

IRREGULAR by MANJUL

Hope the members will spend the time more meaningfully like feeding peacocks or playing with parrots!

Cooking gas dearer by ₹50; ATF also up

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 16: Cooking gas LPG price Wednesday was increased by ₹50 per cylinder, the second hike in rate this month following firming of international prices. Also, aviation turbine fuel (ATF) price was raised by a steep 6.3 per cent.

Non-subsidised LPG price was increased to ₹694 per 14.2-kg cylinder from ₹644 earlier, according to a price notification of state fuel marketing companies.

This is the second increase in rate this month. December 1, price was hiked by a similar ₹50 per cylinder. Prior to that, the price had remained unchanged at ₹594 a cylinder since July. This was the same rate at which subsidised LPG refills are also sold.

Since May, most cooking gas customers have not received subsidies as the combination of international oil price collapsed and domestic refill rate increases brought parity between subsidised and market rates. A subsidised cooking gas cylinder was priced at ₹497 in Delhi in June 2019. Since then, prices have cumulatively gone up by ₹147.

MARKET WATCH

Pari case: Fate sealed in sealed envelope

IN A SEALED ENVELOPE, THE SIT SUBMITTED THE AFFIDAVIT TO THE HIGH COURT

POST NEWS NETWORK/ AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 16: The Special Investigation Team (SIT) of Odisha Crime Branch, investigating the death case of Nayagarh girl Pari, Wednesday revealed that the fiveyear-old girl was raped before being murdered, unconfirmed sources said.

The SIT submitted an affidavit in this regard Tuesday with the Orissa High Court. The SIT also mentioned in the affidavit that the prime accused— a resident of Jadupur village in Nayagarh district, the native place of the victim; has also been identified, unconfirmed sources said.

The affidavit read, "The motive of the murder was rape. The investigation revealed that Pari was stripped naked before she was murdered. That she has been raped before being killed was confirmed from the samples collected from her clothes," unconfirmed sources claimed. In a sealed envelope, the SIT team submitted the affidavit to the court. The court scheduled the next hearing date to December 24 after accepting the affidavit.

The SIT team has been led by IPS Arun Bothra. The team started an investigation into the case December 2.

The SIT members also held discussions with the district police who were investigating the case prior to that.



CHILD GOES 'MISSING' IN DHENKANAL DIST

DHENKANAL: A three-year-old boy reportedly went missing while playing on the village road at Khankira under Nihalprasad police limits in the district. Wednesday. The missing child was identified as Kalia Sahu, son of Chandan Sahu in the village. Police started an investigation after a complaint was lodged by the family members in the police station. Reports said that Kalia was playing on the village road when he suddenly disappeared to everyone's surprise. Family members looked for him in all possible locations but failed to trace him despite their best efforts.

CM seeks spl PMAY-G houses to Fani-hit families, writes to PM

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 16: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to sanction special houses under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G) to the people affected by cyclone Fani last year.

In a letter to the Prime Minister, the Chief Minister said that the state has identified, geotagged and Aadhaar seeded 7.87 lakh houses in 14 districts affected by the cyclone in May, 2019. "The beneficiaries may be brought into the per-

manent wait list of PMAY (G) and considered for sanction of PMAY(G) spe cial houses," Patnaik said in the letter issued The beneficiaries may be brought into the permanent wait list of PMAY (G) and considered for sanction of **PMAY (G) special**

NAVEEN PATNAIK CM, ODISHA

been left-out from the permanent wait list of PMAY (G) in 16 non-Fani affected districts.'

"The Union Rural Development Ministry may be advised to open a window of Aawaas+ mobile app to geo-tag these houses to accomplish the objective of 'Safe housing for all'," the letter read. Cyclonic storm Fani had caused extensive damage and impacted life and property of more than 1.6 crore people in 14 districts of Odisha. As many as 64 people had lost their lives due to the natural calamity.





