

'Babu Samjho Ishare'



New Delhi : In 2016, the IAS Association took strong exception to the growing use of the word 'babu' to refer to officers. The then president of the IAS Association, along with several other serving officers, called the word an "abuse" for Indian civil servants. Five years later, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi called IAS officers "babus" and derided the "babu culture" on the floor of Parliament, the shock is being expressed in hushed tones even as some described it as a much-needed call for introspection by the community.

While doffing his hat to the private sector Wednesday for its contribution to the growth and development of the country, Modi questioned the "power center we have created in the country by handing over everything to babus".

"Sab kuchbabu hi karenge. IAS ban gayematlabwoh fertiliser kakaar khanabichalayega, chemical kakaar khanabichalayega, IAS ho gaya toh woh hawai jahaz bhi chalayega. Yeh kaun sibaditaa katbanakarrakh di hai humne? Babuon kehaath meindesh de karke hum

kyakar ne waale hain? Humare babubhi toh desh ke hain, toh desh ka nauja wanbhitohdeshkahai," Modi said.

For most officers, the PM's statement was a rare and emphatic public denouncement of the whole IAS community by the highest office of the country. However, it also came as a surprise to many since Prime Minister Modi's model of governance has involved heavy reliance on a select few IAS officers - often at the cost of ministers.

From extending the services of handpicked officers and keeping them in key posts, including the PMO, far beyond their regular tenures, to establishing one-on-one relationships with secretaries and even district magistrates across the country - the PM has been known to count on his rapport with IAS officers to govern the country, and, before that, his home state Gujarat.

A secretary-level IAS officer said on the condition of anonymity that he could not recall an earlier instance where the Prime Minister "questioned the fundamental premise of the IAS in this manner".

"It will not be an exaggeration to say that what the PM has said is a death knell for the IAS," he said. "The whole argument for the need of specialists is not new, but this is a statement on the supine bureaucracy, which has kowtowed to politicians for decades. It should make them ask themselves what this kowtowing has fetched them," he added.

Anil Swarup, former union secretary to the Government of India, said the comment cannot be seen as an off-the-cuff remark.

"When I was working in the government, the PM was very forthcoming when it came to IAS officers. His statement is a cause of concern and introspection," he said. "There are officers who have worked with him for 5-6 years now, they need to introspect on what has gone wrong with the IAS," he added.

Not the first time Since coming to Delhi in 2014, Modi has on several occasions - either privately or obliquely - aimed at the civil services over allegations of corruption and status-quo. In his 73rd Independence Day speech, he likened corruption to "termites" and said his government took several steps to remove corrupt government servants from cushy positions.

"You must have seen, in the last five years, and this time after coming to power, we have dismissed

several people who enjoyed cushy positions in the government," he said. "Those who used to be roadblocks in our endeavours, we told them to pack their bags (because) the country doesn't need (their) services," he added. After returning to power in 2019, in a closed-door meeting with senior officers of the government, Modi was reported to have said that they had "spoiled" the first five years of his government, and he would not let him spoil the next five.

'Need for introspection' While IAS officers privately acknowledge the problems of accountability, the permanence of tenure, and inefficiency within the civil services as major issues inflicting the system, some point towards a "doublespeak" in the matter.

The government indeed needs experts for sectoral intervention that technocrats can provide, but it also needs inter-sectoral interventions and political engagement, which even this government uses IAS officers for. Then why simply echo the commonly-held disdain for IAS officers? Governance is more nuanced than that.

"The reason that the IAS community will find it hard to speak up against this affront is that it has little credibility," said Raghunandan. "They have not spoken up for so many decades now, but I think this (Page-14)

300 km Paradip-Barbil road to be eight-lane

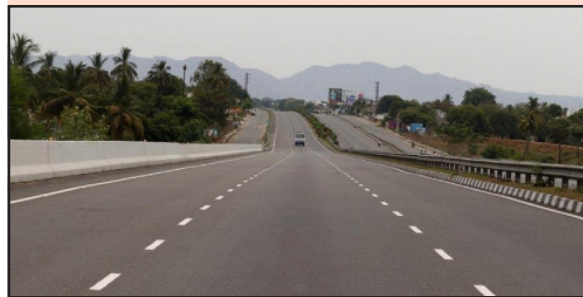
As per the discussion, the four-lane of 166 km Panikoili-Remuli section of NH-20 is almost over and the rest will be completed soon.

Bhubaneswar : The 300 km Paradip-Barbil road will be developed into an eight-lane integrated economic corridor. The proposed corridor will start from Paradip, pass through Chandikhol, Duburi, Keonjhar, Remuli, and Badarsahi before ending at Barbil in Keonjhar district.

Chief Minister Naveen

Similarly, the four-laning of 43 km Remuli-Koida and 104 km Singara-Binjabahal NH will be completed by June 2021. After completion of the four-laning work, steps will be taken for the eight-lane project.

The CMO stated that Gadkari assured all support for an early start to this ambitious project.



Patnaik on Tuesday proposed the project during a meeting with Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari in which Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan was also present. The Chief Minister suggested that, in the interim, the option of 4-laning of the entire stretch with service roads can also be explored.

As per the discussion, the four-laning of 166 km Panikoili-Remuli section of NH-20 is almost over and the rest will be completed soon. A release issued by the Chief Minister's office (CMO) maintained that the Union Minister assured to complete it within a year.

The Chief Minister suggested meetings with the Union Minister once every two months and official-level meetings with the Centre every month to speed up the project.

The State is willing to be a partner and extend all support to this economic corridor, he said. Pradhan said that the corridor will play a big role in the development of the Kalinga Nagar Steel Cluster. Besides strengthening the local economy, it will create huge employment opportunities for youths. The Chief Minister also called for the early completion of various ongoing NH (Page-14)

Odisha to improve nutrition under SOPAN strategy

Bhubaneswar, Feb 10: Odisha Cabinet headed by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Tuesday has approved "SOPAN" (Strategy for Odisha's Pathway to Accelerated Nutrition), a transformative strategy for improving nutrition outcomes in hard to reach 125 blocks of 22 districts in the state.

The state government announced a special intervention package for adolescent girls in the 14-19 years' age group hitherto uncovered under SAG



Scheme including supplementary food and testing and treating for anaemia. "Like 'at risk' pregnancies are given 'red flag' for priority, nutritionally 'at risk' adolescent girls will be

identified and prioritized with 'pink flags'," it stated.

"The strategy has focused on difficult areas, 125 ICDS projects with worst nutrition indications to be prioritized, life cycle

approach for addressing malnutrition and anaemia among adolescent girls, pregnant women and children below six years in the state," it said further.

The government will also ensure spot feeding for pregnant women in these areas (at present take-home ration (THR) is given to them) to ensure consumption. For 0-3 age group kids, hitherto given THR, in selected areas government will have community-based creches providing meals, health

checkup and care and stimulation over and above THR. "Biannual growth monitoring drive for validation of weighing data for children 0-6 years to detect and address growth faltering, focusing on Moderately Acute Malnourished (MAM) children to prevent SAM children. For 3-6 year children, who can't come to AWC, ration to be sent to hamlet for spot feeding there itself either by mothers or SHG," it added. The scheme will also focus on enhancing

complementary feeding in addition to breastfeeding after 6 months by strengthening Anna PrashanDiwas, and drawing on the success of MDM fortifications through rice kernel fortifications while adopting the same for hot cooked meals in AWCs.

The government will also give micronutrient supplementation of THR made by SHOs, and give similar fortifications for THR with 11 micronutrients in these areas through Self Help Groups.

Odisha approves projects valued at Rs 1,242 crore in a bid to offer employment



To create employment opportunities through industrialisation, the Odisha government on Wednesday approved eight industrial projects envisaging an investment of Rs 1,242.02 crore.

Bhubaneswar, Feb 10: Eight industrial projects were approved during the 98th meeting of the State Level Single Window Clearance Authority (SLSWCA) under the chairmanship of Odisha Chief Secretary Suresh Chandra Mohapatra. These projects concern the Metal & Metal Downstream, IT & ESDM, Manufacturing, Logistics and Tourism sectors. Keeping an eye on major reforms, IPICOL has recently submitted the State Reform Action Plan (SRAP) 2020. The reforms, calibrated with the government's policy initiatives, have helped Odisha attract investments worth Rs 1,20,456.74 crore in the last year across six key sectors.

These industrial projects are expected to render 3,135 employment opportunities in the state of Odisha. The projects approved by Odisha's State-Level Single Window Clearance Authority are as follows:

1. A 30,000 MTPA Atomized Iron Powder plant will be set up by SLM Powders Private Limited at an investment of Rs 67.83 crore in IDCO Industrial Estate Kulanga, Sundergarh. This project will generate potential employment opportunities for over 430 persons.
2. Oricon Enterprises Ltd will set up a manufacturing unit of PET Preforms and Closures (Unit-II) of 24,000 tonnes/annum capacity in Khordha at Rs 120 crore. This project will employ over 110 persons.
3. Surya International will set up a manufacturing unit at EMC Park (Info Valley), Khordha at an investment of Rs 67.50 crore. This unit, which

will generate potential employment for over 680 persons, will produce solar panels, advanced storage batteries, including Li-ion batteries, electronic products for energy management, electromechanical components, USB data cables, and HDMI cables.

4. Jagannath Industrial and Logistics Parks Pvt Ltd will set up a logistics park at TangiChoudwar in Cuttack for Rs 140 crore, which will employ over 110 persons.

5. An integrated heavy-beach sands project will be developed by IREL IDCOL Ltd at Krushnaprasad in Purifor Rs 460 crore. This project will generate potential employment opportunities for over 880 persons.

6. A 5-star hotel-cum-luxury resort by Pravat Hospitality Pvt Ltd will be developed in Puri with an investment of Rs 135.69 crore. This resort will employ over 350 persons.

7. Swosti Premium Ltd will develop a 5-star luxury resort in Purifor Rs 134 crore, generating potential employment for over 310 persons.

8. A 4-star hotel will be developed by Hotel Eden Roc in Bhubaneswar with an investment of Rs 117 crore will generate potential employment for more than 345 persons.

A driving test may not be required while applying for a license now

New Delhi : The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways on Friday issued a draft notification for the accreditation of driver training centers, wherein an individual, on successful completion of driver training from such centers, will be exempted from the requirement of driving test while applying for a driving license.

This move, the Ministry said, will also help the transport industry to have specially-trained drivers, which will improve their efficiency and reduce road accidents.

