

SC myopically holds farm laws

If a law passed by Parliament can be put in abeyance, what does it say about the certainty of doing business in India?



New Delhi : Almost as soon as the Supreme Court's (SC) hearing on the farm laws began, it was obvious its plan to keep the laws in abeyance-while a court-appointed committee came up with a solution-was going nowhere since the lawyers for the

farmers were not even present at the hearing; Dushyant Dave, Colin Gonsalves, HS Phoolka, and Prashant Bhushan were the farmers' lawyers. While Dave later told that he did not go to court since the matter was listed 'for orders'-that means the bench will pronounce its ruling/decision, not hear more arguments-on Monday, he also added that, in any case, the farmer unions had made it clear on Monday itself that they were not going to participate in the committee's deliberations. Though SC's Tuesday order (P-15)

ନବବର୍ଷ ୨୦୨୧ ଅବସରରେ ଶୁଭେଚ୍ଛା

DADLS-70

ନବବର୍ଷ-୨୦୨୧ ଅବସରରେ ମୁଁ ରାଜ୍ୟବାସୀ ସମସ୍ତ ଭାଇଭଉଣୀମାନଙ୍କୁ ଆନ୍ତରିକ ଶୁଭେଚ୍ଛା ଓ ଅଭିନନ୍ଦନ ଜଣାଉଛି ।

ନୂଆବର୍ଷ ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ଓଡ଼ିଶାବାସୀଙ୍କ ଜୀବନରେ ସୁଖ, ଶାନ୍ତି ଓ ସମୃଦ୍ଧି ଭରିଦେଉ । ଏହା ମୁଁ ଈଶ୍ବରଙ୍କ ନିକଟରେ ପ୍ରାର୍ଥନା କରୁଛି ।

ସମ୍ପ୍ରତି ଜାରି କରାଯାଇଥିବା କରୋନା ସଂକ୍ରମଣ ଜନିତ କଟକଣା ଅନୁପାଳନ କରିବା ଏବଂ ଓଡ଼ିଶାକୁ ଦେଶର ସର୍ବଶ୍ରେଷ୍ଠ ରାଜ୍ୟ ଭାବେ ଗଢ଼ିତୋଳିବା ନିମନ୍ତେ ସଂକଳ୍ପବଦ୍ଧ ହୋଇ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ କରିବାକୁ ମୁଁ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କର ସହଯୋଗ କାମନା କରୁଛି ।

(ରଘୁନନ୍ଦନ ଦାସ)

ଜଳସଂପଦ, ସୂଚନା ଓ ଲୋକସମ୍ପର୍କ ମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ

OIPR- 15001/13/0113/2021

ନବବର୍ଷ ୨୦୨୧ ଅବସରରେ ମାନ୍ୟବର ରାଜ୍ୟପାଳଙ୍କ ବାର୍ତ୍ତା

DADLS-70

ନବବର୍ଷ - ୨୦୨୧ ଅବସରରେ ମୁଁ ରାଜ୍ୟବାସୀ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କୁ ହାର୍ଦ୍ଦିକ ଶୁଭେଚ୍ଛା ଓ ଆନ୍ତରିକ ଅଭିନନ୍ଦନ ଜଣାଉଛି । ନୂତନ ବର୍ଷ ରାଜ୍ୟବାସୀଙ୍କ ଜୀବନରେ ହସ, ଖୁସି, ଶାନ୍ତି ଓ ସମୃଦ୍ଧି ଭରିଦେଉ, ଏତିକି କାମନା । ରାଜ୍ୟକୁ ଦେଶର ଶ୍ରେଷ୍ଠ ରାଜ୍ୟରେ ପରିଣତ କରିବା ପାଇଁ ସମସ୍ତେ ନିଜ ନିଜ ସ୍ତରରେ ନିଷ୍ଠାପର ପ୍ରୟାସ ଜାରିରଖିବାକୁ ମୁଁ ଆହ୍ୱାନ ଜଣାଉଛି ।

ଡାକ୍ତରୀ ମିଳିଲି
(ଗଣେଶୀ ଲାଲ)
ମାନ୍ୟବର ରାଜ୍ୟପାଳ, ଓଡ଼ିଶା

OIPR- 15001/13/0113/2021

ମାନ୍ୟବର ମୁଖ୍ୟମନ୍ତ୍ରୀଙ୍କ ନୂଆବର୍ଷ ଅଭିନନ୍ଦନ

DADLS-70

ନୂଆବର୍ଷ ୨୦୨୧ ଓଡ଼ିଶାବାସୀଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ସୁଖମୟ ହେଉ । ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ଆନନ୍ଦ, ସମ୍ଭାବନା ଓ ସମୃଦ୍ଧିର ବର୍ଷ ହେଉ । ମହାପ୍ରଭୁ ଶ୍ରୀଜଗନ୍ନାଥଙ୍କ ନିକଟରେ ଏତିକି ପ୍ରାର୍ଥନା ।

ମୋର ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ବିଶ୍ୱାସ ୨୦୨୧ରେ ବିଶ୍ୱରୁ କରୋନା ସଂକଟ ଦୂର ହେବ ଏବଂ ଭାରତ ସହିତ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଦ୍ରୁତ ପ୍ରଗତି ପଥରେ ଅଗ୍ରସର ହେବ ।

ନବୀନ ଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ମାତୃକୀ
(ନବୀନ ପଟ୍ଟନାୟକ)
ମୁଖ୍ୟମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ, ଓଡ଼ିଶା

OIPR- 15001/13/0113/

Why Has Pratap Jena Not Been Arrested?



Cuttack : Odisha BJP in-charge D Purandeswari on Thursday came down heavily on the State government for not taking action against Law Minister Pratap Jena who has been named in the FIR filed in connection with the brutal murder of BJP leader Kulamani Baral. Baral and his associate Dibyasingha Baral were hacked to death in the Salipur area of the district on Saturday. Accompanied by a host of state BJP leaders, including State president Sameer Mohanty, general secretary Lekhashree Samantsinghar, Bhruhu Buxipatra, Prakash Mishra, and others, Purandeswari drove straight to Nrutanga near Salipur-the native place of the deceased leader-to meet the bereaved family and offer her condolences. The top BJP leader raised

serious question marks over the sincerity of the investigation and intentions of the State government in shielding the culprits. "Why has Law Minister Pratap Jena not been arrested though he has been named in the FIR? Why has he been spared," Purandeswari asked, adding, "I urge Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik to open his eyes and ears to watch and hear what is happening in the State." She pointed out that another BJP leader, Bikash Jena, of the same area, had been killed a year ago for exposing irregularities in the PM Awas Yojana. Kulamani and Dibyasingha too were murdered for the same reason, she said. "The family members of Kulamani Babu and Dibyasingha told us that Minister Pratap Jena has a key role behind the crime. But, what prevented the

government to act against him," she wondered.

Responding to the allegations, BJD spokesperson Sasmit Patra said, "The prime accused along with the others involved in the crime were arrested within 48 hours of the crime. BJD has always followed zero-tolerance to the crime but I think, Purandeswari is not aware of it."

Similarly, senior party leader and former Director-General of Police (DGP) Prakash Mishra slammed the investigating officer/s for not bringing those identified by Dibyasingha Baral before his death into the ambit of the investigation.

"During treatment, Dibyasingha Babu had taken some names behind the murderous attack on him and Kulamani Baral. His last words should be considered as a dying declaration and the investigation should be carried out accordingly. But, it is a matter of concern that things are not moving in that direction," Mishra alleged. He further alleged it was no secret that the local police officials were working at the behest of 'someone' in this area.

Police officers who support the ruling party are getting posted in the coastal district. It has set a bad precedent in policing and emerged as a greater threat to the overall law and order situation, Mishra said.

The BJP has been demanding the ouster of Law Minister Pratap Jena, accusing him of orchestrating the brutal crime. The party leaders had held demonstrations at different places across the State and burnt effigies of the minister. In a related development, the police on Wednesday arrested one more accused in connection with the double murder case, taking the total number of arrestees to six. Notably, Kulamani was returning home along with his associate Dibyasingha on his bike when some miscreants attacked them with sharp-edged weapons near Jankoti in Mahanga of Cuttack. Kulamani was declared brought dead at Mahnaga Community Health Centre while Dibyasingha succumbed to injuries while undergoing treatment at SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack.

A letter threatening to kill Naveen Patnaik sent to his residence

The letter, said contract killers armed with AK-47 and semi-automatic pistols are out to kill the CM. The home department sent the letter to the DGP as well as the Bhubaneswar-Cuttack Police Commissioner for further action. The chief minister enjoys Z plus security.

Bhubaneswar : According to the Hindustan Times, an anonymous letter threatening to kill Odisha chief minister Naveen Patnaik was sent to his residence Naveen Niwas on Thursday in Bhubaneswar, throwing security agencies in the state in a tizzy.

The letter says- contract killers armed with AK-47 and semi-automatic pistols are out to kill the CM.

"These contract killers are professional criminals and can attack you at any time. So please be aware that these contract killers are continuously following you. The mastermind lives in Nagpur... The weapons which will be used to kill you have been brought to Odisha," read the handwritten letter in English.

The sender also gave out a list of 17 cars with registration numbers of Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Punjab, Odisha, Delhi, Haryana, and Maharashtra in which the 'criminals' are following Patnaik.

The home department sent the letter to the DGP as well as the Bhubaneswar-Cuttack Police Commissioner for further action. The chief minister enjoys Z plus security.

Bhubaneswar-Cuttack Police Commissioner Sudhansu Sarangi denied seeing such a letter. "Sometimes mad people write such things. I am not aware of such a letter," he said.

In September 2018, a murder accused serving sentence in Bilaspur Central Jail in Chhattisgarh had sent a letter to Patnaik demanding extortion money of Rs 50 crore and threatened him with dire consequences if he failed to pay the amount.

