 after England refused to declare in an unfocused second essay, cut short by Ravichandran Ashwin's brilliance on a sharply turning fourth day strip in the opening Test here, Monday.

At stumps, India were 39 for one, requiring another 381 runs to set a new record and take a 1-0 lead in the four-match series. The previous best is 418, chased by West Indies against Australia in 2003.

Relishing bowling on a responsive pitch, the seasoned Ashwin returned excellent figures of 6/61 to snap England's second innings at 178 after the home team conceded a massive first-innings lead of 241 runs.

With opener Rohit Sharma (12) back in the hut, Shubman Gill (15 batting) and Cheteshwar Pujara (12 batting) will begin the proceedings for India on the fifth and final day at the MA Chidambaram pitch, which has started to play tricks.

India would have been in a bigger hole had it not been for a seventh-wicket partnership of 80 runs between newcomer Washington Sundar (85 n o) and Ashwin, who also contributed a 31 with the bat before picking his career's 28th five-wicket haul.

But despite the duo's best efforts, the hosts still fell way short of the follow-on target after being bowled out for 337. India resumed the day at 257/6. Hoping to give their bowlers some respite from the sweltering heat, England decided against enforcing the follow-on and batted again.

But the start wasn't the one they wanted as Ashwin bowled his off-spinners to deadly effect with the new ball, the bounce aiding him in his endeavour.

Ashwin removed Rory Burns with the very first ball of the second innings. The other opener Dominic Sibley was also shown the door by Ashwin.

Veteran pacer Ishant Sharma was rewarded for bowling with a lot of hearth throughout the match when he had Daniel Lawrence trapped in front of the wicket with the one that snaked in. Ben Stokes could not replicate the form of his first innings and became another victim of Ashwin.

As wickets kept falling at one end, skipper Joe Root (40) looked like he was batting on a pitch different from the one where the ball was turning from one end to the other, scoring runs without much ado.

He not just negated but also attacked the spinners with aplomb but what Root could not tackle was a delivery that kept low on landing before thudding against the English run-machine's pads. The umpire had no hesitation in raising his finger as Jasprit Bumrah appealed for an LBW.

Ollie Pope (28), Jos Buttler (24) and Dom Bess (25) made useful contributions, but England strangely kept on batting even after the lead crossed 350 and then 400 on a track which is expected to give the bowlers a lot of purchase on the final day.

While 16 wickets fell on the first three days, a staggering 15 fell by the wayside Monday.

When India came out to bat again, left-arm spinner Jack Leach bowled Rohit with a peach of delivery that landed on the leg-stump before hitting the off-stump, the turn leaving the home team with plenty to worry about going into the final day's play.

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Rohit Sharma looks behind after being bowled by Jack Leach (inset, left) as England players rejoice, Monday

Ishant Sharma reached 300-wicket feat in Tests after dismissing Daniel Lawrence

The veteran became sixth Indian and third pacer from the country to achieve the feat. Anil Kumble (619), Kapil Dev (434), Harbhajan Singh (417), R Ashwin (386*) and Zaheer Khan (311) have reached the landmark.

The 32-year-old reached the milestone in his 98th Test. Ashwin was the fastest to get there, taking only 54 matches, followed by Kumble (66), Harbhajan (72), Kapil (83) and Zaheer (89).

Pant voted inaugural ICC Men's Player of the Month

DUBAI: India's flamboyant wicketkeeper-batsman Rishabh Pant Monday won the ICC's inaugural Player of the Month award for his superlative performances in the two Tests against Australia in January.

Pant scored a 97 at Sydney and an unbeaten 89 at Brisbane that powered India to an incredible series win against arch-rivals Australia Down Under.

Commenting on winning the inaugural award, a delighted Pant said in an ICC release: "For any sportsper-

son, contributing to a team win is the ultimate reward but such initiatives help motivate youngsters such as myself to do better each time.

"I dedicate this award to every member of Team India that contributed to our victory in Australia and also thank all my fans who voted for me."

South Africa's Shabnim Ismail was named the ICC Women's Player of the Month following her performances across three ODIs and two T20Is during the month.

According to a release issued by the game's governing body, the three nominees for each of the categories were short-listed based on on-field performances and overall achievements during the period of that month (the first to the last day of each calendar month). The short-list was then voted on by the independent ICC Voting Academy and fans around the world.

