

ONCE-IN-A-CENTURY CRISIS

ECONOMIC CONTRACTION PROJECTED AT 7.7 PC IN FY21, STATES ECONOMIC SURVEY

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 29: India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is projected to contract by a record 7.7 per cent in the current fiscal ending March 31, 2021, the Pre-Budget Economic Survey said Friday. The economy is likely to rebound with an 11 per cent growth in the next financial year as it makes a 'V-shaped' recovery after witnessing a pandemic-led carnage. India witnessed its last annual contraction of 5.2 per cent in fiscal year 1979-80. The Economic Survey 2020-

21 said the agriculture sector is the only silver lining while services, manufacturing and construction were most hit by the lockdown that was imposed to curb the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. After an estimated 7.7 per cent pandemic-driven contraction in 2020-21, India's real GDP is projected to record a growth of 11.0 per cent in 2021-22 and nominal GDP by 15.4 per cent. These conservative estimates reflect upside potential that can manifest due to the continued normalisation in economic activities as the

ECONOMIC SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

- 11 pc GDP growth projected in FY22
- Farm sector remains silver lining
- V-shaped recovery supported by vaccination drive
- Exports to decline by 5.8 pc, imports by 11.3 pc
- Healthcare spending up from 1 pc to 2.5-3 pc of GDP
- Sovereign credit ratings do not reflect India's fundamentals
- India reaping 'lockdown dividend' by saving lives, livelihood

rollout of COVID-19 vaccines gathers traction, the survey said. The growth will further be supported by supply-side push from reforms and easing of regulations, push for infrastructural investments, boost to manufacturing sector through the Productivity Linked Incentive Schemes, recovery of pent-up demand for services sector, increase in discretionary consumption subsequent to roll-out of the vaccine and pick up in

India is witnessing a V-shaped economic recovery. History will judge India's Covid policy response as mature. Economic survey captures the resilience of Indian economy

KRISHNAMURTHY SUBRAMANIAN | CHIEF ECONOMIC ADVISOR



Chief Economic Advisor Krishnamurthy Subramanian addresses a press conference on Economic Survey 2020-21, in New Delhi

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Odisha at rock bottom

POST NEWS NETWORK New Delhi, Jan 29: Access to bare necessities such as housing, water, sanitation, electricity and clean cooking fuel has been lowest in Odisha in 2018, states the Economic Survey 2020-21. "Access to bare necessities is the highest in the states such as Kerala, Punjab, Haryana and Gujarat while it is the lowest in Odisha, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Tripura," the survey reveals. Odisha has also been placed at the bottom on the drinking water accessibility index.



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IRREGULAR by MANJUL



BLAST IN DELHI NEW DELHI: A minor IED blast took place outside the Israeli Embassy in the heart of Lutyens Delhi Friday evening, police said. No one was injured.

Singhu border witnesses violence

AGENCIES New Delhi, Jan 29: Violence broke out at the Singhu border protest site after large groups of people claiming to be locals reached there to vacate the area, leading to a clash between them and agitating farmers and prompting police to resort to baton charge and use tear gas shells. Delhi Police SHO (Alipur) Pradeep Paliwal was injured in the violence after a man attacked him with a sword, an official said, adding that some people were also wounded. The official said that police detained the man who attacked the station house officer. The locals demanded that the farmers vacate the Singhu border protest site as they had "insulted" the national



People claiming to be local villagers hurl stones on farmers protesting at the Singhu Border in New Delhi

flag during their tractor parade on Republic Day. Armed with sticks, the group of locals reached the site and asked the farmers to leave while raising slogans against them. Both sides also pelted stones at each other. The protestors at the Singhu border, much of which is barred for entry from outside, were coming out in numbers to resist the locals. However, they were promptly

PREZ BACKS FARM LAWS

President Ram Nath Kovind Friday strongly defended the three new agri laws saying their benefits have begun reaching 10 crore small farmers instantly and condemned as "very unfortunate" the Republic Day violence and "dishonor" to the tricolour during the tractor parade by the protesting farm unions. MORE P8

Centre okays flood relief

POST NEWS NETWORK New Delhi, Jan 29: A high-level committee under the chairmanship of Union Home Minister Amit Shah has approved additional central assistance of ₹320.94 crore under the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) for the havoc caused by floods and landslides in Odisha. According to the ministry, the committee has approved additional central assistance of ₹1,751.05 crore to five states which were affected by floods and landslides during the South West monsoon 2020 and hailstorm. While approving the additional relief, the Home Minister said that the Union government under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has resolved to help our sisters and brothers of Odisha, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Telangana and Uttar Pradesh who braved these natural disasters. Besides Odisha, the union government has approved ₹437.15 crore for Assam, ₹75.86 crore for Arunachal Pradesh, ₹245.96 crore for Telangana and ₹386.06 crore for Uttar Pradesh. The ministry further said that in all the five states, the government had deputed Inter-Ministerial Central Teams immediately after the calamities, without waiting for the receipt of Memorandum from the state governments.



LAVERNE COX REVEALS SHE HAS FOUND LOVE

Actress Laverne Cox, who is known for her role on the popular show *Orange Is The New Black*, said she is back in the dating business and has found love. Laverne spoke on the Ellen DeGeneres show, shooting remotely, *Eonline.com* reported.

SINGER THE WEEKND DOESN'T CARE ABOUT THE GRAMMYS ANYMORE

Singer The Weeknd says his past Grammy Award wins mean nothing to him, following his 2021 nominations snub. Soon after the nominations were announced last year, The Weeknd called the Grammy Awards corrupt for denying him nomination even in a single category.



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ARIES
Curl, massage, clip, tweeze, polish, gloss, condition... today, will you attempt to shed your old skin. A dream date may have you in jitters but Ganesh suggests that you take it easy. True relationships are not sealed by glossy kisses alone!

TAURUS
Fortune favours the brave and you will wake up feeling gutsy. Your performance will peak today and you will reap the benefits of real estate and construction business. Your peers and boss will extend all the support you need.

GEMINI
Today, you are likely to rack your brains to get things done. But your modesty will not do you any good. You will have to show that you are the boss, even if you are not. Your extraordinary brilliance will translate into exceptional performance and will save the day.

CANCER
Today, you are likely to be brimming with love and compassion. However, certain negative thoughts will spoil all your good work. But don't fret! Your efforts won't go wasted and you will get the desired results sooner or later, says Ganesh.

LEO
On some days, the sun doesn't seem to have risen from the east, and neither does it seem you have gotten up on the right side of the bed. You start your day in a tensed atmosphere in the morning, caused by some annoyance on the part of one of your family members. But the day is not as bad as it seems.

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

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

SCORPIO
Investing in real estate could yield maximum profits today, says Ganesh. An unusual gain from speculative trade is also on the cards. But you may need to spend time in the waiting room, before a more profitable opportunity comes by.

SAGITTARIUS
Setting for a new, better employment will help you fast-track your career growth. A telephonic interview might ring in a new offer. A lucrative deal with an MNC would serve well. Your dedication and devotion to work will also peak today, says Ganesh.

CAPRICORN
It may seem too far-fetched, but your boss will bank on your brilliance and unmatched abilities to get respite from the existing problems, says Ganesh. Moreover, much to the dismay of your rivals, you will have your way and gain popularity by winning the hearts of your clients.

AQUARIUS
You will come out top in whatever you choose to do, and success will smell honeysuckle sweet! Naturally, recognition and rewards await you. Take your friends to that trendy cafe; you needn't wait for a reason to party, says Ganesh.

PISCES
You are likely to be grinding yourself under at the workplace today. A turning point will arise in romantic liaisons, though if the evening awaiting you is anything to go by, it is something you should welcome wholeheartedly, says Ganesh.

KAJAL ALL SET TO MAKE HER DIGITAL DEBUT

Mumbai: Actress Kajal Aggarwal returns to the screens post marriage with the horror series, *Live Telecast*, which marks her debut in the OTT space. The trailer of the show was launched Friday, and the show itself drops February 12.

"As an actor, I am constantly looking for roles that challenge me and take me out of my comfort zone. *Live Telecast* did just that," Kajal said.

"My character Jenny, a director by profession, is a strong and independent woman whose single minded goal is to make a successful TV show and, in that quest, she finds herself locked in a huge house with no way out. Audiences who love horror stories and otherwise are going to love this show," she added.

The seven-episode Tamil series has been directed by Venkat Prabhu, and also stars Vaibhav Reddy, Kayal Anandhi, Priyanka, Selva, Daniel Annie Pope, and Subbu Panchu Arunachalam.

The series narrates the story of a TV crew adamant on creating a superhit show, who come to realise that they are trapped in a house controlled by supernatural powers. Their tryst with the supernatural is live for millions to watch.

Prabhu is also making his digital debut as writer and director, and he says "*Live Telecast* has been a dream project which I wanted to do as my first film."

"This is my fresh attempt at starytelling for a digital platform, and the entire experience of transforming this film script

to series has been a massive journey," said Prabhu. He added: "Horror is a speculative genre. It feeds on the heightened sense of the unknown and one has to balance between moments of silence and spook. I believe I delivered the story in my style which has a good combination of horror, thrill and mystery; and will keep the audience gripped till the very end."

Live Telecast will release on Disney+ Hotstar VIP and Premium.



Bhumi shoots for Badhaai Do at 0°C

Mumbai: Actress Bhumi Pednekar is shooting for *Badhaai Do*, a follow-up to the National Award-winning film *Badhaai Ho*, at Zero degree Celsius. Bhumi posted a string of Instagram images and clips Friday to share the experience.

Alongside an image, where she is seen lazing in bed, she wrote: "Sumi doesn't want to leave her bed today #SumiDiaries #BadhaaiDo 0 (degrees) C. 4:37 AM." Sumi is the name of her character in the film.

Bhumi then shared a picture taken at 5.04am Friday. In the image, the actress is seen sipping on coffee. "Because you've got to do what you've got to do... Getting ready #SumiDiaries," she wrote.

In a third image, she captured a billboard that read: "You are at 6,000 feet". Bhumi did not share where she is shooting for the film.

Badhaai Do is the second instalment in the *Badhaai Ho* franchise. While the first film starred Ayushmann Khurrana and Sanya Malhotra, the new film will see Bhumi team with Rajkummar Rao to take the franchise forward.

Rajkummar plays the only male officer in a mahila thana in Delhi. Bhumi will reportedly play a police officer and a PT teacher.

The film is directed by Harshvardhan Kulkarni, who helmed the Gulshan Devaiah-starrer comedy *Hunterrr* (2015), and is written by Suman Adhikari and Akshat Ghildial, who earlier wrote *Badhaai Ho*.



Actor Arvind Joshi passes away

Mumbai: Noted theatre actor and director Arvind Joshi has breathed his last. He passed away reportedly at Nanavati Hospital in the city Friday morning.

Arvind Joshi is the father of Bollywood actor Sharman Joshi, and though he is mostly known for his performances on stage, he had also appeared in a few Bollywood films including *Sholay* and *Ittefaq*. Veteran actor Paresh



Rawal offered his condolences to the Joshi family, calling Arvind Joshi's death an 'irreparable loss to Indian theatre'.

"Irreparable loss to Indian theatre; with grief we say goodbye to the noted actor Shri Arvind Joshi. A stalwart, a versatile actor, an accomplished thespian, are the words that come to mind when I think of his performances. My condolences to @TheSharmanJoshi & family. AUM SHANTI," Paresh Rawal tweeted.

Trade analyst Komal Nahta tweeted: "Veteran and respected actor-director of Gujarati theatre,

Arvind Joshi, passes away. Condolences to son Sharman Joshi, daughter Mansi Joshi Roy, and entire family."

"V sad to hear about sad demise of Shree Arvind Joshi Ji..My heartiest condolences to @TheSharmanJoshi n entire family.. RIP," wrote filmmaker Anil Sharma.

Arvind Joshi is survived by his wife, son Sharman Joshi and daughter Mansi Joshi Roy.

HOLLYWOOD ICON CICELY TYSON NO MORE



Los Angeles: Emmy award-winning actress Cicely Tyson, known for her portrayal of strong Black women on screen, is no more. She was 96.

Tyson, who was nominated at the Oscars for her role in *Sounder*, passed away Thursday. The news of her demise was announced by her family through her manager Larry Thompson, reports *variety.com*.

"I have managed Miss Tyson's career for over 40 years, and each year was a privilege and blessing," said Thompson, adding: "Cicely thought of her new memoir as a Christmas tree decorated with all the ornaments of her personal and professional life. Today she placed the last ornament, a Star, on top of the tree."

Tyson's memoir 'Just As I Am' was published Tuesday.

The actress had her Hollywood break in the 1959 Harry Belafonte film *Odds Against Tomorrow*, and followed it with films like *The Comedians*, *The Last Angry Man*, *A Man Called Adam* and *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*.

Tyson received an Oscar nomination in 1973 for Martin Ritt's drama *Sounder* and an Honorary Oscar in 2018.

She is also known for featuring in *Miss Jane Pittman*, *Roots*, *The Wilma Rudolph Story*, *King: The Martin Luther King Story*, *When No One Would Listen*, *A Woman Called Moses*, *The Marva Collins Story*, *The Women Of Brewster Place*, *The Oldest Living Confederate Widow Tells All* and the TV adaptation of *Trip To Bountiful*.

Throughout her career, Tyson refused to play drug addicts, prostitutes or maids

as she thought it demeaned and stereotyped Black women. The actress was one of 25 Black women honoured for their contribution to art, entertainment and civil rights as part of Oprah Winfrey's 2005 Legends Ball.

Several Hollywood stars mourned her demise.

Actress Viola Davis, who co-starred with Tyson in *How To Get Away With Murder*, shared a long note: "I'm devastated. My heart is just broken. I loved you so much!! You were everything to me! You made me feel loved and seen and valued in a world where there is still a cloak of invisibility for us dark chocolate girls. You gave me permission to dream."

"Because it was only in my dreams that I could see the possibilities in myself. I'm not ready for you to be my angel yet.

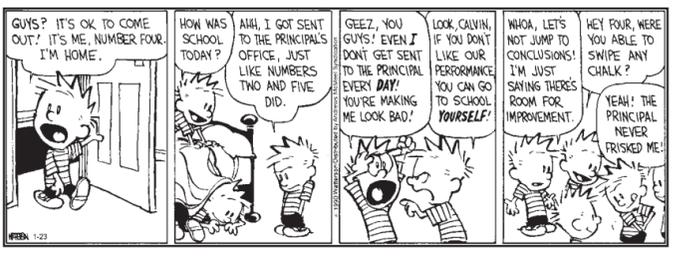
But...I also understand that it's only when the last person who has a memory of you dies, that you'll truly be dead. In that case, you will be immortal. Thank you for shifting my life. Thank you for the long talks. Thank you for loving me. Rest well," Davis added.

Oprah Winfrey posted: "Of all the times and experiences we shared together, this was one of my favorites... What a joy to honor her and feel her receive it! I loved her hat so much, she sent it to me afterwards. Cicely decided early on that her work as an actor would be more than a job. She used her career to illuminate the humanity of Black people. The roles she played reflected her values; she never compromised. Her life so fully lived is a testimony to Greatness."

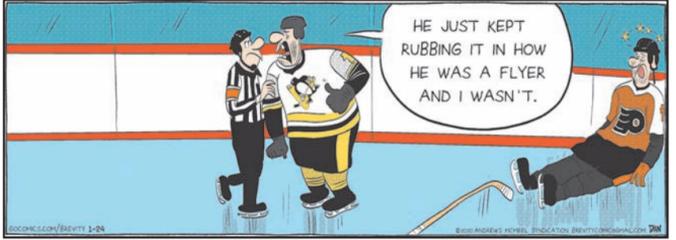
PEANUTS



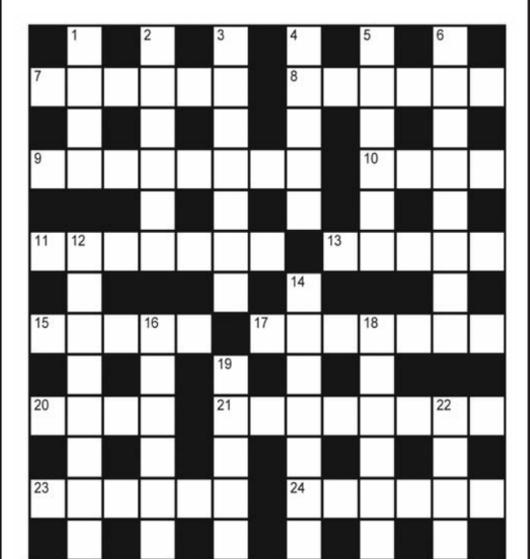
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



FUN post CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 7 Kind of occasion
 - 8 Penny-pinching
 - 9 Gala affair
 - 10 Fair attraction
 - 11 Maneuvers
 - 13 Noisy bird
 - 15 Deadly
 - 17 Drip
 - 20 Greek cheese
 - 21 Infringe upon
 - 23 Wealth
 - 24 Lunatic
 - 5 County on the Thames
 - 6 Court game
 - 12 Scholarly
 - 14 Former Greek money
 - 16 Indifference
 - 18 Sign of rain, maybe?
 - 19 Honkers
 - 22 Rugged rock
- Down**
- 1 Exploding star
 - 2 Australian marsupial
 - 3 Flightless bird
 - 4 Many, many times

SUDOKU

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

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

SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

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

SUDOKU

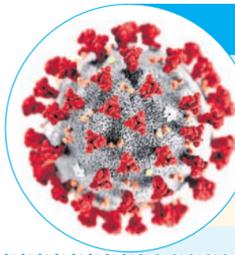
C	0	1	4	2	B	3	5	7	E	6	D	A	8	9
6	2	8	0	A	3	4	1	9	B	C	7	5	E	D
5	9	7	8	E	1	2	0	D	3	A	4	C	6	B
E	B	D	6	9	7	C	8	A	5	1	2	4	0	3
A	4	3	D	5	C	E	6	B	0	9	8	1	7	2
7	3	4	5	C	8	6	D	1	A	0	B	2	9	E
1	C	6	A	B	E	0	4	2	8	5	9	D	3	7
0	5	2	7	4	D	9	E	8	6	3	1	B	A	C
D	A	E	9	0	2	5	B	3	4	7	C	8	1	6
9	8	3	1	6	A	7	C	2	D	0	E	5	4	3
2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

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



HANDLOOM EXPO

People check out saris at the national-level handloom expo organised by Boyanika at Exhibition Ground in Bhubaneswar, Friday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	10,21,60,181	7,40,10,011	22,03,519
India	1,07,20,971	1,03,93,162	1,54,047
Odisha	3,34,850	3,31,824	1,906

State to revamp Single Window Clearance Authority

CHIEF SECY MAKES IT CLEAR THAT THE INVESTORS SHOULD NOT BE ASKED TO RUN TO ANY OFFICE FOR OBTAINING CLEARANCES

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 29: In a bid to attract more investments, the state government has decided to transform its Single Window Clearance Authority (SWCA) system to the next level.

This was revealed at a high-level meeting held under the chairmanship of Chief Secretary Suresh Chandra Mahapatra, Friday.

