

Neck and neck fight predicted between BJP and SP-RLD alliance in western UP

SHAMLI/BAGHPAT/MUZZAGARNAGAR: It's the battle for legacies in Jat and Muslim-dominated Western Uttar Pradesh that goes to the polls on February 10. The fight is between the "work done" by

However, this year the communal divide seemingly looks narrowed with the farmer agenda on top of the mind of Jats. Repeated 'Punish BJP' call by Bhartiya Kisan Union leader Rakesh Tikait and unaddressed concerns of the farming community are expected to swing a section of Jats continue to pledge support to BJP and the rest towards the Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD), which is contesting in alliance with the Samajwadi Party in the state.

Chaudhary Rajveer Baliyan, who was at the Gazipur border for 10 months during farmer agitation, says that the protest changed everything (loyalty to party) for Jats and that most of them would abide by the call given by Tikait.

UP polls: BJP ally Apna Dal(S) says not averse to fielding Muslims

"He (Tikait) is the head of our clan and very respectable to us and we will do whatever he says. When the Yogi government has shut its eyes on farmers, then how can they see problems faced by farmers," says a frail-looking Baliyan, 65, as he is busy cutting sugarcane crop. He comes from the

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Babaji (CM Yogi Adityanath) and legacies of two famous Jat leaders -- former PM Chaudhary Charan Singh and farmer leader Mahendra Singh Tikait -- as there is anger among farmers against the BJP.

The 'baap-dada' (elders) allegiance to their clan icons still runs deep among people in the districts of Baghpat, Muzaffarnagar, Shamli, and Meerut but communal narrative changed things electorally since 2013 with Jats voting en masse for the BJP. About 90 per cent of Jats in Western UP voted for the BJP in the 2019 Lok Sabha election while 77 per cent in the 2017 assembly election.

Maldives govt considering law to criminalise 'India Out' campaign launched by ex-President

NEW DELHI: The Maldives government is considering bringing in a law that would criminalise the ongoing 'India Out' campaign that was launched by former President Abdullah Yameen.

Authorities in Maldives feel that this campaign could pose a threat to na-

tional security and endanger the lives of Indians (nearly



29,000) living in the island nation and

Maldivians (around 5,000) living in India. In November 2019,

Yameen was sentenced to five years in

prison for money laundering, where he allegedly pocketed \$1 million by a private company that was meant for the government. In December 2021, the Maldives Supreme Court overturned the conviction and he was released following which the 'India Out' campaign

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'Blind opposition to everything is never the way ahead': PM slams Congress

NEW DELHI(KCN): Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday launched a scathing attack on the

party suggest that it has resigned itself to staying out of power for 100 years.

"We are firm believ-

president's address to the joint sitting of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.

He said the Congress

Mumbai station and scaring innocent people, he said.

"The question is not about elections it is about intentions. Despite being in power for 50 years why are the people of the country repeatedly rejecting them. Whenever people have taken the right path, they did not allow you to enter again," he said.

The prime minister said the way India handled pandemic is an example for the world.

He 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' is the perfect time to think about how India can play a global leadership role in the coming years Post Covid-

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Congress, saying the party has failed to secure people's mandate in several states for decades but is still indulging in "blind opposition". He said the statements and the actions of the opposition

ers in democracy. And we also believe that criticism is an essential part of democracy. But, blind opposition to everything is never the way ahead," Modi said while replying to the debate on the

crossed all limits in this time of COVID-19.

During the first wave, when people were following lockdown guidelines suggesting that they stay where they are, the Congress was standing at

UK rebukes China for supporting Argentina's Falklands claim

BEIJING(KCN): Britain on Monday firmly rejected a statement from China that affirmed Beijing's support for Argentina's claim to the Falkland Islands, as relations between

defend their right to self-determination. China must respect the Falklands' sovereignty," she wrote. Chinese President Xi Jinping and his Argentine counterpart Alberto Fernandez

ter Olympics. Argentina believes the Falklands were illegally taken from it in 1833 and invaded the British colony in 1982. The United Kingdom sent troops and Argentina lost the

Relations with China have already been strained on multiple fronts, including Britain's joining a U.S.-led diplomatic boycott of the Beijing Winter Olympics to protest China's human rights record.

The joint statement also said Argentina "reaffirms its adherence to the one-China principle," a reference to China's claim to the self-governing island democracy of Taiwan.

"China and Argentina agree to carry on with close communication and coordination in international affairs, and safeguard the overall interests of the two countries and other developing countries," the statement said.

Xi and Fernandez also pledged closer economic cooperation and signed a

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London and Asia's leading power remain strained.

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said in a tweet that the United Kingdom "completely" rejected "any questions over sovereignty of the Falklands."

"The Falklands are part of the British family and we will

issued a joint statement on Sunday that said China "reaffirms its support for Argentina's demand for the full exercise of sovereignty over the Malvinas Islands," using the Argentine name for the territory. The two leaders met as Fernandez was in Beijing for the Win-

two-month war for the South Atlantic archipelago in a conflict that claimed the lives of 649 Argentines and 255 British soldiers.

Argentina still claims the islands. London says the Falklands are a self-governing entity under its protection.

Only Congress can provide stable government in Goa: Priyanka Gandhi

PANAJI(KCN): Only Congress can provide

in Goa, the party general secretary



a stable government and ensure progress

Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said on Mon-

day and alleged that "outsiders" like AAP and TMC cannot rule the coastal state as their agenda is only to expand their base.

Addressing an indoor public meeting at the St Cruz assembly constituency in North Goa ahead of the February 14 polls, she said that an unstable

government that is constantly trying to save itself cannot provide stability.

The Congress leader also accused the ruling BJP of failing to ensure the safety of women and provide jobs to young people. "Unless we have a stable government, it

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'What compulsion do you have?': Smriti slams Akhilesh for seeking Mamata's support

NOIDA(KCN): BJP leader Smriti Irani on Monday hit out at Akhilesh Yadav,

wondering why the Samajwadi Party president was seeking support of Trinamool Congress supremo and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee who had "insulted" the people of Uttar Pradesh.

While addressing a poll programme in Gautam Buddha Nagar's Jewar, the Union Minister claimed Yadav's reach out to Banerjee was an indication that he is "not getting people's support on his own strength".

Irani claimed Yadav was seeking support from Banerjee despite her insulting the

traditions, culture and food habits of the people of Uttar Pradesh.

strength," she added. Irani was addressing a gathering in support of BJP's Jewar MLA



"I want to ask Akhilesh ji, what has happened now that you want support of those who had forgotten the glorious past of this state and openly insult the residents of the state. What compulsion do you have?" she said. "But Akhilesh ji is definitely giving indications that he is not getting public support on his own

Dhirendra Singh, who is once again in the fray from the seat for assembly polls. The Lok Sabha MP from Amethi said it was her good luck that she has been elected to parliament from Uttar Pradesh, which has been not only known as the land that has defined 'sanskar, sanskriti' but is also the land which is redefining develop-

ment in India's politics. Quoting the remarks of MLA Singh, she said the BJP has accomplished in five years in Jewar what could not be done even in 70 years.

"It's not easy that an international-level airport gets built in an assembly area or a medical device park for manufacturing modern equipment," she said, talking of the big ticket projects Jewar has got since the BJP came to power in Uttar Pradesh in 2017.

Polls in Gautam Buddha Nagar in western Uttar Pradesh are scheduled for February 10 during the first phase of elections in the state.

Results will be declared on March 10.

Regional Media Forum, Barbil paid tributes to Late Lataji and Rohit



Barbil (KCN): Legendary singer Lata Mangeshkar passed away today at the age of 92. She was admitted to a city hospital in early January this year, after she tested positive for Covid-19 and was also diagnosed with pneumonia. In another case one reporter who was killed in a Maoist land mine blast near the Kar lakhunta Bridge under M.Rampur police station. The regional media forum, Barbil gathered in their office premises to pay tribute to departed soul. Sunil Das, Basant Mahapatra, Basant Mahant, Saroj Mohapatra, Pradipta Dhal and Prasant Mohanty were present on the occasion.