The ICC Voting Academy comprises prominent members of the cricket fraternity in-

cluding senior journalists, former players, and broadcasters and some members of the ICC Hall of Fame.

spot in the third set to beat Mihaela Buzarnescu 6-2, 4-6, 6-3.

World No.23 Angelique Kerber, a three-time major champion and 2016 Australian Open winner, lost to American Bernarda Pera 6-0, 6-4.

Top-ranked Novak Djokovic has won eight titles at the Australian Open. He began his quest for a ninth with a clinical, 6-3, 6-1, 6-2 victory over Jeremy Chardy in the

closing act of the day one program on Rod Laver Arena.

US Open champion Dominic Thiem was a break down and saved set points before beating veteran Mikhail Kukushkin 7-6(7-2), 6-2, 6-3 in his first match at the tournament since losing last year's final to top-ranked Djokovic.

World No.6 Alexander Zverev lost the first set in a tie-breaker, after saving four set points, then lost his temper in the second and belted his racket into the court. Letting off a little steam worked for the US Open finalist, who recovered to beat No.73-ranked Marcos Giron 6-7(8-10), 7-6(7-4), 6-3, 6-2.

Also advancing were No.14 Milos Raonic, the first man to finish the first round, former champion Stan Wawrinka and Americans Reilly Opelka, Frances Tiafoe and Taylor Fritz.

Tenth-seeded Gael Monfils lost a marathon against Emil Ruusuvuori 3-6, 6-4, 7-5, 3-6, 6-3 and his fellow Frenchman, No.25 Benoit Paire, also was beaten in the first round.

RISHABH'S NOBLE GESTURE

CHENNAI: Rishabh Pant said he will donate his match fee towards rescue operations for the glacier burst in Uttarakhand and also encouraged others to come forward and contribute. A glacier broke off at Joshimath in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district Sunday, leading to a massive flood in the Dhaul Ganga river and causing large-scale devastation in the upper reaches of the ecologically fragile Himalayas. Pant was born in Roorkee, a town in the state's Haridwar district. "Deeply pained by the loss of life in Uttarakhand. Would like to donate my match fee for the rescue efforts and would urge more people to help out," Pant wrote on his Twitter handle.



BBC 'INDIAN SPORTSWOMAN OF THE YEAR' HONOUR Dutee, four others nominated

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 8: Odisha sprint queen Dutee Chand, along with four others, has been nominated for the BBC 'Indian Sportswoman of the Year' award, Monday.

India hockey team skipper Rani Rampal, chess ace Koneru Humpy, young shooter Manu Bhaker and Vinesh Phogat, who is the only Indian woman wrestler to have qualified for the Tokyo Olympics are the others who have been nominated alongside the Asian Games 100m silver medalist for the prestigious honour.

Dutee, who missed out on the inaugural award last year, have been again nominated by the 40-member jury panel. The winner will be decided by public voting. The fans can vote for their favourite star on any of the six language platforms of the BBC.

The voting is open till February



24 and the winner will be announced March 8, the international Women's Day. The organisers have introduced a new category this year - 'Emerging Player of the Year' and the winner of which will be decided by the jury instead of voting.

Asked why a cricketer has not been nominated for the second

straight year, Rupa Jha, BBC Head of Indian Languages clarified that the nominees were selected by the jury, full of experts and sports writers, and that they did not exclude any sport.

Athletics star PT Usha, who received the lifetime achievement award the last year, lauded the BBC for the initiative. She also tipped India's mixed relay team to do well at the Tokyo Olympic Games but was candid in saying that medal will be difficult to get.

The BBC also announced that it will host a 'Sports Hackathon' where more than 300 Wikipedia entries of 50 Indian sportswomen will be added. It has tied up with various journalism institutes in various states in the country for the said purpose.

Para badminton player Mansi Joshi said such an initiative was required since not much information is available on many of country's women athletes.

Australian Open: Serena wins easily

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Melbourne, Feb 8: Serena Williams arrived ready to race at the Australian Open. In a colorful one-legged catsuit she said was inspired by former Olympic champion Florence Griffith Joyner, Williams shook off a wobbly start — opening with a double-fault and dropping her first service game — to sweep 10 consecutive games and beat Laura Siegemund 6-1, 6-1 on the first day of the tournament.