Mahapatra asked the Industries department to make the new version more comprehensive and gratifying for the investors with end-to-end system from receipt of application to delivery of all services.

He made it clear that the investors should not be asked to run to any office physically for getting any clearance. He also directed all the departments concerned to designate a nodal officer for coordinating with Industrial Promotion & Investment Corporation of Odisha (IPICOL) in development of the new online version.

Further, Mahapatra directed to revamp the district-level single window authorities with more professionalism and accountability. He advised to put in place a district-level industry facilitation authority with

WOONG INVESTORS



■ Odisha has attracted investments of around Rs 1.25 lakh crore since February 2020

■ The state has become No-1 in implementation of investment projects during last quarter of 2020

■ Investors would submit applications at one go through GO-SWIFT portal

■ It would have single payment gateway for different kinds of fees and government dues

enhanced role of district Collectors.

He also asked to include the promotional activities of MSME, handlooms, handicrafts, textiles and manufacturing units with district industries centres (DICs). The personnel in DICs were directed to handhold the entrepreneurs in getting various approvals and certificates from different offices.

Industries secretary Hemant Sharma said the new version of the SWCA would be more comprehensive covering all phases of activities required up to starting of pro-

duction in an industry viz. in principle approval, land allotment, land possession, approval for starting the construction and approval for commencing the operations.

“Defeating the adversities of Covid-19 pandemic, the state has attracted investments of around Rs 1.25 lakh crore since February 2020. Odisha has also become No-1 in implementation of the investment projects during last quarter of 2020 even on the face of the peak time of pandemic infection” Sharma said. The investors would submit ap-

plications at one go through GO-SWIFT portal. It would have single payment gateway for different kinds of fees and government dues.

The managing director of IPICOL, Nitin Bhanudas Jawale, said, “The new version will have an inbuilt system of ‘deemed approval’ after expiry of the maximum time limit for requested service or approval.”

The Chief Secretary directed the officials to complete development of the portal in all aspects along with its dry run by end of March.

Deadline set for 23 investment projects

Reviewing the progress made on execution of 23 big investment projects, Chief Secretary SC Mahapatra set timelines for each phase of activity and asked departments concerned to adhere to the timeline scrupulously. He also directed the project investors and project proponents to mobilise more man and machine for early completion of the construction works. The advancement and bottlenecks of the projects in Keonjhar, Sundargarh, Mayurbhanj and Jajpur districts were reviewed. Investors and project proponents placed their problems too. Issues relating to advance possession of government land, operation of truck unloading station at Dubuna, issue of NOC under Forest Rights Act, road connectivity, water supply, allotment of non-forest government land, power connectivity, law and order matters discussed at the meeting.

SC seeks report on pending penalty with mining firm

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Jan 29: The Supreme Court, Friday, asked the Odisha government to file an additional affidavit regarding the pending penalty on Narayani Sons Ltd, a mining company for violation of environment norms and mining without consent to operate.

A three-judge bench of the apex court headed by Chief Justice SA Bobde and comprising justices AS Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian asked Odisha to file an affidavit in three weeks.

During the hearing, the counsel appearing for the lessee, NS Nandkarni, submitted to the court that he had paid all the dues along with interest to the state government for alleged environmental clearance violations and urged the court to grant him permission to lift and sell the extracted ore.

However, the counsel for Odisha, Kirti Mishra, submitted that the lessee hasn't paid all the dues. Mishra sought time from the court to file an affidavit giving details of the dues pending on the lessee.



Meanwhile, advocate Prashant Bhushan opposed the prayer of the lessee to lift extracted ore citing that its lease licence had expired in 2010.

However, the lessee's counsel referred to an affidavit filed by the state government in the apex court and said that the lease of Narayani Sons Ltd was extended till March 2020.

It is pertinent to mention here that the Supreme Court had imposed huge penalty on the mining firm for carrying out mining operations in Odisha without obtaining environmental clearance.

State ready for greener fuel

Bhubaneswar: The Union government's plan to mix ethanol with petrol has now come to fruition as the Boudh Distillery Friday dispatched its first ethanol supply to the Indian Oil Corporation Limited. The government has been aiming for 10 per cent blending target by 2022 which is 400 crore litres and 20 per cent by 2025. The plant Friday dispatched 25,000 litres of ethanol for blending with petrol.

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VAIATION
SENSEX	46285.77 ↓ 588.59
NIFTY	13634.60 ↓ 182.90
DOLLAR	73.44 ↓ ₹0.13
EURO	88.33 ↓ ₹0.01
GOLD	₹49,395 ↑ ₹771
SILVER	₹71,051 ↑ ₹3,456

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP. MAX	30.2°C	29.2°C
TEMP. MIN	15.6°C	14.0°C
Humidity	47%	55%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Light rain likely	

Odisha jumps four notches in policing



■ Odisha had held the seventh spot in policing in the India Justice Report for 2019

■ Now, it jumped to 3rd spot in the current report which was released Thursday

■ The report revealed that the state police force showed significant development in filling up vacancies in lower ranks, increased the number of women in force

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 29: Odisha police secured the third place in terms of policing in the recently released India Justice Report for 2020. The report has been prepared jointly by various leading legal and human rights think tanks of India.

Odisha had held the seventh spot in policing in the India Justice Report for 2019. Now, it jumped to 3rd spot in the current report which was released Thursday.

The report revealed that the state police force showed significant development in filling up vacancies in lower ranks, increased the number of women in force.

“Odisha's four-spot jump to third place in police ranking is the result of the state's efforts to improve deficits in the policing capacity since 2017. It has made efforts to im-

prove not only the caste diversity amongst officers but has also increased the presence of women personnel (9 per cent to 10 per cent) and the share of women officers (8 per cent to 11 per cent),” reports the IJR 2020.

The report also stated that the state police have showed a decrease in constable vacancies over a five-year period (2015-2019). However, the report indicated an ‘increase in vacancies at the officer level’.

The state police force also managed to ‘utilize only 10 per cent of its Modernisation Fund, over 40 percentage points less than in 2017.’

Expressing happiness over the ranking, DGP Abhay tweeted, “Very happy to note that Odisha has been ranked third in Policing among 18 Large and mid-sized states ranked by prestigious ‘India Justice Report 2020.’”

9 officials given compulsory retirement

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 29: Cracking whip on corrupt and inefficient officials, the state government Friday gave compulsory retirement to nine officials with immediate effect.

Of the nine officials, seven have been terminated on cor-

ruption charges while two others have been removed for their inefficiency in delivering services. With this, a total of 113 government servants have so far been given compulsory retirement in the state.

Sources said two mines department officials, one forest official and one assistant engineer

of Public Health Engineering Organisation (PHEO) were asked to retire Friday. Five officials were given compulsory retirement a few days ago, official sources said.

The tainted officials included mines deputy director Madan Mohan Biswal, mining officer Ramesh Chandra Mahalik, for-

estrange officer Prashant Kumar Nayak, PHEO assistant engineer Narayan Pradhan, ACF Laxman Kumar Pradhan, forest range officer Bharat Kumar Ghadei, Labour officer Pradeep Kumar Bhoi, joint labour commissioner Sarat Kumar Choudhury and divisional labour commissioner Namita Das.

17TH DHAULI-KALINGA MAHOTSAV

300 artistes to showcase dance skills on the foothills of Dhauri

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 29: The 17th Dhauri-Kalinga Mahotsav will be organised jointly by the state Tourism department and Orissa Dance Academy (ODA) from February 6 to 8 on the foothills of Dhauri Shanti Vihar.

Addressing a presser here Friday, renowned Odissi dancer Padma Shri Aruna Mohanty, secretary of ODA, said that nearly 300 artistes from different dance forms such as Odissi, Kathak, Bharatnatyam, Kuchipudi, Purulia Chhau, Mayurbhanj Chhau, Seraikella Chhau and others will participate in the cultural extravaganza.

This apart, two categories of awards will also be given to the artistes on the occasion. The first award, Buddha Samman, which has been instituted by ODA for the last 14 years, will be given to Odissi Vocal Exponent Gopal Chandra Panda. He will receive the cash award of Rs 1



Dignitaries including Odissi exponents Ileana Citaristi (L) and Aruna Mohanty address the media, Friday

Buddha Samman, instituted by ODA, will be given to Odissi Vocal Exponent Gopal Chandra Panda

Guru Gangadhar Pradhan Smruti Samman, which was instituted in the memory of academy founder Guru Gangadhar Pradhan in 2016, will be given to four personalities of different fields

Dhauri Mahotsav is celebrated in February every year with a motto of permeating the gospel of peace through the concept of concerts of classical and folk dance and music of India by synthesizing the quintessence of religions and faiths

They are: Karnatic veena player K Rama Rao Patro, Odissi dancer Snehaprava Samantray, dance critic Shyamahari Chakra and posthumously to Late Tarakanta Panda sound designer and music arranger. They will receive cash award of Rs 25,000 each along with citation and shawls.

Dhauri Mahotsav is celebrated in February every year with a motto of permeating the gospel of peace through the concept of concerts of classical and folk dance and music of India by synthesizing the quintessence of religions and faiths.

Likewise, Kalinga Mahotsav will send the message of peace through martial arts which would be represented by artistes from across the country.

“Limited number of audiences will be allowed to the festival owing to Covid-19 protocol and sanitisation of the premises will be ensured,” said Mohanty.

lakh along with a citation and a shawl.

The second category of award, Guru Gangadhar Pradhan Smruti Samman,

which was instituted in the memory of academy founder Guru Gangadhar Pradhan in 2016, will be given to four personalities of different fields.

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DMs told to augment vaccine coverage

ANIMAL MASK DANCE



Artistes from Ganjam perform animal mask dance under the Horizon Series of ICCR at Guru Kulu Charan Mohapatra Odissi Research Centre in Bhubaneswar, Friday

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 29: The state government has asked the Collectors of low performing districts in terms of Covid-19 vaccination to personally intervene to increase the number of health workers turning up for the inoculation drive.

According to data available with the state Health department, several districts have reported below 70 per cent coverage while a few districts like Deogarh have reported below 50 per cent.

In a communication to all the Collectors, the department has asked them to personally intervene and take adequate steps to increase the coverage of the vaccines in their jurisdiction. The communication was also sent to the Municipal Commissioners of the Urban Local

FIGHTING PANDEMIC

Several districts have reported below 70 per cent coverage while a few districts like Deogarh have reported below 50 per cent



The communication said that all Collectors should take steps to ensure 100 per cent vaccination of all health workers by February 10

THE DEPARTMENT HAS ASKED THE COLLECTORS TO PERSONALLY INTERVENE AND TAKE ADEQUATE STEPS TO INCREASE THE COVERAGE OF THE VACCINES IN THEIR JURISDICTION

Bodies.

"All Collectors and Municipal Commissioners are aware that the first dose vaccination of all health workers will close on February 10. In this matter, it is of great concern that in some districts the percentage coverage of health workers

vaccinated in the past week (achievement against target) is poor," the letter to the Collectors read.

The communication said that all Collectors should take steps to ensure 100 per cent vaccination of all health workers by February 10.

"Clear message should be given

that those who do not turn up for vaccination when called on the designated dates will forgo the opportunity to get free vaccination from the government," said the letter from the department to the Collectors.

As per the data, Deogarh district reported the least coverage of 42 per cent while Khurda reported 61 per cent coverage. Jajpur district too reported only 62 per cent coverage.

BOX: 71% vaccination target coverage today

The Health department Friday said the state achieved 71 per cent Covid-19 vaccination coverage across the state. Out of the 15,701 vaccination target set by the government, the government saw participation of 11,142 persons. The government also reported one minor adverse effect case.

Shot in the arm for BMC sanitary wing

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 29: With a view to strengthening sanitation and improve solid waste management in Capital city, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) has engaged 20 more sanitary inspectors for 67 wards.

The sanitary inspectors appointed through an agency on contractual basis are said to have done professional course in sanitary inspection. With this, the strength of

Sources have also mentioned that additional manpower has been brought to check the rising cases of adulterated food and other edible products. The civic authority about a week ago had fined seven eateries in the state capital for making food under unhygienic conditions and had also destroyed about 60 kg of stale food.

Similarly, a series of raids conducted in the twin cities had found more than dozen fake food manufacturing units selling spurious ghee, paneer, oil, dal and other

NUGGETS



ADDITIONAL MANPOWER HAS BEEN ENGAGED TO CHECK THE RISING CASES OF ADULTERATED FOOD AND OTHER EDIBLE PRODUCTS

THE CIVIC AUTHORITY ABOUT A WEEK AGO HAD FINED 7 EATERIES IN THE STATE CAPITAL FOR MAKING FOOD UNDER UNHYGIENIC CONDITIONS AND HAD ALSO DESTROYED ABOUT 60 KG OF STALE FOOD

sanitary inspectors has increased from 14 to 34. The SIs will now be involved in regular field inspections after orientation-cum-training programme which was organised by the BMC, Thursday.

"As the city's population has crossed 9 lakh and the number of wards increased from 47 to 67, we had requested the state government to increase the sanctioned strength of sanitary inspectors to streamline the work. The newly appointed inspectors will also be involved in drain cleaning, street light inspections, maintenance of parks and crematoriums among others," said a BMC official.

items. The large-scale discovery of fake food item manufacturing units and rampant circulation of the spurious articles in the market had raised doubts over civic authorities monitoring over quality control.

"Recruitment of additional manpower has been done largely to counter the compromise on food quality and ensure quality in other services. The inspectors will also supervise and prepare cases under Food Adulteration Act against the offenders. The additional staff will certainly help in covering the vast areas in the state capital," the source mentioned.

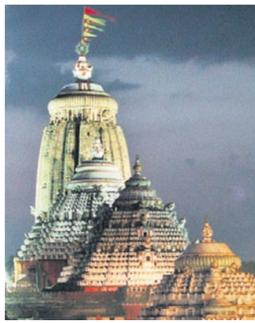
BLAME GAME OVER SUNA BESHA RITUAL DELAY

POST NEWS NETWORK

Puri, Jan 29: The inordinate delay in performance of Suna Besha ritual at Srimandir here Thursday has triggered a tug of war between the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) and the servitors of the 12th century shrine.

The temple administration has claimed that a dispute between Singhari Puspalak and Bhandar Mekap servitors led to the ritual delay while many servitors blamed the SJTA for its alleged mismanagement.

Srijagannath Sebayat Sammilani, an outfit of Srimandir servitors, Friday alleged that the SJTA did not take prompt action to resolve the dispute between Singhari Puspalak and Bhandar Mekap servitors. There was a dispute between Singhari Puspalak and Bhandar Mekap servitors during the Nagarjuna Besha (warrior attire) ritual of Lord Jagannath in November last year. "The reason of the dispute was the presence of excess number of Singhari servitors on the Ratnabedi (bejeweled throne). The SJTA was quite aware



of the dispute but it did not take any step to solve the issue. The two groups of servitors were in a tussle over the same issue again Thursday," said the outfit.

Senior Daitapati servitor Binayak Das Mahapatra too blamed the SJTA for the Suna Besha ritual delay. "The dispute between Singhari and Bhandar Mekap servitors is nothing new. The dispute was reported during Nagarjuna Besha. But, the SJTA did not take any step to resolve it," Das Mahapatra said. The senior Daitapati servitor

also claimed that many devotees could not witness Suna Besha (golden attire) due to the delay. Besides, Mahaprasad, the Srimandir delicacy, could not be made available for the devotees on time due to the inordinate delay. "The Suar-Mahasuar servitors incurred huge losses as large amount of Mahaprasad remained unsold," he said.

Notably, The Suna Besha ritual of Lord Jagannath and his siblings was reportedly delayed for around five hours Thursday.

"The Sakala Dhooपा ritual of the presiding deities was completed by 9.40am Thursday. It was expected that the Suna Besha ritual would be performed by 11:30am. However, the ritual was performed at 5pm due to some dispute between two groups of servitors," said a source in temple administration.

SJTA chief administrator Krishan Kumar had said that the temple authorities would seek reports from the two groups of servitors on the ritual delay and take necessary steps to solve the issue permanently.

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF LAW ON THE CARDS

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Jan 29: The Bar Council of India Friday announced that it would establish the Indian Institute of Law (IIL) in Bhubaneswar in collaboration with and support of KIIT University.

The BCI Trust has entered into an MoU with KIIT and accordingly KIIT has provided requisite land at the prime location of Bhubaneswar (Patia).

This apart, KIIT will also bear 40 per cent of the cost of the infrastructure of the proposed campus of 1.5 lakh sq feet area.

Master plan soon for Odisha Economic Corridor

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 29: A process has been initiated for preparation of a master plan for the proposed Odisha Economic Corridor (OEC) along NH-16 in the state.

The National Industrial Corridor Development and Implementation Trust (NICDIT) under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry has already floated tender for engagement of engineering consultant for preparing the master plan, of official sources said.

"The Odisha economic corridor will be developed as one of the largest industrial corridor of the country. Discussion is going on to

give complete shape to project," said Industries Minister Dibya Shankar Mishra here Friday.

The project is envisaged as the third phase of East Coast Economic Corridor (ECEC) which links up with and continues the Visakhapatnam-Chennai Industrial Corridor (VICIC) and the Chennai-Kanyakumari Industrial Corridor. The project will be developed, implemented and maintained by an SPV, which will be formed between NICDIT and Odisha Industrial Infrastructure Development Corporation (IDCO).

As per sources, the government has planned to invest Rs 6,505 crore for development of the corridor, of

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 29: The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has asked the state government to examine the allegations of illegal sand mining in Jaleswar area of Balasore district and submit a report within two months.

The development follows a petition filed in the tribunal seeking its intervention in the alleged illegal sand mining activities along Subarnarekha river under Jaleswar tehsil in Balasore.

The NGT has asked the state government to form a special panel and examine the issue before filing a report within two months. The tribunal in its written order has also made CPCB, SEIAA and SPCB as parties to the panel.

"Let a joint Committee of four members, comprising Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), State Pollution Control Board (SPCB), State Level Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA), Odisha and District Magistrate, Balasore, look into the grievance in the application and furnish a report to this Tribunal within two months," the



order said.

It also added, "SEIAA, Odisha will be the nodal agency for coordination and compliance. Based on the observations of the Committee, the concerned statutory authorities may take appropriate action in accordance with law, following due process."

The original petition had claimed that sand mining along Subarnarekha river was in violation of the Environment Protection Act, 1986. Several norms of sand mining were also found to be flouted in the case. The petitioner had demanded early hearing of the case and intervention of NGT. The case was heard by a three-judge bench headed by Justice Adarsh Goel while Justice Sheo Kumar Singh joined the bench as the judicial bench while Dr Nagin Nanda was in the bench as expert member.

Explanation sought on bizarre EIC order

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 29: State government has sought explanation from Engineer-in-Chief (EIC), Civil on the order issued by the latter asking women staffers to leave office by 5:30pm on working days. Works department additional secretary has written a letter to EIC (Civil) in this regard, Friday.

The department asked the EIC to submit a written explanation as to why such an office order was issued. The department has conducted an inquiry by the deputy secretary-cum-presiding officer of the Internal Complaints Committee on Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition & Redressal) Friday. The deputy secretary has interacted with officers/staff of the EIC office on the above matter.