Odisha Govt Lying On Separation Of Investigation, Law And Order Wings: Congress

Bhubaneswar : The Congress party of Odisha unit on Sunday alleged that the Odisha government did not comply with the Supreme Court directive to separate the investigation and Law and Order wings to lessen the burden on police. At a press meet, Congress spokesperson Nishikant Mishra alleged that the Odisha government had lied to the apex court that it had separated the investigation and Law and Order wings in the Commissionerate police jurisdiction in the twin city- Bhubaneswar and Cuttack. But, the reality is something different, he said. Though the government submitted multiple affidavits in the Supreme Court, stating the same in 2007, 2008, and again in 2013, RTI data, which is in the possession of the Congress party, revealed that there is no separation of investigation and Law and order wings in the Commissionerate police jurisdiction, he claimed. Acting on a PIL, the SC had asked all the States to segregate investigation and Law and Or-

der wings, Mishra said. "The Odisha government had filed an affidavit in 2007 mentioning that it has separated the two wings in Commissionerate police limits in Bhubaneswar and Cuttack. The government had also repeated the same thing in separate affidavits in 2008 and 2013," Mishra alleged. The Congress leader further said that he had sought some data under RTI regarding the subject from some police stations under Commissionerate Police jurisdiction. The RTI report revealed that no such separation has been made so far in these police stations, Mishra claimed. "It means that the State government continues to lie to hide one truth. The government, especially the Home Department should come out with a clarification that why it kept the 4.5 crore Odia people in dark," he added. The Congress party also demanded that Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, who holds the Home department in the State, should give clarification and issue a White Paper in this regard.

Gadkari Assures To Expedite Approval For Sidhamahavir Flyover in Puri

Bhubaneswar : Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari on Wednesday assured to expedite approvals for the long-demanded Sidhamahavir flyover in Puri. The announcement from the Union minister came after BJP national spokesperson Sambit Patra and Puri MLA Jayant Sarangi met him yesterday and discussed the construction work of the flyover on the Puri-Konark highway. The locals have been demanding the construction of a flyover on the level crossing near Sidhamahavir rail gate of the Puri-Konark National



Highway as they have to wait for hours due to long jams of hundreds of people along with buses, taxis and commercial vehicles on both sides of the level crossing during the train hours. Notably, the level crossing is on the main

road which connects Puri to Konark, Nimapara, Gop, and Kakatpur area and it is the second biggest connecting route to the Twin Cities of Cuttack and Bhubaneswar, and other parts of the State.

GDP fall worsened by cyber loot

Stress must shift from the bullet to farms



Prof. Shivaji Sarkar

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The projection for India's growth is not a surprise. It is on a continuous roll and the loss of Rs 11.3 lakh crore or contraction of 7.7 percent of GDP in absolute terms also may be a modest assessment because it is just only the economic and industrial activities that are included in it.

It means the growth in real GDP during 2020-21 is estimated at minus 7.7 percent as compared to 4.2 percent growth rate in 2019-20. This is 20 basis points more than the 7.5 percent contraction projected by the Monetary Policy Committee of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). Never before since 1952, India had such a deep crisis.

Only hope remains on the most maligned agriculture growing at 3.2 percent among the eight core

sectors, as per the National Statistical Office (NSO) advance estimates for preparing the budget 2021-22. It means if agriculture is encouraged, it can give a major boost to the economy.

The state government revenues are in a worse situation as debt rises phenomenally. The Centre's fiscal deficit itself would be over 7 percent of GDP against the target of 3.5 percent. The growing borrowings are likely to further hit the economy as it would have twin effects of severe inflation and shrinking of lending capital. It threatens the health of the banking sector, as its losses are mounting.

The unemployment rate, a key indicator of distress, as well as rural joblessness, has jumped

to a six-month high in December to 9.06 percent, while the rural rate climbed to 9.15 percent, according to CMIE. It means about 17 to 18 crore people are affected.

The NSO projections do not take into account Rs 1.25 lakh crore cybercrime losses in 2019, revealed by National Cyber Security Coordinator Lt Gen Rajesh Pant. The country lost Rs 128 crore during October-December 2019 and 21,041 such cases (mainly ATM and debit cards) were registered in these three months, Anurag Thakur, MoS, Ministry of Finance told Lok Sabha quoting RBI. Out of the total loss, Rs 85 crore was lost in a single month of October 2019.

One must note that all cases are not reported or recorded. And these do not include phone banking through NEFT transactions by criminal insurance agents of HDFC-type companies have mastered. Lt Gen Pant says cyber threats are increasing as smart cities and 5G are being rolled out. The worst is in states like UP, the police reject e-FIRs on phone banking frauds without even primary queries forget about the investigation. The impact on the country is far more as it disrupts the family budget and consequent purchasing power. Quite a few have reportedly committed suicide as they lost their

earnings.

While calculating seven months' data released in preparation for the budget efforts many gaps remain. In 2014, it was expected that the new dispensation would correct the system. It has only worsened through policing and regulatory costs have since have risen several times. Yes, the country is in a difficult situation and covid19 unwise lockdown alone is not to be blamed for the minus 23.9 percent contraction reported in June 2020.

It had started reflecting by December 2019, when salaries for central university staff, autonomous bodies, and others started being delayed. The government had also stopped sanctioned expenditures and imposed severe cuts. The GDP growth had started slowing down through 2019. The phenomenon had caused concern in the last Economic Survey, which had indicated distress in many areas. This is certainly accentuated as at least 17 crore people suffered severe jolt due to job losses, contraction of wages, or closure of business activities for the better part of 2020. Many are yet to have the wages restored to pre-pandemic levels. It has contracted the purchasing of power of almost every individual, family, and corporate.

No wonder the NSO assesses private consumption shrinkage

by 9.5 percent and 14.5 percent in gross fixed capital formation - an indicator for private investment. In other words, it sees general poverty increasing. In 2016 too, post note ban disorder private consumption had fallen. The policymakers are not learning lessons from knee-jerk actions that jolt the entire socio-economic processes.


Except for the merger of banks possibly to window-dress losses little has been done over the years to check the losses of banks. The 14 public-sector lenders, which included five banks, posted an aggregate loss of Rs 74,278 crore for 2019 against Rs 65,723.52 crore in 2018, based on figures available on the Capitate Database. This loss was despite the state-run entities posting a positive aggregate of Rs 63,645 crore in 2019 and Rs 62,371 crore for FY18. The losses are mounting and most banks are avoiding giving loans to students and other needy.

Even exports fall to \$ 26.8 billion in December 2020 from \$ 15.71 billion a year back. The manufacturing is declining by 9.4 percent in 2020-21 from 0.03 percent in 2019-20; mining to contract by 12.4 percent; trade, hotels, transport, communication minus 21.4 percent (last year 3.6 percent growth); and 12.4 percent contraction

in construction (last year 1.3 percent growth).

The 2020-21 GDP at 2011-12 prices would be Rs 134.40 lakh crore as against the provisional estimate growth rate of Rs 145.66 lakh crore.

Though the NSO says that there could be revisions at the end of March, the overall distress would not disappear. The next financial year could be better provided the industry functions in a better manner, jobs rise, lending and repayments are healthy. These are hopes but revenue collections suffered in the first three months are found difficult to recover. Revenue shortfall from taxes and disinvestments in PSUs is estimated at over Rs 7 lakh crore but the room for expenditure cut is limited with an eye on growth. It would be interesting to see how the government borrows.

The pandemic apart, the projections suggest that country's policies have not matched the problems. It calls for a total review of every aspect of the social and economic life and revival of the planning process. Agriculture that employs over 80 crores (or 60 percent of the population) has been given short shrift. The development strategies like a bullet train and toll roads possibly are disastrous and unilateral financial powers to rulers need to check for positive growth in five years. 

District Culture Office Inaugurated at Sundargarh



Sundargarh : Collector Nikhil Pavan Kalyan inaugurated a district culture office and library on the premises of the newly-built Sanskruti Bhavan here on 8th January. A 'Sahabhagita' program to promote the tribal culture

and folk art of the district was also launched on the occasion. Officials said the 'Sahabhagita' program will emphasise promoting tribal dance, Pala and Daskathia. In the library, there are more than 20,000 books along with a reading room facility. "To promote folk-art of Sundargarh district and to encourage the artists, many programs have been organizing in the district. For this reason, the state government has taken the initiative of the 'Sahabhagita' program. Likewise, for the students and book lovers of the district, we have inaugurated the library," the collector said.

SAIL, Rourkela Steel Plant ends the Year 2020 with a bang

Rourkela : SAIL, Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP) a unit of the Maharatna Company SAIL, has ended the Year 2020 with a bang. On 30th December 2020, the Steel Plant produced its Best-ever 15,180 Tonnes of Hot Metal from 3 furnaces, while Blast Furnace-5 surpassed the magical figure of making more than 10,000 Tonnes in a day. The previous single-day best of 14,416 Tonnes was recorded on 22nd December 2020 from the same three furnaces. Out of the 15,180 Tonnes, Blast Furnace-1 has contributed 2510 Tonnes, Blast Furnace-4 made 2645 Tonnes while the remaining 10025 Tonnes have been produced by Blast Furnace-5. The earlier record of Blast Furnace-5 for any single day was 9505 Tonnes which was achieved on 13th Nov. 2020. Dipak Chattaraj, CEO, RSP visited the Blast Furnace-5 on 31st December to congratulate the department collective as well as their associated units. The feat was achieved due to the integrated team effort of all the associated departments like Sinter Plant, Raw Material Handling Plant, Coke Ovens, Traffic and Raw Material, Captive Power Plant, Oxygen Plant, Production, Planning, and Control Department and Research and Control Laboratory, the quality supply of raw materials and the determined efforts of the Blast Furnace collective.

RSP QC Teams shine at National level Convention

Rourkela : The Quality Circle teams of SAIL, Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP) have performed exceedingly well in the 34th National Convention on Quality Concepts (NCQC - 2020) was organized on 27th December through virtual mode for the first time due to Covid Pandemic situation. Out of the 16 Quality Circle teams representing RSP in the case study presentation, 10 teams bagged the highest award that is the Par-Excellence award, and 05 teams bagged the Excellence award while one team bagged the Distinguish award. The Quality circle teams which won the Par-Excellence award are Parivartan from Blast Furnaces, Samadhan from Steel Melting Shop

- I, Milan from Steel Melting Shop - I, Dynamic from Plate Mill, Pioneer from Electronics and Electrical Services Department, Udaya from Oxygen Plant, Sambhab from Repair Shop (Electrical), Megamind from Roll Shop, Think Bank from R&CL and Nayeudaan from SMS-II. Utthan of HSM, Phoenix from Pipe Plant, Genius from Pipe Plant, Utkrisht from Oxygen Plant, Urja from EMD were awarded under the Excellence category while Sadhanaa from RMHP bagged Distinguish award. The pioneer team of the E&ES Department bagged the Appreciation award (4th Spot) in the quiz competition in which 126 teams from

across the country participated. QCFI, Rourkela chapter got appreciation award among B category chapter in National Level. Notably, 1636 QC teams comprising more than 8200 delegates from 403 organizations across the nation representing various industrial and service sectors had participated in the competition. Chandan Samal, GM, RCL had coordinated the Quality Circle activities from RSP. It is worth mentioning here that to inspire the employees to participate in the growth and development of the organization, Rourkela Steel Plant is encouraging Quality Circle activities in a big way.