To impart quality driver training to the citizens, the Ministry has proposed detailed requirements to be met and procedures to be followed by such centers.

An official release also said that the draft notification, dated January 29, 2021, has been uploaded on the official website of the ministry for public consultation and will be formally issued after this stage.



The notification comes as the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways is celebrating Road Safety Month from January 18 to February 17, 2021, instead of the National Road Safety Week, which is observed from January 11-17 every year.

During this period, several nationwide activities have been planned to be conducted throughout the country in association with the state governments/UT administrations, OEMs, and other stakeholders.

The government, through such events, aims to spread awareness on how to avoid accidents and injuries while on the road.

Last month, while addressing the 40th Meeting

of Transport Development Council, Union minister Nitin Gadkari had stressed the need for making public transport people friendly, safe, affordable, accessible, cost-effective, and pollution-free.

He had also called for reducing road accidents by half by the year 2025.

At the 19th Meeting of the National Road Safety Council (NRSC), Gadkari had suggested involving social media on a major basis for awareness and education about road safety measures. He highlighted that there is a committee of MPs related to road safety, and requested all the MLAs to also focus on the issue of accident reduction in their constituencies.

Debt, inflation, farm outlay cut, job issues stalk the growth path



Prof. Shivaji Sarkar

Former HOD in English journalism in IIMC, Delhi

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

It is viewed as the debt-funded huge expansion that may be good for the stock market but not for the overall development of the people. Borrowings constitute 36 paise of rupee earned by the government and bound to shoot inflation. Expenses should have been cut on many constructions and euphoric projects like new ornamental constructions

and super-speed trains. A decision that merits praise is the increase in healthcare allocations

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

There is the catch. The budgeted Central Government's total expenditure of 34.8 lakh crores in 2021-22 is identical in nominal terms to that in 2020-21 - which amounts to slashing expenditure in real terms. Debt servicing takes a larger cake that has risen in 2020-21 to over Rs 6.9 lakh crore is estimated to cross Rs 8 lakh crore. In short, the government

would be left with Rs 26 lakh crore for its expenses.

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

The tax system has gone too many changes and confusing in terms of the new no-concession income-tax and conventional I-T system that allows some deductions. The tax on EPF investment is beyond comprehension. Even the benefit of no-filing of return for those above 75 is superfluous because if one has two bank accounts or has any income other than interest accrual or pension, he may forfeit the benefit.

The budget should have been kinder to the lowest 30 percent of people in the unorganized, small, and medium industry, and labourers who trekked hundreds of kilometers to save their lives. Every earner has been shorn off the benefits they were having and many still do not have jobs. Taxing the provident fund is a signal that many more savings instruments may be targeted gradually. It does not augur as a large chunk of borrowings come from small savings, as per FM's budget

speech.

Despite clamour from depositors not to tax their meager interest accruals, the poor savers, retirees and pensioners are losing a large chunk to TDS on bank deposits. It is not a prudent policy to tax the aged or push them to penury. The new car scrapping policy is to burden them more.

It sends mixed signals to the farmers. The budget allocation for the Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare is slashed 8.5 percent in 2021-22. The flagship PM-KISAN scheme, meant to provide income support to farmers, sees a 13 percent drop in its budget, which is Rs 10,000 crore lower than last year's initial allocation. However, the budget says state-run Agricultural Produce Marketing Committees (APMCs) would now have access to the Rs 1 lakh crore Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF). The AIF cess has been raised to 4 percent and would impact almost every walk of life as it is dumped on petrol and diesel prices. The nation should have looked for providing cheaper fuel to the people at a time when international prices are at their lowest.

Various cesses on petroleum products raise over Rs 3 lakh crore a year but erode the economy through cost rise on transportation

and farm inputs, leading to severe inflation and overall hardship. A government committed to development should realise that a nation progresses on low expenses on fuel.

The budget should have given some novel thoughts for supporting agriculture. The government has to think out-of-the-box to take the opportunity to have a fresh look at the farm sector that encompasses the life of over 80,000 crore people and they cannot live on the dole for long.


The government has lowered the disinvestment target to Rs 1.75 lakh crore from Rs 2.1 lakh crore in 2020-21 as pandemic affected the government's disinvestment plans. It has put on a platter for strategic sale of IDBI Bank, BPCL, Shipping Corp, Container Corporation, Neelachal Ispat Nigam Ltd, Pawan Hans, Air India, GAIL, oil pipelines, seven ports, and some others, including two public sector banks through setting up Asset Management and Asset Reconstruction Company.

The move to sell two banks and diluting stake in LIC to 74 percent is beyond comprehension. The LIC is in good shape and is the only honest insurance company. The decision needs to be rolled back. The bank NPAs are not their

creation. It happened because of interference in the work of banks since 2009. The present step can be the beginning of selling out stakes in other banks too. So is the nation-changing tack of nationalizing the banks in 1969 or going into a cycle of another nationalization in a few years? It calls for reviewing such Manmohanomics decisions at a time when RBI itself is concerned about its health.

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

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

The budget is too thinly spread and needs a thorough relook to achieve the goals of fast development that the FM stresses. 

SAIL Chairman Mrs. Soma Mondal Visit RSP



CEO, RSP, RajVir Singh, ED (P&A), Pankaj Kumar, ED (Projects) with the additional charge of ED (Works) accompanied her during the visit.

Praising the employees of RSP for overcoming the COVID challenges with their deep resolve and commitment and simultaneously registering brilliant performance on production, productivity, and every other important front, Mrs. Mondal said, "I am sure with the kind of leadership, passion and the sense of ownership RSP possesses, it'll create even more new benchmarks in future." Emphasising the utmost importance of safety, the Head of SAIL said, "There's absolutely no substitution for loss of life. We have to inculcate safety in our DNA and develop a culture. Safety has to be part of our every activity each day. RSP has to lead by setting an example for

other units. Let's take a pledge that we'll make the plant accident free." She also held discussions with representatives of Trade Unions, Executive Association, and local industry leaders. Mrs. Mondal visited the various CSR initiatives of RSP at Deepika Mahila Jagruti Sansthan. She expressed immense happiness over the Deepika Hast Kargha, the handloom weaving center project. She also visited the Super Specialty Hospital project at Ispat General Hospital and reviewed the progress and went around the facilities. Later, she went to 'Ispat Sarovar Udyan' which holds the distinction of having the tallest tricolor of the state fluttering on a 70-meter flag pole. The SAIL chief planted a sapling on the premises. She also attended a function at NIT, Rourkela before concluding her visit.

Raurkela : After assuming charge as chairman of SAIL Mrs. Soma Mondal visited Rourkela for the first time for two days on 2nd and 3rd February. During her visit, she interacted with the various stakeholder of RSP. While interacting with cross-sections of employees of different departments of SAIL, she said "RSP is doing extremely well on all fronts. However, the challenges and expectations become high when you are at the peak. We must not be content with our

achievements. Let's strive further not only to sustain the momentum but also to excel further in our every endeavor."

Mrs. Mondal visited Raw Materials Handling Plant (RMHP), Coke Ovens, Blast Furnace-5, Steel Melting Shop-II, NSPCL, Hot Strip Mill-II, and New Plate Mill and took stock of the operations of different units. She also attended a high-level meeting at the Conference Hall 'Manthan' to review the performance of the plant in various key areas. Dipak Chattaraj,

MCL's Mindless Pollution Push Villagers to Agitation

Raurkela : Mistrust between villagers and administration has created a big agitation by villagers which has affected the movement of coal loaded trucks in the Taparia area of Hemgiri block. The agitation began on 19th January has completely stopped transportation of coal from MCL's Kulada open cast project to companies located in Chhatisgarh. The villagers are demanding restrictions on the movement of coal-laden vehicles passing through the villages which are causing pollution in their villages. Hundreds of villagers are sitting at Bankibahalchhak in protest. District administration faces an uphill task in convincing villagers to allow the



transportation of coal. Villagers say they are suffering from the pollution because of coal sands spreading in their villages from coal loaded trucks. People living in the villages are suffering from pollution caused by coal. The water, cultivated land, vegetable products are affected. Villagers since long have been demanding a separate road for the movement of trucks. But the administration had promised them to make a separate corridor is yet not fulfilled. After several requests, the villagers of Rajenmara, Ratanpur, Bilaimunda of Hemgiri block resorted to agitation. Government officers requested them to allow one month time to solve their problem. The administration says that DMF has submitted a plan to strengthen the Dudaka- Gopalpur- Taparia MDR road. Rs. 146 crore has been sanctioned for the work. But villagers are not ready to trust the verbal assurances, they demand written assurance. The economic blockade has disrupted coal transportation. Seeing the determination of the villagers now many political parties have started supporting the agitation. Sundargarh MLA Smt. Kusum Tete has declared her support for the agitating villagers.

Sundargarh Launches 'Sudakshya' Programme



Sundargarh : To help the talented youth from underprivileged and mining-affected areas of the district entering competitive careers, the district administration has launched 'Sudakshya', a skill enhancement program. The program aims to enhance career-oriented skills among aspiring candidates of the district who have passed +2 and +3. The District Mineral Foundation, (DMF) Sundargarh is providing financial support for the initiative, while Niyatee Foundation, an NGO, is the implementing agency. Many talented girls and boys fail to fulfill their dreams of having a

career by cracking competitive exams. However, when proper training and skill support are given they can perform better. 'Sudakshya', one of the unique programs picked up by the district, is based on this objective. While inaugurating the program Collector Nikhil Pavan Kalyan said the job aspiring youths would be given free coaching for various competitive examinations. "Students from six mining-affected blocks of the district, SC/ST, underprivileged and with a good educational background will be able to reap benefits of Sudakshya," he said. 'Sudakshya' will provide free three-month coaching for com-

petitive examinations conducted by banking and insurance sectors, staff selection commission, Railways, Army, Air Force, Navy, Odisha Police, paramilitary, and others. The candidates can avail free accommodation, food, study materials, and uniforms. Bhairab Singh Patel; Project Director, District Rural Development Agency, Rasailaguri; CEO, DMF, Nirmal Kumar Panda; Chairman, Niyatee Foundation Itishree Panda; Chief Executive, Niyatee Foundation, and senior officials of DMF were present at the inauguration function.