Govt offices to run with full strength

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 29: All state government offices in Bhubaneswar and Cuttack will function with full strength from February 1, General Administration & Public Grievance department said an order, Friday.

In view of Covid-19 pandemic, the government offices in the twin cities excluding offices providing emergency services were functioning with 75 per cent capacity.

In case any department or office is constrained in maintaining physical distancing among staff members as a result of full attendance, they may regulate the staff strength, as felt necessary.

However, all state government offices throughout the state will continue to remain closed on Saturdays in February.

'TOGETHER FOREVER'

Premarital counselling centre opens in City

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 29: Keeping in view the challenges of the modern society pertaining to marital disputes, a premarital counselling centre, "Together Forever", was launched by the Institute for Social Development (ISD) at Lohia Academy in Unit-IX here, Friday.

The centre is a first-of-its-kind initiative in Odisha, sources said.

"The sole purpose of this initiative is to prepare prospective couples and their families to enter into a sacrament which lasts forever. Various support services including counselling, legal assistance, sexual behaviour counselling will be provided systematically to make sure that matrimonial life is safe and protected," said ISD director Subhashree Das.

Initially, the counselling centre would operate in Bhubaneswar and



Guests at the inaugural occasion of 'Together Forever' at Lohia Academy in Bhubaneswar, Friday

Cuttack in association with Legal service Institute-CLAP and Sangeeta Mediation Centre respectively, Das added.

In order to curb gender-based violence, the ISD has already established Maadhyan Women Support Centre in Bhubaneswar-Cuttack Commissionerate Police and SAKHI-One Stop Centre at SCB Medical

College and Hospital in Cuttack. In addition to this, "Together Forever" will prepare couples and their families for a happy married life, Das said.

The recent marital discord between Odia actress Varsha Priyadarshini and Lok Sabha member Anubhav Mohanty shows the matrimonial disputes are not con-

finned to any particular community or strata in society, said some experts.

The matrimonial disputes usually involve emotions, feelings, ego, and psychological reasons.

"It is very difficult to predict the nature and behaviour of human beings. We all have the tendency of assuming that what we are doing and thinking is correct. We pre-

The centre would operate in Bhubaneswar and Cuttack in association with Legal service Institute-CLAP and Sangeeta Mediation Centre respectively

tend to be good listener but we are listening to counter others to score a goal to boost our inflated ego. We are not listening to understand others' point of views, which may help us in resolving issues. Why don't we accept that we are imperfect in nature?" Das said.

"Relationship can work more positively if we understand the perceptions of our spouses. Sometimes we ignore such basic things," Das added.

Planetariums to reopen February 2

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 29: Good news for science and planetarium enthusiasts. The state government has allowed the Pathani Samanta Planetarium in Bhubaneswar, APJ Abdul Kalam Planetarium in Burla and Pathani Samanta Planetarium of Khandapada in Nayagarh to reopen February 2, in compliance with Covid-19 norms.

Director of Pathani Samanta Planetarium Laxmidhar Das said the planetariums are directed to open for people on all the week days except for Monday and not more than 50 people would be allowed to watch the shows.

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SCW chief for intensifying probe

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, Jan 29: Odisha State Commission for Women (SCW) chairperson Minati Behera visited the spot under Kukhia police limits in Jajpur where college student Jharafula Nayak's body was found dumped.

Notably, two bike-borne youths were seen in a CCTV footage carrying her body January 26. She held discussions with Jajpur SP, Rahul PR at a meeting in the collectorate about the investigation into the alleged murder of the college student. Behera has laid stress on intensifying the investigation into the matter and stern action against the accused.

The SCW chairperson observed that the commission had been working on resolving violence against women and in the matter of domestic violence.

Speaking on the occasion, the SP appreciated the work of the SCW. He assured that police had been extending support to the SCW in resolving issues related to women.

The SCW's visit to Jajpur came a day after the prime suspect was arrested by the Jajpur police in co-ordination with the Airfield Field



JHARAFULA MURDER MYSTERY

police in Bhubaneswar. The arrest followed the FIR lodged by the deceased's father and the CCTV footage that has captured the movement of the two suspects with the girl on a bike.

Meanwhile, Jajpur police intensified investigation following the arrest of prime suspect Rakesh Swain. However, the exact reason behind the mysterious death or alleged murder is yet to be ascertained.

The main accused in the death of Ramadevi Women's University Plus III third year student Jharaphula Nayak has confessed that he was in

a relationship with the deceased. During his interrogation at the police station, accused Rakesh Swain said that he was in love with the girl. Rakesh said that he had met Jharaphula at Jashipur village in Mayurbhanj district. Jharaphula was staying in her residence due to the COVID-19 induced lockdown while Rakesh was engaged in the laying of underground pipes during that period in the same village.

After lockdown restrictions were lifted, Jharaphula used to meet Rakesh whenever she visited the state capital. Both used to hang out for prolonged periods.

Rakesh was arrested Thursday night by a special squad of Commissionerate Police from a place in Sundarpada locality. Initially, he was detained as a suspect, but during interrogation he gave some vital information after which police arrested him.

Rakesh told the police that Jharaphula had boarded a bus to go to Jashipur from Jaydev Vihar. However, she got down at Vani Vihar Square and from there walked to Rupali Chowk where Rakesh was waiting for her on a two-wheeler.

The two then checked into a hotel for the night and Rakesh told the police they got intimate. Late in the night according to Rakesh, he woke up and found Jharaphula unconscious. He said he panicked and called up his friend Shekhar to help him out. Rakesh said that when they took Jharaphula out with them on the two-wheeler she was still unconscious. Midway through the journey, the two realised that the girl had died and then they dumped her body near Kuakhia in Jajpur district.

Police have launched a hunt to locate Shekhar. They are also trying to ascertain the exact time of Jharaphula's death.



A thick layer of fog hangs over Daringbadi Friday

OP PHOTO

7 FOREST OFFICIALS ATTACKED DURING RESCUE OF PANGOLIN

POST NEWS NETWORK

Malkangiri, Jan 29: Seven forest officials including a ranger sustained multiple injuries after they were reportedly attacked by a group of villagers near Namkonda in Malkangiri district Friday. The attack took place when the forest officials were on their way after rescuing a pangolin. Three attackers were detained.

According to reports, a team of 12 forest officials got information that some people were planning to sell a pangolin and a deal was being finalised at the village. They raided a paddy yard and rescued a pangolin. However, the team was attacked by over 20 persons wielding wooden logs, axe and sticks. The injured were admitted to the district headquarters hospital.

A case has been registered at Malkangiri police station. Three of the attackers were detained. Further investigation is on.

3-yr-old charred to death in Kendrapara, kin critical

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kendrapara, Jan 29: A three-year-old girl was charred to death during her sleep after a massive fire broke out at a paddy yard Thursday night at Okilpal village of Pattamundi under Rajnagar block in Kendrapara district.

The mishap occurred when the girl was sleeping with her father Ramakant Samal, mother Kunilata and her elder sister. The other three suffered critical injuries and are currently undergoing treatment.

According to a source, the husband with his wife and two daughters were sleeping at the yard to guard their paddy crop. Probably, a kerosene lamp kept by their bed tipped over and caused the fire.

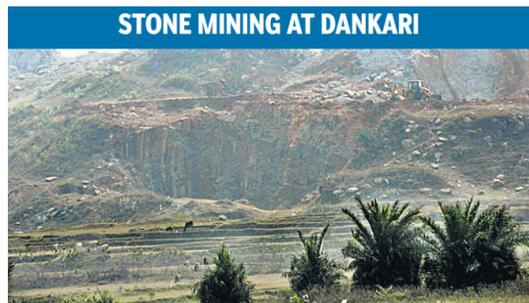
Admin sits on probe against errant officials

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, Jan 29: After a lull, illegal quarrying of black stone has resumed in Dankari hill under Dharmasala tehsil in this district due to lack of action from the district administration, a report said.

The matter came to the fore after revenue inspector Manoj Samal filed a report alleging resumption of black stone quarrying in the hill a few months back. In his report, Samal alleged Rabi Das of Dankari village, Kuna Prusty of Chadheidhara village and Swaroopananda Das of Najichowki Chhack in Dhenkanal district are illegally extracting black stones and transporting it for sale to various locations.

Reports said Dharmasala tehsildar on the basis of a report on illegal black stone quarrying by the revenue inspector had advised Jenapur police to initiate legal action against three persons for the wrongdoing December 21, last year. However, Jenapur police are yet to take action against the wrongdoers although a month has passed. The tehsildar has stopped taking follow-up action which has emboldened the miners.



STONE MINING AT DANKARI

Reports claimed attempts are being made to hush up the matter. Illegal quarrying of black stone from the Dankari hill dates back to 2002 when miners had illegally extracted large quantities of black stone from the hills sans environmental clearance.

The then Dharmasala tehsildar issued a demand notice of ₹58,62,79,633 to the miners asking them to deposit the money in government exchequer towards mineral loot. Directed by the District Collector, the tehsildar in a letter (1878, dated- May 28, 2016) asked leaseholder Sribatsha Jena to deposit the money.

Then Collector Satya Kumar Mallick in a letter (5547, dated- December 3, 2015) also directed the deputy director, mines, Jajpur Road to form a special team comprising revenue and mines officials and make an assessment of the actual revenue loss and other losses to the government.

The team visited the hill site in the second week of January, 2016. The mines department submitted its report to the Collector.

The report said around 73,38,022.50 cubic meter of area on the hill has been excavated for quarrying of black stones. Reports said Jena had extracted black stones from the hill

from the period starting from November 2002 till 2015. During this period, Jena had deposited only ₹6, 64,89, 908 cr as revenue towards extraction of black stones to the tune of 14,15,996 cubic meter on the hill.

He had evaded depositing revenue on the rest of 59,22,0165 cubic meter of area on the hill from which he had extracted black stones. The mines department had estimated that Jena had defrauded the state exchequer of ₹58,62,79,633 cr if ₹99 is the revenue per cubic meter.

The matter is sub-judice. Since then, 17 tehsildars have been appointed in the Dharmasala tehsil but none has cared to recover the revenue from Jena.

Later, then Jajpur Collector and principal secretary, revenue and disaster management department published a notification under Section-15 of the Orissa Civil Services Act directing a probe against 10 revenue inspectors and 10 tehsildars for conniving with the leaseholders in the loot. However, that also failed to make progress.

When contacted, Dharmasala tehsildar Prasant Samantray said necessary steps will be taken in this regard.

CHC medical officer caught in Vig net

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sundargarh, Jan 29: A team of officials from Sundargarh Vigilance division caught the medical officer in charge of Hemagir community health centre (CHC) red-handed. The accused official was accepting bribe from a woman health worker Friday morning.

According to an official source, the medical officer was identified as Sraddhakar Gadia. He was arrested by the Vigilance team after being trapped. Allegedly, he was accepting bribe of ₹5,000 from his subordinate staff for setting right her two-day absentee statement.

Covid aid of ₹56L returns to govt

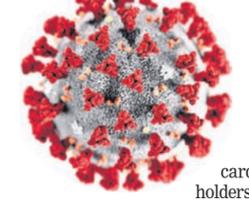
POST NEWS NETWORK

Nabarangpur, Jan 29: Covid assistance to the tune of ₹56 lakh remained undisbursed in Nabarangpur. The fund has returned to the government, triggering suspicion over a failed bid to misappropriate the fund in the name of ghost beneficiaries, a report said.

According to the report, ₹1000 was provided by the Centre as assistance to each ration card holder after the outbreak of Covid pandemic.

The report said, there are 3, 16, 533 ration card holders (under NFSA and SFSS) in the district.

The district was provided over ₹31.64 crore as financial assistance to the ration



card holders. The civil supplies department has so far distributed ₹31.07 crore to beneficiaries while over ₹56 lakh could not be distributed. The department has returned it to the

government.

Various outfits sought to know on what basis such fund was provided by the government to the Nabarangpur district administration.

"How thousands of beneficiaries failed to get their assistance. The department must have received fund from the government by furnishing the details of ration card holders. Now, thousands of them are really missing and their assistance money was returned," they lamented.

They alleged that the department is under cloud over its activities even as ghost beneficiaries have been pushed into the PDS system. Their quota of items are being misappropriated, they rued.

Ropeway project for Nilamadhav shrine under red-tape

POST NEWS NETWORK

Khandapada, Jan 29: The famous Nilamadhav temple, a very old and famous Vishnu temple situated atop twin hills on the banks of the Mahanadi at Kantilo in Nayagarh district is visited by hundreds of devotees every day.

The deity is revered by devotees who throng it round the year to witness the permanent flow of holy water from the feet of Lord Nilamadhava. Lord Siddheswar present in the shrine is another highlight of the place.

The deity occupies a central position in the Jagannath cult. Many of the tourists being senior citizens and disabled find it hard to climb the hill for which it was decided to construct a ropeway. However, the proposal is buried under red-tape.

Former MLA Anubhav Patnaik had stressed construction of a ropeway to the shrine in 2014. Later, concerned officials conducted a survey to implement the project in 2016. Since then, years have passed but the project is yet to be implemented. This has sparked resent-



The survey report was submitted to the District Collector. Later a detailed project report and drawing design were submitted to the state government. The project work was to start after sanction of the funds.

ment among visiting tourists and devotees. Sources said the Nilamadhav temple is known as the original shrine of Jagannath culture and is situated atop Brahmadri and Padmadri hills. The temple is surrounded by four gates namely lions' gate on east, tigers' gate in west, elephants' gate in north and horses' gate in south. The road to each gate has a flight of 54 steps.

The need for construction of a ropeway arose when former MLA Anubhav Patnaik accompanied by Janaki Ballav Mohapatra, chief engineer, state water resources department visited the temple for darshan of the deity, November 13, 2014.

Patnaik realized the difficulty in climbing 54 steps to the temple and stressed installation of a ropeway as has been done in various shrines in Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. Later, on the advice of the chief engineer, Lingaraj Associate, a private firm, conducted a survey for the project, March 1, 2016. The firm was advised to install a ropeway of 175 mtrs in length from the foothill on the west to the hilltop. A preliminary estimate pegged the expenditure at ₹3 to ₹4 crore for installation of the ropeway.

The survey report was submitted to the District Collector. Later a de-

tailed project report and drawing design were submitted to the state government. However, it never became a reality Khandapada MLA Soumya Ranjan Patnaik said a special project will be implemented for development of the Nilamadhav.

Pihu's parents stage dharna before Minister's residence

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 29: The parents of Pihu, a two-year-old missing girl from Jajpur, Friday staged a dharna before the official residence of Women & Child Development Minister Tukuni Sahu here. Pihu has been missing since August 2020.

The parents of Pihu came to personally apprise Sahu of Jajpur police's lax approach towards finding out their missing daughter. However, they failed to meet the minister who was out of the station.

Later, they staged a sit-in before Sahu's residence protesting against the indifference of Jajpur police. Pihu's mother told media Jajpur police managed to rescue 64 missing children of the district in a special drive, but failed to trace Pihu.

Her mother accused Jajpur police of lacking interest in the case. Later, the parents lodged a complaint at the Odisha State Commission for Protection of Child Rights

She accused Jajpur police of lacking interest in the case. Later, the parents lodged a complaint at the Odisha state commission for protection of child rights.

Notably, Jajpur police are yet to succeed in tracing Subhalaxmi Nayak alias Pihu, a resident of Madhusudanpur village under Binjharpur police limits, who has been missing for last six months.

CUTTACK MUNICIPAL CORPORATION

"e" PROCUREMENT NOTICE

Tender ID : 2021_ORULB_65529

Bid Reference No. MC (CMC) CTC Div-I No46/2020-21

Tender Call Notice No. 578 (PW) Date. 29.01.2021

No. C-361:-

Name of Works : Civil Works

No of Works : 19 Nos

Bid Value : Rs. 2.04 Lakh to Rs. 35.39 Lakh

Period of Competition : One Calendar Month to Two Calendar Months

Date and Time schedule:

Start	End	Opening
11.00 AM on dt. 04.02.2021	5.00 PM on dt. 15.02.2021	11.00 A.M. on dt. 20.02.2021

Tender Details: can be seen from the procurement portal: www.tendersorissa.gov.in

Executive Engineer, City Div-I
OIPR-13009/11/0001/2021

MUNICIPAL COUNCIL, RAIRANGPUR

Phone No.:- 06794-222054, E-Mail ID:- rairangpurn.hud@ori.nic.in/rprnmac@gmail.com

"e" PROCUREMENT NOTICE

TENDER CALL NOTICE NO:- 221 dt. 28.1.2021

BID IDENTIFICATION NO:- T6RRP2020-21

No. C-354:-

1. Name of the Work	: Civil Works
2. Total No. of works	: 5 Nos.
3. Estimated Cost	: 2.23 lacks to 9.80 lacks
4. Class of Contractors	: As per DTCN
5. Period of Completion	: As per DTCN
6. Availability of Tender	: 01.02.2021 at 10 AM to 10.02.2021 up to 5.00 PM
7. Tender Box Offiline Dropping	: 11.02.2021 up to 5.00 PM
8. Date & Time of opening of Tender	: 12.02.2021 at 11.00 AM

Other detail can be seen from the website www.tendersorissa.gov.in

Sd./- Executive Officer, Rairangpur Municipality
OIPR-13106/11/0002/2021

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (AGRI.), CUTTACK DIVISION, CUTTACK

AT/PO: NAYABAZAR, DISTRICT: CUTTACK-753004

Phone No. (0671)-2442638 E-mail ID:- eeaagri.cuttack@gmail.com

e-Procurement Notice No./Bid Identification No.: EE(AGRI)L Cuttack Division - 02/2020-21

No. L-61:- The Executive Engineer (Agril.), Cuttack Division, Nayabazar, Cuttack, Odisha on behalf of the Governor of Odisha, invites percentage rate bids in single cover system from the eligible class of contractors through e-procurement in ONLINE MODE only in the website "www.tendersodisha.gov.in", for the works as detailed below:

Sl. No.	Nos. of the work/nature of work for which Tender invited	Approximate Estimated cost put to Tender (Excluding G.S.T.)(Rs.)	Cost of Bid Documents (in Rs.)	EMD in (Rs.)	Class of Contractor	Period of Completion
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Total 9 Nos (Nine) of Building Works	Vary from Rs.535337.00 to Rs.4421959.00	Rs.4000.00 to Rs.6000.00	1% of amount Put to Tender	A, B, C & D With Valid Electrical License	Vary from 90 Days to 120 Days

1. Date & Time of availability of bid document in the portal: 02.02.2021 at 10.00 AM to 11.02.2021, 5.00 PM. **2.** Last date/Time for receipt of bids in the portal: 11.02.2021 upto 5.30 PM. **3.** Date of submission of original bid documents in Tender Box: 03.02.2021, 10.00 AM to 12.02.2021 up to 11.00 A.M. **4.** Date & Time of opening of original Documents & Verification - 12.02.2021 at 11.30 A.M. **5.** Date & Time of opening of Online bids: 12.02.2021 at 3.00 PM onwards.