Smt. Soma Mondal assumes charge as Chairman, SAIL

Rourkela : Smt. Soma Mondal has taken over as Chairman of Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) on Jan 1. She was the Director (Commercial) of SAIL. Before joining SAIL as a Director, Smt. Mondal was the Director (Commercial) at NALCO.

After assuming the charge on the first day of the year, she addressed the SAIL collective and said, "SAIL has a rich legacy with enormous contributions from its employees and leadership over the decades. It has been at the forefront of the nation-building. 'There's a little bit of SAIL in everybody's life' is an apt description of SAIL's importance as a trusted steel maker to the nation." She added, "SAIL is a colossal organization, with multi-location production units & mines, wide-ranging product basket, and diverse workforce. People are its greatest strength and with synergized efforts of the entire Team SAIL, we will strive to attain higher summit". "Our immediate focus is to improve the top-line and



the bottom-line of the company. We are charting out all strategies to improve value for all our stakeholders and make it structurally stronger", she asserted. Smt. Mondal was instrumental in introducing new marketing strategies and products at SAIL enriching the company's product basket. Under her able leadership, the company launched niche branded products like NEX (Structural) and SAIL SeQR (TMT bars). Both

these products have emerged as best-in-class in their respective categories. A graduate in Electrical Engineering from the National Institute of Technology, Rourkela in 1984, Smt. Mondal started her career as a Graduate Engineer Trainee at NALCO and rose to become Director (Commercial) at NALCO. She then joined SAIL in 2017 as the Director (Commercial) and subsequently has become the Chairman of SAIL.

People dislike the frequent transfer of collectors in J'spur



Jagatsinghpur : Administrative and developmental works as well as providing good governance to people in Jagatsinghpur district has taken a jolt due to abrupt transfer of collectors within a short period. From February 2019 to January 2021 four collectors have assumed office and got transferred.

On January 08 the incumbent collector Saroj Kumar

Mishra was transferred to Raygada collector replaced by new collector Sangram Keshari Mohapatra who had been earlier transferred from Jagatsinghpur on October 05, 2020, presumably due to political reasons.

It started with the then collector Yamini Sarangi had shifted from J'singhpur in February 2019 and Guha Poonam Tapas Kumar

joined as a new collector subsequently. After conducting successful general elections in 2019 and handling post-restoration works of cyclone 'Fani' the lady collector was shifted in June 2019 and Sangram Keshari Mohapatra assumed office as district collector forthwith.

Mohapatra had settled down and involved himself in welfare works and successfully launched e-governance works in the district, moreover effectively implemented Covid 19 pandemic preventive measures during consecutive lockdowns and unlock 2 in the district, but Tirtol by-poll pushed him away. Following direction from the

Election commission of India, the state government transferred Mohapatra after Congress and few political parties complained of supporting the ruling BJD. Consequently, the state government posted Saroj Kumar Mishra as a collector on October 5, 2020. The new incumbent conducted a successful Tirtol by-poll and concentrated on Covid 19 works in the district following his efforts new case of Covid 19 has reached Zero, but, strangely enough, the state government transferred Sangram Mohapatra shifted back to Jagatsinghpur district again. The frequent transfer of Collectors hurts the people of the district.

Balikuda BDO lodges FIR against a bank in the police

Jagatsinghpur : About Rs 2 crore of Balikuda block deposited in Union bank of India, Sadeipur branch has been strangely debited from the account. Acting on the incident Balikuda block development officer Kalyana Sourav Das has lodged an FIR in Balikuda police station. The report said that block authority had been maintaining an account in Union Bank of India, government funds pertaining AmaGaon AmaBikash, Critical Grant Funds and other developmental money about Rs 2.60 Crore had been deposited in current fiscal. While conducting a departmental inquiry held on December 31 with regards to funds utilization and banking transaction of Balikuda block it found that about Rs 2 Crore had been missing from the account. Responding to irregularities BDO Das wrote a letter to branch manager Union Bank of India seeking a probe and immediate refurbishing of the money in the block account. But bank authority tuned deaf ear consequently he filed a complaint in Balikuda police station, BDO Das informed. Balikuda police confirmed the allegation of Block authority and said we have asked BDO furnishing bank transaction details and audit report so as easing an investigation, added Balikuda police station IIC Sarveswar Behera.

Freedom fighter Ravindranath Ray statue unveiled



Jagatsinghpur : The prominent freedom fighter and social activist Ravindra Nath Ray's statue was unveiled at his residence at Gopalpur village under Naugaon block. The state culture and tourism minister Ashok Kumar Panda inaugurated the statue accompanying water resource and I&PR minister Raghunandan Das, MLA Prasanta Muduli, Naugaon

Panchayat Samiti Chairman Jagannath Das, Devi Choudhury, Pradipta Swain attended the occasion as guests. Speaking at the inaugural function minister Panda spelled out late freedom fighter Ray's contribution to strengthening the freedom movement in the Jagatsinghpur areas and asked the youths to follow the principles and great morales of late Ray.

Kiosk for SHG inaugurated in J'spur

Jagatsinghpur : For easy marketing the produces of SHGs across Jagatsinghpur district a kiosk was inaugurated at municipality market complex here. District collector Saroj Kumar Mishra inaugurated the outlet jointly monitored by ORMAS and District Rural Development Agency [DRDA] in collaboration with a few active SHGs. While speaking at the inauguration event collector Mishra said that usually SHGs products are sold in Palishree Mela held in several fairs and festivals celebrated in different locations. A permanent outlet was needed to function at district headquarters for dealing SHGs products throughout the



year, acting on the requirement we started a permanent SHG Kiosk at Jagatsinghpur headquarters. Among others project director DRDA Saroj Kanta Mohanty, ORMAS deputy CEO Satya Sundar Sivaram Paital, lead bank manager Satish Patra, Deputy General Manager NABARD B B Mohanty, Jagatsinghpur municipality executive officer Bimal Kumar Lenka, members from several SHGs attended the inaugural function.

Maa Sarala temple reopens after the COVID-19 break

Jagatsinghpur : After nine months of closing Maa Sarala shrine in Jhankada was reopened amid Covid 19 guidelines. A Standard Operation Procedure [SOP] has been framed by Jagatsinghpur civil administration for entering the temple. Visitors were subjected to a formal test at the temple entrance after showing their identity proof, a strict vigil had kept on visitor's movement to follow the Covid 19 guidelines. Devotees were disallowed offering Puja and Bhoga to deity inside the temple, even vermilion, and sandal paste as usually given to devotees was prohibited. According to Maa Sarala temple administrator and Tirtol Tahasildar informed that following the Jagatsinghpur collector's instruction the temple will open at 8 AM till 12 noon and 500 devotees would be permitted for Darshan. On the other hand servitors and temple dependents have expressed happiness for reopening of Temple after nine months break and requested the administration to gradually ease the restrictions, allowing servitors giving and distributing Bhoga and changing the time stipulation fixed for Darshan.

Boundary dispute in Odisha-West Bengal to solve soon



Balasore : Territory dispute is one of the major issues of both Odisha and West Bengal to be solved very soon as the officials of West Bengal and Odisha have taken necessary steps to demarcate the border of the two states. As per the effort of some local people of Jaleswar and revenue department of Jaleswar Tehsil have put as many as 36 poles in the border of two states in presence of the officials of West Bengal. The drive has been carried out since a month after the National Green Tribunal (NGT) had directed both governments to demarcate their exact territory at the border. The land dispute at the border of two states becomes a big headache to both states. This problem gave an advantage to the West Bengal government and the people of this state have rampantly conducted sand mining as they had been charged some lands of West Bengal are inside Subarnarekha river. The officials have demarcated the exact location of the two states' border after

measuring the lands in the border as per map.

As many as 12 villages closed to the Subarnarekha river were facing several woes due to land dispute at the state borders and deprived of government benefits. The

Though the demarcation of the boundary of the two States was delayed for two years, later the revenue officials of Medinipur of West Bengal and officials of Balasore in Odisha state had held a meeting one month ago and finally decided to measure the lands at the border.

sand mafias in West Bengal exercised their powers on these villages and continued to drive on illegal sand mining. The land dispute in the border mounted from the tehsil when S Soleman was the collector cum PWD Commissioner of Balasore district in 1926 had demarcated river Subarnarekha as the border of two states. The border dispute intensified in 2016 and the illegal sand mining from the river bed has continued since then. Social activist and Congress leader Sudarshan Das filed a case

before the National Green Tribunal in 2016 for a boundary dispute of two States and the NGT had directed both Odisha and West Bengal governments to immediately measure the boundary and demarcate the border of the States in

2018 as the illegal sand mining flourishes at Subarnarekha river bed.

Though the demarcation of the boundary of the two States was delayed for two years, later the revenue officials of Medinipur of West Bengal and officials of Balasore in Odisha state had held a meeting one month ago and finally decided to measure the lands at the border. As per the map of two states, the land at the border was measured in presence of officials of two States and initially, 36 poles were put at the boundary of two

States.

Jaleswar Tehsildar Khirod Kumar Panda said as per the direction of NGT the Odisha Space Application Centre (ORSAC) the apex body of the State of Odisha for space technology applications had intervened in the matter. Then the revenue officials of both States had held a meeting in September 2020 at Dantun in West Bengal. The maps of the boundary were exchanged among the officials to find out the exact periphery of the two states. The ORSAC had conducted a formal digital satellite survey of the state's boundary. After a match of maps, then the poles were put in the state boundary. There were seven days had spent to complete the drive, the tehsildar said adding that 4 poles were put at the place near Mankdia village, 6 poles at Kuanarpur, 3 at Bilaspur, 3 at Gopalpur, 4 Totapada, 3 at Beherasahi, 2 at Praharpur, 3 at South Praharpur, 2 at Makarpur, 3 at Gobarghata, 2 at Khudiamajhisahi and 1 at Mundakatia a hamlet village.