The victory marked the start of Williams' latest bid for a record-tying 24th major title. As she left the court she flexed her biceps, and later she donned a T-shirt that read 'Unstoppable Queen'.

She wasn't the first Williams to reach the second round, however: Her sister, Venus, won a Grand Slam match for the first time since 2019. Playing in her 21st Australian Open, the elder Williams beat Kirsten Flipkens 7-5, 6-2. At 40, Venus is the oldest woman in this year's draw and just the sixth player in her 40s to com-

pete at the Australian Open.

Three-time Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka, who won the title in Melbourne two years ago, played the opening match in Rod Laver Arena and beat Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova 6-1, 6-2.

Bianca Andreescu, the 2019 US Open champion, made a successful return from a 15-month injury absence, serving herself out of a tough

spot in the third set to beat Mihaela Buzarnescu 6-2, 4-6, 6-3.

World No.23 Angelique Kerber, a three-time major champion and 2016 Australian Open winner, lost to American Bernarda Pera 6-0, 6-4.

Top-ranked Novak Djokovic has won eight titles at the Australian Open. He began his quest for a ninth with a clinical, 6-3, 6-1, 6-2 victory over Jeremy Chardy in the

closing act of the day one program on Rod Laver Arena.

US Open champion Dominic Thiem was a break down and saved set points before beating veteran Mikhail Kukushkin 7-6(7-2), 6-2, 6-3 in his first match at the tournament since losing last year's final to top-ranked Djokovic.

World No.6 Alexander Zverev lost the first set in a tie-breaker, after saving four set points, then lost his temper in the second and belted his racket into the court. Letting off a little steam worked for the US Open finalist, who recovered to beat No.73-ranked Marcos Giron 6-7(8-10), 7-6(7-4), 6-3, 6-2.

Also advancing were No.14 Milos Raonic, the first man to finish the first round, former champion Stan Wawrinka and Americans Reilly Opelka, Frances Tiafoe and Taylor Fritz.

Tenth-seeded Gael Monfils lost a marathon against Emil Ruusuvuori 3-6, 6-4, 7-5, 3-6, 6-3 and his fellow Frenchman, No.25 Benoit Paire, also was beaten in the first round.



Messi sparks Barca to comeback win at Betis

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Barcelona, Feb 8: Lionel Messi showed why Barcelona agreed to keep him an extremely rich man when Sunday he acted as Ronald Koeman's super sub, scoring one goal and setting up another to help Barcelona earn a 3-2 win at Real Betis.

Youngster Francisco Trincao shared in the victory by clinching the thriller with his first goal for the club that he scored with three minutes to go.

Barcelona's sixth league win in a row lifted it back into second place at seven points behind Spanish league leader Atletico Madrid, who have two more games to play.

Koeman left Messi and first-choice midfielders Frenkie de Jong and Pedri among his reserves Sunday. De Jong's rest, however,

only lasted 10 minutes before he came on for defender Ronald Araujo after he twisted his lower left leg.

Borja Iglesias slotted in a low cross by Emerson after a quick transition into attack led by Nebil Fekir to put Betis ahead in the 38th.

Messi, after coming in, needed just two minutes to rifle a left-footed shot inside the post. He sparked a second goal in the 68th with an exchange of passes with Jordi Alba who squared the ball across the goalmouth. Antoine Griezmann scuffed a point-blank shot, but was fortunate that the ball hit Betis defender Victor Ruiz and bounced in.

Ruiz made up for his error in the 75th when he rose to head in a free kick from Fekir. But substitute Trincao recovered a ball from Ruiz and fired a long strike off the goal-frame and into the net in the 87th.

Alisson gifts City win at Anfield

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Liverpool, Feb 8: The fireworks being set off behind the Kop provided a flashback to last season's Premier League trophy celebrations. But little on the Anfield pitch suggested these were the champions in action.

Jurgen Klopp's side appears a faded force preparing to relinquish the title, highly possibly to Manchester City after being beaten 1-4 by the leaders Sunday. After going 68 games unbeaten on home soil, Liverpool have now lost three in a row for the first