Indian Navy Contingent Adjudged Best Marching Contingent of Republic Day Parade -2022

Khordha(KCN): contingent comprised of selected initial training for two months was commanding officer INS, Chilika



On the basis of assessment of three panels of judges the Indian Navy marching contingent of the Republic Day parade -2022 among the three services. The 96 men marching SSR trainees of 02/2021 batch from INS, Chilika located at Odisha has achieved this glorious feat after rigorous training of nearly three months. While the conducted at INS, Chilika, the second phase of training for one month was conducted by INS, India at New Delhi. Cmde NP Pradeep, Naval Officer-in-Charge, Odisha and congratulated the trainees and instructors who have put in sustained efforts and hard work on the receipt of the prestigious and proud recognition.

Liquor Ban On Polling & Counting Days

Cuttack(KCN): In the interest of free and fair Panchayat election, the State Excise Commissioner Ashish Kumar Singh has banned sale, transport and distribution of liquor in the re-

aforsaid days.

Non-proprietary clubs, star hotels, restaurants etc. and hotels run by anyone, even if they are issued different categories of licenses for possession and supply of Liquor, shall also not be permitted to serve liquor on these days. Similarly, the storage of liquor by individuals will be curtailed during the above period and the restrictions provided in the Excise-law on the storage of liquor in unlicensed premises shall be vigorously enforced.

In addition to the above, the Excise Commissioner asked the Collectors to take steps to prohibit sale of liquor in the areas adjoining the wards to forestall the chance of clandestine movement of liquor from the area, had the restrictions not been in-

force. Intensified joint raids by Excise, Police and Forest personnel will be carried out to avert any liquor related issue.

Similarly, the Collectors have been asked to declare counting days (February 26, 27 and 28) as Dry Day under section of the Odisha Excise Act, 2008 and the Odisha Excise Rules, 2017 ensuring closure of licensed premises for retail sale of foreign liquor, IMFL and country liquor within the respective Blocks on the days of counting.

The Commission has directed that no spirituous, fermented or intoxicating liquors or other substances of a like nature shall be sold, given or distributed at a hotels, eating houses, tavern, shops or any other place, public or private within the respective blocks as on the day of counting. As per schedule, the counting will be completed on the first day of counting in 15 Blocks as they have got one Zilla Parishad constituency in the Block.

Similarly, 126 Blocks have two Zilla Parishad constituencies each and their counting will be completed on February 26 and 27 while counting in remaining Blocks will be done on all the three days of counting.

Edu Institutes Reopen

Bhubaneswar(KCN): As per earlier announcement, all educational institutions of Class VIII and above across the State have reopened today for the students with strict adherence to Covid-19 protocols.

As per the instructions of School and Mass Education (S&ME) Principal Secretary Bishnupada Sethi, all schools have been reopened for students of Class- IX to XII for the academic session 2021-22. The physical teaching for Class I to VIII students will resume from

Seating arrangements of students have been made in such a way that each student maintains social distance from each other.

"After doing thermal scanning and ensuring wearing masks, students have been allowed to school. We have kept an isolation room ready for those students, who develop any Covid like symptoms" said a teacher from a Rourkela school.

"Physical teaching has no alternative. It's easier to understand any subject while doing physical

SEC Relaxes Poll Norms

Bhubaneswar(KCN): With the improvement in the Covid-19 situation in the State, the State Election Commission (SEC) has partially relaxed the restrictions imposed for campaigning during ensuing General Elections to Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), 2022. While addressing media persons here on Monday, State Election Commissioner Aditya Prasad Padhi said now, candidates can conduct door-to-door campaigning with a maximum of 20 persons including the candidate. Earlier, only five persons were allowed to accompany contestants in the door-to-door campaign.



Similarly, outdoor meetings have been allowed with a limit of 300 persons, he said. However, all other restrictions like bike rally, cycle rally and Padayatra, etc will be continued to remain in force, Mr.Padhi said. The Commission has modified the above guidelines taking the prevailing situation into consideration.

"Public meetings can be organized by the Political Parties/Contesting Candidates with prior permission of the appropriate authority with maximum 300 persons in open ground subject to strict observance of Covid-19 protocols i.e. compulsory use of face mask and social distancing," read an order issued by the SEC.

Mr.Padhi, who held a review meeting with the District Collectors this morning, said, precautionary doses have been administered to about 80 to 90 per cent polling staff while others will get the dose in the next 2 to 3 days.

On preparation of Ward-wise Electoral Roll for the urban polls, the Commissioner said the final draft list will be published on February 10. The SEC has also conveyed a meeting with leaders from all political parties on that day for smooth conduct of the election to Urban Local Bodies (ULBs), which is likely to be held soon after the Panchayat Poll.

The Panchayat elections will be held in five phases on February 16, 18, 20, 22 and 24. The voters will exercise their franchise from 7 AM to 1 PM on these days. Counting of votes and declaration of results will be done at Block level on February 26, 27 and 28.



spective Blocks during polling and counting of votes.

Following the instruction of the SEC, Mr.Singh has written a letter to all Collectors to ensure closure of licensed premises for retail sale of foreign liquor, IMFL and country liquor in the constituency area and adjoining areas during the period of 48 hours ending with the hour fixed for the conclusion of poll up to day following the poll day. The polling is scheduled to be held on February 16, 18, 20, 22, and 24.

"This is in tune with Section 135C of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 which provides that no spirituous, fermented or intoxicating liquors or other substances of a like nature shall be sold, given or distributed at a hotel, eating house, tavern, shop or any other place, public or private, within a polling area within the respective Wards during the period of 48 hours preceding the poll upto the day following the poll day," said Mr.Singh, adding this will include the dates of re-poll if any. As per the order, no Liquor shops, hotels, restaurants, clubs and other establishments selling / serving liquor will be permitted to sell/serve liquor to anyone whatsoever, on the



February 14.

The teaching hour for the students started at 10 AM sharp and will continue till 4 PM. The classes will continue on all days excluding Sundays and public holidays. There will be a recess or lunch hour. However, cooked meals will not be served to the students at schools.

The classrooms have been sanitized prior to the reopening of schools. Students and teachers have followed Covid-19 guidelines including the use of thermal scanning, mask, and hand sanitization in the schools.

All students, wearing masks and holding hand sanitizers, were seen entering their classrooms. The students expressed happiness over the reopening of the schools.

classes than online. I am happy to attend the physical class and meet friends," said a girl student of Capital High School, Bhubaneswar. In view of the onset of the third wave of Covid-19 pandemic, the classroom teaching of Class IX and XII students has been suspended since January 7. Similarly, the colleges and universities have also reopened in the State today. The students have started attending classes at their respective institutions. The school and college hostels have also been reopened for the students from yesterday. The students are allowed to attend the classes either online mode or offline mode in consultation with their parents. Attendance is not mandatory for students in offline mode, officials said.

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Mohanlal, Akshay Kumar to launch trailers of 'Marakkar: Arabikkadalinte Simham'



The highly anticipated trailer of Priyadarshan's 'Marakkar: Arabikkadalinte Simham' will be launched by Mohanlal and Akshay Kumar on March 6 on their Facebook and Twitter

pages at 5 pm. While Mohanlal will launch the Malayalam trailer, Akshay will release the Hindi version.

ALSO READ | Mohanlal is 'Marakkar', but what about others in

Priyadarshan's star-studded period drama?

Ever since the first footage was shown at the Aashirvad event a few months ago, followed by the launch of the teasers, film buffs have been wait-

ing to take a look at a more elaborate trailer. The film's promotions are going on in full swing and the makers recently the Tamil poster featuring, in addition to Mohanlal, Manju Warrier, Keerthy

Suresh, Arjun Sarja, and Prabhu. Marakkar is set to have a grand release on around 5000 screens worldwide on March 26. The big-budget period epic also stars Suniel Shetty,

Pranav Mohanlal, Kalyani Priyadarshan, Fazil, and Madhu among others. It is bankrolled by Aashirvad Cinemas, Confident Group, and Moonshot Entertainments.

Kajol's short film 'Devi' hit with plagiarism allegation



MUMBAI (KCN): An ex-student has accused the makers of Kajol-starrer "Devi" of plagiarising his short film "Four". The film depicts how nine women belonging to different strata of society are brought together by circumstance and end up forming a sisterhood after they share their stories of abuse.