Rourkela's Wait for Domestic PNG Supply Gets Longer

ROURKELA : Rourkela's wait for cost-effective and green fuel piped natural gas (PNG) and compressed natural gas (CNG) connections for domestic and industrial connections will stretch beyond 2021

GAIL's Rourkela-based General Manager (Projects) B Behera while talking to "IMO" stated that the piped connection in the Steel City, is in different stages of execution. He said GAIL had set the target to complete the work by the end of 2020 but due to pandemic corona work got delayed. He said GAIL now is trying to complete pipeline laying work at the earliest.

It is noted that GAIL has won the City Gas Distribution (CGD) bidding for Sundargarh and Jharsuguda districts for the supply of

CNG for the transport sector and PNG for households, industries, and commercial units.

Behera said for domestic PNG connections, the survey, feasibility report, and networking strategy have been completed, and pipe laying work has begun wherever permission is granted by concerned authorities. In the city, pipe laying will be done of 22 km around the ring road and 11 km in other areas. Apart from this

300 km pipes would be laid to connect households of Rourkela. The project envisages supplying PNG to around seventy thousand houses. Mr. Behera said that after completion of the main pipeline and distribution network, industrial houses can avail gas connection to replace fuel-based coal and fur-

nace oil with clean and efficient fuel. Sharing a little more information Behera told that the total budget for Sundargarh and Jharsuguda district Rs. 860 crores have been allocated to be spent in 8 years.

The Project will cover 12130.70 sq. km Area in both the districts where 22 blocks namely Lahunipara, Laikera, Hemgir, Lephripa, Balisankara, Tangarapali, Sundargarh, Subhdega, Baragaon, Kutra, Rajagangapur, Kuanmunda, Nuagaon, Bisra, Lathikata, Gurundia, Baneigarh, Koida, Lakanpur, Jharsuguda, Kirimira, Kolabira

He needs cooperation from every quarter so that GAIL would be able to complete the work and start supply to houses of the city.

Mass Education Minister Dash lays the foundation stone of the second Adarsha Vidyalaya in J'spur



JAGATSINGHPUR, Feb 12: The state School and mass education minister Samir Ranjan Dash laid the foundation stone of an Adarsha Vidyalaya in Dahipala village under Tirana Panchayat in

Naugaon block on Monday.

Addressing the public at the foundation stone laying function minister Dash said the Adarsha Vidyalaya aims to provide qualitative education to rural students as

compared to private school delivering at urban areas. Moreover, CBSE type education would be provided to the students through English medium, the minister said. For admission into Adarsha School students

would have to clear an entrance test. MLA Prasanta Muduli chaired the meeting and said this is the second Adarsha School in Jagatsinghpur district, the Naugaon students would be benefited after the establishment of this educational institution. Among others, MP Jagatsinghpur Dr. Rajashree Mallick, Naugaon block chairman Jagannath Das, district education officer Niranjana Behera, DPC Sapan Kumar Jena, BDO Rashmi Rekha Mallick, and Tahasildar J Kalpana, few Panchayat Samiti members and Sarpanch's have attended the function.

J'spur collector Mohapatra inoculates Covid 19

Jagatsinghpur : On the second day, the Covid-19 vaccination drive underway at the district collector office here, and district collector Sangram Keshari Mohapatra inoculated the Coronavirus vaccine. While reassuring government employees and front-line Covid warrior's collector Mohapatra urged to beware of propaganda and rumors about Covid inoculation, nobody should fear

of side effects of this vaccine as it has passed through many trials and experts have certified it. Meanwhile, thousands of health care and sanitary workers at the front-line of the country's Covid 19 battle have shot their first jabs reporting very minor complaints, so people should be secured about the vaccine's safety and effectiveness, Collector told to media persons.

J'spur Scribe's body holds an organizational meeting



JAGATSINGHPUR : The Jagatsinghpur District Journalist Union [JDJU] held its organizational meeting at Sidha Baranga Pitha in Punanga four km away from here. JDJU president Subhankar Jena chaired the meeting accompanying other office bearers, discussed several problems suffering scribes in district headquarters. A unanimous resolution was

passed claiming few demands as a piece of land at headquarters for JDJU building, Corona jab for all working journalists, action against fake scribes, and journalist protection law in the state. Few senior scribes as Pinaki Mohanty, Sasanka Panda, Saroj Kanta Sahoo, Prasanta Mohapatra, and Deepak Mohanty were felicitated on the occasion.

A driving test may not be required while applying for a license now

New Delhi : The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways on Friday issued a draft notification for the accreditation of driver training centers, wherein an individual, on successful completion of driver training from such centers, will be exempted from the requirement of driving test while applying for a driving license.

This move, the Ministry said, will also help the transport industry to have specially-trained drivers, which will improve their efficiency and reduce road accidents.

To impart quality driver

training to the citizens, the Ministry has proposed detailed requirements to be met and procedures to be followed by such centers. An official release also said that the draft notification, dated January 29, 2021, has been uploaded on the official website of the ministry for public consultation and will be formally issued after this stage.

The notification comes as the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways is celebrating Road Safety Month from January 18 to February 17, 2021, instead of the National Road Safety Week, which is observed

from January 11-17 every year.

During this period, several nationwide activities have been planned to be conducted throughout the country in association with the state governments/ UT administrations, OEMs, and other stakeholders.

The government, through such events, aims to spread awareness on how to avoid accidents and injuries while on the road.

Last month, while addressing the 40th Meeting of Transport Development Council, Union minister Nitin Gadkari had stressed the need for making public

transport people friendly, safe, affordable, accessible, cost-effective, and pollution-free.

He had also called for reducing road accidents by half by the year 2025.

At the 19th Meeting of the National Road Safety Council (NRSC), Gadkari had suggested involving social media on a major basis for awareness and education about road safety measures. He highlighted that there is a committee of MPs related to road safety, and requested all the MLAs to also focus on the issue of accident reduction in their constituencies.

Covid-19 vaccination for front line workers launches in J'spur

JAGATSINGHPUR : The Covid -19 vaccination drive for the frontline workers included government employees, cops, and other health workers launched in three different places in the Jagatsinghpur district. As per state government instruction the vaccination exercise organized in the



district collector office here and Jagatsinghpur police station as well as Paradip port hospital in Paradip. At district headquarters, additional district magistrate Satchidananda Sahoo inaugurated the vaccination drive against the pandemic and inoculated with Covid- 19 jab self. About

100 frontline workers were targeted getting Covid 19 vaccination here but only 83 government employees were turned up taking the injection.

In Jagatsinghpur police station district superintendent of police Prakash R first shot Covid-19 vaccination then other cops were administered Covid -

19 injection. 161 police personnel were taken Covid-19 injections there. Paradip additional district magistrate Kanhu Charan Dhir inaugurated the vaccination drive at port trust hospital in Paradip, as many as 121 persons belonging to the selective categories were received Covid 19 jabs there.

The paucity of funds delays the Eco-tourism project at Manchabandha



Baripada, 12 February: A strong sense of resentment is brewing among residents of Baripada town in the Mayurbhanj district as the projects works of Manchabandha Eco-tourism yet not complete due to the apathy of the State Government. The development work of the Eco-tourism project at Manchabandha closed to Baripada town under Bripada wildlife division was started in 2012 aimed at conserving green canopy and animals over 285 hectares of a vast forest.

Under the project, there was a proposal to conserve forest, animals, and Ecosystems through the plantation and other activities. It aimed at the growing of medicinal plants, fruit-bearing trees, protection of bamboo forest and conserving

75 bamboo spices, digging up a water body for animals, developing artificial nests promoting eco-tourism. It also aims to provide sustainable livelihood facilities to the people of G o u d a d i h a , Manchabandha, Mahulia, Karatbasa, Bagdiha, and Gudikhamari.

The official sources said it was planning to utilise at least 50 percent of the revenue generated from the project for the locals. However, the official had decided to allow the local people inside the project area for collecting dry wood and leaves once a week to clean inside and the local people. Though the residents' involvement would be necessary for its different developmental activities, the department had later decided to involve them as one type of engaging facility for them

but in the last four years, not a single assistance had been provided by the Government for its further developmental activities.

Sans proper protection facilities around the territory of the project and lack of security facility by the forest department is helping timber smugglers. With the effort of the forest department and some forest lovers, a Gram Sabha was held in 2012 and it had been approved the name of the project in the meeting it as Sri Ram Batika later the name of the project had been changed Eco-tourism Manchabandha. Except for a few infrastructure works nothing has been done so far. A few meters of a boundary wall and a pond weredug during the starting of the project work, said official sources. The forest department had given a proposal of Rs.10 crore for

the completion of the project but the Forest and Environment Department sanctioned scanty Rs.50 lakh and released only Rs.20 lakh during the 2012-13 fiscal year. Based on the available fund, a road and main entrance gate, drinking water facility, pond, and a toilet inside the forest were built. An amount of Rs. 5 lakh was later utilized for construction work and repair of the toilet in 2016. Since then no fund has been sanctioned by the department.

Dr. Krushna Chandra Mohapatra a citizen of the town said that the government should intervene in the matter and provide assistance with anadequate amount for the completion of the project.

Baripada DFO Santosh Kumar Joshi said that he will look into the matter and will visit the project site.

STR authority hike death reports of animals, alleged Bhanja Sena

Baripada : STR office at Bhanjpur BhanjaSena a district-based socio-culture outfit here slammed the authorities of Similipal Tiger Reserve (STR) as its authorities hike the death reports of wildlife.

Apathy towards the management of security and poor monitoring over the protection of STR by the authorities. Two major factors bring advantage to poachers and timber smugglers on 2750 sqm vast natural forest in Mayurbhanj district, alleged BhanjaSena outfit on Friday while its members staged a demonstration in front of PitnuMaity the president of the outfit criticised the authorities of the STR who have failed to manage proper security to combat animals' poaching in the forest. Consequently, many portions of the STR are looking deserted due to the dwindling of trees by timber smugglers. The tourists do not desire to visit again once they visit the STR to see the appalling condition.

He said the succumbed of an adult female leopard in Dangadiha-1 beat of Podadiha wildlife range

on first February has shocked people across the district as the officials allegedly stated to media that the death of the adult female leopard occurred due to septicemia and given statement the death of any wildlife life due to age-old or natural death to escape from trouble while the animals were killed by poachers.

The outfit demanded a high-level inquiry should be carried out by an independent investigating agency to find the real cause of animals' death taking place in STR.