6. Name & address of the officer inviting Bid: Executive Engineer (Agril.), Cuttack Division, Nayabazar-Cuttack

The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only with matching class compatible Digital Signature Certificate (DSC). Further details and other terms and conditions can be seen from DTCN in the e-Procurement website: "https://tendersodisha.gov.in". Any addendum/ corrigendum/ cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website. OIPR-01447/11/0004/2021

Sd./- Executive Engineer (Agril.), Cuttack Division, Nayabazar, Cuttack

FOCUS ODISHA ECONOMY

TIME TO AUGMENT RESOURCES



A committee should be constituted to explore the possibility of raising resources. The government should collect taxes that are pending and curb tax evasion

states should demand a higher percentage of contribution from the Centre in CSSs.

However, the Odisha government is doing well in comparison to other states in the pandemic times. As of August, the own tax revenues of state governments were 3 to 38 per cent lower than last year. In Odisha it is 14.8 per cent lower. Only Tripura, Meghalaya, Sikkim, Chhattisgarh are better placed compared to Odisha. In case of own non-tax revenues of state governments, all states have negative growth ranging from -8 to -82 per cent. But only two states have positive growth - Tripura 11 per cent and Odisha 36 per cent.

The state's own tax as per the percentage of GSDP was estimated to be 6.43 per cent in 2020-21. Though this is better compared to many states, it is still behind the target of 6.75 per cent as envisaged by the 13th FC. Similarly, non tax revenue as a percentage of GSDP was estimated at 3 per cent in 2020-21. Hence, the state's own revenue (both tax & non-tax) as a percentage of GSDP was estimated at 9.4 per cent in 2020-21, but it is below the record high of 9.51 per cent achieved in 2015-16. However, it is better than the national average of 8 per cent.

It is high time the Odisha government explores various avenues to enhance its own revenues, otherwise resources crunch will hamper progress and the state may be dragged into a quagmire of debt trap. A committee should be constituted to explore the possibility of raising resources. The government should collect taxes that are pending and curb tax evasion. The state government may impose some new taxes like pollution tax, may enhance entertainment tax too. It can raise resources by imposing rent by leasing unused land, quarters of closed industries, barren land, and a higher tax rate for those having more than one house or plot in an urban area, or using more than one car/luxury car.

The author is an Odisha-based economist. Views are personal.

Odisha Finance Minister Niranjan Pujari will likely present his third budget in February at a time when the economy is ravaged by the pandemic-induced recession. Indeed, it is a herculean task to present a please-all budget especially when the share of states from the divisible pool is going to be reduced in the current financial year and the next financial year for which budget will be presented.

Generating resources for budgetary outlay is a gigantic task especially when rich people are evading taxes. Scarcity of resources always stands as a great impediment to higher allocation for various schemes. Though the Centre had promised cooperative federalism, actually states are experiencing hostile federalism. Normally, the Centre has a lion's share in the use of public funds. But heavy welfare obligations and higher expenditures lie with state governments. The implementation of GST has squeezed the scope for generating resources by state governments.

A state government generates resources by own taxes, non-taxes, disinvestment, borrowings, recovery of loans, etc. It gets funds from the Centre in the form of the state's share from Central taxes, grants-in-aid through transfers to local bodies, from National Disaster Response Fund, Central sector schemes, and Centrally-sponsored schemes (CSSs). The share of net proceeds from Central taxes recommended to be devolved to states has increased from 29.5 per cent in the 11th finance commission (FC) to 30.5 per cent in 12th FC. It has further increased to 32 per cent in 13th FC and to 42 per cent in 14th FC. The 15th FC has kept devolution to states unchanged in its interim report for 2020-21 even as their cumulative share contracted marginally to 41 per cent after the number of states was reduced to 28 because of the reorganisation of Jammu & Kashmir into two Union Territories. But actually, states are getting much less with each passing year as the Centre's revenue collection from cesses

and surcharges though increasing by leaps and bounds does not constitute a part of the divisible pool. As a result, instead of 42 per cent, states are getting much less. In 2015-16, states were getting 35 per cent from the divisible pool instead of 42 per cent as decided by 14th FC. This further dropped to 32.4 per cent in 2019-20.

Total cesses and surcharges as a percentage of total revenue collected by the Centre have increased from 9.4 per cent in 2013-14 to 15.3 per cent in 2019-20. The Centre has estimated to collect Rs 3,69,111 crore through cesses and surcharges this financial year and it may increase in 2021-22 as new cesses may be imposed to mitigate the coronavirus crisis. So, all states including Odisha are severely affected and this the finance minister must raise in an appropriate platform. What is reprehensible is that between 2014-15 and 2019-20, the Modi government failed to utilise cess amount of Rs 3,59,000 crore.

A disconcerting news is that the percentage share of Odisha from net proceeds of the Central taxes and duties has declined from 5.16 per cent (12th FC) to 4.77 per cent (13th FC) and further to 4.64 per cent in the 14th FC. It is further likely to decline to 4.63 per cent in

the 15th FC.

The Centre's gross tax revenue may fall short of nearly Rs 5 lakh crore in the current fiscal affecting the its transfer of funds. Some of the Central schemes already cover the sectors chosen for performance-based grants. The state is expected to lose around Rs 8,000 crore this fiscal. Tax devolution and grant for Odisha till October 2020 is 21 per cent and 15.5 per cent less as compared to the corresponding period in 2019. Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Telangana, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Bihar have seen a major reduction in devolved tax revenue in the current fiscal. Odisha has received Rs 13,456 crore from the divisible pool between April and October against Rs 17,030 crore during the same period last year.

Similarly, the share of CSSs during the seven months was Rs 14,007 crore as compared to Rs 16,594 crore received during the period in the previous year. After the 14th FC's recommendations, the Centre reduced the number of schemes from 67 to 29 and substantially increased the 'matching contribution' by states to 40 per cent from 25 per cent earlier. The proposal to reduce Central share further will subvert the financial health of states. The



SANTOSH KUMAR MOHAPATRA
ODISHA AMONG OTHER STATES HAS SEEN A MAJOR REDUCTION IN DEVOLVED TAX REVENUE IN THE CURRENT FISCAL

Modi reshuffles babus

In a major reshuffle, the Centre has transferred and posted 18 secretaries to different ministries and departments while several have been promoted. As is often the case, there is a story behind many of the babus involved in the reshuffle.

The Department of Personnel & Training (DoPT) has finally got a new secretary in Deepak Khandekar, who was laterally shifted to North Block from Shastri Bhavan where he was Tribal Affairs Secretary. The post had been vacant for four months. Curiously, the government may soon have to find a replacement for Khandekar as well, since he is due to retire in seven months. There is also much whispering about who will replace ABP Pandey, who retires as Finance Secretary in 45 days.

Of the 18 IAS officers involved in the reshuffle, sources say that 13 were appointed as secretaries while five were upgraded to the Special Secretary in the rank of secretary. They include Praveen Garg, SS Sandhu, Anjali Bhawara, JN Swain and Anil Kumar Jha.

A lot of the buzz has centred around two officers who have been given plum assignments despite rumours that they had been sidelined. The first is 1988 batch IAS officer Alok Kumar of the Uttar Pradesh cadre who has been shifted from his cadre state and appointed Union Power Secretary. The other is also a UP cadre officer Alok Tandon who has been named Secretary, Ministry of Mines.

Arvind Kumar Sharma, who recently took VRS to plunge into the UP legislature, has been replaced in the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises by another Gujarat cadre officer BB Swain.

CUTTING IT FINE

The delay in inviting applications for the post of Managing Director of Delhi Metro has led to speculation that incumbent Mangu Singh may get yet another extension on March 31, when his second extension ends.

Sources say that since Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) is a joint venture between the Centre and the Delhi government, the delay in starting the procedure could be because the two governments are unable to decide how to proceed in the matter. Normally, the process is initiated and completed by the state government with the concurrence of the Centre. That the two governments rarely see eye-to-eye on various issues, this could another of such instances.

Meanwhile, Mangu Singh has enjoyed a rather long inning heading the Delhi Metro. He took over from "Metro Man" E Sreedharan in January 2012. He was given an extension in December 2016 and another extension in December last year until March 31, 2021, to give the government sufficient time to find a suitable successor.

But that clearly isn't happening, say observers. The delay has set off speculation about the government's plans since a clause in the Delhi Metro rules states unequivocally that a suitable person for senior posts must be named before the posts fall vacant. Though there is still some time, by dragging on the process the government is cutting it fine, to say the least.

BABU WHO HAS COME IN FROM THE COLD

Tukaram Mundhe, one 2004-batch IAS officer known for his frequent transfers and who was kept waiting on posting since August last year, has seemingly come in from the cold, for now. He has been appointed as Secretary of the Maharashtra Human Rights Commission.

According to sources, this is the Maharashtra cadre officer's 17th posting in 15 years of his civil service career! Known for his rule-based work ethic, it is not surprising that he came up against vested interests. Apparently, he has faced threats and had no-confidence motions passed against him in several municipalities where he served. In his last posting at Nagpur Municipal Corporation, he was appointed Member Secretary in the Maharashtra Jeevan Pradhikaran in September last year, but the appointment was inexplicably cancelled within days and he was kept waiting for posting. It can be hoped now he will have a more stable stint at his new workplace, but don't count on it!

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

WISDOM CORNER

- Kindness in words creates confidence. Kindness in thinking creates profundness. Kindness in giving creates love. **LAO TZU**
- There is more wisdom in your body than in your deepest philosophy. **FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE**
- Keep me away from the wisdom which does not cry, the philosophy which does not laugh and the greatness which does not bow before children. **KAHLIL GIBRAN**

WORDSWORTH

Zorbing

Imagine yourself suspended inside a ten-foot clear plastic sphere by nylon ropes, then rolled to the top of a slope and pushed off. No brakes, no steering, just you and gravity. By all accounts, it's like being a stray sock in a spin dryer, and it's obligatory to scream a lot. There are reports that some find hillslides too tame, and have tried rolling off cliffs and waterfalls. The balls bounce OK; so usually do those inside. Some have tried walking on water by taking the spheres on to lakes. This adventure activity was invented by Dwayne van der Sluis and Andrew Akers in New Zealand in 1995 as something exciting for tourists to do once they became jaded with bungee jumping. They created the term Zorb for the ball, presumably a variation on orb, which they trademarked and which they used for the name of their company. Confirming my suspicion that there is no activity so crazy that it will not be taken up by somebody somewhere, Zorbing has large numbers of enthusiastic participants, not only in New Zealand but also in the US, Europe and elsewhere. The term, and zorbing for the activity, began to appear in print in 1996. Since Zorb is a proprietary name in New Zealand and the US, the term sphereing has been used as an alternative, though zorbing is showing some signs of becoming generic. Variations are becoming known, such as hydro-zorbing, in which you are drenched in soapy water on the way down (the nearest thing in existence to a human washing machine), and harness zorbing, in which two people are strapped together. On flat land, a number of participants can play bumper-zorbs. A participant is often called a Zorbonaut.

LOL

DAMAGING FOOD

A dietician was once addressing a large audience in Chicago. "The material we put into our stomachs is enough to have killed most of us sitting here, years ago. Red meat is awful. Vegetables can be disastrous, and none of us realises the germs in

our drinking water. But there is one thing that is the most dangerous of all and we all of us eat it. Can anyone here tell me what lethal product I'm referring to? You, sir, in the first row, please give us your idea." The man lowered his head and said, "Wedding cake."



SPECTRUM CLIMATE CRISIS

The Arctic on the frontlines

Climate scientists have known for years that the Arctic is warming far faster than anywhere else on the planet. But even those of us who follow the Arctic closely were shocked by the changes that occurred in 2020, a year of broken records, retreating glaciers, and shattering ice sheets. The alarm bells are ringing louder than ever: we must urgently and drastically reduce our greenhouse-gas emissions.

Last year, temperatures in the Arctic Circle reached their highest-ever recorded levels. A heatwave in Arctic Siberia brought temperatures of 38°C (100°F) - 18°C higher than the average maximum daily temperature in past years. Meanwhile, fierce Arctic wildfires released a record-breaking level of carbon dioxide and set a new pollution record for the region.

With the heat turned up, the Arctic landscape has been changing fast. For the first time since records began, sea ice in the Arctic's Eurasian sector had not yet begun freezing in October. The previous month, an ice sheet the size of Paris broke off from Greenland's largest glacier shelf, and in July, Canada's intact ice shelf - 4,000 years old - fragmented. As Arctic ice melts, sea levels rise, threatening countries worldwide. Over the last year, scientists have

also spotted worrying signs of future climate breakdown. As higher temperatures cause Arctic plants to grow taller, permafrost is thawing faster - a process that releases enormous amounts of carbon dioxide and methane, accelerating the temperature rise. Last year, a 164-foot-deep crater or "funnel," one of many reported in recent years, was found in northern Siberia after an underground pocket of methane, formed by melting permafrost, burst through the tundra.

The consequences of climate collapse in the Arctic are wide-ranging. A fuel tank cracked open in the Russian Arctic after settling into softened permafrost, releasing about 150,000 barrels of diesel into a river. A Human Rights Watch report found that climate-related changes in animal migration patterns are making it harder for indigenous communities in Canada to find food or traverse previously frozen bodies of water. And coastal villages can be devastated when fish species migrate to escape warming waters.

If the events of 2020 have shown us anything, it is that what happens in the Arctic does not stay there. On the contrary, rising Arctic temperatures threaten to trigger a devastating domino effect that ends in global catastrophe.

That is because of two powerful natural phenomena. First, Arctic warming weakens the jet stream - the river of air that flows high above Earth's surface.

The jet stream is propelled by the contrast between the planet's frozen poles and its hot equator. As that contrast is diminished, the jet stream slows and even stagnates. Scientists believe this change in the jet stream is behind a number of deadly weather events, including wildfires in California and Siberia, extreme winter storms in Eastern United States, and record-high temperatures in Mojave Desert.

The second way Arctic warming affects the rest of the world is by disrupting the polar vortex, a low-pressure weather system that sits above each pole and keeps cold air there. As the Arctic warms, the cold air contained in the polar vortex is thought to be displaced and moved to the south, leading to extreme and unusual cold weather in faraway places. This winter, Italy, Japan, and Spain experienced extreme snowfall.

During the pandemic, "build back better" has become something of a mantra. Measures to preserve the Arctic must be at the centre of this effort. To aid in this process, Arctic Basecamp, which I founded, will be developing an

open-access Arctic Risk platform this year, to highlight early warning signs of emerging risks caused by changes in the Arctic ecosystem.

Fortunately, a growing number of decision-makers seem to recognise the Arctic's critical importance. The World Economic Forum's recently released "Global Risks Report 2021" ranked extreme weather, weak climate action, and human-induced environmental damage among the most likely - and highest-impact - risks we face over the next decade. During the WEF's Davos Agenda week, I led a high level panel aimed at accelerating progress toward protecting this critical region.

It is comforting to imagine the Arctic as a snowy faraway place, populated by reindeer and polar bears. In fact, it is a cornerstone of the climate system that keeps our weather stable, our communities habitable, and our economies prosperous. And it is under immense pressure. Relieving that pressure - especially by ending all mining for oil and gas - is a prerequisite for a more sustainable and equitable world.

The writer is Founder of Arctic Basecamp, a team of Arctic experts and scientists.

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Gail Whiteman

RISING ARCTIC TEMPERATURES THREATEN TO TRIGGER A DEVASTATING DOMINO EFFECT THAT ENDS IN GLOBAL CATASTROPHE

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, Russalgari Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

'My School' movement

Sir, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik's appeal for adopting schools has received tremendous response from various quarters. Members of the administrative and police services and also from the judiciary have come forward to adopt a school of their choice which they are emotionally connected to. The move would go a long way in shaping the future of the students and the institutions they are studying in. The educational institutions adopted so far have a glorious history of their own and the personalities joining the move for this noble job of adding colours to their schools would set examples for others. A mission such as this will certainly improve the academic environments in the schools and the students will be encouraged to follow the footprints of the old students who have established themselves in their present fields. Patnaik is the first CM in the country to initiate such a programme at a massive scale and for this he deserves praise from all quarters.

Sanjib Das, CUTTACK

Sigh of relief

Sir, This refers to the report "US, Russia agree to extend 'New Start' nuclear treaty" (Orissa Post, International Page, January 28, 2021). With the Biden-Harris team now taking the office in the White House, there are plenty of issues to resolve. The most pressing issue that the Biden administration faces is America's relation with Iran given the concern that the present scenario may upend Washington's non-proliferation strategy and increase tensions in the energy rich Gulf region. In 2018, Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the US from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and imposed sanctions on Iran, especially on shipment of Iranian oil through the infamous Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) to put maximum pressure on Tehran to force it to accept America's maximum demands that went far beyond the agreement. It is noteworthy that Trump's policy of exerting maximum pressure has brought Iran closer to the process of weaponisation which is alarming for all nations. Once bitten shy, Iran now seems to be more vigilant and has rightly cautioned President Joe Biden for rejoining the nuclear deal shortly. After four years of Trump's egregious policies and isolationist rhetoric, the general public can now breathe a sigh of relief.

Tushar Anand, PATNA

Now, Tejashwi questions Nitish's political ideology

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Patna, Jan 29: Rashtriya Janata Dal leader Tejashwi Yadav Friday targeted CM Nitish Kumar saying he doubts whether Kumar is actually a socialist leader.

"Keeping in view the present situation, farmers, teachers and students are angry with the central and state government. Crime against women is on the rise... Instead of addressing their issues, CM Nitish Kumar is putting all effort behind saving his chair. He does not have any political ideology," Tejashwi said in Patna.

The RJD leader chaired a party meeting at the residence of former CM Rabri Devi Friday to discuss the progress of the human chain programme scheduled for January 30 to support the farmers agitation across Bihar.

"We firmly believe that farmers of Bihar have the same ideology as the farmers of Punjab, Haryana and Western Uttar Pradesh. They will also come out in their support," Tejashwi said.

"In absence of Bazaar Samiti and Mandi, the farmers of Bihar are forced to sell their agriculture products way below the Minimum



We firmly believe that farmers of Bihar have the same ideology as the farmers of Punjab, Haryana and Western Uttar Pradesh. They will also come out in their support

TEJASHWI YADAV | FORMER DY CM

Support Price (MSP). They are selling paddy at not more than Rs 700 to 800 per 100 KG while the MSP is Rs 1868. The state government should establish Bazaar Samiti and Mandi in Bihar so that farmers can sell their agriculture products," he said.

Meanwhile, Rajesh Ranjan alias Pappu Yadav, president of the Jan Adhikar Party (JAP) launched an indefinite hunger strike at Gandhi Maidan on Friday morning in solidarity with the farmers.

He said that the Modi government must roll back the three farm laws. "The Centre should stop tor-

turing farmers of our country. Our elders fought with the British and eventually forced them to retreat. The current government at the Centre is more ruthless than the British," alleged Yadav.

"In the agitation, 133 farmers have lost their lives in the last two months. This government had conspired against tractor rallies in a well-planned manner to defame farmers. How did more than 10,000 farmers come to ITO? The Delhi Police fired tear gas shells on farmers. The entire incident should be investigated thoroughly under monitoring by a court," Yadav said.