Directed by Priyanka Banerjee, the short is produced by Niranjan Iyengar and Ryan Ivan Stephen. In a Facebook post, Abhishek Rai alleged the movie has "heavy resemblance" with his own short film, which he wrote and directed in 2018. ALSO READ | Devi short film review: 13 minutes, nine women

and one stark reality "Here's something I'd like to bring to everybody's notice. We at AndaKurry Productions, made a short film when we were in film school, two years back called 'FOUR' that dealt with a premise of rape victims sitting together in a room when a new victim arrives. And yesterday,

a film named 'Devi' was uploaded to LargeShortFilms's YouTube channel that has heavy resemblance and the premise is also of the film we made," Rai said. Here is the short film 'FOUR' by AndaKurry Productions: He said it is "ruthless" on the part of "Devi"

makers to claim his work as theirs. "Our film was a student (film) with very little production design, bad audio and stuff, but still it's a child of our own imagination and it's ruthless how anyone can just pick up a piece of thought and claim it to be theirs." The film is an intellectual property of

Asian Academy of Film & Television. No one has contacted him regarding any kind of query. Now, I have not been contacted by large short films or the makers of the film regarding any kind of query," he claimed. The makers of "Devi" remained unavailable for comment when contacted.

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Budget 2022- Forty-Eight Thousand Crores devoted to the construction of 80 lakh eco-friendly houses in India

If the financial condition of a person or family is not very stable, it does not, in any manner, hinder them from dreaming of a home of their own. It is the sincere desire of every person that



they acquire the pleasure of living in their house at the very onset of their existence. To bring theirs and million others' dreams to life, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has made a hefty proposal worth Rs

48,000 crore in the Union Budget for the year 2022-23, with a resolution to build about 80 lakh houses in the country. That is indeed a very pragmatic decision considering societal welfare and the current standard of living. A step in this direction shows the genuine intention of the government to help those people whose income is limited and who are not able to own their houses. With the construction of 80 lakh houses during the current financial year, at least three to four crore families with five to six members in each will transition into new homes.

If we are to understand the sense of freedom owning your own house brings, we must ask those who have had the pleasure of shifting from a rented house to their own after being berated by the constant taunts of their landlord. Under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana 80 lakh, affordable homes will be provided to the needy while the government has decided to expand the housing scheme. The central government will work in consonance with the state governments for its implementation. They will combine their effort to reduce the time taken for land

acquisition and construction approvals for the scheme. The

R.K. Sinha

government has also decided to cooperate with financial sector regulators to bring down the cost of arbitration and raise capital effortlessly. Despite such great initiatives taken by the government, their impact has been limited. A major part of that money goes into the pockets of a few corrupt people. For most of the time, the benefits of the scheme are not available to the public who need it the most. This is an unfortunate situation. The concerned



departments of the Central and State Governments will have to ensure that the construction of standard houses is done with an amount of Rs.48,000 crores. Arranging land for the construction of 'so many' houses will be a Herculean task.

For this, the land for the construction of houses must be swiftly acquired at the necessary places, in close proximity to a city where there are means of employment for the poor. During the construction of houses, arrangements for public transport will also have to be made available. Those who buy houses must not face any

problem commuting to their offices, factories, or shops. All adequate facilities such as schools, hospitals, markets, etc., will need to be provided.

The houses constructed in rural areas must be without compromising their quality. Throughout a project, all these aspects have to be examined closely. It is the duty and responsibility of the government to ensure that the builders who come forward to build cheap houses get a lot of tax exemption. Numerous eco-friendly homes are being built in Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, and

about building beautiful eco-friendly homes. Our architect fraternity also has to adopt a creative approach so that we think beyond the construction of traditional houses. Hundreds of architecture degree colleges have been founded in India. Thousands of new architects pass out every year from them, but is there any college offering education to build eco-friendly homes? That seems highly unlikely.

If the proposed 80 lakh houses are built with advanced technology, it will become a glowing example for us and others across the globe. It is next to impossible to comprehend society's need

to compete to build extravagant and flamboyant houses. Massive houses are being built, but some do not even have space for books. The government will have to consistently stay strong in its pursuit to build affordable eco-friendly houses in the coming years. The number of millionaires in

the country is rising day by day. This cycle is going to continue in the future as well. This section of the society can buy houses anywhere they wish with their ever-compounding wealth. But, the government also has to strive to ensure economic equality in India. Undoubtedly, the income of most people has plummeted due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. Thus, the government will have to pay special attention to this category and address the public with renewed enthusiasm and energy regarding its smart cities project.

(The author is a senior editor, columnist, and former MP)

Constitutional validity of death sentence

Death sentence or the capital punishment was accepted by the civilized society through evolution. The historical records would show even the ancient primitive tribes followed the death sentence by punishing the wrong doers by taking their lives.



The wrong doers committing the murder or other heinous crimes including sexual assault, treason and various military offences. The punishment for murder is based on a "life for a life" concept. The ancient laws of China

established the death penalty as a punishment for crimes. In 18th Century B.C. the king of Hammurabai of Babylon codified the death penalty for 25 different crimes but there was no death sentence for murder. The first death sentence was recorded historically in 16th Century B.C. in Egypt where a wrong doer or an accused a member of nobility was accused of magic and ordered to take his own life. In 7th Century B.C. the Draconian Code of Athens made death penalty for every crime committed. In the 5th Century B.C. the Roman Law of the Twelve Tablets codified the death penalty. The most notorious execution about 399 B.C. when the Greek philosopher Socrates was required to drink hemlock poison for heresy and corruption of youth. Mosaic Law codified many capital crimes. The Jews used many different techniques including stoning, hanging, beheading, crucifixion. The most infamous and intolerable execution of history occurred in 29 A.D. with the crucifixion of Jesus Christ outside Jerusalem. But after 300 years, the emperor Constantine abolished crucifixion after converting him to Christianity. By the passage of time the various methods were adapted for the execution of the death sentence such as burning alive, drowning, beating to death and impalement. In 10th Century A.D. hanging was accepted as the customary method of execution in Britain. Subsequently under the rule of William the Conqueror, hanging was not allowed except during wars. It is seen that the countries with no death penalty have less number of murders taking place whereas the country with death penalty, there are more murders. As per the records of United Nations, more than 150 countries, no longer use such death sentence or have abolished.

The Section 302 of The Indian Penal Code, 1898 deals with the punishment for murder. The said section contemplates that whoever commits murder shall be punished with death or [imprisonment for life] and shall also be liable to fine. The Section 354(3) of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 deals with the language and contents of the judgment in the case of the management under Section 302 of the IPC. The said Section 354(3) of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 is reproduced as under:-

"When the conviction is for an offence punishable with death or, in the alternative, with imprisonment for life or imprisonment for a term of years, the judgment shall state the reasons for the sentence awarded, and, in the case of sentence of death, the special reasons for such sentence."

