



CANDID TALK

Actor Sunny Leone says the concept of dating changes nearly every year as circumstances keep changing

LEISURE P2



CHINA FIRES BACK

China fired back at the US over allegations that Beijing withheld some information about the Covid outbreak

INTERNATIONAL P10



ASHWIN SHINES

Ravichandran Ashwin takes five wickets to put India in command in the 2nd Test against England

SPORTS P12

After farm laws, it's labour 'reforms'

THE LABOUR MINISTRY HAS COMPLETED THE PROCESS OF CONSULTATION ON DRAFT RULES ON THE FOUR CODES

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 14: The Ministry of Labour and Employment has finalised rules under the four labour codes paving the way for making reforms a reality by notifying those for implementation soon.

The four broad codes on wages, industrial relations, social security and occupational safety, health & working conditions (OSH) have already been notified after getting the President's assent. But for implementing these four codes, the rules need to be notified.

Now the ministry has completed the process of consultation on draft rules on the four codes and firmed up those for notification.

Talking to PTI, Labour Secretary Apurva Chandra said, "We have finalised the rules under the four codes



which are required to implement the four labour codes. We are ready to notify these rules. The states are doing their work to firm up rules

WHAT NEXT

The Code on Wages was passed by Parliament in 2019 while the three other codes got clearance from both the Houses in 2020

The ministry wants to implement all four codes in one go. After firming up of rules, now four codes can be notified in one go

under the four codes."

Parliament had passed four codes on four broad codes on wages, industrial relations, social security and occupational safety health & working conditions (OSH) which would ultimately rationalise 44 central labour laws.

The Code on Wages was passed by Parliament in 2019 while the three other codes got clearance from both the Houses

in 2020. The ministry wants to implement all four codes in one go. After firming up of rules, now four codes can be notified in one go.

Earlier February 8, 2021, Chandra had said in a press conference, "Rule-making process is already underway and likely to be completed in the coming week. All stakeholders are also consulted in the framing of rules. This ministry would soon be in a position to bring into force the four Codes, viz., Code on Wages, Industrial Relations, Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions (OSH) and Social Security Codes."

Since labour is a concurrent subject, certain rules would also be framed by the states under the four codes. The states are also in the process of notifying draft rules and holding tripartite consultations to firm up those for implementation.

Start Strong. Grow Stronger.

1800 266 266 1 (tollfree)

THUNBERG 'TOOLKIT' CASE

Activist Disha Ravi sent to 5-day police custody

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 14: Climate activist Disha Ravi, who was "picked up" by the Delhi Police in connection with her involvement in Greta Thunberg "toolkit" case, has been remanded to five-day Delhi Police Special Cell custody. Disha Ravi was arrested from Bangalore Sunday morning for questioning in Greta Thunberg "toolkit" case.

Student-cum-activist Disha Ravi was "picked up" from her house in Soladevanahalli area of Bangalore in connection with the case regarding "toolkit", shared by Greta Thunberg in connection with the farmers' protest. Disha Ravi is accused of disseminating the toolkit.

Disha Ravi was later produced in Patiala House court. Delhi Police had initially asked for a seven-day remand while claiming a "conspiracy" against the Indian government. It also claimed that thousands of people are involved in the case. Delhi Police also claimed that Disha Ravi edited the toolkit February 3. During the hearing in



Patiala House court in Delhi, Disha Ravi said she had edited only two lines. Disha Ravi said, "I did it to support the farmers. I was influenced by the farmers' movement."

Disha Ravi is one of the founders of the "Friday for Future" campaign - a global climate strike movement that started in August 2018 when Greta Thunberg began a school strike for climate.

Delhi Police had February 4 registered a case against the "pro-Khalistan" creators of a "toolkit", which was shared by teen climate activist Greta Thunberg and others on Twitter in connection with the farmers' protest.

Greta Thunberg had shared the toolkit while extending her support to the farmers' protest in India after the chaos and widespread violence on Republic Day during the farmers' tractor rally.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Your brother wants to be a stand-up comedian and your sister an activist. I guess, you're left with no option but to be a lawyer!

SHORT TAKES

Schools to remain closed Feb 15, 16

Bhubaneswar: In view of the state-wide bandh call given by the Congress party February 15 and the following day being Saraswati Puja, the Odisha government has decided to close the schools across the state on the two days. Talking to the media, Odisha School and Mass Education (S&ME) Minister Samir Dash informed, "As a bandh call has been given by the Congress party tomorrow from 7 am to 1 pm, the state government has decided to keep all the schools shut keeping in view the safety and security of the students." "The second point is celebration of Saraswati Puja February 16. Thus, it has been decided to keep all the schools closed on the two days."

Jammu: Major tragedy avoided

Jammu: A major tragedy was averted after police recovered a seven-kilogram Improvised Explosive Device (IED) from the Jammu bus stand Sunday, officials said. With this recovery, the police foiled a major plan of the terrorists to set off an explosion on the second anniversary of the 2019 Pulwama attack. As there were inputs that the terrorists would carry out terror attacks, adequate security measures were taken by the security forces. "It was a huge IED," a senior police official said. The bus stand is a crowded place in Jammu city thronged by hundreds of people daily. P7

Cong calls 6-hour Odisha bandh today

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 14: The Congress party had called for a six-hour state-wide bandh Monday in protest against the consistent rise in petrol and diesel prices.

Party leaders Sunday said they have mobilised supporters and volunteers from across the state to make the bandh a success. Congress leader Suresh Routray told the media, "As per the resolution taken by the party on the issue, we have decided to impose the bandh between 7am and 1pm. All essential services, including vehicles transporting milk, patients and those used by hospitals, for marriage and funeral services would be kept out of the purview of the bandh," he said.

Routray assured that they would hold peaceful demonstrations during the bandh. "We are not going to create any ruckus. We are not planning to break shops or indulge in any violent activity. We have appealed to the shopkeep-

PROTEST AGAINST FUEL PRICE HIKE



Torch light rally by Congress workers, Sunday

ers, traders, bus owners and others to cooperate with us and stand together to oppose the consistent fuel price rise during the BJP government at the Centre," the Congress leader said.

Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) president Niranjana Patnaik

said that the bandh aims to draw the attention of the Union government towards the sufferings of the common people due to the consistent rise in petrol and diesel prices.

Meanwhile, Odisha Police Sunday claimed that they have made adequate security arrangements in all the districts of the state in order to avoid any untoward incident during the six-hour bandh called by Congress Monday. Speaking to Orissa POST, ADGP YK Jethwa said that all the district superintendent of police (SPs) have been alerted regarding the bandh. He held discussions with IGs of all the ranges regarding deployment of forces and action against the protestors if try to do any mischief.

Around 37 platoons of police force will be deployed at important places in the jurisdiction under the Commissionerate Police to avert any untoward incident during bandh. As many as five platoons of force will be mobilised in each district keeping in

Petrol crosses ₹89/litre, diesel at ₹86.13 in City

BHUBANESWAR: With an increase of 30 paise/ litre, the price of petrol reached ₹89.42 per litre in the state capital Sunday. At the same time, the price for diesel went up by 35 paise to reach ₹86.13 per litre. Petrol price crossed the ₹99 a litre mark in Rajasthan Sunday while diesel topped ₹91 after rates were increased for the sixth day in a row. This pushed retail rates, which differ from state to state depending on incidence of local sales tax or VAT and freight charges, to their highest level. In the national capital, petrol climbed to ₹88.73 a litre and diesel soared to ₹79.06, the notification showed.

view the bandh call. He also expressed hope that the protest will pass without any violence.

Apex Court in deadlock on judges' appointment

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 14: While five judges of the Supreme Court are set to retire by August 2021, there is no recommendation sent to the government so far regarding the elevation of new judges to the Supreme Court.

This indicates that sitting CJI SA Bobde, who will retire April 23 this year, may leave a legacy of not having recommended any judge for appointment to the Supreme Court.

According to sources, the Supreme Court Collegium, the group of five senior-most judges, including the CJI, has been in disagreement over the recommenda-



tion of names of judges for elevation to the apex court.

Sources say that the disagreement may be over one single name, that of Justice Akil Kureshi, the current Chief Justice of the Tripura High Court, whose elevation as the Chief Justice was fraught with controversy. Justice Kureshi is one of the senior-most judges in the all-India seniority list.

While the Justice Bobde-led

Collegium has recommended several judges to the high courts since he took over in November 2019, no recommendations for names for Supreme Court have been passed yet. The Collegium has held over 25 meetings since Justice Bobde's appointment as CJI, but these meetings have all been for recommendations to the high courts. No moves seem to have been made to recommend a judge to the Supreme Court.

Justice Indu Malhotra, one of the only two women judges on the bench, is set to retire March 13, while CJI Bobde himself retires in April. The Supreme Court is already working with only 30 judges, instead of the sanctioned strength of 34 judges.

REMEMBERING OUR MARTYRS



Students carry the Tricolour in a rally to pay tribute to the martyrs of Pulwama attack in Jammu, Sunday PTI PHOTO

SENATE ACQUITS TRUMP IN SECOND IMPEACHMENT

THE FIVE-DAY TRIAL CONCLUDED WITH AN INSUFFICIENT 57-43 MAJORITY OF SENATORS VOTING TO CONVICT

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Washington, Feb 14: Former US President Donald Trump was acquitted Saturday on charges of inciting an insurrection at the US Capitol, after a majority of Senate Republicans closed ranks and refused to punish the former president in his historic second impeachment trial.

The five-day trial saw Democratic prosecutors argue - bolstered by dramatic video of the January 6 riot - that Trump betrayed his oath by whipping up his supporters into storming Congress in a last-ditch attempt to cling to power.

It concluded as expected with a majority of Republicans declaring him not guilty, in a sign of the powerful grip the 74-year-old Trump

continues to exert on his party. But while the 57-43 majority that voted to convict fell short of the two-thirds needed in the Senate, seven Republicans joined with Democrats to seek Trump's conviction, making it the most bipartisan impeachment trial in US history.

Trump, who has been sequestered in his Florida club since leaving office January 20, welcomed the verdict - denouncing the proceedings as "yet another phase of the greatest witch hunt in the history of our country."

Despite the stain of a second impeachment, Trump hinted at a possible political future, saying that "our historic, patriotic and beautiful movement to Make America Great Again has only just begun."

"We have so much work ahead of us, and soon we will emerge with a



vision for a bright, radiant, and limitless American future," he said in a statement.

Trump was impeached by the House of Representatives January 13, a week after the chaotic assault

that stunned the nation and provoked widespread bipartisan outrage. Democrats argued that Trump's behavior was an "open and shut" case of impeachable conduct, retracing how he spent two months repeating the falsehood that the election was stolen, before inciting his supporters to attack Congress and stop the certification of Joe Biden's victory.

"He summoned his supporters to Washington, on the Ellipse, whipped them into frenzy, and directed them at the Capitol," Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said after the vote. The defense team swatted the evidence away, arguing that Trump's appeal to supporters to "fight like hell, at the rally that preceded the attack," was merely rhetorical.

But their central argument was that the Senate had no constitu-

tional jurisdiction to try a former president. Most Republican senators agreed.

But Mitch McConnell, the powerful Senate minority leader who voted to acquit on those same grounds, left no doubt he considers Trump to have caused the riot - which sent lawmakers fleeing for safety as a marauding mob rampaged through the Capitol.

The former Trump ally unleashed a searing rebuke of the ex-president, calling his actions preceding the assault a "disgraceful dereliction" of duty.

"There's no question - none - that President Trump is practically and morally responsible for provoking the events of the day," McConnell told the chamber after the vote.

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
MAX	35.4°C	34.6°C
MIN	16.4°C	15.8°C
Humidity	42%	40%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

Forecast: Dry weather likely

leisure



MATTHEW LEWIS CAN FALL INTO EXTREME BOUTS OF LAZINESS

Actor Matthew Lewis says he struggles to find his 'on' switch at times. "I think I struggle to find my on switch! I can fall into extreme bouts of laziness, which can be very difficult to get out of!" reports femalefirst.co.uk.

'TO ALL THE BOYS... HAS BEEN INTEGRAL TO HOW I'M TODAY'

Actress Lana Condor, who rose to fame portraying Lara Jean Covey in the *To All The Boys I've Loved Before* franchise, says these movies have been a huge part of her life for years, and have been very integral to how she is today as a young woman.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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

ARIES
Your day is packed full. There are negotiations, commitments, plans and decisions to wade through. You may feel low on energy and swamped due to lack of information and inputs from others. But clarity will return gradually as matters conclude, says Ganesh.

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
You need to bear in mind that you need to concentrate on your own image and standing in society rather than worry about the actions of others. Those in the retail business will see an unprecedented spurt in their profits today, says Ganesh.

CANCER
You will try to improve ties with beloved ones. Your devotion and dedication will reap benefits for the future. You will have physical and mental happiness. You will keep your future in mind. This will boost your self-confidence. Ganesh's blessings are with you.

LEO
You will be confused with issues relating to the work-place today. You need to accept your present circumstances for what they are, and work towards resolving your immediate concerns to find your way ahead in life.

VIRGO
Your beloved will not only give you a surprise today but also demand one, says Ganesh. There may be some good news on the business front. Ganesh says own up to your old mistakes so that you don't repeat them, and chalk out the plans for the future.

LIBRA
Ganesh says you will get the answers to all your questions. You will tend to worry about small things and issues. You will be able to earn from different sources today. Ganeshji assures that if you keep your mind balanced you will achieve amazing results in your work.

SCORPIO
You may bump into people with different tastes and temperaments, says Ganesh. Some may surprise you, while some may just shock you. Sometimes, it is difficult to understand when people react indifferently to your success. Handle it with smartness and diplomacy.

SAGITTARIUS
You have been experiencing the adverse effects of stressful lifestyle off-late. But not anymore, as you realise the importance of good health. Maintaining good health will begin with good news of either promotion or increment at work. This leaves you happy and satisfied, says Ganesh.

CAPRICORN
Today, you'll like to hold a cup of hot coffee in one hand, relax and go down the memory lane to cherish some golden moments. You may want to give another chance to your romantic relationship as you develop likings for your ex-boyfriend/girlfriend.

AQUARIUS
You speed up your pace and try to do everything in order to complete your targets, but you won't be able to complete the tasks on time. Don't lose hope as tomorrow will be a different day, says Ganesh. Give yourself some time to relax and unwind.

PISCES
You need to concentrate more on your personal life, and seriously think about the changes you need to make. You are guided more by your heart in these matters. However, there is nothing to worry about, as this is a golden period for you.

Human-pet bonding, trust mark Valentine's Day in city



THE FIRST OF ITS KIND EVENT IN BHUBANESWAR COMPRISED A RAMP WALK COMPETITION IN WHICH DOG PARENTS AND THEIR 'BUDDIES' PARTICIPATED

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar: Bonding and trust between humans and pets always exudes pure joy and bliss. And that is exactly what everyone experienced at the 93.5 RED FM's Valentine's Day event at the lawn area of Esplanade One Mall where the unconditional love was on display.

As many as 20 parents and their canine buddies took part in the programme. Titled K9 Love, the first of its kind event, was held to make people experience love in its purest form, the organisers said. The event comprised a ramp walk competition



which was participated by the dog parents and their 'buddies' while top three participants were awarded with trophies.

Besides, there were also some fantastic obedience acts showcased by a few talented canine participants. "Dog is widely

known as man's best friend. Therefore, all the dog owners and lovers have attended the event to witness how the four-legged ones are being taken care of, their lifestyle and how they have turned assets for people," said Subrat Ranjan Prusty, secretary of Odisha Kennel Club.

All participating dogs were judged and awarded based on parameters including temperament, anatomical correctness and adherence to the 'Breed Standard'. The event was judged by Prusty and noted Dog Behaviourist Brijesh Dash. Mickey won the first prize in Pet Show category while Saina topped in Obedience Routine.

The Station Head (Odisha) of the channel, Manas Pattanik, talking about the event, said, "Nothing can match the affection and love that your canine showers on you and this event was organised to make people feel more empathetic towards not just the dogs but animals in general. The overwhelming response that we received has certainly given us the necessary push to organise more such events in future."



PICS: BIKASH NAYAK

Organic Fair attracts attention



In an attempt to create awareness on chemical free farming, several organic farmers and promoters Sunday put their fresh stocks on display at the Organic Fair, organised by the Press Club of Odisha on its campus in Bhubaneswar. A total of 16 stalls of varied items grown, processed and manufactured were put up by the exhibitors who came from different parts of Odisha. Tathagata Satpathy, president of Press Club of Odisha, said, "The fair witnessed participation of genuine organic farm producers." He also expressed his desire to see a boost in organic farming in the state.

OP PHOTO

Dating concepts change every year: Sunny

Mumbai: Toasting the Valentine's Day spirit, Sunny Leone opens up on how the concept of dating changes nearly every year because of circumstances of the world keep changing. Dating style post 2020, in particular, has changed dramatically, she adds.

"The concept of dating changes basically every year because of the circumstances of the world we live in. Last year, obviously dating has completely changed and it might change forever, on how we meet people and (have) interactions. Or, we might go back to the same. I have no idea," Sunny said.

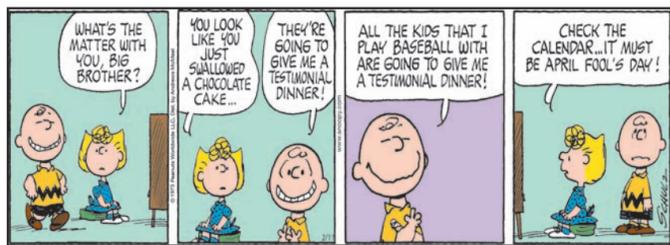
The actress feels that Covid has made dating more difficult. "Right now it is so difficult to just meet anyone in person. So, definitely dating style has changed dramatically. You go on the first date and you go like, 'I will see you but show me your Covid test'," she said.

Sunny has been married to Daniel Weber for almost a decade now and they have three children - daughter Nisha and twins Noah and Asher.