ISI espionage; Iswar Behera gets life imprisonment

Balasore, 11 February: The Additional District Judge of Balasore district GirijaSankarMohapatra sentenced life imprisonment to IswarBehera on Thursday for having a link with Pakistan spying agency ISI.

Behera (42) a resident of Kantipur village under Baisinga Police Station in Mayurbhanj district, was engaged as a contractual employee of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) in Chandipur of Balasore district was arrested by Balasore police on 22 January 2015, and the State Crime Branch investigating the case for allegedly given information of the DRDO to Pakistan spying agency ISI. A case was registered against Iswar under section 121, 121(A), 120 (B) of IPC, 3 and 5 of Official Information Act. Harekrushna Das the defense lawyer of Iswar said that the Crime Branch did not submit



necessary documents before the Court and the Government prosecutor had demanded his death sentence but the honorable Court gave Iswar life imprisonment. He will appeal before the High Court against the sentence soon. Deputy Director of Crime Branch and Prosecutor ChittaranjanKanungo also present in the Court.

Tata Trusts abandons Odisha cancer project

Though the Chief Minister had laid the foundation stone of the project on February 17, 2019, there is no tangible progress on the project in the last two years.

MoU signed between the Odisha government and Tata Trusts for setting up of cancer hospital

BHUBANESWAR, Feb 4: Is Tata Trusts abandoning the Odisha government's most ambitious cancer care program? With the State government deciding to go ahead with its funds and talks about a former founder of an IT giant being roped in for a

world-class cancer hospital gaining momentum, it appears that the oldest charity of the country is not keen on the project for which it had inked a pact three years ago.

On May 6, 2018, the managing trustee of Tata Trusts R Venkataramanan had signed the MoU with the then Secretary of Health and Family Welfare department in the presence of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and chairman of Tata Trusts Ratan Tata to create a comprehensive cancer care network in the State.

As part of the agree-



ment, a three-tier cancer care network with a state-of-the-art Cancer Hospital and Research Centre near Baranga on the model of Mumbai-based Tata Memorial and Acharya Harihar Post Graduate Institute of Cancer (AHPGIC), Cuttack as an apex center, was to be developed. Diagnostics facili-


ties along with radiotherapy units were to be developed at 15 locations in the State. The Tata Trusts had committed Rs 300 crore for the Rs 800 crore program to be implemented over five years.

Though the Chief Minister had laid the foundation stone of the project on Feb-

ruary 17, 2019, there is no tangible progress on the project in the last two years.

Sources said months after the agreement, the Trust came up with a proposal only to bear the cost of high-end equipment to be installed at the radiotherapy units and sought the government's intervention for a well-developed approach road for the Rs 150 crore cancer hospital project. "The government had agreed to the proposal and approved a four-lane road to be developed at Rs 57 crore. But there was no commitment from the Trust for the


hospital," sources said.

Tata Trusts seems to be in double minds over the project after an external evaluation made early last year indicated that the hospital may not be viable as a standalone unit with a limited flow of patients unless it is made an integrated one with cardiology and renal facilities. While the Trust authorities could not be contacted, a senior health official said the government will take up the cancer care program along with radiotherapy units with its fund for which a five-year plan has been made. 

Vehicle flagged up to reduce carbon footprint in Bolangir

Bolangir : (Sudhir Mishra) Bolangir Municipality Executive Officer, Bipin Deep flagged up a truck loaded with polythene to Cement factory at Bargarh. "The biodegradable materials like polythene and others are collected from door to door in different wards of the town. Each municipality has been tagged to a cement factory and we are sending these two tonnes of polythene garbage to the cement factory at Bargarh for treatment," says the Executive officer of Bolangir Municipality, Sri Bipin Deep.

Earlier, the civic body had sent two such trucks loaded with polythene weighing 4 tonnes and today we are sending another two tonnes of plastic garbage for treatment.

Bolangir Municipality is striving to keep Bolangir town clean and green and we seek the cooperation of people, to keep it clean and green, says Executive Officer of Bolangir Municipality, while talking to the IMO. 

Green Manure, produced from the garbage in Micro Composting Center at Bolangir

Bolangir : It is a common sight to find garbage dumped on the roadside in a town, which becomes a breeding ground for various disease and nauseating views, besides the pollution, and people criticizing the civic authority for the bad environment. However, this garbage has proved to be a boon for people, as after its safe disposal in the Micro Composting Center (MCC) at Bijakhamman dumping yard it is made green manure.

In Bolangir town, according to an estimation, around seven tonnes of garbage is generated daily and its disposal was a headache for civic authority and the public.

There are two types of waste generated namely dry waste and wet waste. In the Micro Composting Center (MCC) at Bijakhamman, whose capacity is Five Tones per Day, the waste is segregated first. The wet waste is shredded and processed into green manure. The recycled garbage would be given to Kabbadiwala and ragpickers. The other non-degradable objects like plastic




and polythene would be sent to the Cement factory for its safe disposal, points out a municipality official here

We appeal to people not to throw garbage here and there and also don't burn the plastic which causes more pollution, says executive officer Bolangir municipality Sri Bipin Deep. People should handover the garbage to the municipality for its safe disposal and to produce manure from it.

The Micro Composting Center (MCC) has started functioning and we are selling the produced organic manure at rupees 20 per kilo-

gram. So far we have sold manure for rupees 3000, says Manoj Mahajan Trainee IAS officer at Bolangir Municipality. It would go a long way in keeping the Bolangir town garbage-free, says Mahajan.

Cleaning of garbage dust from the road at the night

Besides this, Bolangir Municipality has started cleaning of roads in the evening. It has commenced a week ago. To ensure garbage-free Bolangir, the cleaning and sweeping of roads have started and it has been institutionalized, says, Manoj Mahajan. 

Odisha Forest Officer Receives UN's Asia Environmental Enforcement Award

Sasmita Lanka, who is a divisional forest officer in Athgarh, Cuttack, received the award under the 'Gender Leadership and Impact' category for her work in help in busting pangolin smuggling rackets in the state.

Bhubaneswar : In a first for India, a female forest officer from Odisha, Sasmita Lanka has been felicitated with United Nation's Asia Environmental Enforcement Award. Ms Lanka, who is a divisional forest officer in Athgarh, Cuttack, received the award under the 'Gender Leadership and Impact' category for her work in help in busting pangolin smuggling rackets in the state.


Ms Lanka has helped in busting an international network of pangolin in Athgarh and Khunnpunni.

"We have seized three pangolins, including a dead one, and arrested 28 smugglers. The pangolins were being supplied to China, Vietnam, and Myanmar for black marketing...I'm glad my work was noticed. But it'll only

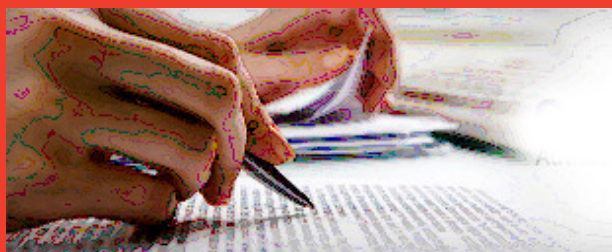


stop once the pangolin is saved from extinction," Sasmita, who is now posted as deputy conservator of forest in the Bhubaneswar district headquarters, said. She also conducted many awareness campaigns among locals about the illegal trade of pangolins.

To bust the racket, she offered a reward of ? 10,000 for information about suspects. "Residents across 30 villages reached out with information. The initiative received a huge response, and we took action against several criminals based on this information," Ms Lanka said.

She said the majority of locals were not aware that pangolins exist in the vicinity, but awareness about the animal and strict action taken by the administration helped change the people's mindset. 

Battle of Farm law is lost; now it's time to cognize the limitations of majority



Sirish C. Mohanty

The farm laws, by and large, are good for the farmers and India. At various points in time, most major political parties and leaders have wanted these changes. However, many might still disagree. Whether the laws are good or bad for the farmer no longer matters. In a democracy, facts don't matter if you've failed to convince them.

The Modi government is right when it says this is no longer about the farm laws. Because nobody is talking about MSP, subsidies, mandis, and so on. Then what's it about? The short answer is, it is about politics. And why not? There is no democracy without politics. When the UPA was in power, the BJP opposed all its good ideas, from the India-US nuclear deal to FDI in insurance and pension. Now

the BJP is implementing the same policies but at a faster hop.

As far as the farm laws are concerned, the Modi government has already lost the battle. Again, you may disagree, but this is the fact. The best evidence is the government's capitulation to unilaterally hold the laws for 18 months and the permission of tractors into Delhi on January 26. Finally, the Modi government has two choices. It can let it fester, expand into a larger political war. Or it can cut its losses and, forget the reforms it has been mandated to.

Here is the evidence that lets us say that the Modi government has lost the battle for these farm laws. First of all, there is the unilateral offer of an 18-month deferral to implementing the laws. Count 18 months from now, you

will be left with only another 18 before the 2024 general elections. You see even a 'Modihaitohmumkinhai' BJP is unlikely to risk reopening this front at that point. The bellwether heartland state elections: Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Rajasthan, will be exactly 12 months away. Two of them have strong Congress incumbents and in the third, the BJP has bought or stolen power. Nobody's risking losing these to make their point over farm reforms. These laws, then, are as bad as dead in the water.

Again, unilaterally, the government has already committed to continuing with Minimum Support Price (MSP), although there is nothing in the laws saying it will be taken away. With so much already given away, the battle over the farm laws is lost.

The Modi government's challenge now is to buy normalcy without making it look like a defeat. We know that it got away with one such, with the new land acquisition law. But that issue was still confined to Parliament. This is on the streets, highway choke-points, and in the expanse of wheat and paddy all around Delhi. This can spread. If the government retreats in surrender, this issue may close, but politics will rage. And why not? What is democracy but competitive politics, brutal, fair, and fun of the notorious class of 'Andolanjibi'? The next targets could then be other reform measures, from the new labour laws to the public listing of LIC.

What are the errors, or blunders, committed by India's most powerful government? Here are these to see:

Bringing in these laws through the ordinance route was a blunder. To usher in the promise of sweeping change affecting the lives of more than half a billion people, the correct way would have been to market the ideas first. We don't know if Modi now regrets not having prepared


the ground for it. But the fact is, people at the mass level would be suspicious of such change through ordinances. Especially if you aren't talking to them. How the laws were pushed through Rajya Sabha added to these suspicions. This needed better parliamentary craft than the blunt use of vocal cords. This helped fan the fire, or spread the 'Hawa' that something terrible was being forced down the surplus-producing farmers' throats.