For the first time the constitutional validity of the Section 302 of the Indian Penal Code was

challenged in the matter of Jagmohan Singh Versus The State of U.P.,

Mr. Radha Shyam Jena

(1973) 2 SCR 541. The sentence of death for an offence under Section 302 of the Indian Penal Code awarded by the Sessions Judge and confirmed by the High Court was challenged in a Criminal Appeal before the Hon'ble Supreme Court on the following grounds:

(i) **That death sentence puts an end to all fundamental rights guaranteed under clauses (a) to (g) of sub-clause (1) of Article 19 and, therefore, the law with regard to capital sentence is unreasonable and not in the interest of general public.**

(ii) **That the discretion invested in Judges to impose capital punishment is not based on any standard or policy required by the Legislature for imposing capital punishment in preference to imprisonment for life. It was a stark abdication of essential legislative function, and, therefore, section 302, IPC is vitiated by the vice of excessive delegation of essential legislative function.**

(iii) **That uncontrolled and unguided discretion in the Judges to impose capital punishment or imprisonment for life is hit by Article 14 of the Constitution, because two persons found guilty of murder on similar facts are liable to be treated differently one forfeiting his life and the another suffering merely a sentence of life imprisonment.**

(iv) **That provisions of the law do not provide a procedure for trial of factors and circumstances crucial for making the choice between the capital penalty and imprisonment for life. The trial under the Criminal Procedure Code is limited to the question of guilt. In the absence of any procedure established by law in the matter of sentence, the protection given by Article 21 of the Constitution was violated and hence for that reason also the sentence of death is unconstitutional.**

After considering the above mentioned grounds, the Hon'ble Supreme Court while dismissing the appeal of the Appellant, held as under:

"However, it is necessary to emphasize that the court is principally concerned with the facts and circumstances, whether aggravating or mitigating, which are connected with the particular crime under inquiry. All such facts and circumstances are capable of being proved in accordance with the provisions of the Indian Evidence Act in a trial regulated by the Cr.P.C. The trial does not come to an end until all the relevant facts are proved and the counsel on both sides have an opportunity to address the court. The only thing that remains is for the Judge to decide on the guilt and punishment and that is what section 306(2) and 309(2) Cr.P.C. purport to provide for. These provisions are part of the procedure established by law and, unless it is shown that they are invalid for any other reasons, they must be regarded as valid. No reasons are offered to show that they are constitutionally invalid, and, hence, the death sentence imposed after trial in accordance with the procedure established by law is not unconstitutional under Article 21."

In the said historic judgment, the Hon'ble Supreme Court of

Indiabefore rejecting the challenge of the validity on one of the grounds stated hereinabove has held; "the only authoritative study of the Law Commission of India published in 1967". It was the 35th report. After collecting the materials available as possible and assessing the views expressed in the west both by abolitionists and retentionists. The Law Commission has held at paragraphs 262 to 264 which were summarized at page 354 of the report as mentioned in the said judgment at page 550 as under:

"The issue of abolition or retention has to be decided on a balancing of the various arguments for and against retention. No single argument for abolition or retention can decide the issue. In arriving at any conclusion on the subject, the need for protecting society in general and individual human beings must be borne in mind. It is difficult to rule out the validity, of, or the strength behind, many of the arguments for abolition nor does, the Commission treat lightly the argument based on the irrevocability of the sentence of death, the need for a modern approach, the severity of capital punishment, and the strong feeling shown by certain sections of public opinion in stressing deeper questions of human values.

Having regard, however, to the conditions in India, to the variety of the social upbringing of its inhabitants, to the disparity in the level of morality and education in the country, to the vastness of its area, to the diversity of its population and to the paramount need for maintaining law and order in the country at the present juncture, India cannot risk the experiment of abolition of capital punishment. Arguments which would be valid in respect of one area of the world may not hold good in respect of another area, in this context. Similarly, even if abolition in some parts of India may not make a material difference, it may be fraught with serious consequences in other parts.

On a consideration of all the issues involved, the Commission is of the opinion, that capital punishment should be retained in the present state of the country."

The Hon'ble Supreme Court while upholding the punishment under Section 302 of the IPC has also considered the policy of law in England as stated by Halsbury in the Laws of England, 3rd Edition, Vol.10 at page 486. The relevant portion of paragraph 888 is as follows:

"DISCRETION OF COURT AS TO PUNISHMENT"

In all crimes except those for which the sentence of death must be pronounced a very wide discretion in the matter of fixing the degree of punishment is allowed to the Judge who tries the case. The policy of the law is, as regards most crimes, to fix a maximum penalty, which is intended only for the worst cases, and to leave to the discretion of the judge the determination of the extent to which in a particular case the punishment awarded should approach to or recede from the maximum limit. The exercise of this discretion is a matter of prudence and not

of law, but an appeal lies by the leave of the Court of Criminal Appeal against any sentence not fixed by law, and if leave is given, the sentence can be altered by that court. Minimum penalties have in some instances been prescribed by the enactment creating the offence."

In addition to the above considerations, the Hon'ble Supreme Court has also referred the various judgments such as Ram Narain&Ors. Versus State of U.P., AIR 1971 SC 757., State of Madras Versus V.G. Row (1952) SCR 597., Furman Vs State of Georgia Supreme Court of America (NOS 69-5003, 69-5030, 69-5031) decided on 29th June, 1972, Municipal Committee VsBaisakhi Ram Criminal Law Journal 475, Mccautha Versus California, United States Supreme Courts Reports, Lawyers' Edition, 28, 713 and BudhanChoudhary and Ors. Vs State of Bihar., (1955) SCR 105.

The constitutional validity of death penalty as provided in Section 302 of the Indian Penal Code, 1898 and the sentencing procedure laid down in sub-section (3) of the Section 354 of the Cr.P.C., 1973 for the second time arose before the Constitution Bench comprising Hon'ble the Chief Justice Chandrachud, Justice Sarkaria, Justice S.C. Gupta, Justice N.L. Untwalia and Justice P.N. Bhagwati in the matter of **Bachan Singh Versus State of Punjab (1983) 1 SCR 145**. The said Constitution Bench upheld the constitutional validity of death sentence by the majority in the ratio of four to one. Hon'ble Justice Sarkaria was the author of the judgment for the majority while Hon'ble Mr. Justice P.N. Bhagwati delivered separate judgment for minority. The following principal questions were raised before the Hon'ble Bench:

(i) Whether death penalty provided for the offence of murder in Section 302 of the Indian Penal Code is unconstitutional?

(ii) Whether the sentence procedure provided in Section 354(3) of the Cr.P.C. 1973 (Act II of the 1974) is unconstitutional on the ground that it invests with unguided and untrammled discretion and allows the death sentence to be arbitrarily or freakishly imposed on a person found guilty of murder or any other capital offence punishable under the Indian Penal Code with death or, in the alternative with imprisonment for life?

(iii) Whether the Supreme Court has powers to lay down standards or norms restricting the area of imposition of death penalty to a narrow category of murders? However the Constitution Bench of the Hon'ble Supreme Court by the majority was pleased to reject the challenge to the Constitutionality of the impugned provisions containing in Section 302 of Indian Penal Code and Section 354(3) of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 after referring the plethora of judgments of the Hon'ble Supreme Court.

Further substantial points on constitutional validity of death sentence including "The rarest of rare case doctrine" and "Mitigating and Aggravating circumstances on death sentence" are under preparation and will be submitted through the next article.....

Advocate Supreme Court
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IAF's LCA Tejas to show flying skills at Singapore Airshow

SINGAPORE: The Indian Air Force's Light Combat Aircraft (LCA), Tejas, will be showcasing its flying skills at the Singapore Airshow 2022 being held from February 15 to 18.

fighter aircraft capable of operating in high-threat air environments. The aircraft is a potent platform for air combat and offensive air support missions while reconnaissance

year, the Republic of Singapore Air Force will feature an F-16C fighter jet displaying solo aerobatics, and a pair of AH-64D Apache attack helicopters. The United States Marine Corps'

watchers can also expect to see demo flyovers by Airbus' A350-1000 and Boeing's wide-bodied B777-9, it said. Members of the public will be able to catch these spectacu-



"The single jet performance will bring impressive stunts and manoeuvres to Singapore's skies," the airshow organisers, Experia, said on Monday. The airshow will have eight flying displays and flypasts from four air forces and two commercial companies, it said. The Tejas aircraft had also participated in the Dubai Airshow in November last year. Tejas, manufactured by state-run aerospace giant Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd, is a single-engine and highly agile multi-role supersonic

and anti-ship operations are its secondary roles. Apart from the IAF LCA, the US military, the Indonesian Aerobatic Team and the Singapore Air Force will put up airshows, the organisers said. Nearly 600 companies will participate as well. Last seen at the 2018 Singapore Airshow, Indonesia's Jupiter Aerobatic Team, also known as "The Jupiters", will thrill the audiences with their six-plane formations and precision flying. Returning with two performances this

F-35B Lightning II, the world's first short-takeoff, vertical landing stealth fighter, will also be featured at the airshow along with the United States Air Force's B-52 Stratofortress in a fly-by. "An integral part of the Singapore Airshow, the flying displays are testament to the strong bilateral ties that Singapore has with the participating Air Forces, and brings together attendees from all across the world to interact at this biennial event," said Experia. Commercial plane

lar display performances via livestream. Experia Managing Director Leck Chet Lam said, "We are excited to present the much-anticipated flying displays at this year's Singapore Airshow, a key highlight that brings the global aerospace and aviation industry together for this biennial event. "These stellar performances by our partners and exhibitors are testament to the recovery of the aerospace and aviation industry and we hope they will uplift spirits," he said.