'We have already put the poles at the boundary of the two States. The ORSAC will verify the boundary again through a digital survey then it will be approved. The boundary dispute was mounted basically for sand lifting in Subarnarekha river bed,' said the tehsildar.

Jitendra Mohanty pioneers over sanitation drive in Mayurbhanj

Baripada, Jan 13:-When the people are panic of pandemic and do not come out even for sanitation around their own home, a man of Baripada town takes a key role in sanitation in Baripada municipality in Mayurbhanj. Jitendra Mohanty of Ward No-5 was never scared about the pandemic and continues his performance to keep the municipality clean and greenery. He usually keeps the town clean and plants saplings of different varieties on roadsides in several wards in the municipality. He has not cared for the price of the sapling which he regularly buys and plants on roadsides. It has become a passion of Mohanty who volunteers to keep a healthy environment. Now he is an example in the town for his dedication to keeping the town with greenery and clean. He has continued such noble practice before Prime Minister's flagship program Swachh Bharat Mission. Every person in the town knows who is Jitendra Mohanty. Either the drain is choked by garbage, stagnate of water on drains, or even disposal of any claimed and unclaimed body of cow and bull, people immediately call him for the service



that he promptly responds. People affectionately call him Nachhi Bhai also. Even the municipality recognizes Mohanty for his excellent performance over sanitation drive and plantation programs. "I had felt the non-disposal of garbage is a major threat of pollution in the town, I have decided to do something to keep the town clean and make a healthy environment and make the town green, since then I take this initiative. I have been continuing the sanitation before launching the Swachh Bharat Mission _GoBack_GoBack program of Prime Minister Narendra Modi," said Jitendra Mohanty. To see his performance over the sanitation a group of youths from Muslim Community had come to Grand Road accompanied him over this drive entre the car festival on that year, also brought it a good appreciation, he said that he never believes appreciation but he believes on work. If he will keep the town clean and plants trees to make a healthy environment, this will give him greater satisfaction in his life, he said. To encourage others I often post photographs of sanitation made by me on the social platform of SabujaSundaraBaripada, he said. any people have given their expressions and comments on the social platform. Pranab Prakash Das, observer for Mayurbhanj district from BJD had expressed his appreciation to Jitendra Mohanty over his sanitation activity, besides political and non-political people expressing their gratitude to Mohanty.

The Mahanadi riverine port at Akhadasali gathers momentum



Kendrapada : (Rajesh Kumar Behera) The proposed Mahanadi Riverine port received a boost following a high-level team led by the former Chief Secretary Asit Tripathy and 5T Secretary V.K. Pandian visited


the spot to review the progress of the Mahanadi Riverine Port project, that is going to come up at Akhadasali under Mahakalapada block in Kendrapada district, just 13 km distance from the river

mouth at Paradip.

The Chief secretary was recently accompanied by Manoj Mishra, the Special Secretary, Commerce and Transport, the MLA of Mahakalapada, Atanu Sabyasachi Nayak,

the Chairman of Paradip port, Rinkesh Roy, and senior officials of PPT, the District collector of Kendrapada, local police and administration. The port will come up under the public-private-partnership model on a build, own, operate, share and transfer (BOOST) basis. The all-weather and multi-user port on river Mahanadi with a capacity of 54 MTPA will be set up in PPP mode at an estimated cost of Rs 4,062 crore. In the first phase, 22 MTPA capacity will be created for Rs 2,562 crore. The port will develop supporting project infrastructures like rail and road connectiv-

ity and dredging. The state government will also provide the necessary support to PPT in respect of any additional land required for the project. On commissioning, the riverine port will provide direct and indirect employment opportunities to more than 4000 persons in the first phase and about 1700 more in the second phase. The riverine port, along with the State-aided Haridaspur-Paradip Railway line, will go a long way in boosting the economy of the Kendrapada district. The State Government has identified 300 hectares of land for the project. Odisha

Government will also provide the necessary support to PPT in respect of any additional land required for the Project. Notably, the state government approved a proposal for setting up a riverine port on river Mahanadi in Kendrapada district last July 2018 and issued a request for quotation (RFQ) in 2018. As the project could not progress due to a lack of interest by potential bidders, the PPT evinced interest in the project. The project would boost the economy of coastal Kendrapada by providing job opportunities to the unemployed youths of the district. 

Cats are fed and taken care of at the Bileikhia mutt in Mathasahi

Kendrapada : (Rajesh Kumar Behera) If Rajasthan has a temple where rats are worshiped and taken care of, then Odisha has a temple where it is the cats that are revered. However, unlike the Karni Mata temple in Rajasthan, the devotees visiting BileiKhia mutt in Nikirai under the Kendrapada district are not allowed in the sanctum sanctorum of the temple. Traditionally the devotees pay their obeisance from outside the temple. It is said that the temple has been feeding cats since the times when Aul royals ruled here. The then Aul king had donated land to the mutt to ensure that cats are fed here daily twice. Till today the Mahanta (priest) of the BileiKhia Mutt at Nikirai's Mathasahi, feed and take care of the cats here. The Madanmohanjew temple was later constructed on


the same premises. According to locals, the mutt was set up in the year 1744. Later, the then king of Aul, BrajaSundar Deb, donated 150 acres of land for the mutt. Even, the Jamindar of Nikirai' Purbasahi and PaschimaSahi, Jamindar of Ratnagiri, Jamindar of Damarapur too donated land for the smooth functioning of mutt and to meet the expense of daily rites and rituals of Madanmohanjew temple. Presiding deities Lord Madan Mohanjew, Radharani, Sri Krishna ChaityanaMahaprabhu, Gopinathjew, Radhakantajew, Lord Baladevjew, Subhadra, and Jagannath are worshipped in the sanctum sanctorum of the temple a place which only the Mahanta and cats have free access. According to Baba Abhayacharan Das, the Mahanta of BileiKhia Mutt, there were about a



hundred cats when Mahanta Braja Mohan Das, the 8th Mahanta of the said mutt and the Madanmohanjew temple was under his charge. The Mahanta used to take care of the cats and used to feed them. And that he used to do by collecting food by way of begging. Once the then king of Aul, BrajaSundar Deb, was going along with his soldiers via Mathasahi road from Aul to his Rajabati at Derabish via Kantia road. The king

asked his soldiers to find a place to rest. The soldiers fanned in the area and upon their return informed the king about the mutt. The king then summoned the Mahanta of the mutt. When the Mahanta came to meet the king all the cats, numbering over a hundred, also followed him. The king was surprised to see so many cats following the priest. The Mahanta told the king that he goes begging

daily and whatever he gets he shares it with the cats. The king was so impressed that he donated six acres of the land to the mutt so that the Mahanta could till the land and grow grains for himself and his cats. Now it is more than a hundred years since that meeting of the king and the Mahanta of the mutt, but the royal decree is still honored in true letter and spirit. Over the years the number of cats at the

mutt has declined. From being over a hundred years back, at present there are only about a dozen of cats residing in the mutt, informed ChiraRanjan Jena, a local youth. The cats are offered the Prasad of the midday, which is rice apart from milk and rice twice a day. Besides the resident cats, many times people from nearby villages leave kittens here, knowing well that they would be fed and taken care of, informed Santa Jena, the sarpanch of Nikirai. The BileiKhia mutt is the second oldest mutt in the Kendrapada district. Besides, caring for the cats, the mutt also provides stay and food for the visitors, and that too free of cost. Although no rule prohibits the devotees from entering the sanctum sanctorum of the mutt, they by tradition do not enter it. 

Sans Politics, Make Inclusive Changes in Agriculture



Sirish C. Mohanty

To end the impasse the Supreme Court put a hold on the Agri laws while advising to form a committee to find the ground realities. But will the problems that beset agriculture be solved? The Farmers problem has been in the making since Independence. This is the first time in its six-year tenure that the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government has faced such a siege of the Capital and such a challenge from farmers. No single government or political personality is to blame for this impasse; this problem has been addressed with patchwork thanks to our political habit.

We already have seen the sort of fear-mongering we are witnessing today in the early 1990s. At that time, then Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao and his

finance minister Manmohan Singh brought about economic liberalisation. Bharat Ratna Atal Bihari Vajpayee, George Fernandes, and all other Opposition leaders and parties declared this a conspiracy to sell India down the drain. There was unrest on the streets and in Parliament. The whole argument was that foreign companies would now come and enslave us as the East India Company had once done during the British raj. Did that happen? No. It has been our political habit to oppose for the sake of opposing. Today too, the same actions, but the actors have changed.

That liberalisation pulled at least 300 million Indians out of poverty. Coordination between the government, corporates, and society

improved. This helped set India on the path to becoming an aspiring economic superpower. Many things changed for the better with liberalisation. In the mid-1990s, it used to take hours to make a phone call from one city to another. I wonder, what would have happened had we faced a pandemic like Covid-19 at that time. Today, if millions of Indians can save their jobs by working from home, they have the communications revolution to thank for this. This and many such important measures are the results of those 1991 reforms.

To get back to agriculture, let us look at the market in milk. Milk is also an agricultural product. It has no Minimum Support Price (MSP). The dairy sector has no special government protection when it comes to

the purchase and sale of milk. Barring a few semi-government institutions like Mother Dairy, most of the bulk buyers come from the private sector. The white revolution that Amul started in Gujarat through cooperatives has spread to many parts of the country. Most people who are primary sellers of milk are from villages and own one to six animals per family. No corporate entity has affected their business.


This is not to argue in favor of mindless privatisation. Most sugar mills in India are in private hands. But working hand-in-glove with corrupt government officials, the business is exploitative of farmers. In such a situation, it is necessary that farmers' rights be not only strengthened but that administrators should also be forced to implement the rules strictly. At the same time, farmers must be mobilised to grow alternative crops and also crops for agro-industries. We need to effect positive, inclusive changes in the agrarian sector in our quest to rebuild the economy in a post-Covid-19 world.

During the famine of

1967, Tribals and villagers used to come to the cities and big towns those days in search of work or food. But, they often went back empty-handed. The red wheat that was imported from the United States (US) was being distributed through ration shops. People were not able to access wheat in sufficient quantities, as a result of which the black market was flourishing. More than 90% of the farmers were facing various problems. With the growth in population and an increase in members in households, land holdings were getting smaller. The farmers were sticking to traditional crops. They had no one to advise them on how to change cropping patterns which could benefit them financially. If the weather was conducive, life after the harvest was bearable. If not, they faced various adversities, obviously being unable to meet both ends.