The party was riding far too high on its majority to care about allies and friends. If it had taken them along respectfully, the passage through Rajya Sabha wouldn't have been so ungainly. At least the Akalis should never have been lost. It also underestimated the frustration among the Jats of Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh, disempowered by the Modi-Shah politics. The BJP conceded too much, too soon, unilaterally in the negotiations. It doesn't have much more to give now. On the other hand, the farm leaders have conceded nothing.

In conclusion, where does the Modi government

go from here? One approach could be to tire the farmers out. On all evidence, that is not about to happen. Rabi harvest in April is still nearly 75 days away, and with much work done by mechanical harvesters and migrant workers, families would be quite capable of keeping the pickets full.

The next expectation would be that the Jats would ultimately make a deal. This is conceivable. Note the key difference between Singhu and Ghazipur. In the first, no politician can even go for a selfie. But everybody can go to Ghazipur and be photographed hugging Tikait. Wherever there are politics and politicians, conflict resolution is possible.

This will leave India and the Modi government with the most dangerous outcome of all. It will corner the Sikhs of Punjab. This crisis requires political sophistication and governance skills. The BJP is riding an all-conquering election-winning machine. The party is yet to accept the realities of Indian politics and appreciate the limitations of a parliamentary majority that brought it here. 

Goat Bank

Take goat on loan, return 4 lambs: Maharashtra farmer starts unique 'Goat Bank' to fight agri distress

In a rapidly changing agricultural environment, a farmer in Maharashtra's Akola district has launched a 'Goat Bank' to promote integrated farming among fellow farmers and rein in profits.

The 'Goat Bank of Karkheda' initiative in the Akola district of Sangavi Mohadi village is being applauded throughout the state. 52-year-old Naresh



Deshmukh, a graduate of Punjab Krishi Vidyapeeth, launched the Goat Bank in

July 2018. TV, Naresh Deshmukh explained at length the functioning of the extraordi-

nary bank.

To avail of a loan, the interested farmer has to make a loan agreement by paying a registration fee of Rs 1,200. As per the agreement and loan conditions, each person availing a goat under the loan scheme has to return 4 lambs within the time frame of 40 months.


During his daily visits to the village, Deshmukh found, though economi-

cally weak, the woman farmers engaged in goat rearing could afford to buy small pieces of land, educate their kids, even celebrate a marriage ceremony with pomp and show.

After studying the families involved in goat rearing, Deshmukh decided to set up a 'Goat Bank' wherein he will organize this sector and make it available for loan

schemes as well as for the deposit of goats.

He invested Rs 40 lakh from his savings and bought 340 full-grown goats. Subsequently, 340 goat breeding families were registered and all of these goats were distributed among them.

It has been estimated that each of the women using the goat under this scheme will make a profit of around Rs 2.5 lakh. 

The agony of India's small farmer finds a platform

PM Narendra Modi's speech, marked by bipartisanship, spelled out a great vision for India and Indian agriculture



Sirish C Mohanty

Words carry the power to shape the future. Not many statesmen can speak in a manner as powerful as Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi. His response to the debate on the motion of thanks on the President's address pressed all the right buttons with people at this critical hour.

Replete with hard facts, and with a sprinkle of humour and wit, his speech addressed apprehensions related to crucial issues such as the farm laws. His message to the nation was clear - this is India's moment under the sun and we must seize every opportunity for growth that lies ahead of us. It is time to re-energise our inherent capabilities and rebuild our nation. It would be a colossal mistake to lose sight of the big vision for India, and so, our differences should not come in the way of this vision.

The most important aspect of the PM's speech was the elaborate explanation of the government's aim to

empower small and marginal farmers through the three farm laws. In all discussions about agriculture in India, this section is often forgotten. It is a well-known fact that, after all these years, the Green Revolution's gains have not trickled down to this section. India's small farmer has neither the ability to organise, nor the time to devote himself to political pursuits. Thankfully, India's small farmer has got a powerful spokesperson in the form of the PM.

That India's agriculture is riddled with many challenges is not hidden from anyone. Landholdings are shrinking, agri-technology is becoming obsolete, and farmers face exploitation at the hands of middlemen. To free the small farmer from these shackles, the government has combined an innovative approach with zero tolerance towards malpractices. PM Modi referred to modernising the long-standing mandis, while also complementing efforts by various states towards improving agriculture systems. The unequivocal message - minimum support price (MSP) was there, is there, and will remain - should answer all those who have spread canards about MSP. After all, it is this government that has increased MSP to 1.5 times the cost of cultivation.



Other initiatives, be it neem-coated urea or the modified crop insurance scheme, have touched the lives of small farmers the most.

At the bedrock of good governance is listening and accommodating divergent views. The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government has always shown utmost empathy and sensitivity towards the issues of the poor and the marginalised. This is why it initiated an unprecedented 11 rounds of talks with the farmers. At a time when egos and oneupmanship are rampant, it takes a big heart to offer to put the laws on hold for 18 months until all the issues are addressed. PM Modi is a leader who understands the pain of the farmers, and every step taken under his leadership will, undoubtedly, be in line with their best interests.

To elaborate, as the PM underlined, there is a need

to widen the ambit of what we see as "improvements" in agriculture. At the base of it, if infrastructure, including roads, rail, and air connectivity improves, farmers will be able to gain access to distant and diverse markets. The government's focus on allied sectors such as dairy and fisheries is aimed at generating additional revenue for the farmers and giving them opportunities to showcase their innovations. Similarly, the PM's vision for water in every household too has its gains for the farmers.

Today, millions of small farmers need our attention. They are talented and hardworking. They do not need doles to keep them poor. They need support to enable them to rise and contribute to the welfare of India. No less a leader than the PM speaking about them is noteworthy. He

addressed every critical issue with farsightedness. At no point were those protesting called names. He highlighted the monumental contribution of the Sikh community to national development. He appreciated (rightfully) the pioneering contribution of HD Deve Gowda towards the cause of farmers. He referred to Sharad Pawar and appreciated Ghulam Nabi Azad.

These are things to learn - we may all be on different sides of the political spectrum and will certainly fight electoral battles with our full might but on the floor of the House, decency rules the roost. Our friends in the Opposition who boycotted the President's speech and indulged in sloganeering could learn from PM Modi.

PM Modi quoted two former prime ministers, the farmer leader Chaudhary

Charan Singh and Dr Manmohan Singh. From their words, we understand that there has always been a desire for agricultural reform. It was the inability to navigate the roadblocks that delayed them. PM Modi has tried to navigate the roadblocks. It should, as a nation, make us happy that a PM is fulfilling some of the ideas of his predecessors despite having different political affiliations. Such continuity and bipartisanship augur well for our future.

Parliament was also the right forum to isolate those who are perpetual mischief-sniffers (Andolanjeevi as the PM called them), who cannot ignite a positive change but are quick to latch on to others, and subsequently, mislead them. The PM was right to caution us about such elements. After all, when a nation's economic revival is right on track; when the world is all praise for India's humanitarian ethos of supplying vaccines; when India's young are scaling new heights, who gains by causing mindless roadblocks?

PM Modi's Rajya Sabha speech has set the benchmark - it was a speech that said the right things, exposed many mistruths but most importantly one where India's small farmer was brought into the mainstream of national discourse.

World's costliest crop is now cultivated in Bihar

The use of hop-shoot as an herb is also popular in European countries, where it is used for keeping the skin gleaming and young since the vegetable is also a rich

PATNA : One kilogram of this vegetable costs about Rs 1 lakh! The cultivation of the world's costliest vegetable namely 'hop-shoots' has started on a trial basis in Bihar's Aurangabad district.

Intermediate-pass from Hazaribagh's St. Columbus College in 2012, Amresh Singh, 38, a farmer from Karamdih village under Navinagar block of Bihar's Aurangabad district, is the first to start hop-shoots cultivation on 5 kathas of his land.

It used to be sold for 1000 pounds a kg even six years ago in international markets which comes roughly to about Rs 1 lakh. This crop is rarely seen in the Indian market and bought only by placing a special order. "I am happy to say that more than 60 per



cent of its cultivation has happened successfully," Singh said.

He also said that if Prime Minister Narendra Modi makes a special arrangement for the promotion of cultivation of 'hop-shoots', it will make the farmers earn 10 times more than they can do by other means of agriculture within a couple of years. The cultivation of hop-shoots

(Humulus-lupulus) is going on under the supervision of agricultural scientist Dr. Lal of the Indian Vegetable Research Institute at Varanasi.

"I have planted the saplings of this vegetable two months ago after having brought it from the Indian Vegetable Research Institute at Varanasi. I hope it will be a grand success and turnaround agriculture

in Bihar too," Singh said.

Speaking about its utility, he said that the fruit, flower, and stem of hop-shoots are all used in beverage making, beer making, and for medicinal purposes like in making antibiotics. The medicine, which is made with the stem of this vegetable, has also been found to have a high curative effect in the treatment of Tuberculosis (TB).


"Its flower is called hop-cones or strobile, which is used as a stability agent in the making of beer. The rest of the twigs are used for food and medicine purposes," he said.

The use of hop-shoot as an herb is also popular in European countries, where it is used for keeping the skin gleaming and young since the vegetable is also a rich source of antioxidants. The hop-shoot was discovered in the early 11th century and was used as a flavouring agent in beer and then its use in herbal medicine and as a vegetable gradually.

The shoots have an acid called humulones and lupulones in them that is believed to be effective in killing cancer cells in the human body. The medicine improves the digestive

system, provides relaxation for those with depression, anxiety, is an analgesic, and cures insomnia also.

Singh said that the farming of hop-shoots is done in European countries like Britain, Germany, and others. In India, it was done earlier in Himachal Pradesh but stopped since its marketing did not take off because of the high price.

As for Amresh, apart from this, he also cultivates many other medicinal and aromatic plants. "In the farming sector, taking a risk with the self-confidence ultimately helps the farmer to win. I have taken the risk for experimenting with the cultivation of hop-shoot in Bihar and hope, it will set a benchmark," he says exuding confidence. 

Trinamool's Dinesh Trivedi resigned from Rajya Sabha

In his statement in the Rajya Sabha, the Trinamool MP mentioned Narendra Modi and Ghulam Nabi Azad



New Delhi : In what could become a major setback to the Trinamool Congress ahead of the assembly elections in 2021, party MP Dinesh Trivedi on Friday announced his resignation from the Rajya Sabha. As reasons, he cited his limited role as a Rajya Sabha MP to bring

any change in the present ground situation of West Bengal. He also mentioned Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad in his statement where he said he wants to work for West Bengal, against the violence the state is presently witnessing.