Emmanuel Macron heads to Moscow to try to ease Ukraine tensions

MOSCOW: French President Emmanuel Macron is set to hold talks in Moscow Monday in a bid to help de-escalate the tense situation around Ukraine.

The concentration of an estimated 100,000 Russian troops near Ukraine has fueled Western worries that it heralds a possible offensive, with White House national security adviser Jake



Sullivan warning Sunday that Russia could invade Ukraine "any day," triggering a conflict that would come at an "enormous human cost." Russia has denied any plans to attack its neighbour but is urging the U.S. and its allies to bar Ukraine and other ex-Soviet nations from joining NATO, halt weapons deployments there and roll back NATO forces from Eastern Europe. Washington and NATO have rejected the demands. Macron, who is set to meet in the Kremlin with Russian President Vladimir Putin before visiting Ukraine Tuesday, said last week that his priority is "dialogue with Russia and de-escalation." Before heading to Moscow, Macron had a call Sunday with U.S. President Joe Biden. They discussed "ongoing diplomatic and deterrence efforts in response to Russia's continued military build-up on Ukraine's borders, and affirmed their support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity," the White House said in a statement.

The French presidency said Macron sought to ensure "good coordination" with Biden in the call. In an interview with French newspaper Journal du Dimanche published on Sunday, Macron said that "we won't get unilateral gestures but it is indispensable to prevent a degradation of the situation before building confidence gestures and mechanisms."

"The geopolitical objective of Russia today is clearly not Ukraine, but to clarify the rules of cohabitation with NATO and the EU," Macron said. "The security and sovereignty of Ukraine or any other European state cannot be a subject for compromise, while it is also legitimate for Russia to pose the question of its own security." Continuing the high-level diplomacy, German

Chancellor Olaf Scholz is set to meet with Biden Monday for talks expected to focus on the Ukrainian standoff. Scholz is set to travel to Kyiv and Moscow on Feb. 14-15.

In 2015, France and Germany helped broker a peace deal for eastern Ukraine in a bid to end the hostilities between Ukrainian forces and Russia-backed separatists that erupted the previous year following the Russian annexation of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula.

The agreement signed in the Belarusian capital, Minsk, helped stop large-scale fighting, but efforts at a political settlement have stalled and frequent skirmishes have continued along the tense line of contact in Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland called Donbas.

The leaders of Russia, Ukraine, France and Germany last met in Paris in December 2019 in the so-called Normandy format summit, but they failed to resolve main conflicting issues.

Amid the tensions over the Russian military buildup, presidential advisers from the four countries held talks in Paris on Jan. 26, but they didn't make any visible progress and agreed to meet again in Berlin in two weeks.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has pushed for another four-way Normandy summit, but the Kremlin said a meeting of leaders would only make sense if the parties agree on the next steps to give a special status to the rebel east. Putin and his officials have urged France, Germany and other Western allies to encourage Ukraine to fulfil its obligations under the 2015 agreement, which envisaged a broad autonomy for the rebel east and a sweeping amnesty for the separatists. The agreement stipulated that only after those conditions are met would Ukraine be able to restore control of its border with Russia in rebel regions.

The Minsk deal was seen as a betrayal of national interests by many in Ukraine and its implementation has stalled. Amid the latest tensions, Ukrainian authorities have strongly warned the West against pressuring Ukraine to implement the agreement. Last week, Oleksiy Danilov, the secretary of Ukraine's National Security and Defense Council, told The Associated Press that an attempt by Ukraine to fulfil the Minsk deal could trigger internal unrest that would play into Moscow's hand. Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba noted that Moscow wants the rebel regions reintegrated into Ukraine in order to use them to effectively block the country's pro-Western aspirations, vowing that "this is not going to happen."

PIL in High Court for protection of birds at Mangaljodi

CUTTACK: Debakar Behera, a 50-year-old fisherman, has filed a PIL seeking intervention of Orissa High Court against unchecked operation of motor boats in the Mangaljodi part of Chilika lake.

Behera through advocate Ashis Kumar Mishra on Thursday, unchecked operation of motor boats has been creating hostile conditions for migratory birds that congregate in lakhs at Mangaljodi during

low water, interspersed by a landmass and reed beds, attracts a wide range of birds. Birds like northern pintail, garganey, lesser and fulvous whistling-ducks, ruddy shelducks, northern shov-

from faraway places including the Himalayas, Caspian region, Siberia, Kazakh, Lake Baikal, the remote areas of Russia and neighbouring countries. The petition assumes significance as



The petition has sought declaration of Mangaljodi bird sanctuary as a 'silent zone' and ban on movement of motor boats on the water body in the north eastern part of Chilika lake. As per the petition filed by

different phases of the year. The PIL stated that illegal motor boats are operating for fishing purposes on Mangaljodi wetland part of Chilika lagoon which was declared an Important Bird Area (IBA). The shal-

elers, either in mixed flocks or drifting slowly by themselves can be seen in the water body. ALSO READ: Orissa High Court admits petition on re-trenched VIMSAR staffer The flamingos come

winter witnesses the highest gathering of around four to five lakh resident and migratory birds at Mangaljodi. It is the only place in India where large flocks of different species of colourful birds can be seen from close proximity.




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7 Bravehearts of Railway Protection Force (Indian Railway) to be conferred with Jeevan Raksha Padak Series of Awards 2021

Kolkata (KCN): RPF has been saving lives in mission mode under "Mission Jeevan Raksha". RPF personnel have saved 1650 lives from the wheels of the running trains at railway stations in last four years under this mission. During the year 2021, RPF personnel saved 601 lives by pulling persons out of the harm's way in the nick of time while they were about to come under the wheels of the running train. The acts of RPF personnel have been recognized by Hon'ble President of India by award of Jeevan Raksha Padaks every year since 2018. In the past, such medals were awarded to 01, 03 and 05 RPF personnel in 2018, 2019, and 2020 respectively.

The President of India has approved the conferment of Jeevan Raksha Padak Series of Awards 2021 to Seven (07) Bravehearts of Indian Railways' Railway Protection Force (RPF) personnel. The following RPF personnel were conferred with Jeevan Raksha Padaks in various category:

Sarvottam Jeevan Raksha Padak (SJRP): The Sarvottam Jeevan Raksha Padak is awarded to members of the armed forces, police, or fire services in addition to civilians in recognition to their conspicuous acts of valor beyond the course of their duty running grave risks to their own lives leading to saving precious lives. The award carries a medal, a certificate and a cash reward of Rs. 2 (two) lakhs. The SJRP has been awarded to the following RPF personnel in 2021:

1. Gyan Chand (posthumous) NCR:

Late Shri Gyan Chand, Head Constable RPF, North Central Railway, while on duty as Rojnamcha writer on 2nd May 2021 at about 11.41 PM on Bharwari station, saw a lady standing on the track in the face of approaching Prayagraj-Jaipur express with intention to commit suicide. Sh Gyan Chand alerted the lady, but she did not move away from track. On seeing this, Sh Gyan Chand sprinted towards the lady and pushed her to safety in the nick of time. However, he could not get out of the harm's way and was hit by the running train and laid down his life on the altar of duty.

2. Anil Kumar CR:

Shri Anil Kumar, Constable, Railway Protec-

tion Force of Mumbai Division/Central Railway, while deputed for prevention and detection of passenger belonging theft at Thane Station on 03/12/2019 at about 22.29 hrs, noticed one person struggling to get onto the platform no. 7 from the track

while train No. 18029 was approaching and had come perilously close. Shri Anil Kumar, who was on Platform no. 6, seeing imminent danger to life of the person, jumped to the track, acted swiftly, lifted the person within fraction of second and saved him by putting him out of the harm's way without caring for his own life. Due to timely and courageous action, he was able to save valuable life of a person.