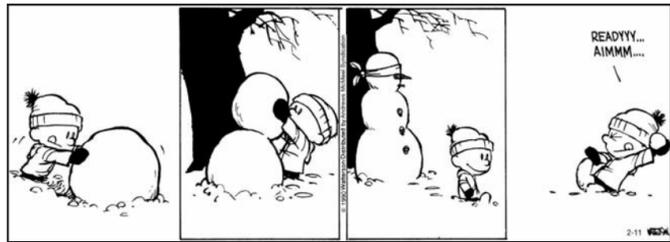
IANS



PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

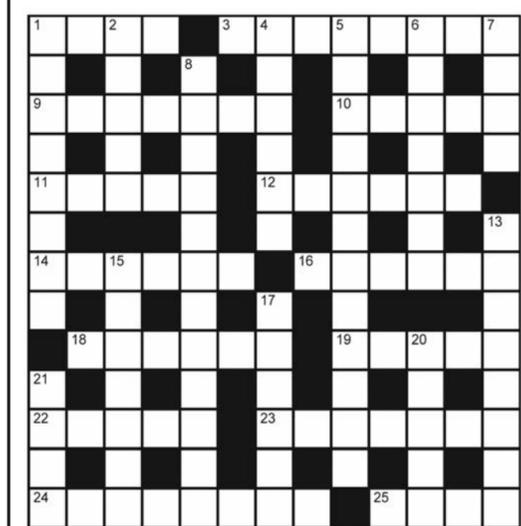


BREVITY



FUN post

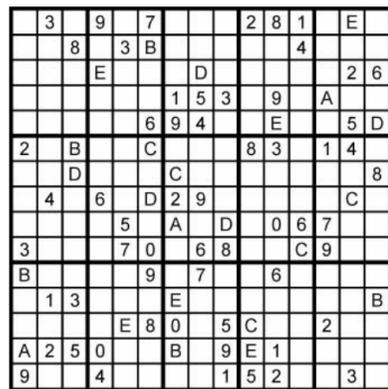
CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Heroic tale
 - 3 Mythical hero noted for his strength
 - 9 Old World plover
 - 10 Spear
 - 11 Vast chasm
 - 12 Colourful bird
 - 14 Crazy bones
 - 16 To the rear, at sea
 - 18 Dress code
 - 19 British wasteland
 - 22 Ballroom dance
 - 23 Sends for junkets, e.g.
 - 24 Compotes and feature
 - 25 Highchair
- Down**
- 1 Saved
 - 2 Aquarium fish
 - 4 They're in the middle of the deck
 - 5 Decorator's chore (6,6)
 - 6 Genealogy
 - 7 Flower holder
 - 8 It comes in many pieces (6,6)
 - 13 Furtively (2,3,3)
 - 15 Hound dogs
 - 17 Skeleton's place?
 - 20 French romance
 - 21 Thunderstruck

SUDOKU

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

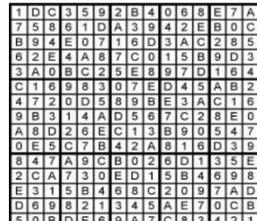


SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD



SUDOKU

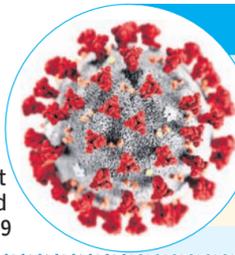


CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



FOR MARTYRS

Students of Utkal University in Bhubaneswar hold a Tricolour rally to pay homage to the martyrs of Pulwama terror attack, Sunday. At least 40 CRPF personnel were killed in the attack February 14, 2019



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	10,91,69,947	8,12,14,985	24,06,714
India	1,08,92,550	1,05,98,709	1,55,588
Odisha	3,36,174	3,33,554	1,910

Saffron targets govt on Kotia

THE SUPREME COURT IS SCHEDULED TO HEAR THE MATTER FEBRUARY 19



Pradesh government to file its response on a contempt petition filed by Odisha.

Odisha has sought action against the neighbouring state over its violation of the apex court order in 1968 and 2006.

The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear the matter February 19. Andhra Pradesh held panchayat elections in three villages Talaganjeipadar, Patusineri and Phagunseneri in Kotia Gram Panchayat under Pottangi block. It has changed their names to Ganjebadara, Pattuchennuru and Pagluhennuru.

Meanwhile, another BJP leader Bhruhu Baxipatra Sunday said that the state seemed to be lethargic in the whole issue and failed to intervene timely.

"In 2018, Dharmendra Pradhan went to Kotia and said that inter-state dispute should be handled. He had said that the Centre is ready to intervene. Both the states can take the help of Centre in inter-state council meeting to resolve the issue. However, the matter still hangs in balance. The state has been silent since 2006 on the issue. There are official documents which claim that the disputed land belongs to Odisha," he said.

BJD leader Shashi Bhusan Behera, however, said, "The remarks of Union minister is condemnable. If the intrusion has been from the Andhra Pradesh government side, putting the blame on Odisha by any Odia is not a good sign. We are undertaking development works across the state including in Kotia. Kotia has been an integral part of the state. Every Odia should come forward to stand by the state on the matter."

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



NMA bylaws withdrawal soon: Sarangi

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 14: In view of huge uproar against the controversial bylaws prepared by the National Monuments Authority (NMA) for two ancient temples in Ekamra Kshetra, the Centre has reportedly ordered to withdraw the draft notification.

"The bylaws on Brahmeswar and Ananta Basudeba temples will be withdrawn soon," said Union Minister of State for Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Pratap Sarangi Sunday.

Clarifying over NMA bylaws that triggered controversy, he said that it was a draft notification, not a final order.

"Like the heritage bylaws were framed for Puri Srimandir, the

NMA prepared the draft notification for two temples in Bhubaneswar. We have discussed with the Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Union Minister of State for Culture and Tourism Prahlad Singh Patel in this regard and order has been given to the NMA for withdrawal of the draft bill," Sarangi told media.

Opposing the bylaws, he said that the draft notification should not have been circulated in this manner.

"A draft notification has been prepared seeking public opinion for enforcing construction restrictions around national monuments. Before preparing the draft the NMA should have consulted others. However, the Union Culture Minister has already ordered to withdraw the controversial bylaws for two ancient temples," he said.

His statement came amid wide protest by servitors of the Lingaraj Temple as well as residents demanding immediate withdrawal of the heritage bylaws on Ananta Basudeba and Brahmeswar temples.

Interfering in the matter, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had urged the Centre to withdraw the controversial bylaws for two ancient temples in Ekamra Kshetra.

The NMA had January 18 issued a public notification on draft heritage bylaws for Jagannath temple besides, Ananta Basudeva and Brahmeswar temples and sought suggestions within a month.

The bylaws prohibit and regulate constructions within 100 to 300 metre radius of the monuments that are protected under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act-2010.

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 14: Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan Sunday urged the Odisha government to take timely steps to protect the geographical boundary of the state.

He hoped the legal course of action for Kotia panchayat would be taken to its logical conclusion by the state administration.

The statement of Pradhan came a day after Andhra Pradesh held panchayat polls in the disputed region of Kotia in Koraput district and other bordering villages of the state.

"Andhra Pradesh's effort to involve Odisha people in its Panchayat polls by invading into the geographical border in Koraput, Ganjam and Gajapati is a matter of great concern. The border dispute with Andhra and other neigh-



The remarks made by Union minister are condemnable. If the intrusion has been from the Andhra Pradesh government side, putting the blame on Odisha by any Odia is not a good sign. We are undertaking development works across the state including in Kotia

SHASHI BHUSAN BEHERA | BJD



...The border dispute with Andhra and other neighbouring states has developed a bitter relationship. The situation may get worse if the Chief Minister doesn't take timely step

DHARMENDRA PRADHAN | BJP



bouring states has developed a bitter relationship. The situation may get worse if the Chief Minister doesn't take timely step (sic)," Pradhan tweeted.

Pradhan called upon leaders of all political parties in Odisha, social organisations and activists to work collectively for safeguarding the

border.

He also said that the local administration should work to implement the government welfare scheme in the border region to ensure development in these areas.

Notably, the state government has moved the Supreme Court, which issued a notice to the Andhra

State's nCoV tally stands at 3,36,174; infection rate slows



PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 14: State's Covid-19 caseload Sunday surged to 3,36,174 after 73 more people tested positive for the infection, a senior Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department official said.

The 73 new cases were detected in 19 of the 30 districts of the coastal state, with 44 reported from different quarantine centres while the remaining 29 are local contact cases. Bargarh district recorded the highest 14 new positive cases followed by Angul (8) and Sambalpur

(6). As many as 11 other districts did not register any new cases since Saturday, the official said.

Gajapati district is the lone district which for two consecutive days remained Covid-19 free as the district has no active cases.

Odisha's coronavirus death toll remained at 1,910 as no fatality is reported since February 9, said the official, adding that the state presently has only 760 active cases while 3,33,451 patients have recovered from the highly infectious disease.

This apart, 53 other Covid-19 pos-

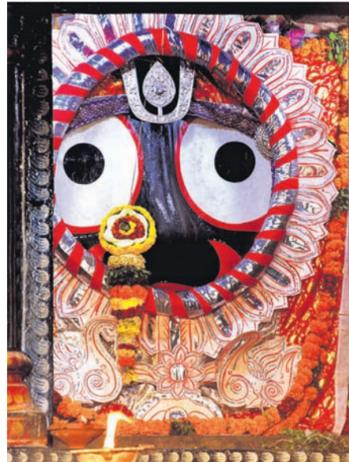
Vax drive extended

The state Health department Sunday decided to extend the first phase of Covid 19 vaccination for healthcare workers after it failed to ensure 100 per cent coverage. The department has informed the extension of the dates to the Collectors, medical officers and Urban Local Bodies. The extension of date was given after the nod from the Union government. The second phase of vaccination drive for healthcare workers will start from February 15.

itive patients have also died due to comorbidities, said the official. Of the total 1,910 fatalities reported so far, Khurda district of which the state capital Bhubaneswar is a part alone accounted for 336 deaths, followed by Ganjam (248), Sundergarh (173), Cuttack (142) and Puri (117). Twenty-five other districts reported fatalities below 100.

The state has so far conducted over 80.23 lakh sample tests for Covid-19 including 22,277 Saturday. Odisha's positivity rate stands at 4.19, a data released by the H&FW department said. Odisha has inoculated 4,16,317 health care workers and frontline workers till Saturday, said the official.

Thousands witness Lord's Padma Besha



Patitapabana, the image of Lord Jagannath at the Lions' Gate of Srimandir, adorned with the Padma Besha, Sunday. People in large numbers visit the 12th century shrine to witness the unique ritual

POST NEWS NETWORK

Puri, Feb 14: Thousands of devotees Sunday visited Srimandir here to witness the Padma Besha of Lord Jagannath, said an official of Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA).

SJTA sources said Lord Jagannath was adorned with the Padma Besha (a special attire) at the sanctum sanctorum during the performance of Badasinghar ritual

Saturday night. However, the devotees were allowed to witness Lord's Padma Besha till the Abakash ritual Sunday.

"The authorities of Badachhata mutt provided several decorative pieces including Kirita, Chula, Hrudapadak and Karapallab for the Padma Besha. The Lord was offered Khiri and Amalu Prasad on the occasion," said the temple official.

By witnessing the Padma Besha

We were deprived of the Nagarjuna Besha November 27 as the temple remained shut for people due to Covid. Today, I am extremely happy after watching Lord's Padma Besha...

JANAK PRADHAN | DEVOTEE

of Lord Jagannath, a person can get pardon for his sins committed in last

several births, said a servitor. As per Srimandir tradition, the Lord is adorned with the special attire only once in a year, he added.

"We had been deprived of the Nagarjuna Besha of Lord Jagannath November 27 as the temple remained shut for people due to the Covid-19 restrictions. Today, I am extremely happy by watching Lord's Padma Besha and partaking Mahaprasad at the Anand Bazar," said Janak Pradhan, a devotee from Balasore.

GRACEFUL MOVES



Artistes from Cuttack Kala Vikash Kendra perform Odissi on the second day of Guru Debaprasad Das Award Ceremony at Rabindra Mandap in Bhubaneswar

Rain, thunderstorm to lash state from tomorrow, says MeT

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 14: The India Meteorological Department (IMD) Sunday predicted that rain and thunderstorm will lash several parts of the state next week.

As per the latest weather bulletin, light to moderate rain or thundershower will occur at several places in the state from Tuesday (February 16).

The IMD has also issued 'Yellow Warning' (thunderstorm with lightning) for 15 districts - Rayagada, Gajapati, Ganjam, Kandhamal, Kalahandi, Boudh, Sonepur, Bolangir, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Balasore, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Angul and Dhenkanal.

The warning has been issued from February 17 to 08:30 am, February 18, 2021.

Youths hurt in brawl at City bar

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 14: The bouncers employed at a city bar in Kharavel Nagar area here have allegedly assaulted two youths leaving them severely injured late Saturday night. The youths—Arya Vedanta and Subhashish—have sustained injuries on neck and other parts of their body.

According to sources, the youths partying at the bar engaged in a heated argument with the bouncers who were reportedly trying to stop them from creating any nuisance under the influence of liquor in the bar. The heated argument reportedly soon turned into violent as the bouncers attacked them with sharp weapons.

The youths along with their friends had reportedly gone to the bar to celebrate 'Kiss Day'.

Kharavel Nagar police is investigating into the allegations after



The youths along with their friends had reportedly gone to the bar to celebrate 'Kiss Day'

registering a case (54/21) in this regard. Police are also examining the CCTV footage.

6th jumbo death in 2 weeks

FOREST DEPT OFFICIALS SUSPECT THAT 'HAEMORRHAGIC SEPTICEMIA' MIGHT BE THE REASON BEHIND THE DEATH OF THESE ELEPHANTS IN KARLAPAT WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Bhubaneswar/Bhawaniapatna, Feb 14: Raising concerns among Forest department officials and animal lovers, another jumbo was reported to be found dead at the Karlapat Wildlife Sanctuary in Kalahandi district, Sunday.



This is the sixth death reported in the last two weeks. The carcass was reportedly spotted near Ghusurigudi drain in the sanctuary. Forest department officials suspect that 'haemorrhagic septicemia' might be the reason behind the death of these elephants. Meanwhile, a team, headed by Prof Niranjan Sahu from Centre for Wildlife Health, Odisha University of Agriculture and Technology (OUAT) in Bhubaneswar, visited

Hemorrhagic septicemia is a bacterial disease that mainly affects cattle and water buffalo, and is an important cause of livestock mortality in tropical regions

of the disease, the Forest department is taking several measures. Immunization of cattle in several villages that are close to the spots where the jumbo deaths were reported has been started. And the water bodies in the sanctuary have been disinfected. Meanwhile, baffled by the death of so many wild elephants in a short span of time a two-member experts team led by Odisha

University of Agriculture and Technology (OUAT) Laboratory Coordinator Niranjan Sahu reached Karlapat Saturday to probe the cause of death of elephants.

Officials suspected that the elephants might have died due to bacterial infection transmitted from a pond in the forest. Meanwhile, the postmortem of the elephants has also been conducted in OUAT.

The Forest officials advised people close to the forest not to allow their cattle to graze in the area suspected to have been infected by bacteria and started an immunisation programme for the cattle.

The Forest officials also disinfected all water bodies inside the sanctuary as a preventive measure in a bid to check the spread of infection by the bacteria to other animals.



People enjoying the weekend at Jobra park in Cuttack, Sunday

Youth tied, thrashed for raping minor girl

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, Feb 14: Taking law into their own hands, some irate villagers tied a youth to a concrete pillar of their clubhouse building for allegedly kidnapping and raping a minor girl of the village in Keonjhar district. They thrashed the youth mercilessly. A video of the incident in which villagers are seen abusing and beating the youth has gone viral on social media.

According to sources, the incident took place at Kimirdaposi village under Durumunga police limits. The minor girl was on her way to a neighbour's house Saturday evening. The accused youth allegedly muffled her mouth and raped her at an isolated place. As the minor girl did not return home, her family members were worried and searched for her in the village. Finally she was traced. The victim narrated her plight to her parents.

King cobra-mongoose duel leaves spectators amazed

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sajanagarh, Feb 14: A fierce wild battle between a mongoose and a king cobra was witnessed at Panchalingeswar forest in Balasore district Saturday. The hissing sound got some passersby attracted to the spot. The onlookers were dumbfounded at what they saw and started capturing the rarest of the rare fight on their mobile phones without losing any moment. The way the arch-enemies were fighting gave a thrilling experience to the onlookers. Each time the most venomous

snake was trying to strike the mongoose with its fangs, the latter which is known for its agility managed to duck its body with lightning speed. But the reptile could not save itself from being attacked by the mongoose. It continued for more than half an hour. And, finally it was the king cobra which had to flee the battleground. Later, on being informed local tourist guide Manoranjan Das reached the spot and rescued the badly wounded snake. He handed it over to the Kuladiha forest department. After treating it, they released it in its natural habitat again.

Once serving to kill Covid, now PPE-clad frontline worker begs

The state govt didn't renew the contract further after it expired Dec 31, 2020, leaving a lot of women health workers jobless

POST NEWS NETWORK

Charampa, Feb 14: A village-level female health worker, found begging in the streets of Charampa wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) kit in Bhadrak district, protested against the state government for not providing rehabilitation to many health workers like her. The worker was identified as Ashwini Padhee.

Notably, hundreds of auxiliary nurse midwife (ANM) workers have been sitting on a dharna for the last two months at PMG Square in the state capital, Bhubaneswar, braving the winter, demanding rehabilitation. Ashwini, along with other women, was recruited on a contractual basis by the state government during the Covid-19 pandemic peak period. However, the contract period ended as the number of Covid cases drastically declined and the pandemic situation improved in the state. However, due to a shortage of budget, the state government did not



We risked our and our family members' lives by working closely with Covid patients. After working for around nine months, the government dismissed us without ensuring any rehabilitation

ASHWINI PADHEE
renew the contract further after it expired December 31, 2020, leaving a lot of women health workers jobless. "The state government appointed us to work as 'Covid

JHARAPHULA DEATH CASE

Irked over tardy probe, victim's father gives self-immolation threat

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 14: As police investigating the Jharaphula death mystery are yet to crack it, the victim's father Ramakanta Nayak hailing from Jashipur in Mayurbhanj district was upset over the 'tardy pace' of the progress. He has threatened to immolate self before the state Assembly.

He alleged that the police are yet to reveal the chain of incidents linked to her daughter's death. The accused has been arrested and the scooter he had used in the crime and CCTV footage have also been seized. Despite all this, the case has not been cracked as yet, he lamented. Jharaphula, a resident of Jashipur in Mayurbhanj district, was a Ramadevi Women's University Plus-III second-year student. Due to lockdown restrictions, Jharaphula was staying at her house. During this period Rakesh made acquaintances with her. Rakesh was engaged in underground pipe laying work in her village. Thereafter, the girl met Rakesh on several occasions in Bhubaneswar. It has been revealed that Rakesh

and Jharaphula had checked into OYO Shiv Sai Guest House, Dharma Vihar in Bhubaneswar January 26. Rakesh reportedly found Jharaphula in an unconscious state at the hotel room on the morning of January 27 and called up his friend Shekhar seeking his help. While Shekhar drove the scooter, Rakesh rode pillion making the unconscious girl sit between them. They were spotted leaving the place around 7 am. Rakesh had reportedly admitted that he initially wanted to hospitalise Jharaphula at SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack. But on the way, he realized that she had already died and changed his decision. The two took the body on the scooter to Jajpur. They al-



CLASSIFIED

GENERAL

SALE

Sale of Old Furniture, Office Assets, Computers & Inventories, Apply before Dt.18.02.2021. Contact: 7205483554, 9861651312, At: World Vision India, Loisingha ADP, Loisingha, Balangir - 767020

AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an affidavit before Sri N. Mohanty, Notary, Bhubaneswar, I, Sayed Munir Ahmed, Son of Sayed Hamamuddin Ahmed, resident of Plot No. 84, 85/D-29, Green Garden, K9A, Kalinga Vihar, P.O.: Patrapada, Bhubaneswar - 751019, Dist. - Khordha, Odisha has changed my name to Syed Monir Ahmed. Hence, I will be known as Syed Monir Ahmed for all purpose.

Blood donation drive in City

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 14: A blood donation drive was organised in the city at the Institute of Engineers to mark the 57th birth anniversary of late Congress leader Lulu Mohapatra, Sunday. The programme was attended by Food Supplies and Consumer

Welfare Minister Ranendra Pratap Swain, Jagni MLA Suresh Routray and Brahmagiri MLA Lalitendu Mohapatra. A total 250 blood units were collected during the event in the state capital organised by social activist Amiyakant Das. More than 1,000 supporters meanwhile attended the drive in other parts of the state.