AGENCIES

Patna, Jan 29: The Bihar government will guide four poll-bound states and a Union territory on conducting elections amid the COVID-19 pandemic, officials said. The state's Health Department had won accolades for conducting the elections to the 243-member assembly amid the coronavirus surge last year.

Officials from West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Assam and Puducherry, where elections are lined up this year, are dialling the Bihar Health Department for tips to accomplish the gigantic task without causing a surge in coronavirus cases, they said. Accepting the Assam government's request, a Bihar Health Department team will visit the northeastern state soon to give a detailed presentation on how the assembly elections were conducted with adherence to the COVID-19 guidelines, Principal Secretary, Health, Pratayya Amrit told PTI.

"Bihar has received similar requests from West Bengal and other states and we will share our experiences with them," the official, credited with leading his team to successfully conduct the Bihar elections in October-November last

Bihar to guide 4 states on holding polls amid pandemic

Officials from West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Assam and Puducherry, where elections are lined up this year, are dialling the Bihar Health Department for tips to accomplish the gigantic task without causing a surge in coronavirus cases



year, said. On conducting the polls amid the coronavirus surge, he said, "It was a big challenge before us. We could accomplish the task due to the hard work of all the staffers and support from the Election Commission of India and the state government."

The Bihar administration had made arrangements for the 7.3 crore voters to exercise their franchise at over 1.06 lakh polling stations. Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora had lauded the manner in which the elections were conducted. Around 57.34 per cent (over four crore) of the 7.3 crore voters exercised their fran-

chise, which was higher than the previous assembly election's voting percentage of 56.8 per cent. The ECI had procured 18 lakh face shields, 70 lakh masks, 5.4 lakh single-use rubber gloves for polling and security personnel and 7.21 crore one hand single-use polythene gloves for voters to press the EVM button and sign the register at the polling stations. Keeping paucity of time in mind, the orders were placed by the Bihar Medical Services and Infrastructure Corporation Ltd through the Government e-Marketplace portal.

Teams were then sent to the pro-

duction and supply centres at Agra, Ajmer, Dehradun and New Delhi to ensure timely delivery of items. Over 10 lakh ASHA workers and Jeevika didis (members of SHGs) were mobilised at three nodal centres Patna, Muzaffarpur and Purnia for packaging the procured items into kits, Health Department sources said.

Buses were arranged for the women to and from the centres, which were sanitised thrice a day, they said. The kits were then packed and handed over to district magistrates and superintendents of police for booth-wise distribution. ANMs, paramedics and ASHA workers were trained for thermal scanning at polling stations. Lists of COVID-19 positive electors were provided beforehand to polling officials and special training was imparted to handle them.

The supply of such a large quantity of safety kits also necessitated effective bio-medical waste management. Every polling station had yellow bags and bins for the collection of waste. Trucks were arranged for collecting the waste twice on the day of polling. The waste items were deposited at the nearest assigned healthcare facility and later disposed of as per standard protocol.

PETA's EV chariot design to replace jumbos at Amer

THE UNIQUE DESIGN, WHICH PETA INDIA AND DESMANIA DESIGN SUGGESTED TO BE NAMED "MAHARAJA", RESEMBLES A ROYAL CHARIOT



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Jaipur, Jan 29: PETA India representatives, in an in-person meeting with Rajasthan Chief secretary Niranjan Arya, submitted a design of electric royal chariot for replacing elephants at the Amer Fort.

The unique design, which PETA India and Desmania Design suggested to be named "Maharaja", resembles a royal chariot. The vehicle could ferry four tourists per trip and would be suitable for the hilly terrain like that at Amer Fort.

It needs to be mentioned here that the committee constituted by the Project Elephant Division of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change recently recommended to phase out elephant rides at Amer Fort by replacing them with electric vehicle rides.

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) India, soon after the recommendations, collaborated with leading design company Desmania Design to create a modern electric vehicle.

PETA India representatives also submitted a factsheet to the Chief Secretary citing shocking instances in which captive elephants have reacted to their abuse at Amer Fort, leading to serious injuries, deaths, and destruction of property, and requested him to safeguard tourists and the general public from such health and safety risks.

"The respected chief secretary listened to PETA India, which represents kind people around the world, and now we hope tourists and elephants will be given the royal treatment with these majestic, cutting-edge cars, which can replace animals forced to give rides," says PETA India Chief Advocacy Officer Khushboo Gupta.

"Desmania is delighted to offer this eco- and animal-friendly elec-

The Central government appointed the expert committee as per a March 6, 2020 order of the Supreme Court of India, and the committee report incorporated recommendations made by PETA India, including ending elephant rides, citing ageing elephants and tourists' declining preference for these rides.

The committee's recommendations include refraining from using elephants with irreparable eye problems for rides and banning any new additions of elephants for rides.

The report notes that of the 98 captive elephants inspected, 22 suffered from irreversible eye problems and 42 had foot problems, including overgrown nails and flat footpads from walking on concrete roads.

tric vehicle design, which would deliver a memorable experience for visitors while helping to end cruel and archaic elephant rides," says Desmania Design Managing Director Anuj Prasad.

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The report notes that of the 98 captive elephants inspected, 22 suffered from irreversible eye problems and 42 had foot problems, including overgrown nails and flat footpads from walking on concrete roads. Three elephants tested positive for tuberculosis, a disease that could be fatal for tourists who catch it.

Gehlot govt rolls out red carpet for global petrochemical majors



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Jaipur, Jan 29: Aiming to bring in big investors in the petroleum and value-added petrochemicals space, the Rajasthan government rolled out the red carpet for the global oil and petrochemical majors to set up operations in the upcoming Petroleum, Chemicals and Petrochemicals Investment Region (PCPIR) at Barmer.

A global virtual meeting was held Wednesday between potential investors from across the world and state government officials to promote investment in the region. The meet was jointly organised by the Rajasthan State Industrial Development and Investment Corporation Limited (RIICO) and the Confederation of Indian Industries (CII).

Delegates from the embassies of the UAE and Brazil along with representatives of nearly 100 companies from India, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Oman, Germany, UK, USA, Switzerland, the Netherlands, France, Japan, Singapore, Taiwan, Brazil, Bahrain, Jordan, South Korea and other countries participated in the global meet.

Representatives of important stakeholder associations like

CHEMEXCIL and IFIBCA also participated. According to officials, the first phase of development of the project would see around Rs 15,000 crore from top global players and will generate around 1.5 lakh job opportunities. They confirmed that the Rajasthan government and RIICO will provide industrial land to the global investors at the PCPIR by July 2021.

Representing the state government, senior ministers and officials assured investors of support and opportunities in the sector. "It is the first global dialogue for investment, however, we wish to hold it as a continuous process for facilitating investments in the region," said Industries Minister Parsadi Lal Meena.

The PCPIR is being developed by RIICO in Barmer district of Rajasthan. A range of petrochemical products, including polyethylene, polypropylene, butadiene, benzene and toluene from the refinery will be available for the downstream industries in the region. Situated nearly 9-13 kms from the much-hyped Barmer refinery, the first phase includes 93 industrial plots spread over 243 hectares.

The state government through the dialogue also sought suggestions to

The first phase of development of the project would see around Rs 15,000 crore from top global players and will generate around 1.5 lakh job opportunities

improve the investment ecosystem. "A new mining policy is being drafted and the suggestions of the participants are most welcome and they will be included for consideration of the state government," said Pramod Jain Bhaya, Minister for Mines.

The state government's efforts for the global auction drew appreciation from HPCL chairman Mukesh Kumar Surana. He said that early commencement of work on the PCPIR will give investors adequate time before operations of the refinery commence next year. He said that there was some impact of the COVID pandemic on the development of the refinery, however, the work has now resumed at a normal pace. Principal Secretary of the Chief Minister and Chairman RIICO, Kuldeep Ranka, highlighted the advantages of investment in the PCPIR.

During his presentation on the opportunities in the petroleum sector, MD RIICO, Ashutosh Pednekar stated that India's per capita plastic consumption at near 11 kg is much less compared to the world average of 33 kilograms per capita, thus emphasising the huge growth potential in petrochemical products.

RAJ ANNOUNCES 2 PC CUT IN VAT ON PETROL, DIESEL



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jaipur, Jan 29: The Rajasthan government has reduced value-added tax (VAT) rate by two per cent on petrol and diesel, giving people the much needed respite from rising fuel prices.

The state finance department late Thursday issued orders, which came into effect from Thursday midnight.

Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot said that despite the price of crude oil being at the lowest level for a long time at the international market, inflation is rising as prices of petrol and diesel are hovering at all-time high levels and the common man is facing economic difficulties.

The price of branded or premium petrol price had crossed Rs 100-mark in Sriganganagar town of Rajasthan January 27.

Retail fuel prices vary from state to state depending on local sales tax or VAT.

The Chief Minister said in a statement that the government of India is currently charging an ex-

cise duty of Rs 32.98 per litre on petrol and Rs 31.83 per litre on diesel, which is excessive.

Gehlot said that the basic excise duty paid by the government of India is part of the divisible pool paid to the states, which has been reduced continuously from Rs 9.48 to Rs 2.98 on petrol and Rs 11.33 to Rs 4.83 on diesel due to which all the states, including Rajasthan are losing huge revenue.

He said that the Centre has been continuously increasing the additional excise duty from Rs 8 to Rs 18 per litre on petrol and diesel and special excise duty has been increased from Rs 7 to Rs 12 on petrol and from zero to Rs 9 per litre on diesel. Due to this policy of the Centre, the states are not getting their benefits. At the same time, people have to bear the brunt of expensive petrol and diesel.

He said that following the initiative taken by the state government, the central government should also give relief to common man by reducing central taxes on petrol and diesel.

Bihar Grand Alliance to organise human chain against farm laws

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Patna, Jan 29: The opposition Grand Alliance in Bihar Friday declared it will organise a human chain across the state Saturday to express solidarity with the farmers agitating against the farm laws.

Fighting the NDA government in Bihar for having scrapped APMCs over a decade ago, former deputy CM Tejashwi Yadav alleged "this had reduced farmers to labourers. The central laws will convert them, like cultivators elsewhere, into beggars". Kumar's government had abolished Agriculture Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) Act in 2006 and also ended the mandi (wholesale markets for agricultural produce) system.

He claimed that while his RJD was in power and the state was ruled, first by his father Lalu Prasad and subsequently mother Rabri

Devi, farmers were better off as they often sold their produce at prices higher than the MSP. Decrying the use of force on many occasions to quell the stir in and around Delhi, the RJD leader said "it is for the first time in the country that the chants of 'Jai Jawan Jai Kisan' have been jettisoned and jawans are being pitted against kisan (farmers).

Yadav, whose promise of "10 lakh government jobs" is widely believed to have boosted prospect of the RJD as well as the five-party opposition coalition in assembly polls, also slammed the state government for setting up committees to assess performance of 50 years plus employees with the supposed aim to retrench those who were not found up to the mark. Representatives from other grand alliance constituents Congress, CPI, CPI(M) and CPI(ML) also spoke on the occasion.



Security personnel baton charge members of the youth wing of the Rashtriya Janata Dal during a protest at Patna University, in Patna, Friday.

national



The Centre has no sensitivity left for farmers, which is why I am starting my indefinite fast at my village from January 30
ANNA HAZARE | ACTIVIST

MAHA GOVT NOD FOR RESUMING TRAIN SERVICES FOR ALL FROM FEB 1

The Maharashtra government Friday approved resumption of suburban train services in Mumbai for the general public from February 1, a state official said



of the day quote

He is the President and he is entitled to our respect. It is a matter of great regret today that the Opposition sought to boycott it
RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD | UNION MINISTER

We have already applied to the drug controller's office for the bridging trial of Novavax Inc's COVID-19 vaccine a few days ago
ADAR POONAWALLA | SERUM INSTITUTE OF INDIA CEO

The presence of Syed Shah Nawaz Hussain in the Bihar Legislative Council will be of immense help for the party especially in the Seemanchal region
NITISH KUMAR | BIHAR CHIEF MINISTER

Single man can't rape a minor without scuffle: Bombay HC

It seems highly impossible for a single man to gag a survivor's mouth, remove her and his clothes, and perform the forcible sexual act without any scuffle: HC

AGENCIES

Nagpur, Jan 29: The Nagpur bench of the Bombay high court January 29 acquitted a man of raping a 15-year-old girl, ruling that "it seems highly impossible for a single man to gag a survivor's mouth, remove her and his clothes, and perform the forcible sexual act without any scuffle". "Had it been a case of forcible intercourse, there would have been a

scuffle. Medical evidence also doesn't support the survivor's case as no injuries from a scuffle could be seen," Justice Pushpa Ganediwala held.

On March 14, 2019, petitioner Suraj Kasarkar (26) was sentenced to 10 years of rigorous imprisonment by a Sessions court after being convicted for rape of the minor. He was also convicted for criminal trespass. He was charged under Sections 376(1) and 451 of the IPC along with Section 4 of the POCSO Act. The complaint against him was lodged by the survivor July 26, 2013. Kasarkar challenged the trial court's verdict, contending it wasn't rape but a consensual act and the survivor lodged the complaint after her mother found him fleeing her house.

He also said the girl was "habituated to sexual acts". Additional



public prosecutor MJ Khan argued that the survivor couldn't have given a false deposition. Justice Ganediwala observed that the testimonies of the girl and her mother could not prove that she was below 18 years when the offence was committed. Moreover, in her cross-ex-

amination, she admitted that she declared her age as 15 years in the FIR on her mother's insistence. Even the birth certificate submitted in court isn't in the specified format and couldn't prove the survivor's age. "The defence of consensual phys-

ical relations does appear probable. The accused could bring on record the probable doubt with regard to consensual relation. The girl admitted that she wouldn't have lodged a complaint if her mother hadn't arrived," the judge said.

Quoting settled law in such cases, Justice Ganediwala added that stricter the sentence, stronger should be the proof. "The sole testimony of the prosecutrix in rape cases is sufficient to fix criminal liability against the accused. However, considering the substandard quality of the girl's testimony, it would be grave injustice to send the petitioner behind bars for 10 years. The prosecution miserably failed to fix criminal liability of rape against him by criminal trespassing in the survivor's house," she said, while quashing the Sessions court order convicting the accused.

Resign or prove majority, AIADMK tells Pondy CM



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Puducherry, Jan 29: The Opposition AIADMK here Friday asked Congress senior leader and Chief Minister V Narayanasamy to prove his government's majority on the floor of the Territorial Assembly or quit the post of the Chief Minister.

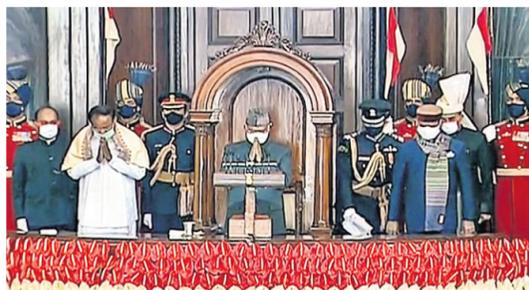
The AIADMK made this demand as the resignation of the ruling Congress members had weakened the strength of the party in the House. The leader of the legislature wing of the AIADMK A Anbalagan said in a press release that A Namassivayam, who was number-two in the Narayanasamy-headed government, had resigned from the post of the PWD Minister and also the MLA post.

Another Congress legislator E Theepainthan too quit the MLA post, reducing the strength of the Congress to a minority.

Therefore, Anbalagan said, the Chief Minister should come forward and prove his government's majority. He said the Lieutenant Governor Kiran Bedi should direct convening of a special session of the House to ascertain the majority of the government.

Anbalagan said the AIADMK and its alliance partners would submit a memorandum soon to the Lieutenant Governor seeking a directive for the session. The current political developments have weakened the government. Routine administration has also come to a standstill and the Chief Minister has failed to implement the promises made in the Congress election manifesto, Anbalagan said.

Govt 'vigilant', add forces deployed at LAC, says President



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

JOINT ADDRESS TO PARL

New Delhi, Jan 29: Against the backdrop of the Chinese aggression in eastern Ladakh, President Ram Nath Kovind Friday said the government is "vigilant" and that additional forces have also been deployed at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) to protect the sovereignty of the country.

In an address to a joint sitting of Parliament on the opening day of the Budget session, Kovind, who is also the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, said when India was grappling with the COVID-19 crisis attempts were made to challenge its capability at the border.

"Efforts were made to disrupt the peace at LAC in utter disregard of bilateral relations and agreements. However, our security forces not only responded to these machinations with promptitude, force and courage, but also foiled all attempts to change the status quo at the border," he said.

"The restraint, valour and courage displayed by our jawans, deserve utmost praise. In June 2020, twenty of our jawans made the supreme sacrifice and laid down their lives defending the country at Galwan Valley. Every citizen is deeply indebted to these martyrs."

Close to 100,000 Indian and Chinese troops are deployed in

Against the backdrop of the Chinese aggression in eastern Ladakh, President Ram Nath Kovind Friday said the government is "vigilant" and that additional forces have also been deployed at the LAC

In an address to a joint sitting of Parliament on the opening day of the Budget session, Kovind said when India was grappling with the COVID-19 crisis last year attempts were made to challenge its capability at the border

eastern Ladakh as both sides have been holding on to their ground and showing readiness for a long-haul, amid continuing diplomatic and military talks to find an amicable solution.

"My Government is vigilant and fully committed to safeguard the interests of the country. Additional forces have also been deployed at the LAC to protect the sovereignty of India," President Kovind said.

China is yet to disclose the number of its soldiers killed and injured in the clash though it officially admitted to have suffered casualties. According to an American intelligence report, the number of casualties on the Chinese side was 35.

R-DAY VIOLENCE

EDITORS' GUILD SLAMS FIRS AGAINST SCRIBES

The Guild demanded that such FIRs be withdrawn immediately and the media be allowed to report without fear and with freedom

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 29: The Editors' Guild of India Friday strongly condemned the filing of FIRs against senior editors and journalists for their reporting on the farmers' tractor rally and the ensuing violence here on Republic Day, saying it was an attempt to "intimidate, harass and stifle" the media.

In a statement, the Guild demanded that such FIRs be withdrawn immediately and the media be allowed to report without fear and with freedom. It said journalists have been specifically targeted for reporting the accounts pertaining to the death of one of the protestors on their personal social media han-



dles as well as those of the publications they lead and represent.

"It must be noted that on the day of the protest and high action, several reports were emerging from eyewitnesses on the ground as well as from police, and therefore it was only natural for journalists to report all the details as they emerged. This is in line with established norms of journalistic practice," the Guild said.

The Editors Guild said it "strongly condemns the intimidating manner in the way in which the Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh Police" have registered FIRs against senior editors and journalists for reporting on the farmers' protest rallies and the ensuing violence that took place in the national capital January 26.

The FIRs allege that the tweets were intentionally malicious and were the reason for the desecration of the Red Fort, the Guild noted, asserting that nothing can be further from truth. "On a day thick with information, the EGI finds these FIRs, filed in different states, as an attempt to intimidate, harass, browbeat, and stifle the media," the Guild said.