Uttam Jeevan Raksha Padak (UJRP): is awarded to members of the armed forces, police, or fire services in addition to civilians in recognition to their conspicuous acts of valor beyond the course of their duty risking their own lives leading to saving precious lives. The award carries a medal, a certificate and a cash reward of Rs. 1.5 (one and a half) lakh. The UJRP has been awarded to the following RPF personnel in 2021:

Dinker Tiwari, ER:

On 08.03.2021 a massive fire broke out in the 13th floor of New Koilaghat Buiding situated at 14 Strand Road, Kolkata in which several people were trapped due to heat and smoke. Seeing this Constable Dinker Tiwari while displaying tremendous courage not only helped in extinguishing the fire but also rescued three persons trapped in the building, thereby displaying exemplary valour at the cost of his own life and safety. In recognition of this act, he has been awarded Jeevan Raksha Padak by the President of India.

Tridip Paul, ER
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by the President of India.

Rajbir Singh, NR

On 23.07.2021 at 22:42 hrs, a passenger of train No. 04379 slipped and his leg got stuck between train & platform while he was trying to board a moving train. On duty RPF Constable Shri Rajbir Singh ran towards this passenger immediately and pulled him safely away from the moving train and in the process he also sustained injuries. By keeping himself calm while handling this critical situation,



Constable Rajbir Singh was able to save a precious life at the cost of danger to his own life. In recognition of this act, he has been awarded Jeevan Raksha Padak by the President of India.

Sanjeet Kumar Ram, SER

On 20.07.2021, at Bishnupur Railway Station one person jumped on the track with the motive to commit suicide in front of the approaching train, and when the train was 100 mtrs away HC/Sanjeet Kumar Ram noticed the person. He immediately rushed toward the spot and pulled him away from Railway track without caring for his own life thereby saving the life of person who was going to commit suicide.



In recognition of this act, he has been awarded Jeevan Raksha Padak by the President of India.

Jeevan Raksha Padak (JRP): is awarded to members of the armed forces, police, or fire services in addition to civilians in recognition to their conspicuous acts of valor beyond the course of their duty leading to saving precious lives. The award carries a medal, a certificate and a cash reward of Rs. 1 (one) lakh. The JRP has been awarded to the following RPF personnel in 2021

Bongu Narasimha Rao, SER.

On 12.02.2021, at Bankura Railway Station one person jumped on the track with the motive to commit suicide in front of the approaching train no- 08027 (ASN-KGP Pgr.). CT/



Bongu Narasimha Rao noticed the person and he immediately rushed toward the spot and pulled him away from Railway track without caring for his own life thereby saving the life of person who was going to commit

suicide.

In recognition of this act, he has been awarded Jeevan Raksha Padak by the President of India. It is a moment of utmost pride and honour for Indian Railways that under the Sarvottam Jeevan Raksha Padak series, Shri Gyan Chand (Posthumous) and Shri Anil Kumar are conferred with recognition for their distinguished services. Under the series of Uttam Jeevan Raksha Padak, four (04) personnel, Shri Dinker Tiwari, Shri Tridip Paul, Shri Rajbir Singh and Shri Sanjeet Kumar Ram have been awarded. For the Jeevan Raksha Padak series, Shri Bongu Narasimha Rao's name was selected for conferment.

Each braveheart displayed courage and valour in the discharge of their duties. These men have added to RPF's glorious tradition of devotion and selfless service rendered to our nation and its citizens.

This nationwide appreciation would add glory to their families and respective Units and showcase the Force as front runners in dedication and humanitarian service.

The recognition of this service rendered to the nation will remind the Force members to emulate such acts and bring more accolades in the times to come.

Indian Railways congratulates all RPF medal winners and their families.

Eminent classical vocalist, researcher Damodar Hota no more

BHUBANESWAR: Doyen of Odissi classical music Pandit Damodar Hota passed away at the age of 87 here on Saturday night. Family sources informed Pandit Hota complained of mild chest pain and succumbed while being taken to hospital. Born in 1935 in Puri, Pandit Hota was trained by his father Gopinath Hota, an accomplished singer and mardala player. The maestro, who dedicated his life to research and promotion of Odissi classical music (Udra P a d d h a t i y a Sangeeta), then went on to learn Odissi music from Guru N r u s i n g h n a t h Khuntia and tabla and mardala from Guru Kashinath Barik. Pandit Hota also received a scholarship from Odisha Sangeet

Natak Akademi from 1954 to 1960 and used the funds to train under Pandit Omkarnath Thakur and Pandit Balwant Ray Bhatt.



In the subsequent years, he did his PhD in Hindustani classical music from Akhil Bharatiya Gandharva Mahavidyalaya, Mumbai. Sources said his primary research on Odissi classical music in the 1960s was ground breaking in uncovering the historical roots, distinct ragas, talas and lakshyanas of the music. For preserving the authenticity and distinctive-

ness of the form through his vocal performances, teaching, scholarship and advocacy, he was conferred the coveted Kabi Samrat Upendra

has at least 17 books to his credit including 'Hindustani Sangeeta Lahari', 'Sangeeta Sastra', 'Bhartiya Sangeeta ra Itihasa' and Udra Paddhatiya Mela where he deals with ragas, tala, and 'p r a b a n d h a lakhyana'. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik expressed his grief on the demise of Pandit Hota and announced that the singer's mortal remains will be cremated with State honours. "His contribution to Indian classical music will be forever remembered by posterity," the Chief Minister said while conveying condolences to the bereaved family. Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and leaders from across political parties also condoled the vocalist's death.

Bhanja Samman for 2013 by the Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi for his lifetime contribution to the field of performing arts. ALSO READ: RIP 'Nightingale of India': Draped in tricolour, Lata Didi embarks on her final journey He also served as principal and senior faculty of Hindustani vocal music at Utkal S a n g e e t Mahavidyalaya and

Odisha pays tributes to Nightingale of India

BHUBANESWAR: Odisha paid rich tributes to Bharat Ratna Lata Mangeshkar who passed away on Sunday. National flags in the State were put at half-mast as a mark of respect to the legendary singer who had also sung in Odia.

My thoughts and prayers are with the bereaved family and her countless fans," he added.

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said he was extremely sad at the passing away of the

Ashwini Vaishnaw who was in Odisha also paid tributes to the departed soul at a function in the State headquarters of BJP. Vaishnaw said her contribution to music cannot be described in words. State BJP president Sameer

souls in love and sadness, fun and frolic, hopes and dreams. She ruled our consciousness for so many decades in a way that made her immortal for the ages. No one came close to her hold over us," he added.



Expressing deep grief over the demise of the legend, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik said the 'melody queen of India' has left a void in the collective consciousness of the people. "She will live through her melody for eternity.

doyen of music. "Her voice cut across genres, regions and generations, and touched the lives of people across the globe," he said. ALSO READ: Letting lata go, seeking solace in her songs Railway Minister

Mohanty and many senior leaders were present at the function. National vice president of BJP Bajjayant Panda said the voice that entranced billions is no more. "Lataji's songs deeply touched our

Expressing his deep sorrow, president of the Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) Niranjan Patnaik said Lata was a household name across India and her melodious voice enthralled music lovers for decades.

Passenger vehicle retail sales drop 10% in January as chip shortage continues: FADA

NEW DELHI: Passenger vehicle retail sales declined 10 per cent year-on-year in January 2022, as the companies continued to suffer production loss amid semiconductor shortage, automobile dealers' body

by 13.44 per cent to 10,17,785 units, compared to 11,75,832 units in January 2021. Gulati said that rural distress coupled with price rise and omicron wave led to a drop in the sales in the segment.

the central as well as state governments, the overall CV segment remains in momentum," Gulati noted.

Three-wheeler retail sales also grew by 29.8 per cent to 40,449 units in Janu-

improve going further," he noted.

Gulati stated that with the Union Budget stressing on developing 25,000 kms of new highways, it will further push infrastructure spending, thus, increasing commercial vehicle sales. "Rural India has generally been a key driver for the two-wheeler and entry-level passenger vehicle segment.