Then the Green Revolution happened. India started growing more food than it needed. But the distribution system did not improve enough to deal with this surplus. So we had a situation where, on the one hand, the

warehouses of the Food Corporation of India were bursting at the seams and, on the other, very few of the population did get enough food to survive. Subsequently, the farmer today does not get the right price for his crop and the consumer has to pay more than is required. The mischief is the middleman in the process.

It is time when we also looked at agricultural best practices from around the world. As a Doctor or Lawyer fixes his fees, the cost of the food is fixed by the restaurants, similarly, the farmer must have a free hand to fix the price of his produce without politically motivated MSP. Last year, we exported 60 lakh tonnes of sugar, providing a subsidy of Rs 600 crore. Why is it that the cost of sugar in the international market is Rs 22 per kg but we are paying Rs 34 per kg for sugarcane? Our MSP is more than international and domestic market prices, and that is the reoccurring problem. To end the problem once and for all sans Politics, we need urgent Inclusive Changes in Agriculture. 

Letter to the Editor

Dear Sir,

At the outset, I beg to differ with ur Editorial headline meaning double-speak & double standard policy of CM NAVIN Patnaik.

Because BJD party headed by NAVIN Patnaik has always been adopting pragmatic stand & extending support to the govt. at the center on many national issues. But launching a scathing attack against the step-motherly attitude by the center towards Odisha.

That during the last 23 years, BJD has

emerged as a strong, stable & powerful Regional party in national politics due to the dynamic & able leadership of NAVIN Patnaik.

Ur editorial is a true presentation of the political maneuverings & gimmicks of BJD to remain in power by maintaining a safe & equal distance to BJP. This is how, NAVIN Patnaik has proved himself invincible, undisputed & the most popular leader in a regional party of Odisha

Now, he has once again proved himself

champion of Odia chauvinism by declaring war against injustice by the Central party and his pledge/commitment to protect, preserve, & defend the Odia pride, language, dance, music literature, culture by announcing reservation in medical/engineering course for Odia medium students, the inclusion of the study of the life history of eminent Odia personalities in school.

**Bharat Patra, Social activist,
Keonjhar**

Hastily enacted laws rarely reform



Sirish C Mohanty

Emergencies call for prompt reforms. When we faced the foreign exchange crisis pledging 60 tonnes of gold reserves to foreign banks to raise \$600 million, it led to the 1991 reforms of liberalisation. However, when reforms pending for years are hurriedly pushed through executive laws, the ordinance, and thereafter in Parliament via voice vote at a time of the Chinese aggression and pandemic-enforced lockdown, it betrays a strategy of reforms by shock tactics. For the shrewd politicians, a natural disaster, a pandemic, or a war is the most opportune time to shove change. Economic strategies prescribe speed, surprise, and shock as a legitimate tactic to bring about changes in the existing law. There is no scope for discussion, debate, or consensus; sheer swiftness would carry the day. One of the fallouts of this strategy is social discord and that makes reforms counterproductive because these first create a conflict and thereafter try to find a solution, as is being now attempted to solve the farmer's agitation. Sky wouldn't have fallen had the government waited for a congenial time to enact the Farm law after a thorough debate!

There is no dispute that

agriculture needs transformation and private enterprise and capital could join with the government for the purpose. But the way the reforms were structured and thereafter hurriedly notified has created a toxic shroud about the motives and turned the entire process into corporates vs peasants, putting private participation in jeopardy even for the future. Do the farm laws address the core ills plaguing our agriculture? The law doesn't address crop diversification, cultivation costs, subsidies or shift of population from agricultural to non-agricultural sectors, declining water table, soil health, etc. The most serious issue is overcrowding. Over 50% of the population is dependent on agriculture, while farms contribute a paltry 17-18% to the gross domestic product (GDP). Consequently, the average farm household income is Rs 6,500 a month, resulting in farm indebtedness and suicides. The solution like shifting a substantial population to non-agriculture professions is not visible. The cost of our production of wheat, rice, and sugar, to mention a few, is higher than the prevalent international prices. The landed cost of wheat at our ports from Australia or Canada is lower than the cost of wheat transported from north India to south. The high price tag as fixed by the minimum support price (MSP), despite low labor costs, is due to the higher cost of agro-inputs, chiefly fertiliser (despite subsidy), diesel, and agro-chemicals. **Why only Punjab region farmers agitate?**



Punjab and Haryana, now leading the agitation, suffer from a geopolitical curse. The government investment eluded them due to hostile borders. This year, Pakistan is importing 2.9 million metric tonnes of wheat from far-off countries, and so is Afghanistan. Export via road from Punjab is competitive due to low transport and handling costs. China has also sought Indian rice. But we cannot deal with them for reasons of the national cause. The farmers of Punjab and Haryana are at the receiving end of the cause.

The new farm law will sound the death knell for rural development in Punjab and Haryana, which sustain on market fees and rural development cess. Punjab's annual income from these sources is about

Rs 4,000 crore and it's used to fund rural infrastructure. The new laws don't provide an alternate source of this revenue loss.

The reforms do not solve the basic agrarian problems and address only trading, contract farming, and stock-hoarding. They lay down a legal regime to create unregulated and tax-free private markets in competition with the existing Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) mandis that are subject to taxes, thus creating an unequal playing field in the favour of corporates.

Agriculture is highly subsidized. Punjab's free electricity has adverse consequences such as is causing a steep fall in the sub-soil water table. The problem solicits a solution, but the reforms remain silent. Incidentally, Punjab

pays the cost of free electricity from its budget and, thus ends up subsidizing the national buffer food stock.

Punjab and Haryana farmers fear that the central pool doesn't need the region's foodgrains any more as the government has 3.5 times higher buffer stocks than what is required. Above and beyond, surpluses exist due to the low purchasing power of the population. Otherwise, the per capita per day availability of rice in 2019 from a mere 189gm and wheat 178gm must have gone higher.

The need of the hour is crop diversification. It needs capital investments but the annual allocation is a paltry Rs 100 crore. Instead of dealing with it on a war-footing, the new laws postulate that once private players enter agriculture,

the market mechanism would trigger diversification. The laws alter the existing agrarian social ecosystem and security, with the state progressively withdrawing from its responsibility.

This is the fundamental difference between the new laws and the existing laws. However, most of the states already permit private markets to operate. Some states also allow contract farming, and virtually no state bans its farmers from selling anywhere in India. But a false narrative has been created that the new reforms create one nation one market as if it did not exist before.

Punjab farmers have been selling kinnow, potato, and cotton all over India, just as Bihar sends trucks loaded with paddy to Punjab and Haryana because its APMCs were abolished in 2006 and private markets are not remunerative.


In an unprecedented non-political unification of diverse forces, the farm agitation has remained remarkably peaceful, despite an unsolicited effort by the political parties who're losing fast ground under their feet to sneak into. Nevertheless, the priority should be to defuse the situation. One solution is to enact the new laws incorporating the substantive demands of the farmers which the government has virtually agreed to partially. As suggested by the Supreme Court, a think-tank should go into the entire gambit of the agro sector problems and suggest reforms. Both the farmers and the government shedding haste and fragile ego must find ways and means to script reforms that can only be meaningful.

Subrat Sahu appointed Chief Secretary of Chhatisgarh



Raipur: (Kishore Dwibedi) 1992 Batch IAS Officer Subrat Sahu has taken over the additional charge of Chief Secretary of the Chhatisgarh State. Since the present Chief Secretary Amitabh Jain has gone on leave on health ground, Shri Sahu has been appointed as Chief

Secretary in his place. The appointment order has been notified through a government circular issued by the department of general Administration. At present Subrat Sahu is in charge of Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel's Office as Additional Chief Secretary and Principal Secretary of


Departments like Home, Jail administration, power, electronics, I.T., Commerce, and Industry. He has been awarded President's Medal by President Ram Nath Kovind, because of his able electoral management and transparent administration during his tenure as Chief Election Officer of the State of Chhatisgarh. Shri Sahu has had the privilege of earning name, fame, and wide acclamation in Bureaucratic circles and Public esteem because of his exemplary and exceptional administrative skill in successfully handling several keys and sensitive government departments. Subrat Sahu is the Son of the former Chief Secretary of Odisha Sahadeb Sahu. 

Bastar man marries 2 women on the same day; wives are 'very happy'

The wedding video and invitation card of Chandu Maurya's marriage function have gone viral on social media. The marriage ceremony, which took place on January 5, was attended by about 500 people. Seen here is Chandu Maurya getting married.

Raipur, Jan 7: He fell in love with two women. He then married both women. On the same day, at the same ceremony in front of friends, well-wishers and with some music to go with the celebrations. The marriage ceremony, which took place on January 5, was attended by about 500 people. The wedding video and invitation card of Chandu Maurya's marriage function have gone viral on social media. It all started three years ago, when 24-year-old Chandu Maurya, a marginal farmer, and laborer of a remote village of Maoist-affected Bastar district, went to install electricity poles in the Tokapal area. There the man met 21-year-old tribal girl Sundari Kashyap and both fell in love. They then kept in touch over phone calls and planned to marry. A year later, 20-year-old Haseena Baghel reached Chandu's village Tikralohnga to attend a relative's marriage. Chandu fell in love again. When Haseena expressed her love, Chandu confessed that he was already in a relationship but Haseena insisted that they keep in touch over the phone. "Both Haseena and Sundari came to know about each other and agreed to have a relationship with me. We were in touch over the phone but one-day Haseena landed at my home to live with me. When Sundari came to know that Haseena is here, she also came to me. And since then, we started living in the same



house like a family," Chandu, who lives with his parents and two siblings, told Hindustan Times. A few months later, the villagers and the family member started questioning the live-in relationship of Chandu with the two women and it was then that he decided to marry both of them. "Fed-up with the questions, I decided to marry both of them because they both loved me. I can't betray them. They agreed they both will live with me forever," said Chandu. The family members of Haseena came to attend the marriage ceremony but Sundari's family skipped the function, said Chandu. Sundari, however, has expressed hope that her parents will come around. "They (parents) are not happy with me today but things will change. Both Haseena and I are very happy with Chandu and his family and will live with him forever," said Sundari. 