SHORT TAKES

Jawan shoots dead colleague

Raipur: A CRPF jawan was killed and another one got injured after one of their colleagues opened fire at them at a camp of the paramilitary force in Chhattisgarh's Bastar district Friday, police said. The offender, who was undergoing treatment for some mental health issue, later allegedly tried to shoot himself in a bid to commit suicide, they said. "The incident occurred at 8 am in the camp of CRPF's 241st 'Bastariya' battalion in Sedwa village under Kesloor police station area," Inspector General of Police (Bastar range) Sundarraj P said.

Teen raped, poisoned to death

Medinagar (Jharkhand): A para-teacher has been arrested for allegedly raping and poisoning a 13-year-old girl to death in Jharkhand's Palamu district, police said Friday. The girl, with whose family the 35-year-old accused had a land dispute, was raped inside an empty classroom in a school in Panki police station area Wednesday and was then poisoned, Lesligani Sub-divisional Police Officer Anup Kumar Baraik said. She died while undergoing treatment at a hospital on Thursday, the officer said, adding that the accused has been arrested.

Another TMC MLA quits party

Kolkata: Days after quitting the Mamata Banerjee cabinet, TMC leader Rajib Banerjee Friday resigned as the MLA of the West Bengal Assembly, as speculation that he might join the saffron camp ahead of the state elections picked up steam. The former Forest minister, who represented the Domjur Assembly seat, visited the state assembly in the morning and submitted his resignation to Speaker Biman Banerjee. "I have resigned as MLA of the state Assembly. I have submitted my resignation letter to the speaker," he said.

Migrant labourers found dead

Dhanbad: Two migrant workers from West Bengal working in a brick kiln were found dead in a makeshift hut at a village in Jharkhand's Dhanbad district Friday morning, a police officer said. All three were residents of Purulia district in West Bengal and had been working in a brick kiln at Ranglitand village under Tetulmari police station limits. The bodies were spotted by the brick kiln owner when he came to the hut after finding them absent from work.

BSP, AAP join 16 others in boycotting President address

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 29: The Bahujan Samaj Party and the Aam Aadmi Party Friday decided to join the 16 opposition parties, who have decided to boycott President Ram Nath Kovind's address to the joint sitting of the Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha on the issue of farm laws.

BSP chief Mayawati tweeted that her party will be boycotting the address since the government was not accepting the demand of the farmer's to repeal the three farm laws. Congress leader Jairam Ramesh tweeted: "Today 16 Opposition parties are boycotting the President's address to Parliament in full solidarity with the agitating farmers, whom the Modi Sarkar is trying to defame. Opposition reiterates the demands of Kisan andolan to repeal the 3 anti-farmers' laws."

LEISURELY EVENING



People walk along RK beach during sunset in Visakhapatnam, Friday

PTI PHOTO

'TANDAV' CONTROVERSY

'Alarming to hold actors accountable for fictional roles'

THE SC'S REFUSAL TO GRANT INTERIM PROTECTION TO TEAM "TANDAV" AND ITS OBSERVATION THAT ACTORS CANNOT PLAY ROLES HURTING THE "RELIGIOUS SENTIMENTS OF OTHERS" HAS LED TO CONSTERNATION IN THE INDUSTRY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Jan 29: The Supreme Court's refusal to grant interim protection to Team "Tandav" and its observation that actors cannot play roles hurting the "religious sentiments of others" has led to consternation in the industry with many insiders worried about the road ahead for India's "soft power".

A day after the apex court ruling on the starchy political saga from Amazon Prime Video from which several scenes have already been cut, most Bollywood biggies were silent.

However, there were others, including Hansal Mehta, Pritish Nandy, Konkona Sen Sharma and Gulshan Devaiah who spoke of the line between art and the artiste being blurred and the implications

of it. Some asked how actors could be held accountable for what they played on screen.

On Wednesday, the Supreme Court declined to grant interim protection from any coercive action to "Tandav" director Ali Abbas Zafar, actor Mohd Zeeshan Ayyub and others facing multiple FIRs for allegedly hurting religious sentiments. Ayyub's lawyer defended the alleged objectionable part of the Web series, saying that as an actor he has no artistic control over dialogues spoken by him. "You cannot take up role without reading script. You cannot play role hurting religious sentiments of others," the bench remarked.

Viewing the observations with alarm, several said it exposes actors, whose very job is to play varied



characters, to legal trouble.

Sharing the news report about the SC order, actor Konkona Sen Sharma tweeted, "Almost all involved in the show have read the script and signed the contract! Let's arrest the whole

cast and crew?" Screenwriter-lyricist Mayur Puri, whose works include "Om Shanti Om" and "Happy New Year", said it was "ridiculous" to hold an actor responsible for the actions of a fictional character.

"What I thought was particularly alarming was making a creator or an actor responsible for what a character does. That's fiction! By that logic, you'd say Amrish Puri was a bad person. He wasn't, he just played those characters. It's a rather stringent interpretation of the law, it's blindsided. It's completely unwarranted," Puri told this news agency.

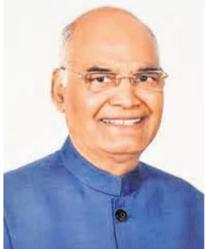
"So from now on we have to play characters that are exactly who we are. Dear directors, writers & producers are you by any chance writing a role for a nomadic nerd identifying as a cisgender straight woman who is 5'8" and just the right amount of weird & wonderfully astounding?" tweeted "Scam 1992," actor Shreya Dhanwanthary.

Actor Gulshan Devaiah said the SC's decision has left many actors

in a quandary. "A lot of us are feeling this is a crack of the whip and it is working, in the sense that a lot of us are scared. One thing I find baffling and disturbing is actors are being targeted through FIRs."

"We are contractually obligated with the companies, who offer us the contract and if you refused to do something that you have agreed to then you are breaking the contract and they can sue you and take you to court," he added.

At the centre of "Tandav" controversy is a scene that shows Ayyub's student leader Shiva playing Bholenath, another name for Lord Mahadev, in a college theatrical production, for which the makers apologised and even decided to implement changes under pressure.



Disrespect shown to the Tricolour at the Red Fort during the farmers' tractor rally January 26 as unfortunate
RAM NATH KOVIND | PRESIDENT OF INDIA

KASHMIR HOTEL LURES TOURISTS WITH IGLOO CAFE

Tourists in Kashmir's Gulmarg ski resort have a new place to chill out - an igloo cafe that serves hot food and drink on tables made of ice and snow. The igloo holds four tables with enough room for 16 guests



of the day quote

The Ullal Assembly constituency has become a mini-Pakistan in Mangaluru. Unless Hindus in the region don't rise above the Muslims, they will continue to dominate majority of the Hindus



KALLADKA PRABHAKAR BHAT | RSS LEADER

There is no defence needed for jokes and it is based on the comedian's perception. My posts on Twitter were not made with the intention of "diminishing faith of people in judiciary"



KUNAL KAMRA | COMEDIAN

This is an ideological attack on India's institutional structure and on our education system, where one does not need any understanding



RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

SHORT TAKES

Power theft worth ₹3.5 crore detected

Bareilly (UP): Power theft worth about ₹3.5 crore was detected in a rice mill in Richha area here following a raid, a senior electricity department official said Friday. The raid was carried out at Bismillah rice mill Thursday night and it was found that the owner was indulging in power theft with the help of an electronic device installed there, Superintending Engineer (rural), Syed Tariq Jalil said. The power supply to the mill was cut and an inquiry into the functioning of the departmental staff deployed in the area has been launched.

Youth, girl killed, bodies hanged

Bareilly (UP): A youth and a girl were killed and their bodies hanged from a tree in the Mirganj area here, police said Friday. The youth, 19, and the girl, 17, were in a relationship, Senior Superintendent of Police Rohit Singh Sajwan said. On Thursday, the girl's family members found them talking to each other at a secluded place and in a fit of rage they killed the duo and hanged their bodies from a tree, he said.

6 killed as lorry, auto collide

Hyderabad: Six people were killed when a lorry and an auto-rickshaw collided head-on at a village in Mahabubabad district of Telangana Friday, police said. The six - three men and as many women - were in the auto, the police said. The accident occurred in Marimitta village, they said. As per preliminary information, negligence on the part of the lorry driver was believed to be the cause of the mishap, they added.

Thousands of farmers attend mahapanchayat

AGENCIES

Ghaziabad, Jan 29: Crowds swelled on the Ghazipur border Friday as around thousands of farmers from western Uttar Pradesh joined the Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) members who have stayed put on the Delhi-Meerut Expressway to demand repeal of agri laws, while several farmers from Haryana decided to move towards Delhi borders to join the stir.



Crowds swelled on the Ghazipur border Friday as around thousands of farmers from western Uttar Pradesh joined the Bharatiya Kisan Union members who have stayed put on the Delhi-Meerut Expressway to demand repeal of agri laws

Flanked by supporters, Tikait remained at the centrestage of the protest site on the Delhi-Meerut Expressway, which has been barricaded from both sides, prohibiting regular traffic movement

However, extra security forces deployed at the protest site have been sent back.

Several farmers from parts of Haryana have also decided to move

towards Delhi borders to join the ongoing agitation against agri laws and held protests against lookout notices to peasant leaders and the Ghaziabad administration's ultimatum to vacate protest site.

The farmers claimed that issuing the lookout notices and asking the farmers to vacate the site will not weaken the ongoing agitation against the Centre's new farm laws.

A number of farmers from Jind, Rohtak, Kaithal, Hisar, Bhiwani and Sonapat will be heading towards various protest sites at Tikri, Singhu and Ghazipur, farmer leaders from Haryana claimed.

Backing the protesting farmers, Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) chief Ajit

Singh announced support to the BKU. The former Union minister spoken to BKU president Naresh Tikait and spokesperson Rakesh Tikait, RLD vice president and his son Jayant Chaudhary said.

"It is a matter of life and death for farmers, but do not worry. All have to stay together, united in this - this is Chaudhary sahab's (Ajit Singh's) message," the RLD vice-president said in a tweet in Hindi.

The Kejriwal government also extended its support to the farmers with Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia visiting the Ghazipur border protest site to check the arrangements made for them by the city government.

The Ghaziabad administration late Thursday night gave an ultimatum to agitating farmers to vacate the UP Gate protest site but Tikait remained adamant, saying he would commit suicide but won't end the stir.

Ghaziabad District Magistrate Ajay Shankar Pandey and Senior Superintendent of Police Kalanidhi Naithani visited the protest site post midnight to review the situation at the site where hundreds of security personnel in anti-riot gears were deployed Thursday.

CBI books six IOB officials for funds embezzlement

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 29: The CBI has booked six officials of the Indian Overseas Bank in Andhra Pradesh's Vijaywada and Guntur for allegedly misappropriating Rs4.56 crore from the accounts of a state government scheme providing cashless treatment to police personnel, officials said Friday.

The agency also carried out searches at various places located in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu in connection with the case, they said. "It was alleged that the secretary, Arogya Bhadratha was maintaining savings accounts with Indian Overseas Bank, Mangalagiri Branch in Guntur district and having four deposits of ₹90 lakh each and another account with deposit of ₹68.84 lakh, totaling ₹4.28 crore," CBI spokesperson RC Joshi said.

The accused officials closed these four accounts without any request from the account holder.

"It was further alleged that the proceeds of the four deposit accounts



amounting to ₹3.87 crore and also ₹68.84 lakh (approx) in another account in the name of the secretary, Arogya Bhadratha were withdrawn in cash partially on various dates and transferred to unrelated accounts after routing through various banks office accounts and third party accounts," he said. Bhadratha and Arogya Bhadratha schemes of Andhra Pradesh government provide cashless treatment to police personnel.

The agency has booked Heli Veepuri, the then regional resource manager posted at the regional office in Vijaywada and officials at Mangalagiri Branch - assistant managers V Suresh, D Narasimha and K Sireesha as well as clerks M Adinarayana Murali and M Praveen Syam.

THE SIX OFFICIALS ALLEGEDLY MISAPPROPRIATED ₹4.56 CRORE FROM THE ACCOUNTS OF A STATE GOVERNMENT SCHEME PROVIDING CASHLESS TREATMENT TO POLICE PERSONNEL

DOLLAR SMUGGLING CASE

Customs officials to question Kerala Assembly Speaker



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Thiruvananthapuram, Jan 29: Customs officials are preparing to question Kerala Assembly Speaker P Sreeramakrishnan by next week in the dollar smuggling case, according to informed sources.

The sources revealed that the Speaker will be questioned unofficially without serving a notice and the Customs Department has received a legal opinion in this regard.

During their appearance before the Department, the two accused in the gold and dollar smuggling case, Swapna Prabhakar Suresh and PS Sarith, said that Sreeramakrishnan is also involved.

They have also given written statements before the Department that the smuggled dollars were used to buy stakes in an educational institution in Oman. The Customs officials have also interrogated Naz Abdulla, a close associate of the Speaker based

on the information shared by Swapna and Sarith that Sreeramakrishnan was using a SIM card taken in Abdulla's name. Abdulla is also the director the educational institution in Oman where the Speaker has allegedly invested. The informed sources further revealed that the SIM card ceased to function after the smuggling case came to light.

If evidences are found against the Speaker after the unofficial questioning, the Customs Department will move ahead with further actions, the sources added.

After being served a notice by the Customs Department, K Ayyappan, Assistant Private Secretary of the Speaker, failed to appear before the officers for three times in a row citing various reasons. In response, the Opposition has levelled allegations that the Speaker was protecting Ayyappan to cover up things.

Indian Union Muslim League legislator M Ummer had submitted a no-trust motion against the Speaker and there were heated discussions in the Assembly on how Sreeramakrishnan had sacrificed the sanctity of the position by indulging in such matters. With the Speaker being questioned in the run up to the Assembly polls likely to be held in mid-April, the Left democratic front will have several questions to answer to the general public as Sreeramakrishnan was a former National president of the Youth Wing of the CPM, the DYFI and a party state committee member.

THE PRESIDENT'S MEN



President's Bodyguards during the Budget Session of Parliament in New Delhi, Friday

PTI PHOTO

SC says remarks against top court 'growing'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 29: The Supreme Court Friday observed that the criticism of the top court has been a growing phenomenon and everybody is doing it now.

The observation was made by a bench headed by Justice Ashok Bhushan during the hearing of contempt cases against comedian Kunal Kamra and cartoonist Rachit Taneja for their tweets and cartoons making undignified and

derogatory remarks on the top court. Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, representing Taneja, contended before the bench why the court had to take cognizance of this matter: "Foundation of court is much stronger. Criticism of court can never be contempt. She is young 25-year-old girl. There is a public perception why a journalist case was taken up during vacations," argued Rohatgi. Justice Bhushan replied that court agrees with his submission, but this is growing

and everyone is doing it now. The bench asked Rohatgi to file a reply in the matter. Rohatgi said his client will say what he is saying now.

Rohatgi also asked the top court to take up his client's case separately and not with Kamra's case. After a brief hearing in the matter, the top court adjourned Taneja's plea for three weeks. The top court asked the petitioners in Kamra's case to file their replies on the affidavit by him and adjourned the matter for two weeks.

AFTER DELHI BLAST, SECURITY BEEFED UP IN MUMBAI

AGENCIES

Mumbai, Jan 29: In a precautionary measure after the mysterious blast in New Delhi near the Israeli Embassy, the Maharashtra Police has tightened security across the state, top officials said here late Friday.

Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, Home Minister Anil Deshmukh, along with top officials of the Home Department, reviewed the security situation after the incident in the national capital and ordered beefing up security measures in the state.

The security cover has been heightened near the Nariman House in Mumbai, where the Jewish prayer facility, Chabad House is located along with a memorial-cum-museum to the victims of the 26/11 Mumbai terror strikes, important consulates in Mumbai and offices of certain international organisations.

Besides, increased cover has been given to all airports, major railway stations, bus depots, government offices, vital installations, certain religious or pilgrimage sites and other important buildings to ward off any untoward incidents.

Police and other armed units have also increased patrolling in sensitive or crowded areas in Mumbai, Pune, Aurangabad, Nagpur and other places.

Will join probe, need time to bring out truth: Deep Sidhu

ACTOR-TURNED-ACTIVIST DEEP SIDHU HAS SAID HE NEEDS SOME TIME TO BRING OUT THE TRUTH AND WILL THEN JOIN THE INVESTIGATION

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, Jan 29: Actor-turned-activist Deep Sidhu, who has been booked in connection with the religious flag incident at Red Fort, has said he needs some time to bring out the truth and will then join the investigation.

The 36-year-old Sidhu is in the eye of a storm for being among the protesters who put up a religious flag atop the Red Fort on Republic Day. "Arrest warrant has been issued against me and also a look out notice has been issued against me. First I want to give this message that I will join the investigation," Sidhu said in a video uploaded on Facebook.

He said he needed some time to bring out the truth.

"Because whatever has been spread, it is false information and it is misleading the public at large. Therefore, I need a couple of days to bring out the truth and then I will join the investigation," said Sidhu.

"I am requesting the investigation agencies...I have not done anything wrong then why should I run away and why should I be scared. I am not scared. I have done nothing wrong and that will come out," he said. He told the investigation agencies and the police department that he will come to them in two days.

"The kind of rumours being spread is not based on facts. I need two days to bring out the truth

based on the facts and I will collect all the evidence and proof," he stated.

The Delhi Police had named Sidhu in an FIR lodged in connection with the Red Fort incident.

Sidhu was present at the Red Fort when a religious flag and a farmer flag were put at the flagpole at the historic monument, triggering massive outrage. Sidhu had been accused by farm bodies of trying to defame their agitation and termed a "traitor".

In his latest video, Sidhu alleged, "But after looking at all the information now, it appears that it could also be a trap. Be it of the Delhi police or of the government. It appears to be a trap."

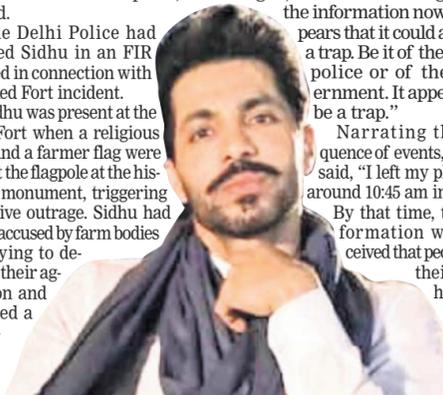
Narrating the sequence of events, Sidhu said, "I left my place at around 10:45 am in a car. By that time, the information was received that people on their own headed to

wards Ring Road and were moving towards Delhi and they did not follow the route as decided by the Delhi police and the government". He claimed that he passed through villages as the main road was blocked. He reached a place where the barricading was broken.

Then the police at one place had stopped the traffic and they also got stuck there, he said.

He claimed that "weak" barricading was put up by the police. Sidhu further claimed that the police allowed one tractor and a car each and they also moved ahead.