With the government's plan for 2.3 lakh crore direct payment as MSP to farmers, it may work as a booster for two-wheelers, tractor and entry-level PV sales," he added.

The upcoming marriage season will also trigger some demand revival for the two-wheeler segment, Gulati noted.

"Overall, FADA changes its outlook from 'negative neutral' to 'neutral' for the next couple of months," he stated.

Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA) said it has collected data from 1,386 out of 1,597 RTOs across the country.



FADA said on Monday. The passenger vehicle (PV) sales dropped to 2,58,329 units last month, down 10.12 per cent from 2,87,424 units in January 2021.

"In spite of good demand, passenger vehicles continue to face the brunt of semiconductor shortage, resulting in the absence of a healthy inventory," FADA President Vinkesh Gulati said in a statement.

Two-wheeler sales last month declined

RBI postpones MPC meet to February 8 as Maharashtra declares holiday on Monday

MUMBAI: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Sunday announced rescheduling the meeting of rate-setting Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) by a day in view of Maharashtra declaring public holiday on February 7 to mourn death of Bharat Ratna legendary singer Lata Mangeshkar. The MPC meeting was scheduled for February 7-9, 2022.

With the postponement, the meeting will now begin on February 8 and the outcome would be announced on February 10.

"With February 7, 2022 being declared a public holiday by the Government of Maharashtra under Section 25 of the Negotiable Instruments Act, 1881 as a mark of respect to Bharat Ratna Ku. Lata Mangeshkar, the MPC meeting has been rescheduled to February 8-10, 2022," the RBI said in a late evening statement.

In a separate release, the RBI said that there will be no transactions and settlements in government securities (primary and secondary), foreign exchange, money markets and Rupee Interest Rate Derivatives on February 7, 2022.

UK rebukes China for supporting Argentina's Falklands claim

Continued from page-1

memorandum of understanding on Argentina joining the "Belt and Road Initiative," Xi's signature project to build Chinese infrastructure worldwide.

China has overtaken Brazil as Argentina's main commercial partner, and if talks with Beijing remain on track, Argentina would become the first of the four major Latin American economies to join the initiative.

"Belt and Road Initiative integration won't be a paradigm shift but rather a continuation of broader trends of growing Argentina-China engagement," said Pepe Zhang, director and fellow at the Atlantic Council's Adrienne Arsht Latin America Center.

During his visit, Fernandez also laid a wreath at the Chairman Mao Memorial Hall, where the embalmed body of Mao Zedong, the communist revolutionary who founded the People's Republic, is displayed inside a crystal sarcophagus.

Tractor sales stood at 55,421 units last month, down 9.86 per cent from 61,485 units in January 2021.

Commercial vehicle sales, however, witnessed a growth of 20.52 per cent last month at 67,763 units, as against 56,227 units in the year-ago month.

"With the revival in the economy, the commercial vehicle segment continues to show year-on-year growth, especially in the HCV category.

With increased infrastructure spending by

Maldives govt considering law to criminalise 'India Out' campaign launched by ex-President

Continued from page-1

gained momentum. Yameen, while he was in power, had an open preference for China and hostility towards India.

Two Indian teachers were harassed on the streets of Male as an outcome of this targeted hate campaign.

Maldives Parliament speaker and former President Mohamed Nasheed had also spoken against the 'India Out' campaign. In a recent visit to Sri Lanka, while speaking to local media he had said, "India is the country which is most compatible with Maldives in all aspects and India is the country that could play the biggest role in Maldives." He also stressed that the 'India First Policy' will remain as the Maldivian foreign policy.

Meanwhile, the ruling Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP), headed by President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih, is drafting a bill that will criminalise any act by individuals that is diplomatically disruptive.

The draft bill is named as the 'Bill to stop all actions that could negatively affect relations established by Maldives with foreign countries.' The legislative body Majlis has resumed and this bill is likely to be submitted soon.

The draft has proposed a fine of Rs 20,000 Maldivian Rufiyaa, six months imprisonment or a year-long house arrest.

In a bid to raise the pitch on their pro-India stance, during the opening session of Maldives Parliament yesterday, President Solih essayed India's role in the country's development.

"With the line of credit provided by India's Exim Bank, roadwork is being carried out to rectify the flooding problem in Addu city," President Solih said.

Addu City is the second largest city in Maldives and Addu road development project is assigned to India's Afcons Infrastructure Limited.

Meanwhile, as part of its annual financial aid, the Indian government has earmarked Rs 360 crore for Maldives. This was announced during the Union Budget on February 1st.

Gold bonds catch investor fancy amid Covid

MUMBAI: Indians have taken a fancy to sovereign gold bonds (SGBs) in the past two years, coinciding with the Pandemic's appearance on the world stage. Indian investments into SGBs in FY21 and FY22 (through January) accounted for 68% of the total investments into these bonds since their issue in FY16. In FY21 and FY22 (April-January) residents subscribed to bonds worth Rs 25,712 crore, accounting for 68% of the total investment of Rs 37,906 crore since the SGB scheme was launched in November 2015.

What makes SGBs attractive

"SGBs lure is the interest income, apart from the potential capital gain probability. This makes for a compelling reason for investors to invest in SGBs at a time when interest on bonds and FDs are declining, and there is a rising need for asset allocation as more and more investors jump on to the stock market bandwagon," points out Amol Joshi, founder PlanRupe Investment Services.

The SGBs offer an interest rate of 2.5% per annum on the amount of initial investment, payable semi-annually. Apart from potential capital gains, the interest component is attractive given scheduled commercial banks' weighted average domestic term deposit rate has fallen 187 basis points during February '19-November '21 as RBI cut the repo rate by 250 bps during the same period.

An increase in the number of aware investors may have bolstered interest in SGBs. The number of stock market Demat accounts have doubled in November 2021 from March 2019. As more investors jump onto the stock market bandwagon, they look for means of asset allocation to balance risk-reward, which implies that investors will look at spreading investments into fixed income, paper gold, etc.

Only Congress can provide stable government in Goa: Priyanka Gandhi

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is impossible to make progress. An unstable government that is constantly working to save itself cannot provide you development," she said, adding that only Congress can provide a stable government.

Notably, the Congress had emerged as the single largest party in the 40-member Goa Assembly after the 2017 state polls, but the BJP then allied with some regional outfits and independents to form a government.

"AAP or TMC cannot provide you what is required in Goa. They have come here to expand their parties. They have not come here to usher in the progress of Goa," Priyanka Gandhi alleged.

All the parties that come here from outside to destabilise the government cannot rule Goa, she said while apparently referring to the Trinamool Congress and the Aam Aadmi Party.

"The conservation between us should be about the issues like development, progress, jobs, and the safety of women. It should not be a conversation filled with negativity. It should not be about telling women what she should wear," the Congress general secretary said.

She said that the unemployment rate in Goa is the second highest in India even though the best resources are available in the coastal state. "The party which has ruled Goa for five years should tell you what they have done on the unemployment front. They should explain why so many small and medium businesses are on the verge of shutting down in Goa," she said without naming the BJP.

Priyanka Gandhi further said that no big industry can create jobs like small and medium enterprises.

She accused the Goa government of supporting its big businessmen friends.

"The biggest example is that they are creating double-laning, double-trekking, and an expressway to transport coal," the Congress leader said.

She claimed that Goans are not going to be benefited from any of these projects.

"Coal which is not bought in Goa or sold in Goa is going through Goa. It shows exactly what this government is about," she added. Priyanka Gandhi further alleged that the crime against women in Goa has risen by 24 per cent. "Goa is second in India when it comes to unemployment. There are hundreds of young people who are studying hard to get selected in government jobs but they never see employment. It is happening in every BJP-ruled state," she added.

Benefits of investing in SGBs for long-term investors surpass those of physical gold, which entail paying for making charges, storage and insurance, and gold ETFs, which though more liquid, involve an expense ratio of as much as 0.5% an annum, points out Suresh Sadagopan, MD & principal officer, Ladder7 Wealth Planners.

"The gold ETF has its own benefits like facilitating entry-exit with more ease than SGB, but in addition to the risk of capital loss, it also involves paying the fund house expense. I'd say it's more for a short-term investor," adds financial planner Manisha Bangera.