Students to answer for 80 marks in class 10 board exams 2021

- **The state government has announced that this year, students of class 10 will have to answer questions for 80 marks and not for 100 marks.**
- **The state government has announced that this year, students of class 10 will have to answer questions for 80 marks and not for 100 marks.**



10 and 12 would be given 100 days of classroom teaching before they appear for the annual exams in May.

Class 10 students will be attending classes from January 8 to April 26, while Class 12 students will be attending classes from January 8 to April 28, as per a notice released by the Odisha education department.

Bhubaneswar: The Odisha government has announced that in this year's board examination, students will answer questions for 80 marks and not for 100 marks. 50 marks from the 80 will be of objective questions in OMR (optical mark recognition) format and the remaining 30 marks

will be subjective, the School and Mass Education Minister SR Dash said. However, the Board of Secondary Education has decided that the overall valuation in each paper will be for 100 marks, Dash said adding that 20 marks will be evaluated based on the percentage

secured by an examinee from the given 80 marks in a particular paper. **Odisha annual board exams for class 10 from May 3** The state government, on Sunday, has announced that the annual board examination for class 10 students will be held from May 3 to May 15,

2021, and, the result for the board exams shall be announced within 40-50 days. The schools will also reopen after eight months of being closed since March 2020. Online classes were being continued. Since the annual board exams are coming up soon, students of classes

HIGHLIGHTS

- *Students will answer questions for 80 marks and not 100 marks in this year's class 10th board exams.*
- *Odisha class 10th board exams from May 3, 2021.*
- *50 marks out of 80 will be of objective questions in OMR format.*

Iron-ore prices to remain high in the near term

Elevated demand from China and meteorological risks in Australia will keep prices high in the near term

The Indian Steel Association (ISA), representing the interest of all major producers of the alloy, drew the government's attention to the "testing times" steel-makers-particularly those without ownership of mines-were facing because of the double whammy of a spurt in iron-ore exports and a fall in production, principally in the country's largest and finest quality ore producing state, Odisha. (Incidentally, Tata Steel left ISA in May, allegedly over differences on contentious mining policy.) Soon, it became a chorus of protests against iron-ore exports with associations of sponge iron and steel-forgings manufacturers making common cause with ISA.

Facing rising displeasure of ministries concerned with infrastructure projects implementation, as also auto and construction groups, as steel prices have climbed to multi-year highs and there have been rapid-fire price revisions by steel-makers in the post-lockdown months, ISA has demanded a six-month ban on iron-ore exports, restriction of e-auction sale to steel- and pellet-makers. It has also urged state-owned mining companies to step up production. The pressure is building on the Naveen Patnaik administration in Odisha over the surrender of three recently-auctioned mines and over others

where the owners didn't take the initiative to execute lease-deeds; the demand is to assign the deposits to state-owned Odisha Mining Corporation and Odisha Mining Exploration Corporation.

At the auctions, some steel companies and merchant-miners had quoted fancy premiums for mines whose leases expired in March. Later, they realised that mining operations would not be sustainable if such high premiums are to be paid on the sale of extracted ore. Didn't Tata Steel global CEO and managing director TV Narendran say "we certainly will never be bidders at these prices? We thought some bids were unreasonably high". To continue to remain self-reliant in iron ore as it expands capacity through organic and inorganic routes, Tata Steel will certainly remain on the hunt for acquiring new deposits. But as Narendran says, his group's mine acquisition decisions at all times will be dictated by "prudence."

Calls for government intervention to rein in prices have grown following MSME and highways minister Nitin Gadkari asking for discussions at the "highest level" to assert if the "55% hike in steel prices in the past six months is justified by rises in the cost of raw materials, principally iron ore, labor, and power." But, why the minister



suspects that the steel-makers might be indulging in the manipulation of production to lift prices is not understandable. In the steel industry, where two major players, namely, SAIL and Vizag Steel are government-owned and producing units using a blast furnace, electric arc furnace, and induction furnace routes are too many, cartelization or price manipulation is not within the realm of possibility.

Steel minister Dharmendra Pradhan has offered reassurances that the government was not inclined to "regulate market forces that decide prices," even while he favored a ban on ore exports for a given period. In the din of protests against spikes in ore-prices of iron ore, and therefore, of steel products, reasoning has been sacrificed on the altar of sectoral interests. What is sadly overlooked

is iron ore and steel downstream are more integral to the global economy than most other commodities. What can bring logic to the discussion is taking account of how prices of ore and steel products are behaving in the world market and the factors responsible for price spurts.

Iron ore is the most heavily-traded dry cargo globally-India participates both as an exporter and importer-it is only expected that prices in the world market will leave an impact here. In the current decade alone, prices peaked at \$187 a tonne in February 2011 and hit \$41 a tonne in December 2015. The steel industry, which regulates product prices based on input-cost fluctuations, has had to live with such fluctuation. Chinese steel-makers, with a commanding share of global steel production and accounting for over

two-thirds of seaborne iron-ore supply, want an inquiry on speculation playing a role in the "abnormal rally" leading to doubling of prices of the raw materials in 2020.

Whatever the role of speculation money, iron ore, fetching a year-end price of \$175 a tonne on the Dalian Commodity Exchange (DCE), is now the world's best performing major commodity for the second year in a row.

DCE has imposed restrictions such as limits on single-day open positions and adjustments of premiums and discounts for futures from time to time. However, the commodity remains on a tear as the Middle Kingdom's industrial engine is at full throttle. What has also helped in reviving the demand for steel and, consequently, of iron ore is Beijing directing stimulus funds to infrastructure. Between

January and November, the world steel production was down 1.3% to 1.61 billion tonnes when China boosted output by an impressive 5.5%, to 961.16 million tonnes. Even while India produced 3.5% more-9.245 million tonnes in November on a y-o-y basis-the total for the first 11 months of 2020 shows a fall of 12.3% to 89.4 million tonnes.

To support the high level of steel production and ore stockholding as insurance against supply disruptions, Chinese imports of iron ore till November were up 10.9% over the corresponding period the year before. Incidentally, of India's iron ore exports of 33.39 million tonnes between April and October, China was the destination for ~90%. According to China's General Administration of Customs, the country's ore imports up to November exceeded that of the entire 2019's by over 100,000 tonnes. Will iron ore prices hold in the near term? Most analysts think prices will stay firm in 1Q 2021. In anticipation of a vaccine-related economic recovery across the world, Chinese steel mills are unlikely to let up on building stocks of iron ore. A December landslide at a mine owned by Brazilian Vale and the perennial fear of adverse weather in Australia in the first quarter disrupting the operation of mines and ports should keep iron ore prices elevated.

Kerala governor's speech critical of Centre

Thiruvananthapuram : Kerala governor Arif Mohammad Khan on Friday played the contentious farm laws passed by the Centre, against which farmers are on the warpath in Delhi, saying it would undermine regulated markets and help the corporates.

Khan read in full length the remarks against the farm laws, against which the Kerala Assembly had unanimously passed a resolution on 31 December demanding its immediate withdrawal. The governor also attacked the central investigating agencies, probing various allegations against the state government programs, saying they have "overstepped the constitutional contours". The remarks against the farm laws and cenart of

new laws, he said there has been an all-India strike of the workers, which is one of the largest of its kind against the new labor bills.

"These agrarian laws will undermine regulated markets, result in the eventual demise of minimum support price and tilt the balance of bargaining power definitely in favor of corporate middlemen," the governor said adding that Kerala being a consumer state was also going to be adversely affected by the amendment of Essential Commodities Act, 1955 and the resultant hoarding and profiteering. These remarks assume significance as Khan had at first turned down the Left government's plea to convene the House on 23 December for discussing the Agri laws, against which farmers have been agitating on Delhi borders for over a month. The session was held on 31 December after the clarifications sought by the Governor were furnished. The policy address also had references against the Centre's amended Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2019, against which the state government had taken a strong stand by moving a unanimous resolution.

While presenting his policy address in January last year, Khan had read out references to the anti-CAA resolution passed by the House, after making it clear that he was doing so while disagreeing with it. Khan said the state government was committed to defending the spirit of the Constitution, which is the cornerstone of democracy. "When apprehensions were raised regarding the consequences of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2019, we have taken the lead in alleviating the fears among large sections of the society," he said.



the Left Democratic Front (LDF) government's policy address during the beginning of the budget session at the state Assembly and Khan did not omit the portions critical of the Union government's policies and the actions of its probe agencies.

"Actions of certain central government agencies have overstepped the constitutional contours and are impeding the development activities and flagship programs undertaken by the State. This has had a demoralizing effect on honest and hard-working officers," the governor said. Khan, who usually does not mind openly expressing his support to the Centre, also said in such a situation co-operative federalism would lose its content and remain only in form. Referring to the protest by farmers against the

Kiske pas Ma hai?

Jack and Xi went up the hill To fetch a pail of Yuan, Jack fell and lost his crown, And Xi came searching after.

- The Chinese billionaire Jack Ma is thought to be missing, Jessica Yun reported for Yahoo Finance on Sunday.
- The Alibaba and Ant Group founder has not been seen publicly in more than two months, and he was abruptly replaced as a judge on the African talent show he founded.
- Chinese regulators have recently cracked down on Ma's business empire, halting Ant Group's initial public offering in November and launching an antitrust investigation into Alibaba in December.
- In October, Ma criticized China's banking rules.
- Ma, who has a net worth of \$50.6 billion, was China's richest man until recently.
- Jack Ma, the 56-year-old billionaire founder of Alibaba and Ant Group, hasn't been seen publicly in more than two months, Jessica Yun reported for Yahoo Finance on Sunday.

Mumbai : Ma has been in the spotlight recently as China has cracked down on his business empire. In late December, Chinese regulators launched an anti-trust investigation into Alibaba, the country's biggest e-commerce company, sometimes referred to as "the Amazon of China." And in November, China introduced regulations that halted what would have been a massive initial public offering for Ant Group, Ma's fintech company.

The new rules came weeks after Ma criticized China's financial regulatory system at a conference in Shanghai. Ma reportedly dismissed the global financial regulations used by China as "an old people's club" and said that "we can't use yesterday's methods to regulate the future."

Blair Silverberg, the CEO of the debt-financing startup Capital, told Business Insider's Katie Canales in November that the regulations were introduced "so the government can assert its supremacy over Jack Ma."

In November, Ma was replaced as a judge on the African talent show he founded, "Africa's Business Heroes," the Financial Times reported. The talent show did not immediately respond to Business Insider's request for comment, but an Alibaba representative said



Ma could no longer be on the judging panel for the show's finale, which was filmed in November but has not yet been released," due to a scheduling conflict."