TECHNICIANS' MEET



Dignitaries including Rajya Sabha MP Munna Khan participate in the 29th annual conference of Odisha Motion Picture Technicians and Workers' Association in Cuttack, Sunday

Doc opens 'One Rupee' clinic for poor people

The clinic, at Kachha Market area in Burla town, remains open from 7 am to 8 am and 6 pm to 7 pm

AGENCIES

Sambalpur, Feb 14: Keeping up with the medical ethics of serving humanity, a doctor in Sambalpur district has opened a 'One Rupee' clinic to provide treatment to the poor and underprivileged people. Shankar Ramchandani, an assistant professor in the department of medicine at Veer Surendra Sai Institute of Medical Sciences and Research (VIMSAR), has started the facility in Burla town where patients have to pay just one rupee for receiving medicare.

Ramchandani's wife Sikha Ramchandani, a dental surgeon, is helping him in the pioneering work. The clinic was inaugurated Friday and 33 patients came to the clinic on the first day the doctor said. Located 330 km north-west of Bhubaneswar, Sambalpur does not have adequate medical infrastructure apart from the government-run Veer Surendra Sai Institute of Medical Sciences and Research (VIMSAR), formerly Burla Medical College (BMC) and Veer Surendra Sai Medical College and Hospital (VSSMCH). And in such a condition the innovative idea of a medico to render treatment on a paltry fee of Re 1 is a boon for the masses.



Ramchandani said that the one rupee fee clinic is part of his long-standing desire to provide free treatment to the poor and underprivileged beyond duty hour. "I joined VIMSAR as a senior resident and the senior residents are not allowed to do private practice. Hence, I could not start the 'One-Rupee' clinic." "But I was promoted as assistant professor recently and as an assistant professor, I am allowed to do private practice after my duty hours. Hence, I have started the clinic in a rented house now," said the 38-year-old doctor. Asked why he charges Re 1 token amount, Ramchandani said, "I charge one rupee from the poor

and underprivileged people as I don't want them to feel that they are availing the service free of cost. They should also think that they have paid some money for their treatment." The clinic, which has been set up at the Kachha Market area in Burla town remains open from 7 am to 8 am in the morning and 6 pm to 7 pm in the evening. The 'One-Rupee' clinic has provided him with an opportunity to serve the poor, destitute, unprivileged, elderly persons, physically challenged people and the people

who do not have access to proper medical care. "I am a doctor of the masses and not the classes," he said. Ramchandani said hundreds of people regularly come to the OPD of VIMSAR and one can find a long queue of patients to consult doctors. "I have seen elderly people and people with disabilities waiting for hours for consultation with doctors in OPD. They don't need to wait for hours and suffer at the hospital. They can come to my clinic and get consultation at Rupee 1 only," he added. Ramchandani, who had hit the headlines when he took a leprosy patient carrying on his arms and dropped him in his house in 2019, said, "My late father, Brahmanand Ramchandani had told me to set up a nursing home." "But a nursing home requires huge investment and it is not possible to provide treatment to poor people at Rupee 1 in a nursing home. Hence, I decided to open this 'One-Rupee' clinic." Ramchandani had received widespread appreciation when he attended a COVID-19 patient beyond his duty hour and also carried the patient to VIMSAR in his car amid the scourge of novel coronavirus in October last year

FOR CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS CONTACT OUR BOOKING STATIONS

Acharya Vihar-Doyal Agency-9437135727, A.P. Tours and Travel, Maitri Vihar, C.S. Pur- 9861301598, Aurobindo Market-Sai Audio & Electronics-9438304668, Airport Road-Sai Baba Variety Store-9090071530, Anish Infotech-Tankapani Road-9861341488, Bapuji Nagar- Dreamland Studio- 9777517314, Baramunda Rental Colony-Maa Ramchandi Communication-9658821469, Baramunda Housing Board Colony-Pappu Variety Store-9040500106, Cuttack Road-Alishan Snacks-8984236754, District Center (Chandrasekharpur)-Sai Google Mart-9776056507, Forest Park-DTDC Couriers & Services (HB Services)-7381024156, IRC Village-Bapi Xerox-9090090404, Gift Hut(Antriksh Gifts & Decors Pvt. Ltd.)-9954781084, Pruthvi Medicine-9853314816, Janpath-Krupajal Book Store-7978646669, Jaydev Vihar-AK Enterprises-7978116618, Subam Sai Books Store-889550649, Swain Graphics- 9337121249, Jagannath Mobile Point- Janpath Road, Ram Mandir- 9938475415, Kanan Vihar-Auro Electronics-8260697560, Khandagiri- Swosti Mobile Centre- 7992914045, World Solution- 9938317559, KIIT Road-Jugad Jn-9338545031, Laxmi Sagar-Aditya Mobile-9438191836, Lewis Road-Spider Web-7809186415, Metro Satellite City-Arogya Mitra Medicine Store-9853621640, Madhusudan Nagar-Mohapatra Communication-9124446664, Maa Santoshi Travels- Gajapati Nagar- 9777675867, Nayapalli- The Cake Room- 7873660137, Near Mayfair Lagoon-Cookiemann-9439491273, Nigamananda-Omm Sai Travels-9668284823, Nr Cosmopolis Main Gate- Shreeram Medical Store- 8763711714, Net Square- Niladri Vihar (C.S. Pur)- 7205634821, Priyadarshini Market-Astro Point-9938134346, R.N. General Store-Nilakantha Nagar-9438642501, Sahid Nagar- Maa Communication- 9437353424, Sahini General Store- Near Patia Railway Station, Mahavir Vihar- 9937586626, Satya Nagar-Baishnavi Mixture & Sweets-7894821764, Samantapur- Download Point-7504557743, Sailashree Vihar-Harsha Book Store-8093449515, Saheed Nagar-Jagannath Graphics-7978652670, Photo World-7978468191, Sainath Photo Studio-8984436129, Shanti & Co-9937071063, Siripur-Omm Maa Sarala Communication-9777682449, Sushree fashion- Jagmara-9938714347, Shree Vision- Sailashree Vihar-9861476678, Unit-3-LIC of India Premium Point-9337787080, Unit-7- LIC Premium Point- 9338227422, VSS Nagar-Friends Cake & Bake-8658200930, Jeet Infoworld-7205195782, XIMB Square-LD Books-9658061373.

No let-up in illegal mineral mining

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, Feb 14: Despite raids and seizure of illegally mined minerals, there is no let up in such illegal activities in various parts of Keonjhar district. Now, forest department and police are seen actively catching most of illegal mining cases while the mines department seems to have lowered its guard, a report said.

According to reports, there are several cases of seizure of illegally mined minerals in last several weeks in various parts of the district. Once again, the forest officials seized two trucks loaded with high grade iron ore and an excavator inside a forest near Rakam village (Khandadhar hill) under Bansapal block Saturday.

Kushala forest guard Bulu Nayak had got a tip-off about a vehicle transporting illegal timbers last night.

At this time, a truck carrying illegally mined iron ore was passing by on the route. Though he was alone, he mustered courage and intercepted the vehicle. Then, he informed the matter to his higher-ups.

Following a directive from DFO Swayam Mallick, a team of forest officials from Bhuyan-Juanga Pidhi Range, Sadar range and Champua range led by ACF Ajay Kumar Sahu swung into action



FACT FILE

Frequent seizure of illegally mined minerals in last several weeks in various parts of the district has failed to be of any impact as the smugglers carry out their works with impunity

Experts observed that a big racket active in the area is promoting illegal mining and many influential people will be exposed if the matter is properly investigated

In first week of January, illegal mining was detected in a bushy area, just 500 metre from the office of the Joda police station. Officials seized manganese worth over Rs 1 lakh and weighing over 10 tonnes. The minerals were found covered under palm leaves amid bushes

and raided the area near Khandadhar hill and seized the two vehicles and a pay loader machine in the presence of Nayakote police.

However, mineral mafia managed to escape in the dark.

Locals sought to know how mines department failed to know of illegal mineral mining and transportation in the forest where as forest officials have to detect such cases. A preliminary investigation found that mafia had been supplying illegally mined iron ore to different lump ore crushing

units in Sundargarh. Bit it has not been ascertained that since how long this illegal act had been going on in the deep forest.

It was learnt that mafia had engaged some local people on daily wages and used to excavate iron ore by triggering explosion with dynamite. They used to load the mineral with a pay loader.

The trucks and the excavator have been kept on the premises of Juanga-Bhuyan Pidhi range office.

The forest department has started an investigation into who

are involved in this illegal act.

Local experts observed that a big racket is active in the area, pushing illegal mining. If the matter is properly investigated, many influential people will be exposed, they said.

They alleged that mineral mafia has been carrying out their business by greasing pals of some corrupt officials.

In first week of January, illegal mining was detected in a bushy area, just 500 metre from the office of the Joda police station. Officials had seized manganese worth over Rs 1 lakh. The illegally mined manganese weighing over 10 tonnes was covered under palm leaves amid bushes.

January 12, a team of forest officials from Champua, Joda, Balibandh and Bamebari conducted night patrolling night when they caught the truck carrying 35 tonnes of high grade iron ore.

January 24, a team of mines officials seized over 50 tones of iron finesse stocked at Serenda under Barbil police limits. Mines officials had got a tip-off about stocked mineral along a road near OMC Colony. Officials seized the mineral valued at Rs 1.5 lakh.

Earlier, mines officials had seized 30 tonnes of illegally extracted iron ore at Antaramantara Chak under Bamebari police limits of Joda mining circle.

Man gets wife murdered by contract killers over extra-marital affair; 4 held



POST NEWS NETWORK

Nayagarh, Feb 14: Police arrested four more persons believed to be contract killers in connection with the alleged murder of a woman in Sarankul area in Nayagarh district, Saturday.

It was earlier alleged that Sasmita Mohapatra (38) of Suarasahi under Sarankul police limits in the district had been murdered, but her in-laws gave the colour of a suicide case.

However, police cracked the death mystery of the woman after two weeks of the incident, an official of the police station said.

The four arrested contract killers were identified as Jitendra Swain (21), Tofan Mandal (21), Bhagirathi Moharana (45) of Golagaon area and Manoj Pradhan (21) of Sarankul

area in Nayagarh district, the police official added.

Sarankul police seized Rs 20,000 from their possession. During the interrogation, the accused confessed their involvement in the crime. They were produced to a local court Sunday afternoon.

The woman's husband identified as Akshaya Mohapatra and his paramour were arrested and produced in court in connection with the murder case around two weeks ago. The total number of arrests in the case has reached six.

Akshaya was allegedly having an extramarital affair with a woman. The newlywed couple was not in cordial terms and often quarrelled over the affair, IIC of Sarankul police station Bimal Mallick said.

Notably, Sasmita was found hanging inside her in-law's house at Suarasahi under mysterious circumstances January 29.

Woman charred to death, hubby battles for life at hospital

Kendrapara: In a tragic incident, a family feud over an alleged extra-marital affair turned fatal for a woman in Pattamundai block of Kendrapara district. According to reports, Shailendra Mallik, a resident of Sabajaria village had a severe altercation with his wife Bandita Mallik at night. The woman accused her husband of having an extramarital affair with another woman. During the quarrel, Shailendra lost his cool and set himself afire after dousing kerosene on him. The wife immediately tried to save the man, but sustained critical burn injuries in the process. Locals rescued the couple in critical condition and admitted them to Pattamundai community health centre. Doctors at the CHC referred the woman to SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack as her condition deteriorated. Bandita succumbed to her burn injuries and was declared by the doctors at SCBMCH as 'brought dead'. Shailendra has been battling for life at the hospital.

ing inside her in-law's house at Suarasahi under mysterious circumstances January 29.

DISASTER MANAGEMENT



National Disaster Response Force personnel performing a mock drill on disaster management at a training programme inside Rourkela Steel Plant premises, Sunday

Panchayat polls in Kotia: 617 loyal to Andhra

POST NEWS NETWORK

Pottangi, Feb 14: With all efforts of the Koraput district administration to scuttle Andhra Pradesh government's bid to hold polls in Kotia panchayat going futile, 617 voters out of total 1,025 voters in eight wards exercised their voting rights at Phatusineri village. The poll results were announced Saturday.

Sedha Rapokami (Himirika), a resident of Phatusineri village of Kotia panchayat under Pottangi block has been elected as the sarpanch. According to returning officer, A Janarddan Rao, Sedha



Newly elected sarpanch Sedha Rapokami (Himirika)

has won the election defeating Kondapali Paidi of the same village. The election was conducted at an under construction church in the village. For the elections in

eight wards, eight booths were set up. Out of 1,025 voters of these wards, 617 exercised their voting rights. Of them, 309 were males and the remaining 308 were females. The voting started at 6.30am and continued till 1.35pm. The election results were declared after 2.00pm. The efforts of Koraput district administration to stop the elections have gone in vain. The district administration had carried out several people-oriented works and organised cultural programmes to desist Phatusineri villagers from taking part in the elections. But nothing worked in its favour.

Racket trading in Hanuman coins, deer hide busted; 3 held

POST NEWS NETWORK

Malkangiri, Feb 14: In a major crackdown, police busted a gang allegedly involved in illegal trade of Hanuman coins and deer hide at Chittrakonda Sadar area under this police limits in Malkangiri district Saturday afternoon.

According to reports, Chittrakonda police received information that illegal trade of the items are being carried out at a house the near daily market in Chittrakonda Sadar area and arrested three people. A team of police personnel swung into action and recovered a gun, 50 antique cop-



per coins, a number of precious gemstones, Rs 12,310 in cash, a two-wheeler, three mobile phones and ATM cards including some tools from their possession.

The three arrested are Mohan Trivedi from Odisha and Itham Shetty Venkata Ramana, Krupabharam Tripalli from Elmanchilli village of Andhra Pradesh.

The gang members used to defraud people, by selling them Hanuman coins, deer hide and possessing illegal guns.

Chittrakonda police registered a case under various sections of IPC, Arms Act and Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. The three were produced in a local court and further investigation is on, a police official said.

17 migrants rescued from Telangana brick kiln



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bolangir, Feb 14: Eve as reports of migrants suffering miseries at their workplaces are coming in, the district administration rescued 17 migrant labourers including six minors of Bolangir from a brick kiln in Telangana for last four months. They were allegedly held hostage, a report said.

The matter came to the fore after the labourers arrived in a vehicle in the district headquarters town after they were rescued

from the brick kiln, Saturday. The rescued labourers were identified as Khira Nag, Tripura Nag, Koutak Nag, Motram Kanhar, Phulbani Kanhar, Bikram Sahu, Anjali Sahu, Daitari Bag, Mantu Bariha, Indira Bag, Jasobanti Bag and six children.

On arrival, the labourers were handed over with a financial assistance of Rs 20,000 before sending them back to their respective homes in Patnagarh and Loisingha blocks.

The labourers and their six

children were lured by a labour contractor Kailash Meher four months back. They had migrated to Telangana to work at a brick kiln in Garudpet village of Peddapalli district. The owner of the brick kiln Bhaskar held them hostage and forced them to work beyond schedule by torturing them. Their rescue became possible only after a social activist and a labourer leader came to know about their plight and sought the help of the district administration.

Finally, backward Hudisahi grabs admin's attention



POST NEWS NETWORK

Champua, Feb 14: After decades of neglect, the administration has finally taken stock of the plight of people living at Hudisahi under Champua NAC of Keonjhar district, a report said.

In the past, media had reported about lack of basic facilities and deprivation of various government benefits to its residents.

Locals were equally surprised and happy when a team of officials led by Gourahari Mohant, the executive officer of the NAC, vis-

ited the village Saturday. He enquired about the problems of the village.

Locals narrated before the NAC official that they have been suffering a lot in the absence of road connectivity, drinking water, Anganwadi centre and bridge in the area. During the monsoon, the villagers have to trek five km on a roundabout way to move out of the village while patients are carried on cots in emergency cases.

The government lays stress on Swachh Bharat Mission, but they don't have toilets. As the village has no Anganwadi centre, their kids are deprived of pre-schooling and other facilities, they alleged.

The officials talked to members of an SHG and assured the villagers that a special team will be sent to the village to list out issue and carry on development works.

Absence of public toilets brings disrepute to Chhendipada town

POST NEWS NETWORK

Chhendipada, Feb 14: Villages under Chhendipada block in Angul district are open-defecation free. The feat is earning accolades for the block administration. On the other hand, Chhendipada town in the same district is facing criticism for not having public toilets.

The block office, Odisha Livelihoods Mission (OLM) office, the district court and the bus stand in the town don't have a public toilet. Lack of public toilets forces hundreds of people visiting these places on a daily basis to relieve themselves in the open.

Notably, the panchayati raj and drinking water department is constructing community toilets at different places in Chhendipada block. So far, two such toilets at Chhendipada and one each at Bagadia, Koshala, Bayani shrine at Patrapada and Jarapada have been constructed.

There is a community toilet in the daily market campus. But this single toilet fails miserably to address the problems hundreds of people face on a daily basis. Also the per-



Chhendipada town in the same district is facing criticism for not having public toilets for which hundreds of people visiting the area on a daily basis are forced to relieve themselves in the open

The block office, Odisha Livelihoods Mission (OLM) office, the district court and the bus stand in the town don't have a public toilet

Women coming for work to the Odisha Livelihood Mission office and the JMFC court have to go to a nearby field for relieving themselves in the open while the women representatives visiting the block use the toilet attached to the conference hall

sons who visit the block office, OLM office, the JMFC court and the bus stand cannot use the public toilet at the daily market as it is far away.

which is one kilometre from the block office to answer nature's call. Similarly, women coming for work to the OLM office and the court have to go to a nearby field for relieving themselves in the open.

Officials, however, tend to look the other way instead of solving the

problem. The local residents have urged the administration to construct a toilet at each of the above mentioned places.

Narrating the problem, Chhendipada panchayat sarpanch, Sarojini Behera said the block office does not have a community toilet. So the women representatives are using the toilet attached to the conference hall. However, other women visitors face problems as they cannot use the same toilet.

Echoing the same feeling, president, Chhendipada Bar Association, Padmacharan Majhi said the administration is treating women with disrespect. Construction of community toilets at the block office, OLM office and the court premises will solve the problem.

When asked, Chhendipada BDO Biswanath Sahu said there have been proposals for community toilets at the block office, the court and the OLM office. We are trying our level best to get these toilets completed as soon as possible. Once constructed, the problems being faced by these women will come to an end, he added.

BRIDGING THE GENDER GAP



A felicitation ceremony under state sponsored 'Mo Gelha Jhia' programme, aimed at bridging the sex ratio, underway at an Anganwadi centre in Buguda of Ganjam district, Sunday

OP PHOTO



Evolution of consciousness is the central motive of terrestrial existence.

SRI AUROBINDO



Triumphant Trump

“Hastened” and “subdued” are words not to be found in the lexicon of just ousted US President Donald Trump. That is why even after having been acquitted on 13 February of inciting the horrific attack on the US Capitol after a historic impeachment trial, he is belligerent, pugnacious and unrepentant, even though his acquittal was primarily based on “technical” reasons. He has been spared the first-ever conviction of a US President, but the trial proceedings have laid bare the fragility of America’s democratic traditions. The country now stands as divided as it was before the polls and unable to come to terms with the violence sparked by his defeated presidency.