At Rs 37,906 crore subscribed value as of January 2022, SGBs exceed the gold ETFs' net assets under management which stood at Rs 18,405 crore as of December 31, 2021. In terms of SGB tax treatment, the capital gain on maturity amount — if held for eight years — is exempted. An exit option exists after the fifth year from the date of issue on interest payment dates. The treatment on capital gains otherwise is the same as for debt mutual funds.

If held for less than three years, capital gains are added to income and taxed at the relevant slab. For more than three years, 20% tax with indexation is applicable. The interest income on the bond is added to the bond holder's income and taxed at the applicable slab.

'Blind opposition to everything is never the way ahead': PM slams Congress

Continued from page-1

19 pandemic, the world is moving fast towards a new world order and India should not miss this opportunity, he said.

Modi on Monday paid rich tributes to singing legend Lata Mangeshkar, who passed away on Monday, saying her contribution strengthened the unity of the country Mangeshkar was cremated with full state honours in Mumbai on Sunday.

She was 92. Replying to the debate on the president's address to the joint sitting of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, Modi began by paying tributes to Mangeshkar.

"Her voice mesmerised and inspired the country for such a long time," the prime minister said, adding that it filled the country with emotions.

He said her contribution has strengthened the cultural heritage and unity of the country.

"She sang in 36 languages and this in itself is an inspiring example for the country's unity," Modi said.

Neck and neck fight predicted between BJP and SP-RLD alliance in western UP

Continued from page-1

Budhana assembly constituency in Muzaffarnagar.

Many in the community remember former prime minister Chaudhary Charan Singh's work and how his son and former union minister Ajit Singh. "All sugar mills in the region are because of him," says Rajender Singh, a farmer from Baraut constituency in Baghpat. UP is the country's biggest sugarcane growing and producing state.

The BJP won 53 of 58 constituencies that will witness polling in the first phase in the region. The seats spanning 11 districts have a high Muslim population, who have traditionally voted for Akhilesh's party.

There are some who are upset that neither Ajit nor his son, Jayant, who is now leading the RLD, turned up after the 2013 Muzaffarnagar riots, that saw Jat-Muslim up in arms against each other, to meet the affected families.

"Sonia Gandhi came and met Muslim families but there was none to back us... our leader (Ajit) also left us. It was BJP that spoke in our favour and 'Babaji' has taken several steps to benefit farmers. We get money under PM Kisan and ration was given to the poor during Covid, law and the order has improved in this region. We respect our farmer leaders but will vote for the party that stands behind us when we need them," says Vijender Singh, who comes from the Kairana constituency in Shamli which was the hub of the 2013 riots. The people irrespective of their loyalties, however, never fail to mention that there is 'Kante ki Takkar' (neck and neck) between the gathbandhan (SP-RLD alliance) and BJP in the western UP but the former will have an edge.

Chinese tennis star Peng Shuai repeats sexual assault denial

BEIJING: China's tennis star Peng Shuai has said she never accused anyone of sexual assault, retracting her earlier al-

for weeks. Her statement was scrubbed from the internet. She first reappeared in public at dinner in videos released by

President that she would attend several events at the Olympic Winter Games Beijing 2022 over the coming days. Later

is over, and the IOC President invited her to Lausanne to visit the IOC and The Olympic Museum, to continue the conver-



legation that sparked global concern.

"I never said anyone sexually assaulted me," she told French sports magazine L'Equipe. "My private life should not be brought up in sports and politics," she added.

Last November, Peng Shuai wrote on the Chinese social media site Weibo that retired Chinese Vice Premier Zhang Gaoli had forced her into having a sexual relationship with him. Soon after, Peng disappeared from sight

state-run media last year and under circumstances unknown - walked back on her sexual assault complaint. Following her latest interview, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) said its president, Thomas Bach, had dinner with the Chinese tennis player in Beijing on Saturday. He was joined by the former Chair of the Athletes' Commission and IOC member Kirsty Coventry. In a statement, the IOC said, "Peng Shuai informed the

that evening, she and Kirsty Coventry attended the mixed curling match between China and Norway."

During the dinner, the three-spoke about their common experience as athletes at the Olympic Games, and Peng Shuai spoke of her disappointment at not being able to qualify for the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020.

"In this context, she also shared her intention to travel to Europe when the COVID-19 pandemic

sation on their Olympic experiences. Peng Shuai accepted this invitation," the statement added.

The in-person meeting in Beijing followed a series of telephone conversations with Peng Shuai over the past few months, which started on 21 November with a call attended by the IOC President and the current Chair of the IOC Athletes' Commission, Emma Terho, who unfortunately could not take part in the meeting in Beijing.

Cricket Australia to mend bridges between former and current players after speaking to Justin Langer

SYDNEY: Former Australia coach Justin Langer on Monday spoke to Cricket Australia's staff to talk about his resignation and defend his reputation.

gry former players group to mend bridges between past and current cricketers.

They will also explain why Langer's tenure as head coach

sion offered to Justin was the result of a thorough review process that evaluated many factors including future requirements of the team and the upcoming exten-

Johnson have slammed Cricket Australia for their handling of the issue. Langer was appointed as the men's team coach in 2018 after the Sandpaper



As per Sydney Morning Herald, Langer spoke to the staff through video conference. In an all-staff meeting, Langer joined Cricket Australia chief executive Nick Hockley to deliver a similar message to his resignation email.

Now, Hockley and Australian Cricketers Association (ACA) chief Todd Greenberg will reach out to an-

ended, stated Sydney Morning Herald's report.

Cricket Australia on Saturday accepted men's team head coach Justin Langer's resignation. "Justin was offered a short-term extension to his current contract, which sadly he has opted not to accept," stated an official Cricket Australia release.

The contract exten-

sive schedule of fixtures. The extension was approved by the CA Board and was put to Justin last night. It included the opportunity to defend the T20 World Cup title in Australia at the end of this year.

After Langer's resignation, many former players including Adam Gilchrist, Shane Warne, Steve Waugh, Ricky Ponting, and Mitchell

Gate which saw David Warner, Steve Smith serving out one-year bans. Under Langer, Australia managed to win the T20 World Cup 2021 and then the Ashes.

In his resignation letter, Langer stated that he is content with his decision, and the speculation regarding his tenure as a coach took a toll on his family.

ATK Mohun Bagan FC aim to stop Hyderabad FC juggernaut

BAMBOLIM: ATK Mohun Bagan will have to be at their best when they take on leaders Hyderabad FC who will look to further consolidate their lead at the top of the table when the two sides meet in the

goals this season and overall tally to 49 in the competition. Ogebeche will be aiming for his 50th goal and also helping Hyderabad in the process. He has scored five goals in his last three matches. A

season, the most they have managed in any of their Hero ISL seasons. If they win against ATK Mohun Bagan, they will extend their record of most wins in a row. For Juan Ferrando's

beaten run but have only managed to keep one clean sheet, bringing to the fore their defensive woes. It remains to be seen whether Sandesh Jhingan comes back in the fold to



Indian Super League here on Tuesday. Hyderabad are on a three-match winning streak, sitting three points clear of second-placed Kerala Blasters FC on 26 points from 14 games.

B a r t h o l o m e w Ogbeche has been in the form of his life, scoring a brace in their 5-0 rout of NorthEast United FC to take his tally to 14

hattrick in a 4-0 win over SC East Bengal and a brace in the last game.

"ATK Mohun Bagan have good players in practically every position. They play well in buildup and strong in set-pieces. We know they are a very strong team in the ISL. (It) Will be very difficult news," Marquez said.

Hyderabad have scored 33 goals this

ATKMB, they have games in hand but will need to win them in order to stay in touch with the top-four pack.

The Mariners are now in sixth place with 20 points from 12 games and the fact that they drew three out of their last four matches could come back to haunt them. The green and maroons are currently on an eight-game un-

strengthen the backline.

Juan Ferrando also expects the match to be intense but is not only putting his focus on Ogebeche but the entire team.

"He is the star of the team but the credit goes to the people who support him from behind. Hyderabad are a brilliant team," said Ferrando.

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