Several heavyweight Trinamool leaders, including Suvendu Adhikari, have recently resigned from the party and moved to the BJP.

Trivedi's statement came abruptly in the middle of the proceeding as he urged Rajya Sabha deputy chairman Harivansh Narayan Singh to allow him only five minutes as he was going to talk about a serious issue.

"Every person has a moment in their life when his or her inner voice gives a message. Today, I encountered a similar mo-


ment as I was sitting here and wondering why we are in politics. Two days ago, PM Modi and Ghulam Nabi Azad spoke in the House. They represented two parties what united their speech was the country," Dinesh Trivedi said. "A moment comes when a person has to decide whether the country is bigger than the party or whether the individual is the supreme," Trivedi said.

"The way violence is being unleashed in my side, democracy is being attacked, I am feeling uneasy sitting here. I am feel-

ing uneasy sitting here. I am from the land of Subhash Chandra Bose, Khudiram, Rabindranath Tagore," he said.

Quoting Swami Vivekananda's 'Arise, awake', the MP said, "My inner voice is telling me that if I can't do anything for my state sitting here, I should leave this chair." "There are limitations here. My party has sent me here so I am grateful. But now I can't take any more what is happening. I am feeling suffocated and that's why I want to resign from here and want to work for my

Bengal," the MP said.

Praising Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the former railway minister said, "The world was looking at India during the Covid-19 pandemic. India's fight against Covid-19 has been successful. PM Modi said the credit goes to 130 crore Indians, but the fight was helmed by him." Reacting to Trivedi's resignation, party spokesperson Sukehndu Sekhat Ray said, "Trinamool" means grassroots. This will allow us to send a grassroots worker of ours soon to the Rajya Sabha." 

Scripting India's toy story

India is home to 25 percent of the world's children aged between 0 and 12 years. But India's share in the \$100 billion global toy market, estimated at Rs 5000 cr is just 0.5 percent



In his radio address to the nation, Prime Minister Narendra Modi called upon the country to become a global toy hub. He stressed the need for India to increase its share in the world toy market and asked its citizens to become 'vocal for local toys.'

His exhortation is valid. After all, India is home to 25 percent of the world's children aged between 0 and 12 years. Domestic demand is, therefore, huge. It also has a rich history and culture when it comes to toy making.

Just visit Chennapatna on the Bengaluru-Mysuru highway to see the rich collection of toys made from softwood - a Persian tradition that has survived over 200 years - or for that matter, Chitrakoot in Uttar Pradesh, or Kondapalli in Andhra Pradesh to name

a few places. Thousands of artisans are hard at work keeping these crafts alive.

But India's share in the global toy market, estimated at \$100 billion, is just 0.5 percent (\$500 million). And, more significantly, 80 percent of the toys sold in India are imported from China.

PM Modi wants India to attain 'aatmanirbharta' in this sector and take on China in the global market. But the 4,000-odd small units that churn out toys in India are in no position to achieve this, however aspirational they may become.

A closer look at what has held India back from making it big in this sector reveals one important flaw - labour laws, which only the government can set right.

Flexible labour laws: Toymaking is unique in many ways. It is, by na-

ture, labour intensive. The life of a toy is limited. For instance, a Transformer Toy sells well when the movie releases and the off-take dies down soon thereafter. The demand for a product, thus, changes rapidly and each toy requires a different skillset.

These factors not only rule out mechanization, but also calls for flexible staffing. Indian laws do not permit recruitment or retrenchment based on demand if the organisation grows beyond a certain size in terms of employee strength.

This explains why most units in the toy sector are very small and also why no major corporates have forayed into the industry despite the low capital investment needs (all you need to invest is in moulding and stitching infrastructure apart from

painting booths). Small-size units meant that there never were any economies of scale.

China, on the other hand, did the opposite. It built huge factories, some employing as many as 30,000 workers. In most cases, the workers were provided accommodation at the factory and were paid on an hourly or per piece basis.

The workers slogged for 14-16 hours a day seven days a week taking a break only to go to their native villages during the Chinese New year. This meant that they could generate huge volumes which dramatically reduced the cost of production. It is thus China became the toy supplier to the world, manufacturing almost 70 percent of all the toys sold globally.

India can never do what China did, but it can surely frame laws that are more flexible for sectors such as toy manufacturing. The government can fix minimum wages to protect workers but allow companies to hire and retrench employees based on demand. It can allow women to work at night with adequate safeguards.

Unless the labour laws are tweaked there is little chance for a large player to emerge in the sector. Big corporates will continue to shy away from it. The scale is critical not only for cost but also for developing the eco-system.

Quality supply chain: Because of the fragmented nature of the sector, the country lacks a decent supply chain. As mentioned earlier, toys have a very short shelf life and tooling needs to be changed every time a new toy is to be made.

But tooling in India has barely evolved and is too costly. Most players depend on China for it. This has to change if India has to make a name for itself in this sector.

Leveraging technology: Wooden toys have their value but today's children are fast gravitating towards intelligent toys and video games. The domestic toy sector needs to tap into India's expertise in information technology to offer games that capture the imagination of children. The Prime Minister is right in asking the start-ups to help achieve this transformation.

Offer plug-and-play infrastructure: The ₹5,000-crore toy cluster at Koppal in Karnataka is a step in the right direction. If India has to move fast and become a toy hub, the government needs to create large scale special economic zones focussed on toys with plug-and-play infrastructure.

It can legislate more flexible labour laws in these zones that suit the toy industry. Experts say that if this is done, India will have a flourishing toy industry in just three

years.

Ensure quality: A large-scale skilling program is a key to ensuring that the toys that come out of these SEZs are of global quality. Quality in this sector is as critical as in the pharmaceutical sector as the users are infants and young children.

The government has made the right beginning by insisting on quality standards for all domestic toy manufacturers and those toys that are imported into the country.

Branding: While it will be difficult for Indian companies to achieve the scale China has built-up, they can command a premium for their toys if they are seen as compassionate employers who treat their workers well and produce toys in an eco-friendly manner. Global toy brands, which are already facing anti-China tirade back home, will not hesitate to gravitate towards India despite higher costs.

Toy manufacturing is an ideal sector to focus on to revive a struggling economy. It offers large-scale employment to semi-skilled/unskilled workers and, especially, women.

With China shifting focus to higher-value toys, the opportunity has opened up for laggards like India. Vietnam has already changed its laws and created a \$4-billion toy industry in just three years. India needs to move fast if it does not want to miss the bus again.

Bail, not jail

Courts are routinely flouting basic judicial norms on bail



In India, the right to life and personal liberty is the most sacrosanct fundamental right. A person can be deprived of his liberty only "according to the procedure established by law". There is a struggle between the procedure established by law and the due process of law-the two poles of bail jurisprudence not just in India, but around the world. Even though the makers of India's Constitution chose to adopt "procedure established by the law", the Su-

preme Court in Sunil Batra as well as in Maneka Gandhi interpreted it as "due process of law".

The discussion on due process of law and procedure established by law in the context of personal liberty has assumed relevance as a result of inconsistency in granting bail to activists, journalists, and comedians. Many on social media and television have made insinuations that the courts, especially the Supreme Court, have shown

a bias in favour of granting liberty to people known to be pro-government, while those who have been critical of the government are treated differently. The right to personal liberty seems to be contingent upon not the procedure established by law, but the identity and ideology of the person in conflict with the law. Courts continue to regard bail as a compromise between effective law enforcement and an individual's liberty. And the balance between the two seems to be based solely on the discretion of judges.

Denial of bail in the 2G case changed the jurisprudence of bail to the detriment of the arrested person. In the transition from the period of the Balchand case, where the Supreme

Court stated that the "basic rule may perhaps be tersely put as bail, not jail", to denial of bail to several undertrials on the ground that his freedom may cause a law and order problem, the rule of bail has again shifted from due process of law to procedure established by law, and from individual liberty being paramount to the primacy of the State's interest.

The object of bail is to secure the presence of the accused at the trial. Bail is not to be withheld as a punishment. However, it does not stand in many of the cases where many have been incarcerated under the draconian Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. As per the prison statistics compiled by the National Crime Records Bureau, many undertrials languish in jails for several years-

74.08 per cent were confined for up to 1 year, 13.35 per cent for 1-2 years, 6.79 per cent for 2-3 years, 4.25 per cent for 3-5 years and 1.52 per cent for more than 5 years. This clearly shows withholding of bail is being used as a form of punishment, and that the courts are complicit in this injustice.

Courts were the first line of defence for citizens against being deprived of their liberty. If the fate of the bail applications of thousands languishing in jails is perused it becomes an indication- our courts have turned a blind eye towards this assertion. Today, with indiscriminate and often unnecessary arrests, the courts need to take a more liberal approach towards bail. Often in matters that gain media prominence, the judges of lower

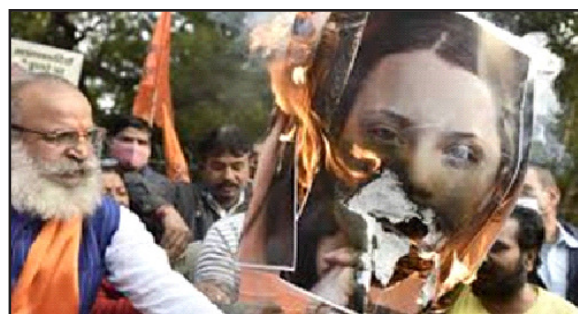
courts tend to get overcautious and take a "safe approach" towards denial of liberty. This psyche has developed due to interference by high courts and even the Supreme Court in the past, when judges granting bail in prominent cases faced questioning or snide remarks, often putting their promotions in jeopardy.

"Personal liberty, deprived when bail is refused, is too precious a value of our constitutional system, that the crucial power to negate it is a great trust exercisable not casually, but judicially, with a lively concern for the cost to the individual and the community," the late jurist Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer had observed. These words need to be prominently displayed in all courtrooms to remind judges that bail, not jail, is the rule.