In less than a month since the barbaric January 6 vandalism at the Capitol, America’s citadel of democracy, by rampaging Trump supporters the Senate convened for a rare weekend session to deliver its verdict. Trump was accused of inciting the violence. The acquittal gives him a historic second victory in the court of impeachment as his first impeachment trial over l’affaire Ukraine had similarly failed.

The quick trial, the nation’s first of a former President, showed with the help of video footage as evidence how Trump’s supporters nearly overturned the verdict of the Presidential race in favour of Joe Biden. From outside the White House, Trump unleashed a mob of supporters to “fight like hell” for him at the Capitol just as Congress was proceeding to certify Biden’s victory.

It was apparent from the beginning that the acquittal was but a formality since the required threshold of two-thirds votes was virtually impossible to achieve. The final count of 57-43, which was 10 votes short, confirmed it.

Emerging unscathed Trump immediately went on the offensive telling the world he has forgotten nothing, learnt nothing. He welcomed the verdict and declared his movement “has only just begun.” He slammed the trial as “yet another phase of the greatest witch hunt in the history of our Country.”

The truth is, however, that though he was acquitted of the sole charge of incitement of insurrection, it was easily the largest number of senators to ever vote to find a President of their own party guilty of an impeachment count of high crimes and misdemeanors.

Voting to find Trump guilty were GOP Senators Richard Burr of North Carolina, Bill Cassidy of Louisiana, Susan Collins of Maine, Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, Mitt Romney of Utah, Ben Sasse of Nebraska and Patrick Toomey of Pennsylvania.

Even after voting to acquit, the Republican leader Mitch McConnell condemned the former president as “practically and morally responsible” for the insurrection. Trump could not be convicted, he pleaded, because he did not believe convicting an ex-president was constitutional. Nevertheless, he aptly summed up Trump’s true predicament when he said his acquittal doesn’t mean he can’t be tried under the country’s criminal laws.

His most encouraging words are that the Senate’s decision “does not condone” anything that happened on or before “that terrible day.”

“It simply shows that senators did what the former President failed to do. We put our constitutional duty first.”

Though Trump triumphed this time as well, democracy did become victorious as a big majority in the Senate was convinced of the Democrats’ case as was reflected in the number of votes.

As President Biden said that the final vote did not lead to a conviction, but the substance of the charge is not in dispute.

Trump’s attorney Michael van der Veen may find solace from the fact that he was found not guilty, but it was no mean feat that seven of his own Senators didn’t exonerate him of the charge.

The verdict signals Trumpism survives. The USA will have to learn to live with it or erase it from its political discourse and national psyche. The country has to be vigilant so that it doesn’t revive as it still has the backing of nearly half the population. The outcome after the uprising leaves unresolved the nation’s wrenching divisions over Trump’s brand of politics that led to the most violent domestic attack on one of America’s three branches of government. One of the House prosecutors rightly concluded that the Senators were in a dialogue with history and having a conversation with the country’s past “with a hope for our future.” Whatever was done by the Senators for carrying the impeachment trial to its logical conclusion, they and the moment will be preserved for posterity.

Not only that, realisation has dawned across the world that the GOP is still steeped in Trumpism. Four years is a very short time.

WISDOM CORNER

He who learns but does not think, is lost! He who thinks but does not learn is in great danger. **CONFUCIUS**

Obedience is the mother of success and is wedded to safety. **AESCHYLUS**

He is richest who is content with the least, for content is the wealth of nature. **SOCRATES**

WORDSWORTH

Malacia

The origin of the word is Greek malakos, soft, a relative of malakia; the Oxford English Dictionary says this meant “softness, homosexual desire, sickness”, a splendid demonstration of how much cultural bias you can build into four words. We borrowed malacia in the seventeenth century from the Latin version of the Greek word. The Oxford English Dictionary says that in Latin this meant a disorder of the stomach, especially the sickness and nausea that was suffered by pregnant women, but early writers in English took it to mean a craving for unnatural or unusual foods, a different symptom of pregnancy. Your second sense grew up only in the late nineteenth century and it would seem that in this case medical writers took the word directly from Greek, creating terms such as osteomalacia (softening of the bones) and gastromalacia (a softening of the lining of the stomach). Incidentally, the combining form malaco- is also derived from the first of your meanings; it appears in malacoderm, used in zoology for an animal having a soft outer protective layer, as well as in a few other technical terms. Just to keep us all on our toes, malaco-, via another sense of the Greek original, can also refer to molluscs, as in malacology, their study.

Malapert

Today’s desk dictionaries often include this word, defining it as boldly disrespectful or impudent, not because it is current – it’s archaic, last used unselfconsciously in the seventeenth century – but because it was once common enough that readers are still likely to encounter it. Some writers – such as Sir Walter Scott – have since borrowed it to provide a bit of period flavour in historical novels. It’s formed from the equally archaic apert, from Latin apertum, open, through French. The oldest English sense was “public, plain, un concealed”, but this shifted over time until it came instead to mean outspoken and later insolent. (Through confusion with another French word, it could also mean clever.) Our word seems to have been created from apert in either the sense of a person who is outspoken or clever, since the mal- prefix means “improperly, badly, wrongly” (as in maladjusted or malodorous), so creating malapert, of somebody improperly outspoken or inappropriately clever. We still know apert in its aphetic form pert, which retains the idea of insolence, though weakened into cheekiness or impudence. The idea was personified into Jack Malapert, an insolent person, which is in one of the first printed books in English, Caxton’s Book of Curtesye of about 1477-78. In modern form, the line would be “Don’t play Jack Malapert, that is, don’t be presumptuous”. The female equivalent was Miss Malapert, as in Henry Fielding’s play The Fathers: “Well, Miss Malapert, and what do you think you have said now? why, nothing more than that your grandmothers had ten times as much prudence as yourselves.”

FOCUS TECHNOLOGY

LET’S GET REAL ABOUT AI

In recent years, artificial intelligence has been attracting more attention, money, and talent than ever in its short history. But much of the sudden hype is the result of myths and misconceptions being peddled by people outside of the field.

For many years, the field was growing incrementally, with existing approaches performing around 1-2 per cent better each year on standard benchmarks. But there was a real breakthrough in 2012, when computer scientist Geoffrey Hinton and his colleagues at the University of Toronto showed that their “deep learning” algorithms could beat state-of-the-art computer vision algorithms by a margin of 10.8 percentage points on the ImageNet Challenge (a benchmark dataset).

At the same time, AI researchers were benefiting from ever-more powerful tools, including cost-effective cloud computing, fast and cheap number-crunching hardware (“GPUs”), seamless data sharing through the internet, and advances in high-quality open-source software. Owing to these factors, machine learning, and particularly deep learning, has taken over AI and created a groundswell of excitement. Investors have been lining up to fund promising AI companies, and governments have been pouring hundreds of millions of dollars into AI research institutes.

While further progress in the field is inevitable, it will not necessarily be linear. Nonetheless, those hyping these technologies have seized on a number of compelling myths, starting with the notion that AI can solve any problem.

Hardly a week goes by without there being sensational stories about AIs outperforming humans: “Intelligent Machines Are Teaching Themselves Quantum Physics”; “Artificial Intelligence Better Than Humans at Spotting Lung Cancer.”

Such headlines are often true only in a narrow sense. For a general problem like “spotting lung cancer,” AI offers a solution only to a particular, simplified rendering of the problem, by reducing the task to a matter of image recognition or document classification.



While further progress in the development of artificial intelligence is inevitable, it will not necessarily be linear. Nonetheless, those hyping these technologies have seized on a number of compelling myths, starting with the notion that AI can solve any problem

What these stories neglect to mention is that the AI doesn’t actually understand images or language the way humans do. Rather, the algorithm finds hidden, complex combinations of features whose presence in a particular set of images or documents is characteristic of a targeted class (say, cancer or violent threats).

And such classifications cannot necessarily be trusted with decisions about humans – whether it concerns patient diagnosis or how long someone should be incarcerated.

It’s not hard to see why. Although AI systems outperform humans in tasks that are often associated with a “high level of intelligence” (playing chess, Go, or Jeopardy), they are nowhere close to excelling at tasks that humans can master with little to no training (such as understanding jokes). What we call “common sense” is actually a massive base of tacit knowledge – the cumulative effect of experiencing the world and learning about it since childhood. Coding common-sense knowledge and feeding it into AI systems is an unresolved challenge. Although AI will continue to solve some difficult problems, it is a long way

from performing many tasks that children undertake as a matter of course.

This points to a second, related myth: that AI will soon surpass human intelligence. In 2005, the best-selling futurist author Ray Kurzweil predicted that in 2045, machine intelligence will be infinitely more powerful than all human intelligence combined. But whereas Kurzweil was assuming that the exponential growth of AI would continue more or less unabated, it is more likely that barriers will arise.

One such barrier is the sheer complexity of AI systems, which have come to rely on billions of parameters for training machine-learning algorithms from massive data sets. Because we already do not understand the interactions between all of these parts of the system, it is difficult to see how various components can be assembled and connected to perform a given task.

Another barrier is the scarcity of the annotated (“labeled”) data upon which machine-learning algorithms rely. Big Tech firms like Google, Amazon, Facebook, and Apple own much of the most promising data, and they have little in-

centive to make such valuable assets publicly available.

A third myth is that AI will soon render humans superfluous. In his best-selling 2015 book, Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow, Israeli historian Yuval Noah Harari argues that most humans may become second-class citizens of societies in which all higher-level intellectual decision-making is reserved for AI systems. Indeed, some common jobs, such as truck driving, will most likely be eliminated by AI within the next 10 years, as will many white-collar jobs that involve routine, repetitive tasks.

But these trends do not mean that there will be mass unemployment, with millions of households scraping by on a guaranteed basic income. The old jobs will be replaced by new jobs that we have yet to imagine. In 1980, no one could have known that millions of people would soon make a living from adding value to the internet.

To be sure, the jobs of the future will probably require much higher levels of math and science training. But AI itself may offer a partial solution, by enabling new, more engaging methods of training future generations in the necessary competencies. Jobs that AI takes away will be replaced by new jobs for which AI trains people. There is no law of technology or history that destines humanity to a future of intellectual slavery.

There are of course more myths: AIs will overpower and harm humans, will never be capable of human-type creativity, and will never be able to build a causal, logical chain connecting effects with the patterns that cause them. I believe time and research eventually will debunk these myths as well. This is an exciting time for AI. But that is all the more reason to remain realistic about the field’s future.

The writer is Professor of Computer Science, Canada Research Chair, and Director of the Institute for Big Data Analytics at Dalhousie University.

PROJECT SYNDICATE

SPECTRUM ENVIRONMENT

Circular economy for a sustainable future



Sanjib Kumar Karmee

THE CONVENTIONAL LINEAR ECONOMY, WHICH IS BASED ON THE IDEA OF DISCARDING WASTE AND BY-PRODUCTS, IS PRACTICALLY UNVIABLE

Different kinds of waste viz, organic waste, plastic waste, and e-waste are generated in huge quantities across the world. Organic waste comprises a large portion of food waste. About 40 per cent of the food produced in India is wasted. Food waste is creating serious environmental and social problems. Landfills are the most common place for garbage deposition and the government plans to cut down immensely the food waste that goes into landfilling. Landfills spread offensive smell and are known to cause hazardous effects on people, animals, and the environment. Furthermore, landfills are unsustainable as they produce methane which is a common greenhouse gas and also generates large amount of harmful leachate when rainwater falls on the garbage. The generated leachate contaminates water and soil. Along this line, plastic waste is dumped haphazardly and is becoming tedious for management. Plastic is washed away by water, getting deposited under earth, water bodies and oceans. Annually, around eight million tonnes of plastic waste flows into the oceans. Inside oceans and water bodies these plastics break-down into tiny pieces or microplastics. Microplastics have now

spread across the planet and can be found in water and also in the air. In this regard, a team of scientists led by Dr Philipp Schwabl, Medical University of Vienna, Austria, reported the presence of microplastics in human stool. Microplastics are fatal for the ecosystem. Similarly, electronic waste (e-waste) is discarded electrical or electronic devices. E-waste is often burnt to recover metals from the waste which causes severe air pollution. Also, high value substances like gold and silver are extracted from e-waste using acids, and corrosive toxic chemicals, which are later released into the environment if not controlled properly.

In the above context, waste management and efficient resource recovery are important from the sustainability point of view. The conventional linear economy, which is based on the idea of discarding waste and by-products, is practically unviable. In line with this, the 3R (Reduce, Reuse and Recycle) policy and its green aspect are also investigated. However, more recently circular economy offers a different model, where no materials are wasted and are utilised as feedstocks. According to an article published by the World Economic Forum, a circular economy repre-

sents the means to save the planet, as well as an enormous market opportunity. More specifically, circular economy is the development of an efficient economic system for elimination of waste and promotion of continuous use of resources.

According to Michael Braungart and William McDonough of Ellen MacArthur Foundation, UK, different principles of circular economy include: i) Sustainable design: design materials and products to avoid waste and pollution; ii) No waste: keep materials and products in use; iii) Regeneration: regenerate natural systems when using bio-based materials; iv) Renewable energy: use only renewable resources; v) Non-toxic materials: exclude hazardous materials from recycling systems; vi) Systems thinking: draw inspiration from nature, where one species’ waste is always another species’ food; and vii) De-emphasis of efficiency: focus on benefiting the planet-through methods such as storing carbon from production processes in soil rather than on reducing environmental harm by increasing efficiency.

Circular economy is an important methodology for the promotion of environmental sustainability.

This concept can be applied for industrial scale production of bio-fuels, biopolymers, chemicals, and essential commodities from waste using different technologies in a sustainable manner for the benefit of environment, businesses, and society. For example, ShoeX a Vietnam-based footwear company known for making coffee shoes, has produced coffee face masks during the Covid-19 pandemic. Also, designer Alice Potts created bioplastic face shields from food waste collected in London. Bio-bean Limited, UK, is recycling waste coffee grounds into advanced bio-fuels and pellets (solid fuels) on an industrial scale. Practically, circular economy can be applied in India for management of different kinds of waste viz, food waste, municipal solid waste, plastic waste, e-waste and agricultural waste. Moreover, for a resource constrained society like India this concept offers judicious use of different products. Industries, academia, policy makers and environmentalists should come together for the promotion and implementation of circular economy to build a sustainable future.

The writer is a scientist and an alumnus of IIT Madras.

Only permanent interests

Sir, In politics, there are no permanent friends or permanent enemies, there are only permanent interests. Opposition leaders who have been going hammer and tongs at a government may suddenly soften their stand; it has happened on umpteen occasions in India and elsewhere. Difference of opinion in politics is not a cause for withdrawing from a friend. Most political leaders of the country have friends across party lines. Respect, understanding and appreciation form the bedrocks of good politics. When matters between parties go out of control, friendship is the glue that holds sanity and sobriety together. The exemplary camaraderie between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the recently retired leader of the opposition in the Upper House Ghulam Nabi Azad is heartwarming. Both Modi and Azad struggled for words while commending each other. The two seasoned politicians rightly seem to regard politics as a level playing ground. Azad is known for his affable nature and efficient conduct. He was the Man Friday of Congress president Sonia Gandhi till he fell out of favour with her. Not that the 71-year-old leader would mind. He has enough admirers, and earned sufficient goodwill, all over. Cynics and critics who have cried foul at the “emotional drama” of Narendra Modi and Ghulam Nabi Azad are entitled to their views but Modi and Azad are qualified to express their sentiments. Emotionally fragile leaders are not wellkings to an institution; they are the ones who know inside out of the institution they serve. Mature politicians make politics solid and steady. Modi and Azad are two such politicians.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

One more bouncer

Sir, The recent decision of the Maharashtra government to go for a probe into the tweet made by Sachin Tendulkar in response to the tweet made by Rihanna and other celebrities is unfortunate. Anyone who has followed Sachin’s cricketing career knows the true personality of the icon. Sachin should treat the Maharashtra government’s decision as just like one of the ‘bouncers’ out of the many he has faced in his illustrious career. Anybody who knows about Sachin’s integrity and social service activities will just ignore the whole episode as a small storm in his tea cup. He was unnecessarily dragged into a political game. Society, especially politics, is a field where everybody is waiting for slightest opportunity to throw mud on others. In his tweet Sachin never degraded any personality or institution. The coming days will only prove that the maestro is on a beautiful batting track with a perfect batting stance. V. Nagendra Kumar, HYDERABAD

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, Rissagarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

Omar claims he, his family put under house arrest

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, Feb 14: National Conference vice president Omar Abdullah Sunday claimed that he and his family members, including his father and MP Farooq Abdullah, have been put under house arrest by authorities.

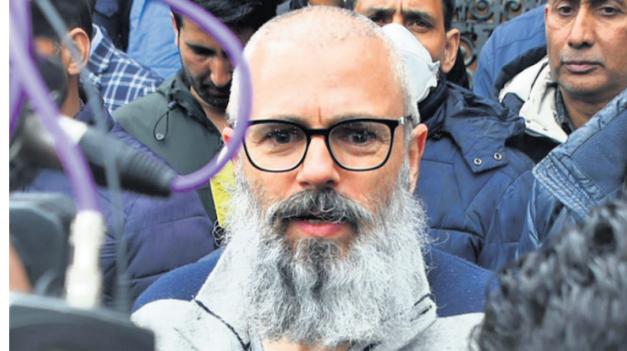
However, police said the movement of protected persons was 'discouraged' Sunday due to adverse inputs on the second anniversary of the Pulwama attack.

February 14, 2019, 40 Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel were killed in the attack by Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) in Jammu and Kashmir's Pulwama.

"This is the 'naya/new J&K' after Aug 2019. We get locked up in our homes with no explanation. It's bad enough they've locked my father (a sitting MP) & me in our home, they've locked my sister & her kids in their home as well," Omar wrote on Twitter.

The former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister also posted photographs showing police vehicles outside the gates of his residence in the Gupkar area of the city.

Omar also alleged that his house staff was not being let inside. "Chalo, your new model of democracy means that we are kept in



This is the 'naya/new J&K' after Aug 2019. We get locked up in our homes with no explanation. It's bad enough they've locked my father (a sitting MP) & me in our home, they've locked my sister & her kids in their home as well

our homes without explanation but on top of that the staff that works in the house aren't being allowed in and then you are surprised that I'm still angry & bitter," he said in another tweet.

Responding to Omar's tweets, police said the movement of protected persons and VIPs was 'discouraged' due to adverse inputs on the second anniversary of the Pulwama attack.

"Today is 2nd Anniversary of dreaded Lethpora Terror incident. There shall be NO ROP on ground. Due to adverse inputs, movement of VIPs/ProtectedPersons has been discouraged and all con-

cerned were informed in advance NOT to plan a tour today (sic)," the Srinagar Police said on its official Twitter handle.

However, Omar asked the police to "please tell me under which law you have detained me in my home today?"

"You can advise me not to leave my house but you can't force me to stay in using security as an excuse," he said.

"Please share the written communication address to me & acknowledged by me (or my office) informing us in advance of these restrictions. Surely this anniversary didn't come as a surprise to

the administration," the National Conference (NC) leader said in another tweet.

The NC said it condemns the "arbitrary detention" of its leaders and their family members.

"JKNC condemns the arbitrary detention of party president Dr Farooq Abdullah, Vice President @OmarAbdullah and their family at their residence in Gupkar, Srinagar. The party demands immediate lifting of these uncalled for and unlawful measures," the party tweeted.