He stated that they then reached near the Red Fort and he got a 'Nishan Sahib' from a person on his way. Then the 'Nishan Sahib' and



international



The US' decision to suspend the sale of the F-35 fighter jets to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) will not affect ties between Tel Aviv and Abu Dhabi
BENJAMIN NETANYAHU | ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER

PAKISTAN UNIVERSITY TO BAN JEANS FOR WOMEN

In a move that has raised eyebrows of many, a university in Pakistan has planned to slap a ban on female students and teachers from wearing jeans and tights, imposing a mandatory rule to wear a scarf with 'abaya' on the university campus



of the day quote

The variant which was first detected in South Africa has spread quickly beyond Africa and so what is keeping me awake at night right now is that it is very likely circulating in a number of African countries



MATSHIDISO MOETI | WHO'S REGIONAL DIRECTOR FOR AFRICA

The Covid-19 pandemic is accelerating in many countries and uncertainty is unusually high



VICTOR GASPAR | DIRECTOR OF THE IMF'S FISCAL AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT

The upcoming Palestinian elections are crucial and important in the path of the Palestinian national struggle to reach our legitimate goals of freedom and independence



MAHMOUD ABBAS | PALESTINIAN PRESIDENT

SHORT TAKES

Tibetan culture advocate released

Beijing: A Tibetan shopkeeper convicted of inciting separatism based on his comments in a New York Times documentary was released Friday after serving a five-year prison sentence, advocacy groups said. Tashi Wangchuk's release was reported by the writers group PEN America and the International Campaign for Tibet.

France mulls additional curbs

Paris: The French government is considering introducing stricter coronavirus restrictions in the coming days to stem an alarming rise in confirmed cases of the new Covid-19 variants, Health Minister Olivier Veran said. At a press briefing here Thursday, Veran noted that the sanitary situation was deteriorating as "the virus variants are actively circulating in France" despite the government's efforts to contain the spreading, reports said.

SL to begin vaccination

Colombo: Sri Lankan health authorities will Friday begin the inoculation of 250,000 frontline health workers against the novel coronavirus after Covid-19 vaccines donated by India arrived in the island nation. The statement said that upon their arrival at Sri Lanka's Bandaranaike International Airport Thursday, the 500,000 Covishield vaccines donated by India were handed over to President Gotabaya Rajapaksa by High Commissioner of India to Sri Lanka Gopal Baglay, reports Xinhua news agency.

'Allow US to prosecute Daniel's killers'

HOURS AFTER THE RULING, WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY JEN PSAKI UNDERLINED THE NEW BIDEN ADMINISTRATION'S COMMITMENT TO SECURE JUSTICE FOR PEARL'S FAMILY

AGENCIES

Washington, Jan 29: Voicing outrage over the acquittal of those involved in the brutal murder of Daniel Pearl in 2002, the White House has asked Pakistan to expeditiously review its legal options, including allowing the US to prosecute al-Qaeda terrorist Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh and other suspects to secure justice for the American journalist's family.

Pearl, the 38-year-old South Asia bureau chief for The Wall Street Journal, was visiting Pakistan to report on Islamist militant networks in the country and on the links between the country's powerful spy agency ISI and al-Qaeda following the September 11, 2001 terror strikes. He was kidnapped in Karachi, the capital of Sindh, and beheaded days later.

Pakistan's Supreme Court Thursday dismissed appeals against the acquittal of British-born al-Qaeda terrorist Sheikh in the kidnapping and murder case of Pearl and ordered his release, a judgement denounced by the American journalist's family as "a complete travesty of justice."

The apex court cleared Sheikh and his three Pakistani accom-



plishes in the case of all the charges, ordering that Sheikh and others be immediately freed from jail.

Hours after the ruling, White House press secretary Jen Psaki underlined the new Biden administration's commitment to secure justice for Pearl's family.

Psaki, during her daily news conference on Thursday, said: "The United States is outraged by the Pakistani Supreme Court's decision to affirm the acquittals of those responsible for Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl's kidnapping and brutal murder which shocked the world's conscience in 2002."

"This decision to exonerate and release Sheikh and the other suspects is an affront to terrorism vic-

tims everywhere, including in Pakistan. We recognise past Pakistani actions to try to hold Mr Pearl's murderers accountable, and we do note that as of right now, Omar Sheikh remains in detention in Pakistan under national security authorities.

"But we call on the Pakistani government to expeditiously review its legal options, including allowing the United States to prosecute for the brutal murder of an American citizen and journalist," Psaki said in response to a question on Pakistan's apex court's decision. Sheikh and his three aides - Fahad Naseem, Sheikh Adil and Salman Saqib - were convicted and sentenced in the abduction and murder case of Pearl in Karachi in 2002.

China appreciates EAM Jaishankar's suggestions



SINO-INDIA TIES
The two countries are locked in a military standoff in eastern Ladakh since May 5 last. India and China have held several rounds of military and diplomatic talks to resolve the face-off in eastern Ladakh, but no significant headway has been made so far

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Beijing, Jan 29: China Friday said it has taken note of External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar's suggestions to mend the strained bilateral relations, saying that it appreciates his remarks which showed that New Delhi attached importance to ties with Beijing.

"We have noted Minister Jaishankar's remarks," China's Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told a media briefing here while responding to a question on the online address by Jaishankar to the 13th All India Conference of China Studies.

"He stressed the importance of India-China relations. It shows that the Indian side attaches importance to the ties with China, we appreciate this," Zhao said. "Meanwhile, we stress that the boundary issue shall not be linked with the overall bilateral relations. That is an important experience we have gathered through many years' effort to keep the ties moving forward," the spokesman said.

"We hope the Indian side will work with us to properly manage the differences, promote practical cooperation and bring bilateral relations back on track," Zhao said.

In his address Thursday, Jaishankar outlined eight broad principles and three "mutuals" to mend strained ties between India and China, and said the two countries are truly at crossroads and their choices will have profound repercussions, not just for them but for the entire world. The minister said the developments in eastern Ladakh last year brought the relationship under "exceptional stress" and India is yet to receive a credible explanation for the change in China's stance or reasons for amassing troops in the border areas.

The two countries are locked in a military standoff in eastern Ladakh since May 5 last. India and China have held several rounds of military and diplomatic talks to resolve the face-off in eastern Ladakh, but no significant headway has been made so far.

Pak to renovate holy sites of minorities

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lahore, Jan 29: The Pakistan government has decided to renovate several holy sites belonging to minorities across the country, in a bid to further strengthen its case of providing safety and security to the minorities living in the country.

As per details, several gurdwaras and temples will undergo renovation across Pakistan.

According to statistics, the total number of Sikh gurdwaras and Hindu temples in Pakistan are 1,830. However, only 31 temples and gurdwaras are operational.

Official sources say that the meager number of operational temples and gurdwaras has prompted the government to take action and renovate the minority holy sites. The Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB), provincial governments along with the Sikh and Hindu community members will be part of the overall renovation process, which is likely to be completed this year. In Punjab province, a Sikh mansion in Rawalpindi will be restored, while renovation in at least two churches and seven Hindu temples is in progress in Lahore.

Moreover, the construction of the Hindu temple in the capital Islamabad, is also likely to be completed in 2021. "Karsewa of Gurdwara Dera Sahib in Lahore has been going on for many years. But the Indian members of the Karsewa Committee had to return home as their visas expired and it could not be renewed because of the pandemic. So this work was stalled and will be resumed soon," Sardar Ameer Sindh, Secretary General of Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (PSGPC), said.



People sled down a public sledding trail on Mount Uetliberg in Zurich, Switzerland

REUTERS

A lament for Portugal's long lockdown

REUTERS

Lisbon, Jan 29: Portugal's extension of a nationwide lockdown this week in the face of spiking COVID-19 infections was no surprise to Marco, 43, who had to shut his Lisbon fitness studio earlier this month. But he is tired and upset.

"We've been at this for a year, something should have been done sooner," he told Reuters Friday as he walked his dog in an otherwise largely empty church square.

Facing the world's highest per capita death toll, Portugal has extended a harsh lockdown until mid-February, banned non-essential travel for its nationals and imposed checks on the border with Spain.

Marco had to shut his studio this month for the second time since the start of the pandemic

and expects it to stay closed for some time to come.

"It was obvious they had to do it. But I'm frustrated. There's just nothing to do," he said in a statement.

Prime Minister Antonio Costa said on Wednesday that relaxing restrictions over Christmas worsened the situation, but also pointed to the quick spread of a new and more contagious variant now estimated to be responsible for around a third of cases.

Hospitals are creaking under the pressure. Health ministry data shows just 67 intensive care beds available nationwide.

Streets were largely deserted except for the occasional supermarket cashier or construction worker taking a break on the curb and a few pedestrians walking quickly by. Few believe restrictions will be lifted soon.

Taliban jeopardising agreement with US: Pentagon

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Washington, Jan 29: In its first address to the media under the Joe Biden administration, the Pentagon has claimed that the Taliban was jeopardising the landmark agreement it signed with the US in February 2020.

"The Taliban have not met their commitments. Without them meeting their commitments to renounce terrorism and to stop the violent attacks on the Afghan National Security Forces, and by dint of that the Afghan people, it's very hard to see a specific way forward for the negotiated settlement," Pentagon Press Secretary John Kirby said.

"But we're still committed to that, there's no question about that... We need to find a reasonable,



rational end to this war, and that it's got to be done through a negotiated settlement that includes the Afghan government," he added.

The US and Taliban signed the historic agreement on February 29, 2020, which called for a full withdrawal of the American military forces from the war-torn country by May 2021 if the militant group meets the conditions of the deal, including severing ties with other terrorist organisations.

Last week, US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan spoke with his Afghan counterpart Hamdullah Mohib during which he made clear Washington's intention to review the agreement, including to assess whether the Taliban was living up to its commitments to cut ties with terrorist groups, to reduce violence in Afghanistan, and to engage in meaningful negotiations with the Kabul government and other stakeholders.

MYANMAR FACES THREAT OF MILITARY COUP

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Naypyitaw, Jan 29: Just two months after Aung San Suu Kyis National League for Democracy (NLD) swept the general elections in Myanmar, the largest country in mainland Southeast Asia is facing the threat of a military coup.

The military-backed opposition Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) in Myanmar has disputed the results of the general elections held on November 8 last year, in which the NLD secured way above the 322 seats required to form the government. It was the second general polls since 2011, when the military rule ended in the country.

Earlier this week, the army had warned that it will take action if the complaints about "election

fraud" were not addressed. It also hinted at the possibility of a coup.

Sources on Friday told IANS that a military coup appeared to be a likely outcome given China's grip over the internal situation in the country.

Myanmar's military junta, which ruled the country through the 90s and 2000s, has had the backing of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). After a long struggle against the military regime for nearly two decades, Suu Kyi led Myanmar's transition to a partial democracy in the last five years.

Suu Kyi, a former Nobel laureate, however, faced widespread criticism from the West when her government expelled around 700,000 Rohingya Muslims accused of perpetrating Islamist terrorism and propagating separatism.



In a case filed by a group of Islamic countries at the International Court of Justice in The Hague, she has been accused of genocide of Rohingyas. However, her government, whose survival depends on the military, not only stood by the army, but also began engaging

Beijing to secure investments. For China, Myanmar is of strategic importance due to its access to the Indian Ocean, the main route for China's oil imports from the Middle East. Beijing is keen on the development of overland routes for oil and gas pipelines via the

Kyaukphyu special economic zone (SEZ) and deep-sea port, which will allow it to bypass the South China Sea where the US and Japan are challenging its sovereignty.

While New Delhi has been interested in Myanmar's entry into Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) grouping against Beijing, China seems to have extended its backing to the military in Myanmar, amid the rapidly evolving situation in the region.

India and China remain locked in a stand-off along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Eastern Ladakh since last year, while Washington-Beijing relations also deteriorated over their bilateral trade and later over the coronavirus pandemic, which originated in Wuhan city of Hubei province in China. On Friday,

Australia, the sharpest critic of the Chinese government, along with other democracies including the UK and the US, warned Myanmar's military against staging a coup. A joint statement from the diplomatic missions in Myanmar, said, "We urge the military, and all other parties in the country, to adhere to democratic norms and we oppose any attempt to alter the outcome of the elections or impede Myanmar's democratic transition." United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has also issued a statement, calling on "all actors to desist from any form of incitement or provocation, demonstrate leadership, and to adhere to democratic norms and respecting the outcome of the November 8 general election.

business



If a business is built on misleading users, on data exploitation, on choices that are no choices at all, then it does not deserve our praise. It deserves reform

TIM COOK | CEO, APPLE

INFLATION EASES

Retail inflation for industrial workers eased to 3.67% in December 2020 against 9.63% in the same month of last year due to lower prices of certain food items. Retail inflation measured in terms of all-India Consumer Price Index for Industrial Workers was 5.27% in November 2020, a labour ministry statement said



of the day quote

The focus of Matter through design and engineering will be to create products and services well suited for the Indian user. We have set a target of \$1 billion top line by 2025. Our vehicles are well aligned with India's strong demand for clean mobility



MOHAL LALBHAI | FOUNDER & CEO, MATTER

I am very hopeful given our enterprise, given the number of vaccines India is developing and the capacity available, hopefully in my own personal read, by Q3. We may actually have a situation where supply will meet up the demand or even outstrip



GAGAN SINGH | COUNTRY PRESIDENT & MD, AZTRAZENCA PHARMA (INDIA)

The adoption of technology in real estate, especially with the challenges posed by the pandemic, has made the process of finding homes for buying or renting much simpler



DHRUV AGARWALA | GROUP CEO, HOUSING.COM

SHORT TAKES

L&T bags ₹2,500cr contract

New Delhi: Infrastructure company Larsen & Toubro (L&T) Friday said it has received an up to ₹2,500-crore contract for Mumbai-Ahmedabad high speed rail corridor project. "The heavy civil infrastructure business of L&T Construction has secured a significant contract from two packages of the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail Corridor," L&T said.

NTPC Meja JV to begin ops

New Delhi: State-run power giant NTPC Friday said the 660 MW second unit of its joint venture Meja Urja Nigam will be commercially operational from January 31. "Based on achievement of approved norms and necessary approvals, unit-2 of 660 MW capacity of Meja Thermal Power Station of Meja Urja Nigam (P) Ltd (MUNPL)...is declared on commercial operation with effect from 00:00 hours of January 31, this year," NTPC said in a regulatory filing.

Shah becomes new chairman

Mumbai: Mahindra and Mahindra Financial Services (Mahindra Finance) Friday announced the appointment of Anish Shah as the chairman of the board, effective April 2, 2021. Shah is already a director of the company. He is the deputy managing director and group CFO of M&M Ltd and is designated to take over as the MD and CEO of the company from April 2, 2021. Shah has taken over from Dhananjay Mungale, who will continue to be an independent director on the board of Mahindra Finance, the release said.

J&J vax adds to Covid armoury

New York: Johnson & Johnson said Friday that its single-dose vaccine was 66% effective in preventing COVID-19 in a large global trial against multiple variants, giving health officials another weapon to tackle the pandemic. In the trial of nearly 44,000 volunteers, the level of protection against moderate and severe COVID-19 varied from 72% in the United States, to 66% in Latin America.

GDP growth rate for 2019-20 revised downwards to 4 pc

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 29: The government Friday revised downwards the economic growth rate for 2019-20 to 4 per cent from 4.2 per cent estimated earlier, mainly due to contraction in secondary sectors like manufacturing and construction. "Real GDP or GDP at constant (2011-12) prices for the years 2019-20 and 2018-19 stands at ₹145.69 lakh crore and ₹140.03 lakh crore, respectively, showing a growth of 4.0 per cent during 2019-20 and 6.5 per cent during 2018-19," National Statistical Office said in revised national account data.

Under the first revision released in January 2020, real GDP or GDP at constant (2011-12) prices for 2018-19 was pegged at ₹139.81 lakh crore, showing a growth of 6.1 per cent.

"The growth in real GVA during 2019-20 has been lower than that in 2018-19 mainly due to relatively lower growth in 'Mining and Quarrying', 'Manufacturing', 'Electricity, Gas, Water Supply & Other Utility Services', 'Construction', 'Trade, repair, Hotels and Restaurants' and 'Financial Services'," the data said.

During 2019-20, the growth rates of the primary sector (comprising agriculture, forestry, fishing and mining & quarrying), secondary



Real GDP for the years 2019-20 and 2018-19 stands at ₹145.69 lakh crore and ₹140.03 lakh crore, respectively

Under the first revision released in January 2020, real GDP for 2018-19 was pegged at ₹139.81 lakh crore, showing a growth of 6.1%

DURING 2019-20, THE GROWTH RATES OF THE PRIMARY SECTOR, SECONDARY SECTOR AND TERTIARY SECTOR (SERVICES) HAVE BEEN ESTIMATED AS 3.3%, (-)1.1% AND 7.2% AS AGAINST A GROWTH OF 2.2%, 5.8% AND 7.2%, RESPECTIVELY, IN THE PREVIOUS YEAR

sector (comprising manufacturing, electricity, gas, water supply & other utility services, and construction) and tertiary sector (services) have been estimated as 3.3 per cent, (-)1.1 per cent and 7.2 per cent as against a growth of 2.2 per cent, 5.8 per cent and 7.2 per cent, respectively, in the previous year.

Nominal Net National Income or NNI at current prices for 2019-20 stands at ₹179.94 lakh crore as

against ₹167.05 lakh crore in 2018-19, showing a growth of 7.7 per cent as against a rise of 10.3 per cent in the previous year: Per capita income i.e. per capita net national income at current prices is estimated at ₹1,25,883 and ₹1,34,186, respectively, for 2018-19 and 2019-20.

Per Capita PFCE at current prices, for 2018-19 and 2019-20 is estimated at ₹84,567 and ₹91,790, respectively.

2021 Skoda Superb launched in Capital

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 29: One of the leading automobile manufacturers Skoda Auto India Friday launched the updated version of the 'Superb' flagship sedan at Trinity Skoda (showroom) in city. The new 2021 Skoda Superb is priced at ₹31.99 lakh for the SportLine trim and its Laurin & Klement is priced ₹34.99 lakh (both prices, ex-showroom pan India). Updated version is equipped with features like LED headlamps with LED daytime running lights and illuminated eyelashes. The Sportline and the L&K have been equipped with new equipment for 2021 to justify the increase in price ranges. Superb was first launched in India in 2004.

The refreshed Skoda Superb sports the new 20.32 cm floating capacitive touch display with proximity sensor which feature a glass design and an update user interface. It is also part of the new generation Amundsen Infotainment system with inbuilt navigation.

The cabin of the 2021 Skoda Superb gets a new 8-inch touch-screen display with proximity sensor. The SmartLink connectivity technology in the new Skoda Superb supports MirrorLink, wireless



Apple CarPlay and Android Auto. The luxury sedan also gets voice command control, new Type C USB ports, Bluetooth GSM telephony, audio streaming and wireless charging options.

The Laurin & Klement gets the Park Assist function with offering 360-degree surround area view. Owner of Trinity Swati Kejriwal Skoda said, "2021 Skoda Superb is equipped with good features which are not available in BMW, Audi and Mercedes at this price. We are hoping for the best with this model."

Kejriwal also said that Skoda will be launching new SUV model Kushaq in March and it will be a game changer. She also mentioned that they are planning to open three dealerships in Balasore, Sambalpur and Rourkela in by next year.



FISCAL DEFICIT SOARS TO ₹11.6L CR AT DEC END

According to a data release, the fiscal deficit at the end of December in the previous financial year was 132.4 per cent of the Budget Estimate of 2019-20

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 29: Union government's fiscal deficit soared to ₹11.58 lakh crore or 145.5 per cent of the budget estimate at the end of December 2020, mainly on account of lower revenue realisation. Revenue realisation was hit by disruptions in normal business activities following the coronavirus pandemic and lockdowns.