"We do not have anything to add beyond that," the representative said in response to questions about Ma's whereabouts.

Ma stepped down as Alibaba's chairman in 2019.

Until recently, Ma was China's richest man, with a fortune of more than \$60 billion. But Ma's net worth has taken a \$12 billion hit over the past two months as China has tightened the rules for the fintech industry. Ma is now worth \$50.6 billion, making him the fourth-richest person in China, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index. As speculation about Ma's whereabouts spread, a prediction about Ma from another billionaire Chinese businessman recirculated on social media.

In a video interview in August 2019, GuoWengui, who fled China as a fugitive in 2014 and has described himself as a whistleblower exposing corruption in the country, said Ma would likely end up in jail or dead in the next year because China wanted to "take back" Ma's lucrative Ant Group.

Last week, the Chinese government ordered Ant Group, which owns Alipay, China's largest digitalpayment platform, to scale back its operations after expressing concerns that its corporate governance was "not sound."

In India, Alibaba has investments in payments company Paytm and its e-commerce arm Paytm Mall, food delivery start-up Zomato, online grocer BigBasket and online retailer Snapdeal, among others.

COVID-19 Hits Print Media Hard

Bhubaneswar : The outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic and the subsequent lockdowns and shutdowns have broken months since the nationwide lockdown was announced.

"The newspaper industry has been hit hard because of the

Industry worst affected

the backbone of the newspaper industry across the country, especially Odisha, directly posing a threat to the livelihood of many who were dependent on the same for a living.

Besides the fear of the virus transmission through paper, the increase in the price of newspapers and the availability of e-paper on mobile phones have added to the woes of the industry.

The newspaper distributors, who eke out a living by selling the dailies, opined that the craze of the newspaper has drastically come down during the last nine

Coronavirus pandemic and the subsequent lockdown," said Jayprakash Mutari, a B o l a n g i r - b a s e d newspaper distributor.

During the initial phase of lockdown, people didn't receive the paper. But, now, some have started reading the print version of the news, he added.

The stiff decline in circulation of the newspaper has also jeopardised the livelihood of many distributors. "Before the lockdown, I used to distribute around 800 newspapers a day. But, now it has come down to almost zero. It has affected my livelihood



greatly pushing me into a state of mental agony," said Bijay Kumar Nandy, a Balasore-based newspaper distributor.

Some others opined that the price hike has also played a significant role in diminishing the demand for newspapers.

"Just after the lockdown, many print media houses have increased the price of the newspaper. So, the people have turned their attention to some alternatives. 'The Sambad' has hiked its

price from Rs 5 to Rs 7 while the price of 'The Samaj' stands at Rs 5 now," said Girish Kumar Bhujabal, who distributes newspapers in Baripada.

Experts blame the popularity and easy availability of news through mobile phones for the dim situation of the print media industry.

"When people didn't receive newspaper fearing Covid-19 transmission, several media houses started circulating their electronic

version (e-paper) on their website. So, people can easily access the daily happenings on their mobile phone now," said K Rabi, a senior journalist.

Echoing similar sentiment, another senior scribe Rabi Das said that the circulation of newspapers has fallen drastically due to the availability of e-paper on mobile phones and computers.

In May last year, the Indian Newspaper Society (INS) had urged the Central

government to provide a strong stimulus package to the newspaper industry which was among the worst affected due to the pandemic.

In a letter to the Information and Broadcasting Secretary, the INS had said that the newspaper industry is among the worst affected in India with hardly any revenue coming in from either advertisement or circulation amid the nation-wide lockdown in the wake of the Coronavirus pandemic.

First Batch Of Corona Vaccine, Covidshield, Reaches Odisha



Bhubaneswar: The first batch of COVID-19 vaccine 'Covishield' dispatched by the Serum Institute of India (SII) has reached Odisha. The consignment arrived at Biju Patnaik International Airport here on a SpiceJet cargo flight from Pune via New Delhi at 3.45 pm, said sources. The vaccines were carried to the State Vaccine Centre in three delivery vans with police escort. Tight security arrangements had been made by

police for the safe transfer of the vials. Insulated vaccine vans from every district will be stationed at the center to carry the vaccines to respective district vaccine stores. The vaccines will further be sent to 1,222 cold chain points for storage. Additional Chief Secretary, Health, Pradipta Mohapatra has expressed happiness over the arrival of vaccines. Earlier in the day, he had asked collectors of differ-

ent districts to send vans to transfer vaccines to their areas.

Extensive arrangements have been made for the mega vaccination drive in Odisha. The state government has identified around 160 session sites across all the districts for the Covid-19 vaccination program, and special teams have been formed to vaccinate close to 3.29 lakh healthcare workers in the first phase.

Steel cos continue higher production and sales



The numbers show how large players are gaining market share from smaller units that can't ramp up despite the lucrative market for want of raw materials

Kolkata, Jan 13: Frontline steel companies continued to clock higher production and sales despite the shortage of iron ore, reaping the benefit of record prices of the alloy. Tata Steel and SAIL, which source ore from their mines, ramped up production, while JSW Steel, AM/NS India, and JSPL, which largely depend on market purchases, scored better in the third quarter, buoyed by a strong uptick in demand. The numbers show how the large players are gaining market share from smaller units that are unable to ramp up despite the lucrative market for want of raw materi-

als.

While top producers continued their upward march in production compared with the same period last year and the preceding quarter of this fiscal, low inventory cramped the sales of Tata Steel and JSPL, which reported a sequential decline in sales. Experts say that integrated players benefited from a tight domestic supply of iron ore, which restricted smaller players from taking advantage of the healthy demand.

A report by rating agency Icria noted that the share of the top six steel producers in total crude steel production, which remained at about 55 percent historically, has risen to about 65 percent in recent months. Record utilisation

Also, against the average industry capacity utilisation of 78 percent for the

period FY2016-FY2020, the top six steel producers have now touched a high of 85 percent in October 2020, while the other producers are still operating at capacity utilisation rates of about 65 percent.

"These trends indicate the rising dominance of large steel players in the domestic industry and an adverse impact of the pandemic on the business performance of some of the smaller steel producers, which would find it difficult to operate at pre-Covid levels in the near term," the Icria report pointed out.

Price dynamics

Benchmark hot-rolled coil prices rallied Rs 13,800 per tonne during October-December to reach an unprecedented level of Rs 51,000 per tonne. However, the large players already made it clear that more rounds of hikes are on the cards given that domestic prices are still 6-8 percent cheaper than the landed price of the import. "We expect steel prices to remain high in the January-March 2021 quarter with a sequential price hike of Rs 7,000-8,500 per tonne," a study by rating agency Crisil

noted.

While user industries - be it construction or engineering - have been asking the government to rein in the prices and found support from Union roadways minister Nitin Gadkari there has so far been no intervention.

However, the vertically integrated players such as Tata Steel and SAIL would reap the benefit as the remaining players procure iron ore at the market price. NMDC's iron ore prices more than doubled from May onwards and so have the prices of pellets (an iron ore intermediate) and scrap. From a low of Rs 1,960 a tonne in May, the prices of ore (64 percent iron content) will go to Rs 4,360 a tonne.

Apart from the tailwind of global prices, domestic shortage especially from Odisha is supporting high ore prices and hurting capacity utilisation of smaller players. ICICI Securities pegged Tata Steel's EBIDTA (standalone) at Rs 19,000 per tonne. However, the benign coking coal price will offer a cushion to large players that use the blast furnace route.

Cabinet likely to approve mining reforms proposal

Amendments in the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 have been proposed, few months after the amendments in the Act, the government may auction around 500 blocks in the next 2-3 years.

The Union cabinet is most likely to consider the proposal of mining sector reform for enhancing private investment. Amendments in the Mines

resources, removing the distinction between captive and non-captive mines, and clarifying the definition of illegal mining. Once the cabinet approves



and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 have been proposed, sources said. The proposal sent to the Union cabinet includes structural reforms by redefining the norms of exploration for auction of mineral blocks and ensuring a seamless transition from exploration to production. It also includes resolving legacy issues to move towards an auction only regime for allocation of mineral

the amendments, the government may bring the bill to parliament during the upcoming budget session. Few months after the amendments in the Act, the government may auction around 500 blocks in the next 2-3 years, sources said. In May last year, under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat package the government had announced enhancing private investments in the mineral sector and bringing in other reforms.

Best Wishes from ::

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The ignited state of America

Washington : Donald Trump emerged from isolation at the White House on Tuesday to brand the likely second impeachment of his presidency "absolutely ridiculous" and warn that it has triggered "tremendous anger."

Speaking as he boarded Marine One at the White House for a trip to Texas, Trump called his scheduled impeachment in the House of Representatives on Wednesday a "continuation of the greatest witch hunt in the history of politics."

With only eight days left in his one-term administration, Trump finds himself alone, shunned by former supporters, barred by social media, and now facing a second impeachment over his instigation of a riot against Congress on January 6.

His trip to Alamo, Texas, where he will tout claims of success in building a US-Mexican border wall, is his first live public appearance since he rallied thousands of followers on the National Mall to march on Congress.

Although this is not the same Alamo as the famous fortress in another part of Texas, the trip marks something of a last stand for the Republican.



Ever since the November 3 election, the real estate tycoon has been obsessively pushing a lie that he, not Democrat Joe Biden, was the

many of Trump's former boosters in the corporate and sporting world to turn their backs.

In Congress, where the

The democracy in America faces a resting time when the protesters stormed Capitol hill. Donald Trump was blamed. But unperturbed Trump called his scheduled impeachment in the House of Representatives on Wednesday a "continuation of the greatest witch hunt in the history of politics."

real winner and last week, in a speech he described Tuesday as "totally appropriate," he called on the huge crowd to "show strength."

Amped up on Trump's rhetoric, the mob burst into Congress, fighting with police, trashing offices and forcing frightened lawmakers to suspend briefly a ceremony legally formalizing Biden's victory.

The crisis galvanized

Republican party has been in thrall to the populist leader for four years, even ultra-loyal senior figures like Senator Lindsey Graham have finally told Trump that he must accept his election defeat.

Trump, however, remains in denial.

He has yet to congratulate Biden or urge his supporters to stand behind the incoming president after he is inaugurated on January 20 -- a

gesture of political unity considered all but routine after US elections.