In a joint statement later, several leaders, including NC general secretary Ali Muhammad Sagar, de-

nounced confinement of the party president and the vice president at their residence and termed the measures arbitrary and a gross intrusion of fundamental rights.

"Confining party leaders to their homes exposes the iron fist approach towards Jammu and Kashmir. The measure is the gross violation of human rights and is highly condemnable. Previously also at various instances, the leaders were debarred from moving out from their residences exclusive of any reason," the statement said.

The party leaders said the undue measure marks a new low in the curtailment of fundamental rights of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

"The measures reveal abnormal is the new normal in this part of the world. Such harsh and unwarranted measures would further alienate the people and delay restoration of normalcy in Kashmir, which has been reeling under fear psychosis and a sense of insecurity since August, 2019," they said.

Marking a new and dangerous low in the Centre's Kashmir policy, the leaders said the disdain with the political leaders who kept the political process alive in Kashmir braving all odds and threats was appalling.

Envoys from Europe, Africa to visit J&K to assess situation

THE ENVOYS WOULD MEET SOME OF THE ELECTED DDC MEMBERS BESIDES HOLDING A MEETING WITH A FEW PROMINENT CITIZENS AND ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARIES



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 14: A group of envoys from Europe and Africa will visit Jammu and Kashmir later this week to take stock of the development and security situation in the valley especially after the successful exercise of the District Development Council elections, officials said Sunday.

The officials said the two-day visit was scheduled likely for February 17 during which the envoys would receive first-hand information on the development work undertaken by the Union Territory administration after abrogation of the special status of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir.

The envoys would meet some of the elected DDC members besides holding a meeting with a few prominent citizens and administrative secretaries.

The showcase would be the recently concluded DDC elections which were completed in December last year, the officials said.

Strengthening of democratic institutions at the grassroots level would be significantly highlighted, the officials said, adding that during the presentation the envoys would be shown how panchayats have been empowered by giving them financial powers.

The next day, the ambassadors

would visit Jammu where they are likely to meet DDC members and representatives of some social organisations, they said.

This is yet another diplomatic exercise being carried out by the government to counter the propaganda being orchestrated by Pakistan at international forums, the officials said.

The envoys would be briefed about the security situation by senior officers involved in the law and order situation in the Kashmir valley especially attempts of Pakistan to push terrorists into India through the Line of Control and frequent ceasefire violations, they said.

Last year, foreign envoys from 17 nations including the United States had visited Jammu and Kashmir and the team also comprised ambassadors from Vietnam, South Korea, Brazil, Uzbekistan, Niger, Nigeria, Morocco, Guyana, Argentina, Philippines, Norway, Maldives, Fiji, Togo, Bangladesh and Peru. Three months after the Centre withdrew the special status of Jammu and Kashmir by revoking Article 370 of the Constitution and bifurcated it into two union territories, a delegation of 23 EU MPs was taken on a two-day visit to assess the situation in the Union Territory by the International Institute for Non-Aligned Studies, a Delhi-based think tank.

U'khand flash floods: High turbidity likely to hit water supply in Delhi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 14: Flash floods in Uttarakhand's Chamoli have increased turbidity of raw water fetched by Delhi from Upper Ganga Canal to "unprecedented levels" which is likely to hit water supply in many parts of the national capital, DJB vice chairman Raghav Chadha said Sunday.

In a series of tweets, Chadha said the Sonia Vihar and Bhagirathi water treatment plants were functioning at reduced capacity. He said the supply is likely to be affected in south, east and northeast Delhi and urged people to use water judiciously.

"In the aftermath of #UttarakhandDisaster, turbidity in raw water fetched by Delhi from Upper Ganga Canal has increased to unprecedented levels (8000 NTU). As a result, @DelhiJalBoard's Sonia Vihar & Bhagirathi Water Treatment Plants currently operating at reduced capacity," tweeted Chadha, who is also an Aam Aadmi

Party (AAP) MLA.

The DJB is deploying water tankers in adequate numbers and all possible efforts are being made to reduce turbidity in water, he said.

"Turbidity is the measure of relative clarity of a liquid. Turbidity is measured in Nephelometric Turbidity Units (NTU). High turbidity can be caused by debris, silt, mud, algae, plant pieces, melting glaciers, sawdust, wood ashes or chemicals in the water," he tweeted.

Following a break in a glacier in Chamoli district of Uttarakhand, flash floods in Dhaultiganga and Alaknanda rivers caused massive destruction of lives and property, last week.

Chamoli District Magistrate Swati Bhadauria had said 40 bodies were recovered from the flood-hit areas of Chamoli district while 166 are still missing.

The rescue operations are still underway to save those who are trapped in the destroyed hydel projects in the area.



'JAI JAWAN, JAI KISAN'



Ex-servicemen join the farmers' protest against the new farm laws at Ghazipur border in New Delhi, Sunday. PTI PHOTO

'Switch Delhi' to facilitate registration of e-autos

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 14: The Delhi government will soon start facilitating registration of e-autos that can save up to Rs 29,000 as compared to their CNG equivalents, Delhi Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot said Sunday.

Under its 'Switch Delhi' campaign, the Delhi government will now focus on adoption of electric three-wheelers, including e-autos, e-rickshaws, and e-carts

"The Delhi government has led the way in promoting e-rickshaws for the last few years by giving subsidy of Rs 30,000. After the EV policy, the same subsidy has been extended to e-carts and e-autos.

Scrapping incentives of up to Rs 7,500 are also available on it," Gahlot said. Under Delhi's electric vehicle policy, 177 three-wheeler models are available and eligible for purchase and scrapping incentives.

The Switch Delhi campaign is an eight-week electric vehicle mass awareness campaign to sensitise Delhiites about the benefits of switching to electric vehicles.

The second week of the campaign focuses on the outreach for electric three-wheelers and aims to sensitise, inform, and encourage Delhiites to adopt electric three-wheelers in the national capital, said a Delhi government statement.

Three-wheelers are one of the major contributors to vehicular

emissions in Delhi and the policy lays special focus on incentivising the transition of this segment to electric. "Two and three-wheelers contribute to two-thirds of the pollution in Delhi. Three wheelers run on the road for 12-16 hours everyday. The focus of Delhi EV policy on this segment to enable their transition to electric will greatly benefit Delhi's air quality," Gahlot said on the occasion of launching the next leg of the Switch Delhi campaign.

While e-rickshaws have a top speed not exceeding 25 kmph, e-autos are comparable to CNG autos and have top speed of around 50-60 kmph and can travel longer distances, he said.

"E-autos can complement e-rick-

shaws in providing zero pollution last mile connectivity in Delhi. The Delhi government will soon bring out a scheme to facilitate easy registration of e-autos in Delhi," said Gahlot.

Road tax and registration fees will also be waived for all electric three-wheelers, he said.

"Subsidies provided by the Delhi government under the EV policy, on electric autos reduce their total cost by up to 26 per cent. By switching to electric auto, an individual can save about Rs 29,000 annually," the minister said.

The subsidy provided on e-rickshaw under the EV policy reduces the total cost of ownership by up to 33 per cent, he said.

Major terror plan foiled on Pulwama attack anniversary

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, Feb 14: A major terrorist plan to set off an explosion at a crowded place here on the second anniversary of the Pulwama attack was scuttled with the recovery of a powerful IED from a nursing student who was arrested along with three others, a top police officer said Sunday.

Inspector General of Police, Jammu Range, Mukesh Singh also said six pistols and 15 small Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) were seized from Samba district in a separate operation.

"Over the past four days we were on high alert because there was general intelligence input that terror groups want to trigger a major blast in Jammu city on the second anniversary of the Pulwama attack. The security around all important locations were strengthened and checking intensified," he told reporters here.

Singh, who was also flanked by Director General of Police Dilbag Singh, said a youth was found moving in suspicious manner along with a bag in the general bus stand area and it led to the recovery of nearly seven kg of IED which was, however, not activated as yet.

The IGP identified him as Suhail Bashir Shah, a resident of Newa village of Pulwama, was pursuing nursing course in a college in Chandigarh and was assigned the task to plant the IED in Jammu by his Pakistan-based handler affiliated with Al-Badr terror outfit.

"He was given four targets including (the famous) Ragnath mandir, bus stand, railway station and Lakhdata bazar (jewellers market) and was scheduled to take a flight to Srinagar after completing his job," he said. However, he said timely recovery of the IED averted a major tragedy in Jammu region.

J&K handicrafts dept ropes in 'Kral Koor' to help revive pottery

SAIMA SHAFI'S DUAL IDENTITY OF AN ENGINEER AND A POTTER DRAWS SURPRISED RESPONSES FROM THE ARTISANS OF KASHMIR VALLEY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, Feb 14: The age-old tradition of pottery has gained the attention of the Jammu and Kashmir government after an engineer-turned-potter pitched for the revival of the dying art in the Valley.

Saima Shafi, 32, popularly known as 'Kral Koor' (potter girl in Kashmiri), was recently invited by the state's handicrafts department to share her experiences with the artisans of Beerwah in central Kashmir.

During her interaction with the artisans, the overwhelming response for the revival of pottery in Kashmir made the handicrafts department official decide that data on such artisans will be collected in order to work out schemes for them.

Shafi, who works as a junior engineer with the Public Works Department here, asked the people present at the function to ensure that they teach the art of pot-

tery to their future generations.

"Curd still sets down best in an earthen container and clay pots have their effect on making the water sweeter and colder during the summers. One ought not to forget that while the wickerwork makes the Kashmiri Kangri a bright and cheerful sight, at its core is an earthen pot made by a potter," she said.

Urging artisans not to look only at the government for help, she asked them to get associated with non-governmental organisations in order to understand the changing techniques in this trade globally. Addressing the gathering, Shafi said the time has come where we need to bring the centuries-old tradition of pottery back into modern Kashmiri kitchens. She informed them that stoneware clay from Haryana can make utensils from the potter's wheel and it can even be used in microwave ovens.

Later talking to a group of potters separately, Shafi told them about the

Burzahom archaeological site in the Kashmir valley, that has remnants of the stone age and is awaiting the UNESCO World Heritage Site status.

"During excavation, there were earthen pots discovered that had been made during the stone age. The place is very close to Srinagar city and tells the tale of ancient links to pottery. Please pass this art to your next generation so that we remain connected to our roots," Shafi said.

The civil engineer said she learnt about the present irreverent state of pottery the day she started looking for an institute that can teach this art in the region. "If we know the trade, where are the institutes that teach this? Why are government schemes not popular among the potter community... These are questions that need to be answered," she said.

After her working hours and on weekends, Shafi frequents places within the Valley that were known for pottery a few decades ago. She visits the local potters, sparsely distributed in the region, to preserve their traditional techniques for posterity. Her dual identity of an engineer and a potter draws surprised responses from these artisans.

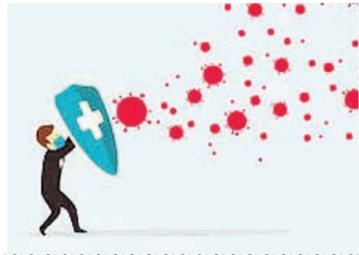




We want to know from this government when there will be status quo ante as on mid-April 2020 in the entire India-China border
A K ANTONY | SENIOR CONGRESS LEADER

FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19

India has been recording a steady decline in the number of daily new deaths since October 1, 2020, while the national recovery rate is amongst the highest in the world, the Union Health Ministry said Sunday



of the day quote

The most deserving were left to their fate — the poor, farmers, migrant workers, MSME sector, middle class, and the unemployed
P. CHIDAMBARAM | FORMER FINANCE MINISTER

Maharashtra is a place where the law of the land prevails
SANJAY RAUT | SHIV SENA MP

The Centre has no plan to make Hyderabad, or any other city, a Union Territory
G. KISHAN REDDY | UNION MINISTER OF STATE FOR HOME AFFAIRS

SHORT TAKES

Quake hits HP's Bilaspur

Shimla: An earthquake of 3.2 magnitude shook Himachal Pradesh's Bilaspur district on Sunday afternoon, the meteorological department said. However, there was no report of any casualty or damage to property. Tremors were felt in and around the district at 3.49 pm. The earthquake's epicentre was at a depth of 10 km northeast in Bilaspur, the MeT department said.

Doc's half-burnt body found

Amethi (UP): The half-burnt body of a 40-year-old doctor, who had gone missing on February 11, was found in a forest area here, police said Sunday. Jaikaran Prajapati was killed by Ashish Dubey and Santosh Tiwari over a monetary dispute, police said, adding that the duo was arrested. "Ashish Dubey along with Santosh Tiwari abducted and killed Prajapati. They set the body on fire and buried the half-burnt body," Superintendent of Police Dinesh Singh said. A case was registered against them and two spades used in the crime were seized, police said.

Advocate shoots self

Mahoba (UP): A 50-year-old advocate allegedly shot himself to death with his licensed rifle here after being harassed by a group of people who tried to extort Rs 60 lakh from him, police said Sunday. A block pramukh (chairman) of Kabrai and his nephew have been arrested in this connection, they said. "Senior advocate Mukesh Kumar Pathak, a resident of Samadnagar locality, killed himself late Saturday night. A suicide note was recovered and a case has been registered against block pramukh of Kabrai development block, Chhatrapal Yadav and his nephew Vikram Yadav," Anoop Kumar Dubey, SHO, Kotwali Police Station said.

3 siblings drown

Palakkad: Three minor siblings, including a three-year old, drowned in a pond near their house in the district Sunday while out for playing, Police said. The brothers -- others aged 12 and eight -- went to the pond to wash their hands, when the tragedy occurred, they said.

2 juveniles held

Jaipur: Two people including a juvenile were held Sunday for allegedly gangraping a minor in Rajasthan's Churu district, police said. The incident took place in Sadarshahar police station area, circle officer Narayan Kumar said.

Rishiganga deluge may trigger fresh migration

AGENCIES

Dehradun, Feb 14: From devastating earthquakes to calamitous floods, natural disasters are bringing widespread death and destruction to the highly fragile hills of Uttarakhand.

At a time when the horror of the Kedarnath tsunami has not dissipated completely, the Rishiganga deluge has created fresh fears in the minds of the people living in the high hills and may trigger a fresh wave of migration, which is considered as a highly sensitive issue. After the calamitous Kedarnath floods, hundreds of people from the ravaged areas like Agstumni in Rudraprayag district migrated to Dehradun in the plains and elsewhere mainly due to safety reasons.

Aruna Benjwal, chairperson of Agstumni nagar panchayat, claimed that nearly 35 to 40 people have migrated to the plains from Silli village alone. "Scores of people have also made arrangements in such a way that they live in Dehradun during winter and come back to Kedarnath area in the summer," Kedarnath MLA Manoj Rawat said. "When these types of disasters strike, it is very natural that the people may think of migrating to the



plains," said SS Negi, Vice Chairman of the Rural Development and Migration Commission which was set up by the state government on the vexed issue of migration from hills.

According to an official estimate, nearly 1,500 villages out of the total 16,000 villages in the state have already been declared ghost meaning devoid of any inhabitant. "Though there are multiple reasons for migration, disasters are also one reason," said Negi.

Negi and other top government officials admitted that there is no data available on the number of people migrating from hills in the wake of various calamities.

Natural disasters are not just restricted to floods only in the hills. Calamities like earthquakes, forest fires and landslides take heavy toll in the state on regular intervals. In the two devastating earthquakes in the recent past - Uttarkashi-1991 and Chamoli-1999, hundreds of people were killed. In Kedarnath floods, over 5,000 people lost their lives while thousands of houses and vital infrastructure were also destroyed/damaged.

Though the government has taken various steps to mitigate the suffering of the people due to disasters, environmentalists say they are not enough and call for banning hydel

Toll rises to 51

DEHRADUN/TAPOVAN: Rescue teams Sunday recovered 13 more bodies, including the first ones to be pulled out from the sludge-choked Tapovan tunnel where a massive operation to reach about 30 people trapped inside began after a flash flood in Chamoli district a week ago. Six bodies were recovered from the Tapovan power project tunnel, six from Raini upstream and one from the riverbank in Rudraprayag, taking the confirmed death toll in the Uttarakhand disaster to 51. Officials said over 150 people still remain missing after the February 7 devastation, possibly triggered by an avalanche in the upper reaches of the Alaknanda river system.

projects in the higher altitudes. Renowned environmentalist Chandni Prasad Bhatt said he had written to the Centre in 2010 warning against the adverse effects of the hydel projects including Rishiganga in the state. "Had my warning been taken seriously, such big devastations could have been avoided," he said.

14 killed in Andhra road mishap

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad, Feb 14: At least 14 people, including five women and a child, were killed when a mini bus overturned and collided with a truck in Andhra Pradesh's Kurnool early Sunday morning.

The accident occurred around 4.30 a.m. on Hyderabad-Bengaluru national highway near Madapuram in Velduri mandal, about 25 km from Kurnool town. Kurnool Superintendent of Police K. Fakirappa said the mini bus was carrying 18 people, who were on their way to Ajmer in Rajasthan for pilgrimage.

The mini bus overturned after hitting the road divider and collided with a truck coming from the opposite direction, on the other side of the road.

GODLY TOUCH



An artist gives final touch to a clay idol of Lord Ganesha on the eve of Ganesh Jayanti festival in Mumbai

PANDEMIC: GOVT ISSUES FRESH SOPs FOR OFFICES

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 14: The Union health ministry has issued new SOPs to contain spread of COVID-19 in offices and according to these, if one or two cases are reported, the disinfection procedure will be limited to the areas occupied and visited by the patient in the last 48 hours.

Work can resume after disinfection has been completed as per laid down protocols, the standard operating procedures (SOPs), which were issued on Saturday, stated. If a larger number of cases are reported at workplace, the whole block or building should be disinfected before work is resumed, the ministry said.

Officers and staff residing in containment zones should inform the same to their supervisory officer and not attend office till the containment zone is denotified. Such staff should be permitted to



work from home, the new SOPs stated. Offices in containment zones shall remain closed except for medical and essential services and only those outside will be allowed to open up, the document said.

The SOPs stated that only asymptomatic staff or visitors shall be allowed entry, individuals must maintain a minimum distance of six feet in common places as far as feasible, and use face covers or masks at all times.

"They must be worn properly to cover the nose and the mouth. Touching the front portion of the mask or face cover to be avoided," the ministry said. It also underlined practicing frequent hand-washing with soap for at least 40 to 60 seconds, even when hands are not visibly dirty, and use of alcohol-based hand sanitiser for at least 20 seconds wherever feasible.

Meetings, as far as possible, should be done through video conferencing and large physical gatherings continue to remain prohibited, the SOPs stated. "Offices and other workplaces are relatively close settings, with shared spaces like workstations, corridors, elevators and stairs, parking places, cafeteria/canteens, meeting rooms and conference halls etc, COVID-19 infection can spread relatively fast among officials, staffs and visitors," according to the procedures.

Won't let govt sit in peace till farmers' demands met: Tikait

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Karnal, Feb 14: Upping the ante against the government, Bharatiya Kisan Union leader Rakesh Tikait Sunday said the farmers won't let it sit in peace till their demands are met.

Addressing a farmers' "mahapanchayat" at Indri grain market in the district, Tikait said the 40 leaders spearheading the agitation against the Centre's farm laws will tour the entire country to drum up support for the stir.