How not to respond to Greta, Rihanna, and others

Last week has offered a perfect view of the theatre of the absurd. To watch our nation, the world's largest democracy, be hysterically rattled by a clutch of tweets on the farm protests, has been embarrassing. Where is Modi's saying '56-inch kaSina'? That we have such little self-confidence and such narrow shoulders that we could not shrug off awake, possibly even surface-level intervention by Rihanna, the international pop sensation, says way more about us than it does about her own country and nevertheless who is there to care about. So, it doesn't matter whether Rihanna's Umbrella cover for India's farmers was rooted in any real understanding of the new farm law legislation. Or if Greta Thunberg's "toolkit" for activism was somewhat

formulaic and superficial. Or whether Rupri Kaur, the minimalist poet from Canada, did a short quick verse on a complex issue. Or whether Meena Harris, niece of the United States (US) Vice-President Kamala Harris, was clambering on a liberal bandwagon because it was the trendy cause celebre of the time. None of this is the point. In this case, it barely matters whether you support the farm protests or not. Or which side of the divide you are on about the options before the police after the fracas on Republic Day. Governments should be responding to other governments, if at all. And unless Rihanna is now a republic, the stodgy, fuming intervention by the ministry of external affairs was unnecessary. It catapulted the issue



into the global headlines. If the government had not responded, Rihanna's tweet would have been just one to be vanished unnoticed. Even more shrink-worthy was the coordinated celebrity endorsement from India's most iconic cricketing and Bollywood stars, as if patriotism and standing with India are now the same as peddling soap or soda. Yes, that is what we reduced Indian pride to, as we saw the silly spectacle

of similarly worded tweets lambasting outside interference in internal matters. Worst of all, we want "foreigners" to mind their own business, but we're now parsing the US state department statement on the farm laws and latching onto the bits that strengthen the government's stand. How can we play this out both ways - resist foreign commentary, but selectively hold on to it as well? Since their tweets, posters of

Meena Harris, Greta Thunberg, and Rihanna have been burnt. Our television channels have lived up to their reputation for dangerous mindlessness by running character assassination campaigns. The police have registered a case like they don't have the actual issue of the farm protests in the real world to deal with or they can bring them down to the police station for interrogation. In any case, if you build barricades of cement, snap internet lines, place iron rods, nails and spikes at the sites where a huge number of farmers have been protesting, it is inevitably going to get global attention. This is where the government's attention should have been instead of going all ill-bred and petty over a handful of tweets. We are unnecessarily just making

a kerfuffle to a full-blown diplomatic fracas. There are complex questions that could have been posed to Greta Thunberg, as the excellent economist ShrutiRajagopalan did, in seeking to know why the climate activist backed crops that used up so much water. There are many fair counters to the broad strokes in which India's police have been painted, especially given that close to 400 police personnel have been injured. We do not have to be trapped in the paid-for binaries of western celebs. But when we respond in this manner, we have just gone and proven their point. As we sought to stand against propaganda, we end up looking like we are teaching the class on propaganda. And not very smartly at that.

Why Is Andhra Eyeing Odisha's Kotia?



Bhubaneswar, Feb 7: Odisha's Kotia panchayat is once again in the headlines following the poll dates announcement by Andhra Pradesh government in the region. Such a move has drawn sharp reactions here with the neighbouring state being accused of meddling in the affairs of Kotia region at regular intervals.

The border dispute is not new. Both Andhra Pradesh and Odisha governments have been trying hard to woo the

residents of Kotia panchayat in the Koraput district by promising and inaugurating a slew of welfare projects.

Many are wondering the reason behind Andhra Pradesh's conspiracy to bring Kotia under its fold. It is being said that the neighbouring state is eyeing Kotia due to the presence of huge reserves of minerals and valuable gemstones.

According to locals, there is a mountain which they refer to as 'Suna Pahad' and one can find several precious gem-

stones including Cat's eye stone. The villagers also believe that the place has reserves of gold and silver.

"Andhra Pradesh is eyeing Kotia as the region has reserves of gold, silver, diamond, bauxite, and other minerals," said Rajesh Hantala, a resident of Kotia Panchayat. Apart from this, the locals say that areas like Nuagaon, Ralegada are rich in eight to 10 types of mineral resources. All such attempts of Andhra Pradesh are just to plunder these natural resources, allege residents.

"Andhra Pradesh has assured the locals to provide jobs if they acquire the Suna Pahada," said Sunil Khara, former Nuagaon Sarpanch.

It is also being said that due to the lack of political intent on part of the Odisha government to carry out developmental works, the inhabitants of Kotia are inclining towards Andhra Pradesh. No step has been allegedly taken by the

State government for effective utilisation of the natural resources or the social development of the region.

Such lapses have now allowed the opposition parties including Congress and BJP to slam the Odisha government.

Former Congress MP Pradip Majhi said, "Cat's eye can be found in abundance here and are being trafficked to other States. There are several instances of such plunder and we urge Odisha government for proper excavation and preservation of such resources."

BJP leader Jayram Pangi said, "There is a lack of intent by Odisha government for development of eco-tourism which can create employment opportunities in the region."

However, Pradip Kumar Nayak, Deputy Mines Director, Koraput said, "I have no information about the availability of any minerals in Kotia. Only after proper inquiry, we can comment on it."

Maruti Suzuki car leasing now in Kochi at monthly subscription prices starting at Rs 12,500

Maruti Suzuki India today announced its partnership with ALD Automotive India, leasing and fleet management business line of the Société Générale Group, for its subscription program. The company has now expanded its car subscription program to

Auto Infrastructure Services and Myles Automotive Technologies.

The unique initiative allows a customer to use a brand-new car without actually owning it. The customer needs to pay an all-inclusive monthly fee that comprehensively covers maintenance, 24*7



customers in Kochi. Maruti Suzuki Subscribe offers cars in eight other cities including Delhi-NCR, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Pune, Mumbai, Chennai, and Ahmedabad.

A customer can opt from WagonR, Swift, Dzire, Vitara Brezza, Ertiga from Maruti Suzuki ARENA and Ignis, Baleno, Ciaz, XL6, and S-Cross from NEXA. Additionally, the subscription plan is now available with varied mileage options of 10K, 15K, 20K, and 25K km annually and 12, 24, 36, and 48-month tenures.

Customers will pay an all-inclusive monthly subscription charge starting at Rs 12,513 for Wagon R and Rs 13,324 for Ignis in Kochi (including taxes) for a tenure of 48 months. The company's other partners for the subscription program include Orix

roadside assistance, and insurance for the complete tenure, Shashank Srivastava, Executive Director, Marketing and Sales, Maruti Suzuki India Limited, said.

The main reasons for higher acceptance of subscription are that there exists a segment of consumers who want to be safe in these times as well as drive the car without the hassles of ownership like managing insurance and maintenance. Especially, Millennials are attracted to such an offering as they do not see much value when it comes to owning a depreciating asset, Suvajit Karmakar, CEO & Whole-time Director, ALD Automotive India, said.

After the completion of subscription tenure, the customer can also opt to extend, upgrade the vehicle, or buy the car at market price.

State's dream of 2nd AIIMS crashes before it takes off

Bhubaneswar: The state's hope of having another AIIMS in Steel City, Rourkela, has been dashed with no provision for it in the Union budget. The then chief secretary, Asit Tripathy, had written to the Union health minister for setting up another AIIMS in Rourkela.

Before the Budget was tabled in Parliament, health observers had said the provision for a second AIIMS in Odisha would result in equal attention to all the regions as far as healthcare facilities were concerned. The one at Bhubaneswar is located in the capital city, which is

already a health hub. Not only that, a 40km radius of the capital city has the best of hospitals, right from Cuttack up to Khurda. The top healthcare institutions are concentrated in one region. "Another AIIMS should have come up either at Rourkela or somewhere between Bargarh and Balangir to cater to the poor of the region. The state government should sincerely press for it. In the next Budget, the Centre may consider having the second AIIMS somewhere in western Odisha," R K Purohit, a senior doctor based in Bargarh, said. In the 2020 Budget, the Centre

had proposed to develop 100 new airports under its Udan scheme, which aims to strengthen regional air connectivity. However, no budgetary allocation has been made for the state's promising and booming aviation sector this time. "The southern and southwestern parts of the state are still very much neglected as far as air connectivity is concerned. We have infrastructure and land ready. The only thing we need to do is develop at least two to three more airports in the state. Unfortunately, the Union budget has no mention of boosting aviation in Odisha, which is

an international tourist hub," hotelier and aviation sector observer, Debashis Patnaik, said. "The Centre has shown scant regard for the number one smart city of Bhubaneswar as far as funding is concerned. Smart city projects have been neglected not only in this Budget but also in the previous two ones. As a result, many plan ambitious. The Centre is now laying greater emphasis on less carbon footprint from public transport instead of simply enhancing the beauty and aesthetic values of the city," urban planner Piyush Rout said.

Iron ore dilemma - Will China cut steel output?

China's vast steel sector, and the iron ore industry feeding it, is grappling with a seemingly contradictory policy impulse that it should produce less this year, even as demand remains strong amid post-pandemic stimulus spending.

China produced a record 1.05 billion tonnes of steel in 2020, helping to drive spot iron ore prices to a one-year peak of \$175.40 a tonne on Dec. 21. Over the year, prices rose 75%.

The spot price of benchmark 62% iron ore delivered to North China, as assessed by price reporting agency Argus, has since retreated below \$160 a tonne.

But the price has been above \$150 for almost two months, which is a strong performance considering that the steel-making ingredient held below \$100 for the five years between May 2014 and May 2019.

While China's record steel output has played its role, global iron ore supply has also been hit by a series of issues in second-largest exporter Brazil,



which has suffered disruptions from the coronavirus pandemic, mine closures on safety grounds, and fire last month at an export terminal.

Top exporter Australia has managed to keep its shipments at robust levels, but this hasn't been enough to offset the supply losses from Brazil and still meet China's demand.

The question for market participants is whether China will curtail steel production in 2021, or whether ongoing stimulus spending will triumph as authorities prioritise economic growth over pollution and energy

consumption concerns.

The official line is that steel capacity and output should moderate this year.

Industry and Information Technology Minister Xiao Yaqing called on the steel industry to "resolutely" reduce output and ensure that there is a year-on-year decline in 2021, according to a Dec. 29 report from state news agency Xinhua.

Industry body the China Iron and Steel Association (CISA), however, expects higher steel demand this year amid supportive macroeconomic policies.

To resolve this dilemma of how to cut steel output and still meet demand,

CISA is touting imports as a solution.