And according to Axios, Trump and the top Republican in the House of Representatives, Kevin McCarthy, had a stormy phone conversation Tuesday in which Trump claimed that left-wing Antifa activists, not his supporters, attacked Congress.

"It's not Antifa," McCarthy reportedly responded. "I know. I was

there."

When Trump continued to push his conspiracy theory that he was the true election winner, McCarthy reportedly interrupted, telling him: "Stop it. It's over. The election is over."

The House of Representatives will vote Tuesday on a longshot bid to get Vice President Mike Pence and the cabinet to invoke the US Constitution's 25th

Amendment, which would declare Trump unfit to perform his duties and install Pence as acting president.

This is unlikely to happen.

Although Pence is reportedly furious about Trump's behavior last week, the two met at the White House on Monday for the first time since the Congress attack and had "a good conversation," according to a senior administration official.

That signaled that whatever Pence and the dwindling number of White House officials feel, they are committed to keeping the presidency limping along until January 20.

Still, with a string of cabinet officials quitting the government -- most recently the acting head of the Department of Homeland Security Chad Wolf on Monday -- it's also clear that Trump's grip on power is tenuous.

In an interview Tuesday on ABC News, Health Secretary Alex Azar did not dismiss outright the option of removing Trump, saying: "I'm not going to get into or discuss the 25th Amendment here."

Democrats will follow up the 25th Amendment vote with impeachment


proceedings in the House on Wednesday. The single charge of "incitement of insurrection" is all but sure to get majority support.

The Republican-controlled Senate, however, is in recess until January 19 and its leadership says there is no way to rush through an impeachment trial before Biden takes over the following day.

This means that Trump, who was acquitted in the Senate last year after his first impeachment, would not be forced out of the office early.

Top Senate Democrat Chuck Schumer has reportedly floated the idea of using a rare parliamentary maneuver to force the chamber back into session under emergency circumstances, giving time for the start of an impeachment trial.

But not even all Democrats are gunning for a trial, worried that this would overshadow Biden's first days in office.

The new president will already face the challenges of an out-of-control Covid-19 pandemic, the stumbling vaccination program, a shaky economy, and now the aftermath of violent political opposition from parts of Trump's huge voter base. 

From Page-1

SC myopically ...

says "representatives of all the farmers' bodies, whether they are holding a protest or not and whether they support or oppose the laws shall participate in the deliberations of the Committee and put forth their viewpoints", several unions have said they will not comply; as BKU spokesperson Rakesh Tikait put it, "Bill wapsinahintohgharwapsinahin". Farmer groups have also alleged that since the panel is packed with supporters of the farm laws.

It was always clear that the farmers wanted a total repeal of the laws, a legislative guarantee that MSP would continue, and that the government would procure the 23 MSP crops every year. So, farmers were never going to accept any SC committee. Given that farmer-government talks have failed on these core demands, SC's myopia is mysterious.

A charitable explanation for SC's decision was that it would diffuse the tension as, once the panel was set up, the farmers would go back home. While that looked like a pipe dream even then, the farmers have made it clear they will not go home till they get their way. If the farmers don't participate in the panel's deliberations, or they disagree with its conclusions-right now,

both possibilities appear plausible-what is SC's game-plan? Will it allow the government to go ahead with its negotiations with farmers or will it put the laws in abeyance once again? It sends out a clear signal to everyone that, if you want a law changed, and can muster enough persons to gherao the capital or some important building like Parliament, you can get SC to keep the law in abeyance, while a panel decides on whether the law is right or wrong.

The constitutional validity of the laws is the only section under which SC is supposed to act; it did not examine this, however, but felt it was all right to hold the laws in abeyance-an 'extraordinary order', it admits-so that farmers would participate in the meetings in 'a congenial atmosphere' and so that their 'hurt feelings' would be 'softened'. SC saying this is truly extraordinary and betrays a poor understanding of the issues at stake. Way back in 1986, the Johl committee had flagged the need to diversify Punjab agriculture away from rice and wheat. Indeed, SC failed to note that the first inroads into the APMC Act, to allow farmers to sell fruits and vegetables in markets other than the APMC ones, were made during the UPA period. That is also why, the Congress party's election manifesto had said it would abolish the APMC monopoly; a point worth keeping in mind is that APMC markets are not being abol-

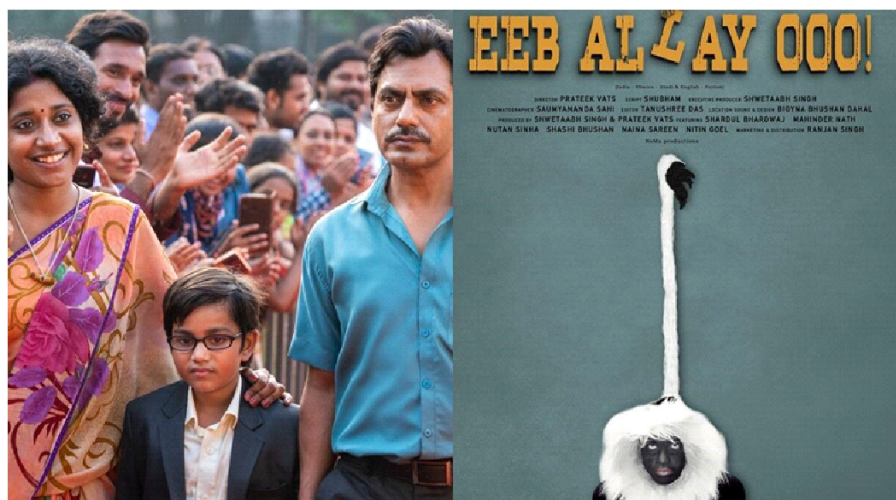
ished, it is their monopoly that is being challenged by allowing farmers to sell in other markets, including directly to consumers. This is important because the argument made is that the farmers will have to now sell to the Ambanis and the Adanis; that is not true, all that happens is that, if they want, farmers can sell to Ambani and Adani, or Walmart or Mother Dairy or Patanjali or to farmer cooperatives, to just anyone.

Another factor that probably influenced SC was the view that small and marginal farmers-and in very large numbers-were being hit by the new laws. That, however, is not true at all. While the farmer unions from Punjab are agitating for a legislatively guaranteed MSP, just 5-6% of farmers across the country benefit from this today; the rest sell their crops in mandis even if the prices there are 20-40% below the MSP announced for various crops.

Resolving the issue, it is true, is not going to be easy. Legislatively guaranteeing MSPs can cost lakhs of crore rupees each year and the money is much better spent on creating new irrigation facilities etc-farm subsidies are four times the government CAPEX in the sector!-as that will benefit all farmers. SC has queered the pitch for the government by getting into its domain. Besides, SC has also eroded its authority. Both augur badly for India's future.

How 2020 rolled

A look at some films that stood out in 2020



2020 was the year that no one wanted, but couldn't escape from: the deadly virus was, and is still, around us. Everything changed. We were forced to clamp down on so many things we took for granted, especially those activities which led us towards gathering in large numbers. The movie hall became one of the first places to be ruled out of bounds; now, when theatres are slowly opening up, we are still reluctant to return to a place that entertained us and transported us.

Ordinarily, Angrezi Medium wouldn't have made it to this list. But not only will be remembered it as the last film (third week of March), it will be marked as the last time we saw Irrfan on screen. As a doting father, who will go to any lengths to make his demanding 'beti' happy, Irrfan lifted the strictly serviceable script as only he could. Within a month, he was gone. Ditto for Dil Bechara, not Sushant Singh Rajput's best, but one in which he reminded us of how difficult it is to process untimely, shocking deaths. The film, quite aptly, was about two young

people in love, and how they deal with difficult lives and impending deaths, and with it, we bade Rajput farewell. Meel Pathar, Ivan Ayr's terrific tale of a man who counts out his time by the mileposts he passes, is another favorite of the year. Arun Karthick's Nasir is a razor-sharp film about a man who is nothing but gentle. All Nasir wants is to be able to live a life of fulfillment and dignity, with his family. His needs are modest. His ambition, too. He is caught at the wrong time, in the wrong place, and his fate mirrors so many others who have become casualties, in real life, of these polarised, communalized times.

Who is a serious man? A man we take seriously? Or a man who wants 'seriousness' as a label to be able to enter worlds that are not his automatically? Nawazuddin Siddiqui in Sudhir Mishra's Serious Men (based on Manu Joseph's novel of the same name) channels deep-seated anger and malice to elevate his son's position on the socio-economic ladder, but he has a lesson in there himself, realizing that your place is yours, and that's

where lies sanity.

Anubhav Sinha's Thappad also centers around a couple of connected lessons. You may be a 'modern' man, but you may be as bound in patriarchy as the older generation. And women are not meant to bear the brunt of your frustrations. Despite a few cheesy, heavily underlined passages, the film waves a strong flag for women, especially those who have made their peace with holding it down for their men.

Female desire is such a hot potato that most moviemakers stay away from it. Alankrita Srivastava dives straight in, with Dolly Kitty Aur Woh Chamaktye Sitaare, which works as a companion piece to her previous what-women-really-want Lipstick Under My Burkha. A two-timing husband, played by Ranvir Shorey, finds himself saddled with a dead body and a problem. In a few hours, their best friends will start trooping in for a celebratory dinner, and he needs to hide his crimes, both corporeal as well as of the spirit. Rajat Kapoor's Kadakh is yet another exploration of

some of the director's favorite themes - of truth and falsehood, crime and punishment - and leaves us asking ourselves tough questions. Can something with a crack in it, ever be mended?

Raat Akeli Hai is a crackling whodunit. But it is also more than just a murder mystery. In Honey Trehan's assured debut feature, toplining Nawazuddin Siddiqui and Radhika Apte, we get a sharply drawn small-town

eco-system that allows powerful men to prey upon helpless women.

And, bringing up the rear, for no other reason than they came towards the end of the year, are Anurag Basu's Ludo, and Vikramaditya Motwane's AK vs AK. Both felt like a stretch in places, both could have done with tighter writing, but both had that special something that leaves a residue

behind. Pankaj Tripathi as a trippy don, and both AKs (Anil Kapoor and Anurag Kashyap) being played to their strengths: especially the latter who gets to do a hilarious send-up of himself, as the guy who makes those 'dark, realistic flop films' and manages to stay in the news because he gives everyone 'gaalis': kismet kihawa Kabhigaram, Kabhinaram.

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