"Till the time the government does not decide in our favour, talks to the committee (spearheading the agitation) and does not agree to the demands, we won't let it sit in peace," Tikait said, demanding the repeal of the laws. He reiterated that the Centre's farm laws "will finish the public distribution system."

The laws will not only impact farmers but also small traders, daily wagers and other sections, he said. Questioning the government's

POLLING HELD FOR OVER 100 CIVIC BODIES IN PUNJAB

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, Feb 14: Polling was held for over hundred civic bodies in Punjab Sunday amid stray incidents of skirmishes at some places.

According to officials, seven people were injured in Rupnagar after workers of the ruling Congress and the Shiromani Akali Dal clashed following a heated argument in Ward No.1 there. Skirmishes and scuffles between activists of the Congress and the Opposition parties were also reported from Batala, Rajpura, Tarn Taran, Bathinda, Gurdaspur, Samana, Rupnagar, Nabha, Nangal, Mohali and Ferozepur.

Though the final voting percentage is yet to come, over 55 per cent people had voted till 2 pm. The voting began at 8 am and continued till 4 pm, said officials.

A total of 9,222 candidates are in the fray for the elections to 2,302 wards of eight municipal corporations of Abohar; Bathinda Batala, Kapurthala, Mohali, Hoshiarpur, Pathankot and Moga, 109 municipal councils and nagar panchayats.

Of the total candidates, 2,832 are independents, 2,037 from the ruling Congress while 1,569 are SAD nominees. The BJP and the AAP have fielded 1,003 and 1,606 candidates, respectively. Prominent among those who cast their votes Sunday were Punjab minister Balbir Singh Sidhu, Akali leader Bikram Singh Majithia, AAP MLA Aman Arora and state BJP chief Ashwani Sharma.

The Opposition Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) accused the Congress workers of indulging in both capturing in Samana, Rajpura, Dhuri, Abohar and Bhikhiwind, a charge denied by the ruling party.

Leader of Opposition in the Punjab Assembly Harpal Singh Cheema claimed that an AAP volunteer was allegedly shot at in Patti by some Congress activists. However, police rejected the charge.

HOW TAJ MAHAL CHANGED AFTER COVID-19

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 14: The number of tourists visiting Taj Mahal is gradually increasing after it reopened September 21, 2020 following a closure of around 180 days due to Covid-19 induced nationwide lockdown. However, during the closure, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) was continuously working on its conservation.

ASI superintendent Vasant Swarnkar said, "Soon there will be a public address system in Taj Mahal. This will help us in passing any information during any emergency times."

These speakers will be installed at various places inside the Taj Mahal and a control room will be made from where they will be operated. He said, "Such a system is



not available in any of the monuments in India, this facility will be made operational here by March."

2021 started on a positive note as the number of foreign tourists was recorded to be more than 1,000 for the first time after it reopened. The total number of Indian tourists was more than 2.50 lakh while 1,380

foreign tourists visited Taj Mahal. In September last year, 17,007 tourists visited the monument of which 16,878 were Indians and 129 foreigners. In October, the number went up to 71,209 including 70,618 Indian and 591 foreign tourists whereas in November 83,345 tourists -- 82,624 Indians and 721 foreign-

ers). In December, 1,26,133 Indian and 938 foreign tourists visited Taj Mahal taking the count to 1,27,071.

Despite the number of tourists gradually increasing, the shopkeepers are not too happy as they feel that till the number of foreign tourists doesn't increase the business will remain sluggish.

Syed Munnuwar Ali, chairman of the National Monument Security Committee, told IANS, "There are around 200 shops around the Taj Mahal. The reopening of the Taj Mahal is a relief but the situation is not as it was before." The same situation is with the photographers and tourist guides. Around 464 licensed photographers work here and they are working on alternate days now to sustain themselves.

Kishan Gopal Kushwaha, a member of the Archaeological Monument

Photographers Association of India, said, "We were forced to sit at home due to the lockdown. The Taj Mahal has reopened but there is not much relief for us. Most of the tourists have costly smartphones and they ask us to click photos from that."

"Carrying smartphones inside the monument should be banned keeping security in mind as people start going live," he added. Tourist guides are also suffering the brunt with less footfall of the foreign tourists. Jameel-ur-Rahman, a tourist guide, said, "The Indian tourists who are coming here don't need guides as they are from around 100 km. Our work will gain momentum once the foreign tourists start coming."

The officers are also working to improve the connectivity inside the monument which is a big problem for the tourists.

national



No Indian can forget this day. Two years ago, the Pulwama attack happened. We pay homage to all the martyrs
NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER

PROPER MASK MUST

In order to provide the best protection against COVID-19, the fit of a face mask is more important in some cases than the material it is made of, according to a study which suggests new ways for manufacturers to test the effectiveness of masks



of the day quote

I join the nation in paying my humble tributes to the CRPF personnel who were martyred in the dastardly Pulwama terror attack. The grateful nation will always remember their patriotism & supreme sacrifice



I bow down to the brave martyrs who lost their lives in the gruesome Pulwama attack on this day in 2019. India will never forget their exceptional courage and supreme sacrifice



My salute to the martyrs who lost their lives in the line of duty towards Mother India, during the Pulwama Terror Attack



Did not forgive, will not forget: CRPF on Pulwama attack anniv

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 14: The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) that lost 40 troopers in the 2019 Pulwama terror attack said on Sunday that the country "did not forgive" and "will not forget" the supreme sacrifice made by the personnel.

A wreath-laying ceremony was held at CRPF camp in Lethpora in Jammu and Kashmir to mark the second anniversary of the deadly attack.

Senior officers of the paramilitary based at its headquarters in Delhi participated in the event in the virtual mode. CRPF spokesperson deputy inspector general (DIG) Moses Dhinakaran said. "Did not Forgive, will not Forget: Salute



to our brothers who made the supreme sacrifice for the nation in #PulwamaAttack. "Indebted, we stand with the families of our valiant Bravehearts," the force said in a Twitter post.

Soon after the Pulwama attack, the Indian Air Force had carried out an airstrike in

Pakistan's Balakot on February 26, 2019, targeting terrorist camps. CRPF Director General A P Maheshwari also unveiled a video book dedicated to the 40 personnel killed in the line of duty.

"We have inherited bravery which flows like blood in our veins," he was quoted as saying

by the spokesperson. "The video book has a content of 80 episodes and 300 minutes. A copy of the book will also be sent to the families of each of the personnel killed in the Pulwama suicide bombing attack," Dhinakaran said. A CRPF bus in the fifth position of a 78-vehicle convoy was targeted by a Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) suicide bomber who detonated his explosives-laden SUV near it on the Jammu-Srinagar highway in Pulwama February 14, 2019.

The convoy was ferrying over 2,500 personnel and all 39 in the ill-fated bus and a sub-officer stationed on the ground, as part of a road sanitisation party were killed in the blast.

CRPF Assistant Sub Inspector (ASI) Mohan Lal, 50, who had

"chased and fired" at the explosives-laden car, was named for the highest police medal for bravery, the President's Police Medal for Gallantry (PPMG), this Republic Day.

The around 3.25 lakh-personnel-strong force is the world's largest paramilitary with about 65 battalions or about 70,000 personnel deployed in the Kashmir Valley for undertaking counter-terrorism operations and rendering law and order duties. As per official data, a total of 2,224 CRPF personnel have been killed in action till now. The force was raised in 1939 as the Crown Representative's Police (CRP) during the British Raj and was re-named the Central Reserve Police Force a decade later in 1949.

ARMY GETS ARJUN

AGENCIES

Chennai, Feb 14: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Sunday handed over the indigenously developed Arjun Main Battle Tank Mark 1A to the Indian Army here and said India believes in peace but will protect its sovereignty at all costs.

Modi handed over the tank to Army Chief General M.M. Naravane.

He accepted a salute by the state-of-the-art tank, indigenously designed, developed and manufactured by the Defence Research and Development Organisation's Combat Vehicles Research and Development Establishment here. Fifteen academic institutions, eight labs and several MSMEs were also involved in the project. The Defence Ministry had recently cleared the induction of 118 Arjun Mark 1A tanks into the Indian Army, costing around ₹8,400 crore.

Modi said that Tamil Nadu is already a leading manufacturing hub of India and now he sees the state evolving as the tank manufacturing hub. Stating that one of the two defence corridors is in Tamil Nadu, Modi said it already received an investment commitment of over ₹8,100 crore.

"A tank made in Tamil Nadu will be used to defend our borders in northern India. This shows the united nature of India," he said. Modi said India believes in peace but it will protect its sovereignty at all costs. He recited Bharatiya poem in Tamil to highlight the importance of defence projects in the country.

"Chennai is full of energy and enthusiasm. It is a city of knowledge



PM dedicates petro-chem complex to nation

Kochi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Sunday dedicated to the nation a Rs 6,000 crore petrochemical complex of oil major Bharat Petroleum here and Ro-Ro vessels of Inland Waterways at Willingdon Islands, asserting these projects would energise India's growth trajectory. On a brief visit to Kerala, the Prime Minister also inaugurated the Cochin Port Trust's International Cruise Terminal and Cochin Shipyard's Vignya Sagar, a campus for Marine Engineering Training Institute. At a function here, he also laid the foundation stone of Cochin Port Trust's South Coal Berth and said these projects covered a wide range of sectors and will energise India's growth trajectory.

and creativity. From here, we begin key infrastructure projects. These projects are symbols of innovation and indigenous development," he said. The Prime Minister also inaugurated the Chennai Metro Rail Phase-I extension completed at a cost of ₹3,770 crore and flagged off passenger services from Washermenpet to Wimco Nagar. He noted that the work was completed on time despite the Covid-19 pandemic. He said the material for the 9.05-km stretch was procured locally and supports his idea of 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat'.

Modi also inaugurated 22-km

fourth railway line between Chennai Beach and Attipattu. It will be an additional track to Thiruvallur districts meant to ease traffic from Chennai Port. Railway Electrification of single line section in Villupuram - Cuddalore - Mayiladuthurai - Thanjavur and Mayiladuthurai-Thiruvallur completed at a cost of ₹423 crore was launched by Modi. He said this will be a great boon to delta districts. The electrification of this 228-km route will enable free flow of traffic without the need for a change of traction between Chennai Egmore and Kanyakumari.

Over 5K jail inmates hold technical degree

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 14: As many as 1,32,729 (27.37 per cent) of the 4,78,600 prison inmates in the country are "illiterate" while 5,677 hold a technical degree or diploma, according to Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) data.

The prison statistics presented by Minister of State for Home Affairs G Kishan Reddy recently in Parliament were based on a compilation of data by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) updated till December 31, 2019.

It showed that 1,32,729 (27.37 per cent) prison inmates were illiterate, while 1,03,036 (or 21.52 per cent) studied beyond class 10 but below graduate level.

According to the data, 30,201 (6.31 per cent) prison inmates were graduates, while 8,085 (1.68 per cent) were post graduates and as many as 5,677 (1.18 per cent) held a technical degree or diploma, etc.

Uttar Pradesh, the country's most populous state, houses the maximum number of prisoners at 1,01,297.

Uttar Pradesh also houses the maximum number of prison inmates who are illiterate (31,927), educated up till class 10 (36,390), beyond class 10 but below graduation (21,269), graduates (8,151), post graduates (2,635) and techies (925), it showed.

West Bengal had not furnished prison statistics for 2018 and 2019 because of which its figures from



2017 were used in the data, while Maharashtra's category-wise break up was 'not available', the data mentioned.

Meanwhile, over 67 per cent of the 4,78,600 prison inmates in the country are Hindu while nearly 18 per cent Muslim, according to MHA data.

The prison statistics presented by Minister of State for Home Affairs G Kishan Reddy last week in Parliament were based on a compilation of data by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) updated till December 31, 2019.

The data showed that 3,21,155 (or 67.10 per cent) prison inmates were Hindu, 85,307 (or 17.82 per cent) Muslim, 18,001 (or 3.76 per cent) Sikh, 13,782 (or 2.87 per cent) Christian, and 3,557 (or 0.74 per cent) 'others'.

A gender-wise break-up of the figures showed that among women, 13,416 prison inmates were Hindus, 3,162 Muslim, 721 Sikh, 784 Christian and 261 'Others'

SHORT TAKES

Farmer hangs self over power bill

Aligarh (UP): A 50-year-old farmer here hanged himself after allegedly being slapped by Electricity Department officials and served an inflated power bill, according to the victim's family. The incident took place at Sunaira village in Atrauli tehsil on Saturday when the officials turned up at Ramji Lal's house and handed over a power bill of ₹1,50,000.

4 mowed down by dumper

Bardhaman (WB): Four persons, including three members of a family, were mowed down by a speeding dumper on National Highway 2 in West Bengal's Purba Bardhaman district Sunday, police said. The incident took place in Alisha area as the daily-wagers were crossing the highway to catch a bus to their workplace in Bankura district when a Kolkata-bound dumper ran over them and fled the spot, a police officer said.

Gwalior Zoo to reopen

Gwalior: Gwalior Zoo would now reopen for tourists from February 15. The zoo was closed till now owing to the coronavirus pandemic in Madhya Pradesh. Municipal Corporation Commissioner Shivam Verma said after getting permission from the authorities, now the Municipal Corporation is going to open the zoo for general tourists.

Half-burnt bodies seized

Sant Kabir Nagar (UP): Police have seized half-burnt bodies of a young couple who had died under mysterious circumstances in Mudadih village in Uttar Pradesh's Sant Kabir Nagar. The couple, according to reports, had announced their marriage Friday when the girl, Kanchan, reached Sagar's house and Sagar applied vermilion on her forehead.

Heroin seized

Aizawl: A 47-year-old Myanmar has been arrested and heroin worth ₹19.25 lakh seized from his possession in Mizoram's Hnahthial district, an official said Sunday. Acting on a tip-off, Excise and Narcotics Department sleuths along with Assam Rifles personnel seized 667 gm of heroin from the man in a forest near New Ngarhchhip village along the India-Myanmar border on Saturday evening, a spokesperson of the department said.

66% healthcare workers report mild side-effects post-vax

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 14: A survey conducted by noted public health experts indicated that the side-effects post-vaccination, or 'reactogenicity' in medical linguistic, is likely to occur in 66 per cent of the healthcare workers which are most probably to subside within a day of their onset.

The survey, which compiled the responses from 5,396 respondents, all healthcare professionals, who had received Covid vaccines, showed 66 per cent of them reported at least post-vaccination symptoms.

The respondents in the survey stated that the most commonly reported symptoms they experienced after immunization were

Myalgia (44 per cent), fever (34 per cent), headache (28 per cent), local pain at injection site (27 per cent), joint pain (12 per cent), nausea (8 per cent) and Diarrhoea (3 per cent) while tiredness (45 per cent) being the most prevailing one. "The occurrence of other symptoms such as sore throat, insomnia, giddiness, rigor, allergic rash, chills, vomiting, syncope were reported 1 per cent or less," study said.

It also noted that the symptoms reported by the respondents were not severe in nature or required hospitalisation. Besides, the survey also pointed out that in 90 per cent of the cases, the symptoms were either milder than expected or met the expectation of the vaccine recipient.



Biden, so near, yet so far

When US President Joe Biden nominated 20 Indian-Americans to key positions in his administration, it was hailed as a

big win for India and Modi's leadership. But analysts pointed out that Biden excluded those who are considered close to the RSS-BJP like Sonal Shah and Amit Jani. They worked for Biden during elections and part of his team. The father of Sonal Shah, who has served on Biden's unity task force, was the president of Overseas Friends of BJP-USA and is the founder of RSS-run Ekal Vidyalaya. The suspicions of Biden's not-so-friendly attitude towards India came correct a few weeks later when many close to the new administration lent their support to agitating farmers in India. Much to the discomfort of the Modi administration, even the niece of Vice President and most-powerful

person Kamala Harris joined the melee. But one will have to watch out Biden in the months to come. External Affairs Minister Jaishankar has a tough task in hand.

Signs of thaw

Back channels have been opened for talks between the government and the farmers once again. The Prime Minister has already sent signals twice - first in Rajya Sabha and later in Lok Sabha - that the government is not averse to making amendments 'here & there', referring to the three farm laws. The farmer leaders have also toned down their protests and want a bill for the Minimum Support Price (MSP). The government has

also deferred the three laws for 18 months and is willing to talk on anything 'under the Sun.' Talks are heading in the right direction, said these sources. On their part, Sanyukta Kisan Morcha leader Rakesh Tikait had already scaled down the intensity of protests reflected on the 'chakka Jam' day by excluding Delhi, UP and Uttarakhand. It is also learnt that Defence Minister Rajnath Singh who also hails from UP and considered close to the Tikait brothers is also involved in these back-channel talks. Union Home Minister Amit Shah is coordinating these efforts and Tomar has been deputed to talk to farmers officially. The PM rather claimed that Tomarji is in "regular touch

with farmers" hinting that talks are going on. Earlier, Tomar had also expressed the hope of 'breaking deadlock' soon as talks are going on. Insiders say that a breakthrough is expected anytime.

Kisan Budget

Long before the farmers' agitation began, Prime Minister Modi had been pondering over this idea particularly after he declared that he would make double the farmers' income in five years. A lot of ground work was also done and NITI Aayog was also sounded out. Modi always considered the Railway Budget a populist measure and buried it virtually. He made it a part of the Union Budget and now there are no

headlines relating to Railways and its projects in the media except for a few new Metro projects. Modi wanted to put a new vision for rural India and farmers' welfare. He has already changed its name to Agriculture & Farmers Welfare. The Kisan Budget was on the table of discussions. But he dumped the plans as farmers sat on dharna on the borders of Delhi. Modi is not the one to buckle under the pressure. Gone are the days when he did not press for the passage of the Land Acquisition Bill to be passed in the Rajya Sabha after it was through in the Lok Sabha in his first term. Interestingly, it was Chaudhary Charan Singh who first toyed with the idea of a Kisan Budget in the 70s.

FOR A CAUSE



Students take part in a protest rally against Love Jihad in Kolkata

PTI PHOTO

Girl thrown off terrace after failed rape bid

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Pilibhit (Uttar Pradesh), Feb 14: A 16-year-old girl was allegedly thrown off a terrace after a failed rape attempt by two of her neighbours, police said Sunday.

The two pushed the girl down when they saw her father enter the house, alleged the family.

The girl has suffered several fractures and internal injuries, said her father while lodging a complaint with the police in Jahanabad area.

Harish Vardhan Singh, Station House Officer (SHO), said the accused, identified as Arvind and Mahendra, have been booked under IPC section 354 (applying force to a woman with intent to outrage her modesty), 504 (intentional insult) and 323 (causing hurt), besides provisions of the SC/ST Act and the POCSO Act. The police have set up teams to arrest the two youths who are now absconding.

According to reports the incident took place Saturday.