According to the data released by the Controller General of Accounts (CGA), the fiscal deficit at the end of December in the previous financial year was 132.4 per cent of the Budget Estimate (BE) of 2019-20.

In absolute terms, the fiscal deficit stood at ₹11,58,469 crore at December-



end, as per the data.

For the current fiscal, the government had pegged the fiscal deficit at ₹7.96 lakh crore or 3.5 per cent of the GDP in the Budget which was presented in February 2020.

The fiscal deficit or gap between the expenditure and revenue had breached the annual target in July this year.

As per the data, the Government of India received ₹11.21 lakh crore

(50 per cent of corresponding BE 2020-21 of total receipts) up to December 2020. Of this, ₹9,62,399 crore was tax revenue, ₹1,26,181 crore was non-tax revenue and ₹33,098 crore was non-debt capital receipts.

Non-debt capital receipts consist of recovery of loans (Rs 14,202 crore) and disinvestment proceeds (Rs 18,896 crore).

The total receipts till December 2020 works out to be 49.9 per cent of the BE. The receipts were 56.6 per cent of the BE 2019-20 at the end of December 2019.

The CGA also said that ₹3,71,640 crore has been transferred to state governments as devolution of share of taxes by the central government up to December 2020.

India reaping 'lockdown dividend' by saving lives

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 29: India is reaping the "lockdown dividend" from the preventive measures it adopted at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic indicating its willingness to take short-term pain for long-term gain, said the Economic Survey tabled in Parliament Friday. The document also said despite the hard-hitting economic shock created by the global pandemic, India is witnessing a V-shaped recovery with a stable macroeconomic situation aided by a

stable currency, comfortable current account, burgeoning forex reserves, and encouraging signs in the manufacturing sector output. "India is reaping the 'lockdown dividend' from the brave, preventive measures adopted at the onset of the pandemic" it said in the opening chapter titled 'Saving Lives and Livelihoods Amidst a Once-in-a-Century Crisis'. Unlike Oscar Wilde's cynic, 'who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing,' India's policy response to the pandemic stemmed fundamentally'

TOP LOSERS 29 JAN		
46,285.77		
4598.65	Dr Reddys Labs	-5.69%
7207.95	Maruti Suzuki	-4.99%
553.20	Bharti Airtel	-3.12%
4007.10	Bajaj Auto	-3.02%
1239.65	Infosys	-2.87%
3112.90	TCS	-2.71%
89.10	NTPC	-2.62%
8720.40	Bajaj Finserv	-2.58%
88.40	ONGC	-2.54%
5325.20	UltraTech Cem	-2.18%
POINTS	BSE SENSEX	0%
-588.59		

'Highways construction to regain high pace of pre-COVID level'

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 29: Highways construction will regain fast-pace of the pre-COVID level on the back of multiple initiatives and unlocking of the economy, the Economic Survey 2020-21 said Friday.

The COVID-19 shock resulted in the decline of road construction to 22 km a day in the current fiscal from 30 km a day in FY19.

Asserting that India runs on the road, the Economic Survey tabled in Parliament said road transport is the dominant mode of transportation in the country and highways building would be fast-tracked.



"The pace at which roads have been constructed has grown significantly from 12 kms per day in 2014-15 to 30 kms per day in FY19 before it moderated in FY20.

"The decline in the construction of road per day in FY21 is mostly on account of the COVID-19 shock. With the unlocking of the economy, construction of roads is expected to return to the high pace attained before COVID-19," it said.

Total investment in the roads and highway sector has gone up more than three times in the six years - from ₹51,935 crore FY15 to ₹1,72,767 crore in FY20, which also led to increased road density across the states, it said.

ECONOMIC SURVEY

'India requires an active, counter-cyclical fiscal policy'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

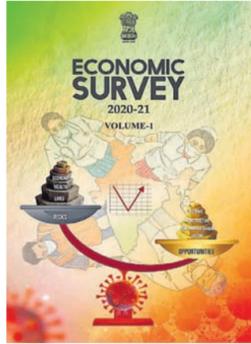
New Delhi, Jan 29: India requires an active fiscal policy which will ensure accrual of overall benefits from Centre's seminal economic reforms, said Economic Survey 2020-21 Friday. The survey document which was tabled by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in the Parliament cited fiscal multipliers are disproportionately higher during periods of economic crises than booms.

"Thus, as the Covid-19 pandemic has created a significant negative shock to demand, an active fiscal policy can ensure the full benefit of

seminal economic reforms taken by the government," the survey said. "As the IRGD is expected to be negative in the foreseeable future, a fiscal policy that provides an impetus to growth will lead to lower, not higher, debt-to-GDP ratios."

The Economic Survey examined the optimal stance of fiscal policy in India during a crisis and concluded that it is growth that leads to debt sustainability and not necessarily vice-versa.

Besides, the survey noted that the phenomenon of a negative IRGD in India, unlike advanced economies, is not due to lower interest rates but



The Economic Survey examined the optimal stance of fiscal policy in India during a crisis and concluded that it is growth that leads to debt sustainability and not necessarily vice-versa

According to the survey, simulations undertaken till 2030 highlight that, given India's growth potential, debt sustainability is unlikely to be a problem even in the worst-case scenarios

much higher growth rates. Consequently, the trend has prompted a debate on saliency of fiscal policy, especially during growth slowdowns and economic crises.

The survey highlighted that a well-designed expansionary fiscal policy stance can contribute to better economic outcomes

In addition, it pointed out that a time of excessive risk aversion in the private sector, as seen during an economic crisis, can catalyse private investment, leading to a crowding in

According to the survey, simulations undertaken till 2030 highlight that, given India's growth potential, debt sustainability is unlikely to be a problem even in the worst-

case scenarios. The survey highlighted that a well-designed expansionary fiscal policy stance can contribute to better economic outcomes as it can boost potential growth with multi-year public investment packages that raise productivity and mitigate the risk of Indian economy falling into a low wage-growth trap, like Japan.

In addition, it pointed out that a time of excessive risk aversion in the private sector, as seen during an economic crisis, risk-taking via public investment can catalyse private investment, leading to a crowding in, than a crowding out.

LIVERPOOL DOWN SPURS 3-1

ASSOCIATED PRESS

London, Jan 29: Roberto Firmino ended Liverpool's 483-minute goal drought in the Premier League to set the champions on their way to a 3-1 win over Tottenham and revive their faltering title defense.

Trent Alexander-Arnold and Sadio Mane also netted as Liverpool ended a five-game winless run in a league it dominated so resoundingly last season.

"We were really up for the game, everyone was at it," Alexander-Arnold said. "No one put too much of a foot wrong and it was an unbelievable performance from the lads."

The victory, which lifts Liverpool into fourth place, started with VAR ruling out an opener for Tottenham when Son Heung-min was adjudged to be offside.

Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg reduced the deficit to 1-2 with a powerful strike shortly after Alexander-Arnold scored at the start of the second half, but the Liverpool right back set up Mane for the third that sealed the win.

While Liverpool moved within four points of leader Manchester City, Jose Mourinho's Tottenham are eight points adrift in sixth after

their first defeat in 2021, albeit with a game in hand.

And Mourinho faces an anxious wait to discover the extent of Harry Kane's injury after the striker twice went down in the first half clutching his left ankle before being replaced at the interval.

"He is injured in both ankles," Mourinho said. "He said to compete with one pain he probably could, but both — it was very painful and very sore and he couldn't. He just couldn't. He is a guy with a good sacrifice spirit, he can fight against pain, but it was difficult for him."

There are problems at the back too for the north London club, which is in danger of failing to qualify for the Champions League for a second consecutive season after reaching the final in 2019 — losing to Liverpool.

Liverpool was forced to play midfielder Jordan Henderson at center back due to injuries and also lost Joel Matip at halftime with ankle ligament damage.

But it was Tottenham's back three looking more fragile. "We were punished by our individual mistakes," Mourinho said. "It's nothing new for us."

How different, though, this game might have gone had Son not been



Sadio Mane strikes from the left for Liverpool's third goal against Tottenham in London, Thursday

marginally offside when he was released by Kane before scoring.

Liverpool was more threatening going forward after that, with Mane testing Hugo Lloris with tame shots before setting up the opener in the fourth minute of stoppage time at the end of the first half.

Firmino tapped in after Mane passed across the face of goal, scoring Liverpool's first league goal since December 27. It was clear from Mourinho's post-match comments that it was a tense atmosphere in the dressing room at halftime.

"It is the mood of a team that is difficult to accept that you are losing," Mourinho said. "It's a mood where people are not happy. But then we have to move on."

But Liverpool doubled their lead two minutes into the second half when Lloris spilled Mane's shot into the path of Alexander-Arnold.

Tottenham threatened an immediate comeback when Hojbjerg powered in a shot from outside the area. There was another break for Tottenham when Mohamed Salah's goal was ruled out because Firmino was adjudged to have handled in the buildup despite Eric Dier grappling the Brazilian.

But Liverpool restored their two-goal cushion in the 65th when Alexander-Arnold's long cross came off Joe Rodon and fell for Mane to strike into the roof of the net.

Bowl 'best ball' to Kohli & co as often as possible: Thorpe

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, Jan 29: Such is the quality of the Indian batting line up that England bowlers will need to bowl their best balls repeatedly if they want to put the hosts, led by their peerless skipper Virat Kohli, under any kind of pressure during the upcoming Test series, reckons batting coach Graham Thorpe.

Since his horrendous show in an away series in England in 2014, Kohli has demolished England at both at home (2016) and away (2018) although the team had contrasting results in both series.

Asked if the bowling unit led by James Anderson has any specific plans for the Indian captain, the former England left-hander said, "We know that he is a fantastic player and he has shown that for many years now. Virat is in one of that batting order which understands home conditions very well."

"The key for our bowling attack will be to bowl our 'best ball' as often as we can. I don't think we can ask for anything more from our spinners and seamers. We need to have runs on the board and then

having the Indian batting order under pressure will really be the key for us. To take the game deep will be an important aspect for England," Thorpe said.

The Indian bowling is no longer about spinners weaving magic on rank turners and Thorpe said that they are well aware about how rounded this current home team attack is.

"The one thing about the Indian bowling attack is, it's not just about spin. I suppose their seam attack is also strong and so from that point of view it's not just to get side-tracked completely into the spin side of things as well."

The challenge posed by both Jasprit Bumrah and Ravichandran Ashwin can be a tough one but the batting coach understands that a balance needs to be created.

"Indian bowling has developed into a very good attack and we are very aware of that. When you come to the sub-continent you will have to deal with spin. More so with Indian attack, we are aware. The training time (three days) will be used to strike a fine balance practising both."



Graham Thorpe (R) with England skipper Joe Root

10-man Gaurs hold sloppy East Bengal

AGENCIES

Goa, Jan 29: A 10-man FC Goa hold East Bengal to a 1-1 draw in their Indian Super League (ISL) encounter at the Fatorda Stadium, Friday. Igor Angulo (39th) scored the opening goal for Goa while Danny Fox (65th) equalised for the home team.

The Gaurs playmaker Edu Bedia was sent off with a second yellow as he made an unnecessary challenge from behind on Anthony Pilkington to bring him down. Goa are at the third spot while East Bengal sit 10th as both teams shared spoils.

It couldn't have any interesting start to a match as East Bengal were awarded a penalty in the 19th second of the game. The Kolkata-based side attacked from the word go and it paid off immediately.

However, Pilkington missed the penalty as Dheeraj Moirangthem dived to the opposite side. But Pilkington hit the ball far off the post. It actually proved to be a costly miss considering the final scoreline.

Recovering from a nervy start, Goa tried to build momentum and almost struck the first goal. Angulo collected the ball following a brilliant through ball from a teammate and strided forward. However, Debjit Majumder got himself well behind the ball to deny Gaurs a well-deserved lead.

Goa continued to press East Bengal and Angulo yet again failed to break the deadlock. In the 23rd, Jorge Ortiz made a brilliant run from the midfield in front of the goal as the clearance from the East Bengal defenders fell for Angulo in space. He struck well, but Debjit was at the right position to hold the ball.

After a few missed opportuni-

ties, Angulo finally broke the deadlock in the 38th. It was a sublime finish from the Spaniard as Alberto Noguera played a delicious through ball and Angulo skipped past Debjit to finish it at the back of net.

It was all going good for the Gaurs until two mistakes within two minutes changed the course of the game. First East Bengal equalised in the 64th before Edu Bedia saw red the very next minute.

A brilliant ball was whipped in the box from Pilkington. However, Dheeraj couldn't hold on to it and spilled it, only for Fox to send it home without any mistake.

The situation turned worse for the Gaurs when Bedia was given marching orders the very next minute. It was poor from Bedia as the Gaurs skipper made an unnecessary challenge from behind on Pilkington to bring him down.

In the 74th, Dheeraj pulled off a brilliant save. Narayan Das delivered a cross for Harmanpreet Singh as he held on to it on the bounce and then pulled the trigger but Dheeraj dived to his right to deny East Bengal the winner.

East Bengal were were unlucky three minutes later when they were denied a penalty. Bright Enohakare made a brilliant solo run inside the box as Saviour Gama got a clear nudge on him inside the box. East Bengal appealed for a penalty but the referee thought otherwise.

Despite having a few more chances, East Bengal couldn't find the winner as the match ended 1-1. Pilkington must be cursing only himself for the missed penalty in the very first minute of the game which eventually cost them a win.



Danny Fox (2nd from L) is congratulated by his East Bengal teammates after scoring the equaliser against FC Goa, Friday

BWF WORLD TOUR FINALS: SRIKANTH HEADS HOME WINLESS Sindhu bows out with consolation win

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangkok, Jan 29: Already out of contention for the knockouts, World Champion PV Sindhu ended her campaign with a consolation win at the BWF World Tour Finals but Kidambi Srikanth had a disappointing finish after yet another close defeat, here Friday.

Sindhu, the Olympic silver medalist, notched up a 21-18, 21-15 win over World No.13 Pornpawee Chochuwong in her third and final match after suffering defeats in the first two days.

"Well I think it was a good finish. Actually until yesterday I still had a chance. Unfortunately the match with Tai went the other way so I didn't have a chance. Otherwise, it was a good game," Sindhu said.

Srikanth, however, went down 21-12, 18-21, 19-21 to Hong Kong's NG Ka Long Angus in what was yet another narrow defeat in a three-game thriller.

Sindhu opened up a 9-5 lead early on before entering the interval with a two-point advantage. Chochuwong managed to turn the tables at 15-14 but a determined Sindhu ensured there was no hiccup as she claimed the opening game.

In the second, Sindhu dished out a dominating game as she



jumped to a 6-0 lead and then kept moving ahead, keeping her rival at bay to seal the contest without much ado.

"For any athlete, losing two games

is going to be hard to come back stronger to, but I think it's very important from these wins to come back stronger and believe in yourself. I just played my game after

yesterday's upset," she said.

"Today is a new day and a fresh start. These three tournaments haven't gone as I had expected and there's been a lot to learn. After a long gap, I was very excited to be back on court, I think it's been a good thing. Now I'll go back home, be happy, take some rest and come back stronger."

In men's singles, both the players entered the inconsequential match with a 2-2 head-to-head record. World No.14 Srikanth once again claimed the opening game after fighting his way from 4-6 down but his opponents, placed eighth in the BWF rankings, rallied to win the next two games and seal the issue in his favour.

In the second game, Srikanth was up 13-10 at one stage but couldn't capitalise as his rival made a successful comeback.

In the decider, Srikanth was left to do the catching up job throughout before he held a slender 15-14 lead. They were tied 19-19 but the Indian once again failed to go the distance. The men's singles Group B match lasted one hour and five minutes.

Srikanth's hopes of making the semifinals were dashed after he had lost to World No.12 Wang Tzu Wei Thursday.

Odisha FC trade Marcelinho for ATKMB's Inman

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 29: Odisha FC reached an agreement with ATK Mohun Bagan (ATKMB) over a loan swap deal of Brazilian forward Marcelo Leite Pereira (Marcelinho) and Australia-born Scottish midfielder Brad Inman. The 29-year-old footballer will now play for the Bhubaneswar-based side on loan until the end of the season of the ISL.



After starting his youth career with Premier League club Newcastle United, Inman represented other English clubs Crewe Alexandra, Peterborough United and Rochdale before moving to Australia to join Brisbane Roar in 2019. The former Scotland youth team member made seven appearances for ATKMB in the ongoing season.

Surprised to be named for Padma Shri: Sudha

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 29: She thought herself to be worthy of it but veteran long distance runner Sudha Singh was nonetheless surprised when her name figured in this year's Padma Shri award winners' list.

The 34-year-old from Raebareilly in Uttar Pradesh joined an elite list of track-and-field Padma winners comprising the likes of Milkha Singh, Anju Bobby George and PT Usha among others. She was nominated for this year's award by the Uttar Pradesh government.

"I was a bit surprised when I got the news that I have been awarded Padma Shri. I deserved to win it but you never know you will get it or not. I am grateful to the UP chief minister for nominating me," Sudha told this agency in an interview.

"I have won a lot of laurels at the international level since a bronze in 2005. I feel the award is recognition of my hard work and dedication in the last 15 years. Surely, win-

ning the award is one of the biggest moments in my life," she said from Bangalore's Sports Authority of India (SAI) Centre, where she is currently training.

"When I started my athletics career, I never thought I would win Padma Shri one day. It has been an amazing journey."

Sudha has taken part in two Olympics, three Asian Games, two World Championships and four Asian Championships, mostly in 3000m steeplechase, an event she held the national record before it was broken by Lalita Babar.

Her best achievement to date is the gold she won in the 2010 Asian Games. She won a silver in the same event in the 2018 edition of the Games. She also won a gold in the 2017 Asian Championships besides three silver medals (2009, 2011 and 2013).

"After the (team) bronze in Asian Cross Country Championships in 2005, I got a job in Western Railways but after some time I got indica-



tions that I will have to keep winning medals if I have to continue the job.

"I did not want to lose the job which would have led to leaving athletics also. But after that I won gold in National Games in 2007 and National Championships (in 2007,

2008, 2009) before claiming a silver in 2009 Asian Championships. After that there was no fear of losing my job," she said.

Almost all her international achievements have come in 3000m steeplechase but Sudha is aiming

for her third Olympics in marathon, an event in which she has represented the country in the 2015 World Championships.

"I want to qualify for the Tokyo Olympics in marathon, 3000m steeplechase is not my priority now as far as Olympics qualification is concerned. I am going to run in the New Delhi Marathon in March and there I am targeting Olympics qualification."

"I also want to break the national record, let's see," said Sudha who is going to give Mumbai Marathon February 28 a miss. "I want to start my season a bit late and moreover, it will be warmer in Mumbai by that time as compared to Delhi."

She has a marathon personal best of 2:34.56 sec which she had clocked while finishing 10th in the 2019 Mumbai Marathon. The Tokyo Olympics qualification time is 2:29.30 while the national record stands at 2:34.43 in the name of OP Jaisha.

Shudha has been running marathons since 2015.