"We can strengthen imports of primary steel products, especially billets ... so that rising demand can be met without increasing output," CISA Vice-Chairman Luo Tiejun told a new conference on Jan. 27.

If China does limit steel output in 2021 and increase imports of steel products, it sets up an intriguing dynamic whereby China's iron ore imports may drop slightly, while imports by other producers increase by a corresponding amount.

If this occurs it could mean iron ore prices remain supported since demand

growth in the rest of the world would offset any decline in China's imports of the raw material.

D E M A N D RECOVERY?

There are already some early signs that seaborne iron ore demand is recovering outside of China. Global seaborne deliveries in January were an estimated 125.08 million tonnes, according to vessel-tracking and port data compiled by Refinitiv. This figure is likely to be adjusted higher as late-arriving cargoes are included in the assessment.

This was up from December's 122.67 million tonnes, and while still just lower than November's 125.18 million tonnes, marking a recovery from pandemic-induced levels below 120 million tonnes in May and June last year.

China's seaborne imports were estimated at 93.05 million tonnes in January, up from 85.35 million in December, according to Refinitiv. Overall the picture that emerges is that global iron ore demand remains solid,

and China has yet to show any meaningful signs of moderation.

There is still some question marks oversupply from Brazil, but probably not as many as there were in 2020.

So, does the current situation justify a price above \$150 a tonne?

History would suggest not. Certainly, the forward curve for Singapore-traded iron ore futures has been slipping in recent weeks, with the six-month contract closing at \$138.33 a tonne on Jan. 29, down from \$146.48 at the start of the month.

Iron ore inventories at Chinese ports, as monitored by consultancy SteelHome, rose the third week in the period ending Jan. 29, reaching 126.2 million tonnes, up from a two-month low of 124.43 million in the week to Jan. 8.

It's a cliché to say a market is finely balanced, but in the case of iron ore, this seems an apt description, with the outlook depends on whether the coming months show China is moderating steel production, or if its mills are still running hard.

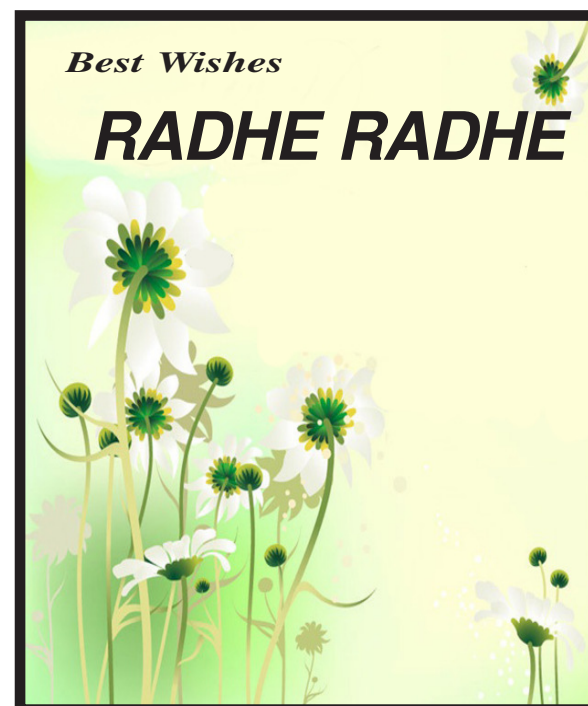
From Page-1

'Babu Samjho ...

300 km...

should remind them that the political executive also turns contemptuous of you if you show uncritical loyalty." Another IAS officer who is still serving in the government pointed towards a more practical problem. "I think the IAS community has for far too long had a holier-than-thou attitude where they have simply dismissed the private sector as corrupt and greedy, and viewed profit creation as an evil thing," the officer pointed out. "The remarks of the PM make it amply clear that this can no longer be our attitude, and, as those with positions of power in the government, we have to engage with the private sector more meaningfully. If anything, this statement tells me it is time for IAS officers to shed their arrogance," he said. A CPR survey published this month appeared to corroborate the claim that most IAS officers view the private sector with a "striking disregard and suspicion". "The Prime Minister has made it amply clear that the private sector has to be treated as an ally, it would be foolish for the babu to not get the ishara," the officer said, referring to a popular song from the 1958 Hindi film ChaltiKaNaamGaadi.

projects in mineral-rich Keonjhar district and their subsequent 8-laning. He said that Keonjhar is quite an important district for the State's economy and the steel industry of the entire country. Some measures have been proposed in the Union budget to increase material availability for steel, he said. Besides, Naveen proposed that there should be an early solution to various issues relating to the Digha-Satapada coastal highway. He said the State government has given all necessary clearances for the project and it can be taken up immediately. Pradhan said the discussion was also held on the alignment of the Rs 9,000 crore coastal highway project and the State government agreed to make all required arrangements while speeding up approvals. The project will boost tourism, pisciculture, food processing industry and make goods transport easier, he said. Issues of port connectivity including Gopalpur, Subarnarekha, Astarang, Paradip, and Dhamra were discussed. Among others, Ampani-Jeypore road, Bhubaneswar-Puri expressway, and Raipur-Visakhapatnam road were also discussed.



Budget lays the foundation for an economic recovery

The government had been urged to boost demand by diverse sections of policy specialists



Uncertain times call for unconventional wisdom. The Union Budget 2021-22 seems to strike the right chord as it strives to fill the huge gap created by the COVID-19 pandemic through focused and innovative approaches. The booster dose will not just speed up the pace of economic recovery but also pave a smooth path for a higher growth trajectory.

The government had been urged to boost demand by diverse sections of policy specialists. The budget lays the roadmap for a construction-based recovery, laying thrust on infrastructure, real estate, and other CAPEX activities to generate employment.

The 34.5 percent increase in budget allocation - Rs 5.54 lakh crore - in CAPEX will help create new jobs and trigger greater consumption and

investments. Tax holidays extended to affordable housing projects, together with the extended deduction on loans for affordable housing will give relief to the real estate sector, one of the hardest hit by the pandemic.

Infrastructure activities will get a boost with the widening of financing avenues. The ambitious targets laid down under the National Infrastructure Pipeline necessitate promoting new mechanisms for raising capital. The proposal to set up a Development Finance Institution is a huge positive which will reinvigorate investment. Foreign portfolio investments being allowed in the debt financing of In IITs (infrastructure investment trust) and REITs (real estate investment trusts) will further boost the infrastructure and real

estate sectors.

The bold measures announced in the banking and financial sector reflect the government's commitment towards providing a clear roadmap for reforms. In addition to the DFI, the decision to set up an asset reconstruction company and asset management company to address the stressed assets problem of the banking sector is in alignment with FICCI's suggestion to create a national asset management company, or a bad bank, for one-time resolution of large non-performing assets. Even the Economic Survey highlights the need for a clean-up of bank balance sheets once the forbearance is discontinued.

The proposed privatisation of two public sector banks and one general insurance company will strengthen

the financial sector besides garnering additional revenue for the government. Enhancing the FDI cap in the insurance sector to 74 percent from 49 percent and allowing foreign ownership and control with safeguards should help attract greater capital and know-how in this sector. This is critical to increase insurance penetration, which is abysmally low in our country, and also help augment long-term funds availability for the economy in general. The budget also aims to attract greater financial capital from foreign investors through additional tax incentives at the IFSC (International Financial Services Centre) located in Gujarat International Finance Tech (GIFT) city. It is noteworthy that agriculture remains a focus area for the government. Allocations for agriculture credit and rural infrastructure have been increased and the corpus of the micro-irrigation fund has been doubled. The addition of 22 perishable crops under the "Operation Green Scheme" as well as the proposed increase in the number of mandis under e-NAM is a continuation of the reforms initiated by the government. The reiteration of the

government's commitment to MSP and the detailed statistics highlighting the significant rise in MSP procurement should assuage farmers' concerns in this regard. The post-COVID world offers India the unique opportunity to become self-reliant and evolve into a global hub for business. With global supply chains undergoing a strategic shift, India must grasp the opportunity with alacrity. The production-linked incentive announced earlier will make Indian manufacturing competitive. The creation of seven mega-investment textiles parks over the next three years will make Indian textiles globally competitive and create significant employment opportunities. MSMEs will get a further boost with the correction of the inverted duty structure on several products. The budget also continues the government's efforts towards enhancing the ease of doing business through easier compliances and faceless tax assessment. This is a big relief to taxpayers and, in the long run, will help widen the country's tax base.

There was a need for the introduction of an incentive framework for states to encourage them to align

their policies with national priorities. It is good news that the budget has created room for this. Besides providing more than Rs 2 lakh crore to states and autonomous bodies for capital expenditure, the government proposes to introduce specific mechanisms to nudge states to spend more of their budget on the creation of infrastructure. The government also plans to incentivise states to undertake disinvestment in public sector companies under their remit through an incentive package.

Under the current circumstances, the government's fiscal management is in the right direction. The focus on garnering more non-tax revenues through strategic disinvestment, privatization, and monetisation of non-core assets will help the government raise adequate resources to fund development expenditure. By prioritising growth over fiscal considerations, the budget has laid the foundation for resilient economic recovery. It also underlines the government's commitment towards structural reforms, which can truly lay the foundations for "Atmanirbhar Bharat".

The void you left shall remain forever



Hemanta Kumari Mohanty

Born on Vijaya Dashami 19/08/1927- goes to heavenly abode 30/01/2021

नैनं छिन्दन्ति शस्त्राणि नैनं दहति पावकः ।
न चैनं क्लेदयन्त्यापो न शोषयति मारुतः ॥

**No weapon can cut the soul into pieces, nor can it be burned by fire,
nor moistened by water, nor withered by the wind.**

THE INDUSTRY & MINES
OBSERVER

Vol.-14
Issue -20
February 16

Editor : Sirish C Mohanty

Our correspondents at

*New Delhi, Rourkela, Jaipur, Jagatsinghpur, Kendrapara, Bolangir,
Baripada, Dhenkanal, Bhadrak, Talcher, Nayagarh, Keonjhar, Joda,
Sundargarh, Rayagada, Nabarangapur, Jeypore, Phulbani, Nuapara*

Editorial office

LIG 491, NeeladriVihar PH II, Chandrasekharpur,
Bhubaneswar 751021, R.O: Uplands, Banspani, Joda 758034, Odisha
Editorial: 9437072248, Circulation and subscription: 9938229429
Email: imobserver@rediffmail.com,
Our offices at: New Delhi, Raipur, and Mumbai