If Covid-19 ends up being like flu, so we live our normal lives and we mitigate through vaccines and treatments, then we can get on with everything again

MATT HANCOCK | HEALTH SECRETARY, UK

UAE PUBLISHES 1st PHOTO

The UAE Sunday published the first image for its Mars probe now circling the red planet. The picture, taken Wednesday, shows sunlight just coming across the surface of Mars. It shows Mars' North Pole, as well as its largest volcano, Olympus Mons



of the day quote

While most children are relatively unaffected by coronavirus and are unlikely to become unwell with the infection, it is important to establish the safety and immune response to the vaccine in children and young people as some children may benefit from vaccination

ANDREW POLLARD | DIRECTOR, OXFORD VACCINE GROUP

The upcoming jobless rate for the past three months will surpass 7%. Hong Kong's unemployment rate rose to 6.6% in the October-December 2020 period due to the Covid-19 impact, hitting a 16-year high

LAW CHI-KWONG | SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND WELFARE, HONG KONG

If we're really honest about it, the challenge to London as the global financial centre around the world will come from Tokyo, New York, and other areas, rather than from those European hubs, particularly if they start to erect barriers to trade and investment

DOMINIC RAAB | FOREIGN MINISTER, UK

WHO investigations: China fires back at US' allegations

China responded with a statement from its Washington embassy, saying the US had already gravely damaged international cooperation on Covid-19 and was now pointing fingers at other countries who have been faithfully supporting the WHO



"To better understand this pandemic and prepare for the next one, China must make available its data from the earliest days of the outbreak." Sullivan's statement said.

China responded with a statement from its Washington embassy Sunday, saying the US had already "gravely damaged international cooperation on Covid-19 and was now 'pointing fingers at other countries who have been faithfully supporting the WHO and at the WHO itself."

While it welcomed President Joe Biden's decision to reverse the Trump administration's move to leave the WHO, China hopes the US will "hold itself to the highest standards, take a serious, earnest, transparent and responsible attitude, shoulder its rightful responsibility, support the WHO's work with real actions and make due contribution to the international cooperation on Covid-19," the statement said.

Following allegations of Chinese withholding of data, investigation team member Peter Daszak tweeted, "This was NOT my experience on @WHO mission."

AGENCIES

Beijing, Feb 14: China fired back Sunday at the US over allegations from the White House that Beijing withheld some information about the coronavirus outbreak from World Health Organization investigators.

In a statement Friday, White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan said Washington had "deep concerns about the way in which the early findings of the Covid-19 investigation were communicated and questions about the process used to reach them."

"It is imperative that this report be independent, with expert findings free from intervention or alteration by the Chinese government," he said, referring to the WHO mission investigating the origins of the pandemic in the central city of Wuhan, where the coronavirus was first detected late in 2019.

Japan formally approves its first Covid vaccine

AGENCIES

Tokyo, Feb 14: Japan Sunday formally approved its first Covid-19 vaccine and said it would start nationwide inoculations within days, but months behind the US and many other countries. Japan's health ministry said it had approved the vaccine co-developed and supplied by Pfizer Inc.

The announcement comes after a government panel on Friday confirmed that final results of clinical testing done in Japan showed that the vaccine had an efficacy similar to what overseas tests showed.

Many countries began vacci-

Wednesday. About 3.7 million other medical workers will be next, followed by elderly people, who are expected to get their shots in April. By June, it's expected that all others will be eligible.

Vaccines are considered key to holding the delayed Tokyo Olympics this summer. Japan is expected to receive 144 million doses from Pfizer, 120 million from AstraZeneca and about 50 million from Moderna before the end of this year, enough to cover its population.

Vaccines being developed by Japan are still in the early stages, so the country must rely on im-



nating their citizens late last year, and Pfizer's vaccine has been used elsewhere since December.

Under the current plan, about 20,000 front-line medical workers at hospitals in Japan will get their first shots beginning around

ports. AstraZeneca approved approval in Japan only recently, while Moderna hasn't applied yet. Japan's reliance on the imports, many of them subject to EU export controls, is also causing concerns about supplies.

Houston and Texas brace for historic Arctic Blast

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Houston, Feb 14: Houston and most of Texas is bracing for a historic Arctic blast expected to dump inches of snow, cripple life, glaze roadways in ice and send temperatures plummeting to near-record lows.

A Winter Storm Warning has been issued for parts of southeast Texas from 9 pm Saturday until 6 pm Monday. Sporadic power outages will be a possibility. Pipes and sprinkler systems may burst if not properly cared for in advance, officials have said.

Temperatures will remain stuck in the 30s all weekend, before the winter storm and arctic air blow Sunday night and Monday morning.

The National Weather Service issued winter storm warnings or watches for most of the state. Wintery

weather may begin in some locations very early Sunday morning.

The Houston region has not experienced such cold, arctic conditions for more than three decades. Houston's all-time record low temperature of five degrees Celsius was recorded in 1930, according to Space City Weather.

Most businesses, educational institutions will be shut down Monday and Tuesday, anticipating winter freeze.

Hospitals have rescheduled appointments and elective surgeries.

Governor Greg Abbott issued a disaster declaration in all 254 counties in response to severe winter weather that is impacting Texas.

The governor is continuing to deploy state resources available to assist local officials in their response efforts. The Texas State



Operations Center (SOC) has been ordered to operate for 24 hours a day through the end of next week.

In a press conference Saturday, Abbott warned Texas residents of

JOHNSON TO HOST VIRTUAL MEETING OF G7 LEADERS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

London, Feb 14: UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson will host a virtual meeting of the G7 leaders on Friday to discuss efforts to ensure an equal distribution of Covid-19 vaccines and prevent future pandemics.

Johnson will call for a new global approach to pandemics, drawing on lessons from the divisions that characterised the initial international response to the coronavirus outbreak, according to a press statement released Saturday night by Downing Street.

The solutions to the challenges we face, from the colossal mission to get vaccines to every single country, to the fight to reverse the damage done to our ecosystems and lead a sustainable recovery from coronavirus, lie in the discussions we have with our friends and partners around the world

BORIS JOHNSON | PRIME MINISTER, UK

"The solutions to the challenges we face, from the colossal mission to get vaccines to every single country, to the fight to reverse the damage done to our ecosystems and lead a sustainable recovery from coronavirus, lie in the discussions we have with our friends and partners around the world," Xinhua news agency quoted Johnson as saying in the statement.



Noting that governments around the world have a responsibility to work together to put vaccines to the best possible use, he said: "I hope 2021 will be remembered as the year humanity worked together like never before to defeat a common foe."

Friday's meeting will be the first hosted by Johnson as part of the UK's G7 Presidency this year and the first gathering of the bloc's leaders since April 2020.

The Prime minister will use the meeting, which will also be US President Joe Biden's first major multilateral engagement since he took office on January 20, to call for leaders to work together on a global approach to pandemics that brings an end to the nationalist and divisive politics that marred the initial response to coronavirus.

Johnson will argue that the last 12 months of the pandemic have shown that no country can be safe until every country is safe from the pandemic, the Downing Street statement said, adding that the rollout of vaccines offers a fresh opportunity to demonstrate the value of international cooperation.

Germany tightens border checks to keep out virus variants

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Berlin, Feb 14: Germany on Sunday implemented tighter border controls on its frontiers with the Czech Republic and Austria's Tyrol province in an effort to stem the spread of more contagious coronavirus variants.

The new restrictions that took effect at midnight limit entry from those areas to German citizens and residents, truck drivers, transport and health service staff and a few others, who have to register online and show a negative coronavirus test.



Interior Minister Horst Seehofer told the Bild am Sonntag newspaper that the new checks may cause some delays at the border and German police "will not just wave traffic through."

Couples in Thailand tie the knot on elephants on V-day



REUTERS

Bangkok, Feb 14: Fifty-two couples in Thailand got married while riding elephants Sunday, in an annual Valentine's Day mass wedding ceremony at a botanical garden in a province east of Bangkok.

Dancers and a band led the procession of elephants and couples and a local official, also on an elephant, oversaw the signing of the marriage licence.

"For me, I've been planning for a long time that if I were to sign a marriage licence one day, it must be an extraordinary event," said groom Patiphat Panthanon, 26, sitting beside his 23-year-old bride.

The elephant-back wedding is an annual event at the Nong Nooch Tropical Garden in Chonburi province which usually attracts up to a hundred couples. But this year due to the coronavirus pandemic, the numbers were down.

V-DAY VIBES



Black capped squirrel monkeys are fed treats from Valentine's Day themed bags during a photo-call at ZSL London Zoo in Britain

REUTERS

'52% of Afghanistan still under Taliban control'

AGENCIES

Kabul, Feb 14: A survey conducted by an Afghan media outlet has revealed the 52 per cent of the war-torn country is still under the control of the Taliban, while the Kabul government controls only 49 per cent of the territory.

In the survey conducted between November 2020 and February 2021, the Pajhwok Afghan News, the country's largest independent news agency, said that 59 per cent of the population lives under the gov-

ernment, Khaama News reported.

According to the survey, the Taliban controls 337,000 square.km of Afghan land and about 297,000 square.km is under government control, while 18,000 square metre is reported to have no influence over by any of the parties.

The findings revealed that 27 districts are under Taliban control while 64 other districts are fully controlled by the government and the rest 297 districts are controlled by both of the parties.

A Taliban spokesman claimed



that the group has control over 70 per cent of the country's territories which was later rejected by the National Security Advisor Hamdullah Mohib at a weekly briefing Saturday.

"The Taliban claims to have control over 70 per cent of the territory, but even today, they convene their meetings in Quetta (in Pakistan) where they make plans on how to kill the people of Afghanistan and destroy the gains that we have achieved and destroy our infrastructures," TOLO News quoted Mohib as saying.

The survey comes as the peace talks between the Afghan government negotiating team and the Taliban representatives in Qatar capital Doha have come to a standstill.

SHORT TAKES

Lebanon begins Covid vax drive

Beirut: Lebanon administered Sunday its first jabs of Covid-19 vaccine, with an intensive care unit physician and a well-known 93-year-old comedian becoming the first to receive Pfizer-BioNTech doses. Lebanon launched its inoculation campaign a day after receiving the first batch of the vaccine - 28,500 doses from Brussels, near where Pfizer has a manufacturing facility. More were expected to arrive in the coming weeks. The rollout will be monitored by the World Bank and the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

B'desh extends closure of schools

Dhaka: Bangladesh has extended the closure of educational institutions, except madrasas, till February 28 due to the continuous surge in the cases of coronavirus in the country, a media report said Sunday. The government shut all the educational institutions March 17 last year, amid the Covid-19 outbreak, the Dhaka Tribune reported.

Pak holds war exercise in Thar

Islamabad: The Pakistan Army is holding a month-long exercise in the Thar Desert in Sindh province to prepare for conflict in an extreme desert environment, the military said in a statement. The exercise, codenamed 'Jidar-ul-Hadeed', began on January 28 and is scheduled to conclude February 28, it said in a statement last night. "The four-week long defensive manoeuvre exercise is aimed at validating the concept of defence in deserts," the statement said.

Kosovo goes for early polls

Pristina: Kosovo is holding an early parliamentary election to form a new government amid the covid pandemic, an economic downturn and stalled negotiations with wartime foe Serbia. Some 1.8 million eligible voters on Sunday started to cast their ballots in 2,400 polling stations. They're electing 120 lawmakers among more than 1,000 candidates from 28 political groupings.

business



Sectors like private banks, consumer, FMCG and IT have seen foreign flows as Indian companies have exhibited resilience and demonstrated growth post lifting of the lockdown restrictions in third quarter
S RANGANATHAN | HEAD OF RESEARCH, LKP SECURITIES

FPIs INVEST OVER ₹20K cr SINCE BUDGET

Foreign portfolio investments, which have touched record highs amid the pandemic, have continued to pour into the Indian equity market post the Union Budget for FY22. Net FPI inflow into equities in the month of February has been ₹20,593 crore, as per NSDL data



of the day quote

The growth of NarrowBand-IOT will keep China ahead of other regions in the cellular IoT module market. However, India is expected to experience the highest growth (38%) in shipments

JAN STRYJAK | ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, COUNTERPOINT RESEARCH

The launch of the vernacular registration and account management experience for sellers in Marathi is a major step in that direction and in line with our pledge to digitise 10 million MSMEs by 2025

PRANAV BHASIN | DIRECTOR, MSME & SELLING PARTNER EXPERIENCE, AMAZON INDIA

The Covid-19 induced stress on our asset quality coupled with the credit squeeze in the NBFC sector has created an unprecedented situation. As a matter of prudence, we have decided to increase our provisions significantly

HEMANT KANORIA | CHAIRMAN, SREI

Centre makes FASTag mandatory from today

VEHICLES WITHOUT TAG TO PAY DOUBLE TOLL CHARGE

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 14: The government Sunday said it has made FASTags mandatory from February 15 midnight and any vehicle not fitted with it will be charged double the toll at electronic toll plazas across the country.

The Ministry of Road Transport & Highways in a statement said it has decided that all lanes in the fee plazas on National Highways shall be declared as 'FASTag lane of the fee plaza' from midnight of 15th/16th February 2021.

"Therefore, as per NH Fee Rules 2008, any vehicle not fitted with FASTag or vehicle without valid, functional FASTag entering into the FASTag lane of the fee plaza shall pay a fee equivalent to two times of the fee applicable to that category," the statement said.

The ministry has clarified that this has been done to further promote fee payment through digital mode, reduce waiting time and fuel consumption, and provide for a seamless passage through the fee plazas.

The ministry had mandated fitment of FASTag in M&N categories of motor vehicles with effect from January 1, 2021.

Category 'M' stands for a motor



■ The Ministry of Road Transport & Highways said, it has decided that all lanes in the fee plazas on National Highways shall be declared as 'FASTag lane of the fee plaza'

■ The ministry has clarified that this has been done to further promote fee payment through digital mode, reduce waiting time and fuel consumption, and provide for a seamless passage through the fee plazas

■ The ministry had mandated fitment of FASTag in M&N categories of motor vehicles with effect from January 1, 2021

vehicle with at least four wheels used for carrying passengers. And Category 'N' stands for a motor vehicle with at least four wheels used for carrying goods, which may also carry persons in addition to goods.

FinMin to infuse ₹3K cr in general insurance cos

The cabinet had also decided to increase the authorised share capital of NICL to ₹7,500 crore and that of United India Insurance and Oriental Insurance Company to ₹5,000 crore each to give effect to the capital infusion decision

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 14: The Finance Ministry will infuse ₹3,000 crore capital into state-owned general insurance companies during the current quarter in a bid to improve their financial health.

Last year, the Union Cabinet headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi cleared proposal to provide capital support to National Insurance, Oriental Insurance and United India Insurance.

The capital infusion will enable the three public sector general insurance companies to improve their financial and solvency position

FM Nirmala Sitharaman in the Budget announced privatisation of two public sector banks and one general insurance company in 2021-22 beginning April

The cabinet had also decided to increase the authorised share capital of National Insurance Company Limited (NICL) to ₹7,500 crore and that of United India Insurance



Company Limited (UIICL) and Oriental Insurance Company Limited (OICL) to ₹5,000 crore each to give effect to the capital infusion decision.

Recently, the government sought Parliament nod for gross additional expenditure of ₹6.28 lakh crore for 2020-21 as part of second and final batch of supplementary demands for grants.

This included ₹3,000 crore for providing additional funds towards recapitalisation of insurance companies.

The infusion will be done after the supplementary demands for grants are passed by Parliament which will reconvene March 8.

The capital infusion will enable the three public sector general insurance companies to improve their financial and solvency position, meet the insurance needs of the economy, absorb changes and enhance the capacity to raise resources and improve risk management.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in the Budget announced privatisation of two public sector banks and one general insurance company in 2021-22 beginning April.

In 2017, state-owned companies New India Assurance Company and General Insurance Corporation of India went public.

Railways freight revenue surges to ₹98,000 cr

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 14: For the first time post the Covid-19 pandemic, the cumulative freight revenue of Indian Railways has surged past last year's levels to ₹98,068.45 crore, as compared to ₹97,342.14 crore recorded in the corresponding period of the previous year.

The Railway Ministry said that on a month-on-month basis as well, the Railways has overtaken last year's freight revenue figures in the first 12 days of February by 5 per cent.



The ministry said that on a monthly basis, the freight revenue has surged ₹206 crore in February 2021 compared to the corresponding period of February last year.

It said that as per the estimates, Railways' freight revenue stood at ₹4,571 crore for the first 12 days of February as compared to ₹4,365 crore for the same period in the last financial year.

It said that incidentally loading is also ahead by almost 8 per cent as compared to the corresponding period of last year.

"Railways has achieved this turnaround due to an extraordinary set of new initiatives being taken in improving business development, incentives, speed and customisation," the Railways said.

It also said that freight loading has been showing higher figures since August 21 last year as compared to the corresponding period of the previous financial year.

"This is for the first time post Covid lockdown that freight revenue for the month is showing higher estimates as compared to the same period last year," it said.

Volkswagen Taigun slated for pre-Diwali launch

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 14: After the 'dieselgate' crisis and the resultant reorganisation of its operations here in late-2018, Volkswagen Passenger Cars India is set for a comeback, boosted by the recovery seen in the past few months, and is also on course for a pre-Diwali launch of its much-awaited compact SUV Taigun.



The company, which had two launches in 2020 as part of its India 2.0 plan under which it was to invest 1 billion euros, is also expanding its reach by adding 15 more touchpoints to 160 this year, Volkswagen Passenger Cars India Brand Director Ashish Gupta told PTI over the weekend.

SHORT TAKES

Derma Co eyes ₹100cr revenue

New Delhi: The Derma Co, part of Honasa Consumer Pvt Ltd (HCPL) that also owns the Mamaearth brand, aims to clock a revenue run rate of ₹100 crore by March 2022 as it expands its presence across online and offline retail in the country. Speaking with PTI, Honasa Consumer co-founder and CEO Varun Alagh said The Derma Co has been in existence for about a year in beta mode with the company engaged in product market fit and testing.

J&K simplifies biz process

Jammu: In a move to revive the business sector and boost investor confidence with a business-friendly environment in Jammu and Kashmir, the Administrative Council has approved a series of measures for simplifying business establishment process. The meeting was held under the Chairmanship of Jammu and Kashmir Lt. Governor, Manoj Sinha Saturday. As per the decision, the pre-requisite NoCs have been relaxed for setting up of a business unit.

Snapchat crosses 60 million users

New Delhi: With over 150 per cent growth in daily active users (DAUs), photo-messaging app Snapchat has seen its user base cross the 60 million-mark in the country, a top company executive said. Snap Inc Managing Director (International Markets) Nana Murugesan said the company aims to continue building on the growth momentum across product development, partnerships and the augmented reality experience. Snap is the parent company of Snapchat.

ONGC's Q3 profit down by 67%

Mumbai: Diversified energy major ONGC Saturday reported a decline of 67.4% in its standalone net profit for Q3FY21 on a y-o-y basis. According to the company, the standalone Q3FY21 net profit fell to ₹1,378 crore against ₹4,226 crore reported during the corresponding period of previous fiscal. Similarly, gross revenues declined 28.2% to ₹17,024 crore against ₹23,710 crore in FY20.

CAIT to release white paper on state of GST regime

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 14: The Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) Sunday said that it will soon release a white paper on the state of Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime in the country.

The traders' body has been raising concerns for some time now over the arbitrariness of the tax regime. It has also called for a traders' strike February 26.

In a statement on Sunday, CAIT said that the call of "Bharat Vyapar Bandh" (nationwide traders strike) on against "draconian and arbitrary provisions" of GST has received tremendous response across the country not only from the trade associations but the bodies of tax practitioners, chartered accountants, MSME and other verticals of domestic trade have also come out in support of the call for a nationwide strike.

"It shows the high level of gross resentment in people of the coun-



try against current state of GST which is called as 'good and simple tax', much away from the ground reality," it said.

The statement said that traders across country are deeply agitated over recent amendments made in the GST rules which give arbitrary and unfettered powers to the GST officials.

"Even after four years of implementation, the GST portal is suffered with various glitches and

is an unstable tax portal but instead of penalising the operators of GST portal, the traders are penalised even for a mistake which has not committed by them," CAIT said.

Further, since the introduction of GST, more than 900 changes have been introduced from time to time due to which the GST taxation system has become extremely complicated and has lost its sanctity, it added.

Govt eases curbs on steel to reduce cost

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 14: Doing away with restrictive conditions for use of steel in highways construction, the government on Sunday announced that all kinds of steel will be allowed for highways provided these meet the quality parameters.

Earlier, the contract provisions required use of steel produced by primary/integrated steel producers only. The move is aimed at ensur-



ing cost reduction in highways construction using steel.

"The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has issued orders that all steel - whether produced

from ore, billets, pellets or melting of scrap - would be allowed to be used for National Highway construction, as long as it meets the standards required for specific grades of steel," the Ministry said in a statement. The steel proposed to be used would be tested in NABL-accredited laboratories as a third party check before approval. The move is based on the analysis and discussions with stakeholders and also technical opinion.

MARKET OUTLOOK

Inflation data, global cues to drive Indian equities

AGENCIES

Mumbai, Feb 14: As the Indian stock market remains largely bullish with intermittent correction and consolidation, wholesale inflation data, global cues along with the trend in the foreign institutional investments (FII) will drive the domestic indices in the coming week, analysts said.

Siddhartha Khemka, Head of Retail Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services noted that post the sharp rally after the budget, the Indian equity market saw some consolidation in the week ended Friday, although it ended on positive note.

Global cues were mixed as

prospects of higher US fiscal stimulus and larger vaccine rollouts globally, along with dovish Federal Reserve outlook kept the overall mood positive, he said.

"Going ahead, with the earnings season largely over, global cues will dictate the short-term market trend. Market would react to the key macro data - IIP, CPI and WPI data," Khemka said. The Wholesale Price Index for January, which shows the wholesale inflation rate, will be released on Monday.

Lower food prices, especially those of vegetables and cereals, brought down India's sequential retail price inflation in January 2021. The Consumer Price Index



(CPI) released on Friday declined to 4.06 per cent from 4.59 per cent reported for December 2020.

Further, the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) for December re-

leased on Friday showed that the factory output grew by 1 per cent in December 2020 from a contraction of (-) 2.09 per cent in November and rose to 0.4 per cent during the

corresponding month of the previous year.

Favourable base effect, along with a broad-based rise in production across sectors, accelerated India's industrial activity in December.

Motilal Oswal's Khemka added that next week, European Central Bank's monetary policy will also be eyed along with India's trade balance data.

"From the long-term perspective, the structure of the market remains constructive, and one can apply buy on dips strategy," he added.

On the foreign fund inflow, S. Ranganathan, Head of Research at LKP Securities noted that several reforms aimed at protecting shareholder rights in

have improved ease of doing business and FPIs have invested ₹39,000 crore till date during in 2021 into Indian equities.

Going ahead, with the earnings season largely over, global cues will dictate the short-term market trend. Market would react to the key macro data -- IIP, CPI and WPI data

SIDDHARTHA KHEMKA, HEAD OF RETAIL RESEARCH | MOTILAL OSWAL FINANCIAL SERVICES

INDIA TAKE COMMAND IN 2ND TEST WITH 195-RUN 1ST INNINGS LEAD

Ashwin show sinks England



MAN OF THE MOMENT: Ravichandran Ashwin successfully appeals along with Virat Kohli and Shubman Gill (left) against an England batsman Sunday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, Feb 14: India took command of the second Test after an exhilarating day two when 15 wickets fell on a rapidly deteriorating pitch. Star spinner Ravichandran Ashwin (5/43) ensured a massive first innings lead of 195 runs for the hosts with his 29th five-wicket haul, here Sunday. Earlier, resuming the day at 300 for

six, Rishabh Pant (58 n o, 77b, 7x4, 3x6) took India to a healthy 329 in their first innings. Ashwin and company then bundled out England for 134 on a pitch that is getting more vicious by each passing session. The 34-year-old was picked up his second five-wicket haul of the series by uprooting the stumps of No. 11 Stuart Broad. By close of play, India were 53 for one in the second innings, extending

their overall lead to 249 runs. Wickets fell in a heap Sunday but it was by no means an unplayable surface, as demonstrated by Rohit Sharma (25 batting, 62b, 2x4, 1x6) in the second innings. Giving him company was Cheteshwar Pujara (seven batting). The only wicket to fall was that of Shubman Gill (14) who was dismissed by Jack Leach. However, barring Ben Foakes

SCOREBOARD

India 1st innings (overnight 300/6): Rishabh Pant n o 58, Axar Patel st Foakes b Ali 5, Ishant Sharma c Burns b Ali 0, Kuldeep Yadav c Foakes b Stone 0, Mohammed Siraj c Foakes b Stone 4, **Extras:** 0, **(Total):** 329.
Fall: 1-0, 2-85, 3-86, 4-248, 5-249, 6-284, 7-301, 8-301, 9-325
Bowling: Stuart Broad 11-2-37-0, Olly Stone 15.5-5-47-3, Jack Leach 27-3-78-2, Ben Stokes 2-0-16-0, Moeen Ali 29-3-128-4, Joe Root 11-3-23-1.

England (1st Innings): Rory Burns lbw b Ishant 0, Dom Sibley c Kohli b Ashwin 16, Daniel Lawrence c Gill b Ashwin 9, Joe Root c Ashwin b Patel 6, Ben Stokes b Ashwin 18, Ollie Pope c Pant b Siraj 22, Ben Foakes n o 42, Moeen Ali c Rahane b Patel 6, Olly Stone c Rohit b Ashwin 1, Jack Leach c Pant b Ishant 5, Stuart Broad b Ashwin 0, **Extras (B-4, LB-4, NB-1)** 9, **Total:** (all out) 134.
Fall: 0-1, 2-16, 3-23, 4-39, 5-52, 6-87, 7-105, 8-106, 9-131, 10-134.
Bowling: Ishant Sharma 5-1-22-2, Ravichandran Ashwin 23.5-4-43-5, Axar Patel 20-3-40-2, Kuldeep Yadav 6-1-16-0, Mohammed Siraj 5-4-5-1.

India (2nd Innings): Rohit Sharma batting 25, Shubman Gill lbw b Leach 14, Cheteshwar Pujara batting 7, **Extras (B-5, LB-3)** 8, **Total:** (for one wicket) 54.
Fall: 1-42.
Bowling: Olly Stone 2-0-8-0, Jack Leach 9-2-19-1, Moeen Ali 7-2-19-0.

(42 n o), England batsmen had no answers to the challenge posed by the Indian bowlers. The sweep shot that came to their rescue in much easier conditions in the previous Test, brought about their downfall including that of captain Joe Root. India, who had taken four wickets in the morning, claimed another four in the post-lunch session to leave England gasping at 106 for eight at tea. Ashwin added two more scalps to his tally while Mohammed Siraj (1/5), who was introduced as late as in the 39th over, debutant Axar Patel (2/40) and Ishant Sharma (2/22) also did the damage. Ashwin got the big wicket of Ben Stokes in the sixth over after

lunch. The left-hander missed an attempted clip off a beauty that drifted in and rocked his off-stump. Ollie Pope (22), who looked assured against the spinners, was brilliantly caught by a diving Rishabh Pant when he tried to glide one down the leg-side, to give Siraj a wicket off the first ball he bowled in Tests in India. Moeen Ali, coming in at No. 8, fell when his edge hit Pant's thighs and rebounded to Ajinkya Rahane who took a fine catch diving forward at first slip. Earlier Ashwin had struck before lunch dismissing Dom Sibley (16) and Dan Lawrence (nine). The first breakthrough was provided by Ishant when he had Rory Burns leg before for a duck.

BATTLE BETWEEN OFF-SPINNERS MAJOR MILESTONE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, Feb 14: Senior off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin surpassed Harbhajan Singh here Sunday to become the second highest wicket-taker in Tests played in

a staggering 29 times and 10-wicket hauls seven times, with a best innings figures of 7/59 and match return of 13/140. Ashwin's 266 wickets at home have come at an average of 22.67. Spin legend Anil Kumble is the

TOP WICKET-TAKERS IN INDIA

	M	W	Avg	SR	5W/1
Anil Kumble	63	350	24.88	59.4	25
Ravi Ashwin	45	268	22.54	49.0	23
Harbhajan Singh	55	265	28.76	64.1	18
Kapil Dev	65	219	26.49	55.7	11
Ravindra Jadeja	33	157	21.06	56.1	7

India. Ashwin got past Harbhajan, who took 265 wickets in India at an average of 28.76, by dismissing Ben Stokes with a perfect off-spinner on the second day of the second Test against England here. Overall, Ashwin has so far taken 391 wickets from 76 Tests at an impressive average of 25.26. The 34-year-old seasoned campaigner has picked five wickets in an innings

leading wicket-taker in Tests in India with 350 scalps at an average of 24.88. Kumble is also India's leading wicket-taker in Tests with 619 wickets to his name. Harbhajan is third in the overall standings with 417 wickets and Ashwin, who is inching towards the 400-wicket mark, is fourth. The legendary Kapil Dev is second with 434 wickets.

Sorry 'Bhajju Pa' says 'Ash' after feat

Chennai, Feb 14: With apologies to Harbhajan Singh, Tamil Nadu off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin cherished Sunday surpassing his former India teammate's number of Test wickets in India. With 266 scalps, Ashwin is now only behind spin legend Anil Kumble's 350 wickets in home Tests. "When I was watching the 2001 series where Bhajju Pa (Harbhajan) was playing, I didn't even imagine that I would go out and become an off-spinner for India," Ashwin said at the virtual post-match press conference. "I was still a batsman for Tamil

Nadu, trying to accelerate a career towards batting and playing for India. I wasn't sure whether I would go on and become a player for the Indian team," Ashwin added. According to Ashwin, a lot of his teammates would make fun of him as he used to try bowling like Harbhajan. "So, from there on to come and actually break the record of something that he possesses, has to be incredibly special. I didn't know of it, now that I do know of it, I feel happy. Sorry, Bhajju Pa..." stated Ashwin.

SHORT TAKES

Maiden WTA win

Melbourne: Indian tennis player Ankit Raina recorded her first victory in the singles main draw of a WTA Tour event with a three-set win over Elisabetta Cocciaretto at the Phillip Island Trophy here Sunday. Ankit came from behind to beat the Italian 5-7, 6-1, 6-2 in the opening round of the USD 235,238 hard court tournament. The win in 131 minutes took Ankit to her new career-high singles rank of 156 from 181. If she further advances, then she will ensure her place in the top-150. "It was very very windy today. I began well but she (Elisabetta) got more consistent. But in the second and third set I played solid," Ankit said.

OFC beaten

Vasdo: NorthEast United FC (NEUFC) continued their unbeaten run and defeated Odisha FC (OFC) 3-1 here Sunday to climb to the third spot of the ISL standings here. Goals from Luis Machado (ninth and 24th) and Deshorn Brown (19th) helped the Highlanders move to third spot and strengthen their chances of qualifying for the play-offs. Braden Inman (45th) netted a consolation goal for Odisha. With the Hyderabad FC and FC Goa, who are currently at fourth and fifth respectively, taking on each other in their final game, NEUFC are now heavy favourites to grab a play-off spot.

Gold for Rawat

Ranchi: Olympian Manish Rawat of Uttarakhand won the inaugural men's 35km event on the second and final day of the National Open Race Walking Championships here Sunday. Rawat beat Tamil Nadu's Ganapati Krishnan by a comfortable nine-minute margin as he clocked 2:49:12 which was, however, well outside the 2:35:00 qualifying standard for next year's World Athletics Championships.

First triumph

Kolkata: Gurpanthjeet Singh scored the only goal of the match as Indian Arrows recorded their first victory of the I-League season with a 1-0 result against Kolkata giants Mohammedan SC at the Vivekananda Yuba Bharati Krirangan, here Sunday. The AIFF's developmental side displayed heroic defending and goalkeeping after Gurpanthjeet's goal in the 26th minute was enough to beat the Black Panthers. AGENCIES

DUBAI PARA ATHLETICS MEET

Kumar, Nishad set new Asian records

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dubai, Feb 14: Teenage high jumpers Praveen Kumar and Nishad Kumar produced their personal best efforts to take a gold medal each and set new Asian records as the curtains came down on the 12th Fazza International World Para Athletics Grand Prix here Saturday. In addition to the golds, India also won three silver and a bronze to finish the event with 23 medals. Thailand topped the list with 34 medals while Turkey, Kenya and India finished with 23 medals each. Turkey took second place while Kenya third because they won more gold medals than India.

After a stellar show from the Indian javelin throwers on Day 3, expectations were high from the high jumpers and they didn't disappoint. Praveen's 2.05m jump was enough to set a new Asian record and fetch him the gold in men's high jump F42/44/64. He finished ahead of former Asian Para Games gold medalist and fellow Indian Sharad Kumar (1.76m) and Hamada Hassan who also cleared the 1.76m bar. "After so long I was competing, so I was a bit nervous. But all my hard work paid off here. I want to win the gold at Tokyo 2020



This championship was important in regard to their returning back to shape in the build-up to Tokyo 2020 Paralympics, besides giving exposure to a few new faces

DEEPA MALIK

Paralympics. I will need to work very hard to achieve my target," said the 2019 world junior silver medalist.

In one of the last events of the day, Nishad, who already has booked a Tokyo Paralympics quota with his bronze medal finish at the Dubai 2019 Worlds, leapt to his personal best 2.06m for the gold and an Asian record in men's high jump T46/47 (for competitors with a below elbow or wrist amputation).

The promising Indian was better than Thailand's Angkarn Chanaboon (1.93m) and Omadbek Khasanov Uzbekistan (1.90m).

RUNNER-UP THEM STUNNED IN AUSTRALIAN OPEN BY DIMITROV

Serena sails into quarters

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Melbourne, Feb 14: Serena Williams tumbled to the ground, her heavily taped right ankle turning, her body contorting, her racket flying. This was early in the second set of a competitive-as-can-be matchup in the Australian Open's fourth round against a younger version of herself — stinging serves, huge groundstroke cuts, a fierce streak — and during a stretch Sunday when things seemed to be slipping away. However, Serena gathered herself to win 6-4, 2-6, 6-4 against No. 7 seed Aryna Sabalenka to reach the quarterfinals at Melbourne Park.

Two years ago at this tournament, Williams was on the verge of a quarterfinal win when she hurt her ankle and ended up losing. "Well, my first thought was, 'Not another ankle sprain in Australia'. But I knew immediately that it wasn't. Then I was more embarrassed than anything. I was like, 'Oh, my goodness'. I don't like falling," Williams said after the match.

Williams now faces second seed Simona Halep who beat Iga Swiatek 3-6, 6-1, 6-1. The other quarterfinal on that half of the draw will be Naomi Osaka against unseeded 35-year-old Hsieh Su-wei of Taiwan.

There were two significant surprises in men's fourth-round action. Dominic Thiem — the Australian Open runner-up and US Open cham-



JOB DONE: Serena Williams is all smiles after her victory Sunday at the Australian Open in Melbourne

PTI PHOTO

pion in 2020 — looked physically compromised in a 4-6, 4-6, 0-6 loss to three-time Major semifinalist Grigor Dimitrov.

Even more unexpected is Dimitrov's next opponent. He is the 27-year old Asian Karatsev, a Russian qualifier who is ranked 114th and first player in a quarter century to reach the quarterfinals in his Grand Slam debut. Karatsev eliminated 20th-seeded Felix Auger-

Aliassime 3-6, 1-6, 6-3, 6-3, 6-4. Osaka barely advanced, saving two match points and grabbing the last four games to top Garbiñe Muguruza 4-6, 6-4, 7-5.

Djokovic advances
Top seed Novak Djokovic had to fight hard before beating Milos Raonic 7-6 (7-4), 4-6, 6-1, 6-4 and also book his spot in the last eight stage. The victory was Djokovic's 12th one in succession against Raonic.

GERMAN MIDFIELDER GUNDOGAN SHINES WITH 2 SUPERB STRIKES

Manchester City thrash hapless Spurs

AGENCIES

London, Feb 14: Manchester City continued their determined chase towards the Premier League title with a 3-0 triumph over Tottenham Hotspur with Ilkay Gundogan scoring twice in the game played Saturday. City are on 53 points, seven clear of second-placed Leicester City, and with a game in hand. And while there are 15 matches still remaining, it will take a major slump in form to stop City from claiming their third title in four years.

"It is a big step for us but of course it is not over," said Spanish midfielder Rodri. Pep Guardiola's side are, however, playing with a swagger having now won 16 straight matches in all competitions and German Gundogan has been central to that record-breaking run of form with 11 goals in his last 12 Premier League outings. Jose Mourinho's Spurs, show none of City's confidence, but they began brightly. They went close to



ON THE MONEY: City's Ilkay Gundogan celebrates after scoring a goal

opening the scoring through a Harry Kane free-kick, a curling effort over the wall that struck the upright. But it was City who went in front

in the 23rd minute with a Rodri penalty after Gundogan was tripped in the box by Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg. City had missed three of their

previous seven penalties this season and Spurs keeper Hugo Lloris could have saved Rodri's poorly placed kick which squeezed over his hands.

City turned on their dominant passing game and Spurs had little in response — either with their far from solid defence or an attack lacking craft.

Gundogan made it 2-0 five minutes after the interval, beating Lloris at the near post after good work from Raheem Sterling.

Then the former Borussia Dortmund midfielder, revelling in a more advanced midfield role, completed the win when he latched on to a superb long ball forward from goalkeeper Ederson, before putting Spurs defender Davinson Sanchez on the floor with some clever footwork and slotting home.

"We were on the money right from the start," said City coach Guardiola. "I am happy that the boys are determined to win each game by dominating the matches," he added.

MESSI SCORES TWICE IN CRUCIAL GAME

Barca hammer Alaves

AGENCIES

Barcelona, Feb 14: Lionel Messi scored with two scorching strikes as Barcelona hammered Alaves 5-1 in their La Liga game here Saturday to warm up for their upcoming Champions League clash with Paris St Germain (PSG) in style. In the process Messi also matched former teammate Xavi Hernandez's club record for the most league appearances (505).

Portuguese forward Francisco Trincao put Barca in front after a cut-back from 18-year-old debutant midfielder Ilaix Moriba. Messi then took matters into his own hands from outside the area and thumped the ball off the far post with such venom that it landed just inside the opposite post.

Alaves's Luis Rioja pounced on a mistake by Ilaix to reduce the deficit in the second half but Barca came roaring back with a second strike from Trincao, another long-range missile from Messi and then a fifth goal crafted by Messi and Griezmann and finished off by left



MOMENT TO ENJOY: Lionel Messi pumps his fist in delight after scoring against Alaves, Saturday

back Junior Firpo. A seventh consecutive league win took Barca up to second in the standings on 46 points, eight behind leaders Atletico Madrid. "Messi is in a fantastic moment of form," said Barca coach Ronald Koeman. "We know how decisive he is and right now he is in the mood. With him playing in this form, everything is easier."