Now, JEE-Mains to be held 4 times a year starting 2021

The first edition of the exam will be held from February 23 to 26, followed by rounds in March, April and May

AGENCIES New Delhi, Dec 16: The JEE-Mains exam for admission to engineering colleges will be held four times a year starting 2021 to offer flexibility to students and a chance to improve their scores, Union Education fied 6.07 lakh eligible minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank announced households who have Wednesday.

The first edition of the exam will be held from February 23 to 26, followed by rounds in March, April and May. "We have examined the suggestions received from students and various quarters and it has been decided that JEE-Mains will be held in four sessions in February, March, April

and May," Nishank said. "The first session will be held from February 23-26 and the results will be declared within five days from the last date of exams." he

ernment and farmer unions did not

most of these petitions are ill con-

ceived, except freedom of people to

move around the country. The Chief

Justice said that the main argu-

ment in the petitions is that there is a blocking of traffic and people

are not allowed to travel. They want

road blocks cleared, CJI observed.

General Tushar Mehta apprised the

court that farmers and the government

are engaged in talks to resolve the

issue. Mehta also submitted that the

government is ready to discuss all

three laws clause-wise but the diffi-

culty is that the farmers only want re-

peal of laws and they (farmers) want

answers in "yes or no."

During the hearing, Solicitor

The apex court also held that

vield desired results.

situation at present RAMESH POKHRIYAL NISHANK UNION EDUCATION MINISTER "The move will ensure that students don't miss out on opportunities due to clash of exams or due to the COVID-19 situation at present," he added. Nishank also said students will be given a choice to answer 75 ques-

The move wil

ensure that

opportunities due to

to the COVID-19

clash of exams or due

miss out on

students don't

tions (25 each in Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics) out of 90 (30 each in Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics).

MAOISTS SET 6-(**VEHICLES AFIRE**

Following the act of arson by the Maoists, police have tightened the security in Malkangiri district



Fundamental Rule 56(J). OA (Original Application) and the

During the Winter Session of

the Assembly, the parents of the

minor girl Soudamini and Ashok

Sahoo attempted self-immolation in

front of the Assembly seeking jus-

Jadupur village in Nayagarh district

was kidnapped July 14, 2020. Sources

said she was kidnapped from her

house when she was playing in the

courtyard. Her skeletal remains

were recovered from the backvard

of her house nine days later.

Notably, five-year-old Pari from

tice for their minor daughter.

'We do not find any m

SC FOR PANEL FORMATION TO SOLVE FARMERS' ISSUES

December 15. The move will not only provide relief to the affected families, but also ensure safe housing to rural families to withstand natural calamities in the cyclone-prone areas, the Chief Minister mentioned in the letter. houses "The state has identi-

IN	IDEX	VARIATION				
BOURSES	SENSEX	46666.46		403.29		
	NIFTY	13682.70		114.80		
CURRENCY	DOLLAR	73.63		₹0.03		
CURR	EURO	89.75		₹0.19		
NOI	GOLD	₹49,596		₹153		
BULLION	SILVER	₹65,851		₹998		
_	-					

WEATH			
	BHUB	СТК	
d MAX	30.7℃	30.5℃	1
[₽] MIN	18.0°C	16.6℃	Forecast
Humidity	97%	74%	
Rainfall	Nil	Nil	Mainly clear sky

New Delhi, Dec 16: The government's step of compulsorily retiring some black sheep in the tax administration last year had now got the seal of approval from the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT).

The principal bench of CAT has dismissed an application from former commissioner of Income Tax Pramod Kumar Bajaj challenging the government's decision to compulsorily retire officers of central services.

In one of the first such cases, the CAT Principal Bench headed by Justice L. Narasimha Reddy as Chairman and Aradhana Johri as Member (Admn) in its order pronounced through video conferencing dismissed Bajaj's application, who was one of the 85 officers compulsorily retired under department.

same is accordingly dismissed. The MA (Miscellaneous Application) No.1931/2020 also stands disposed of. There shall be no order as to costs," the CAT principal bench said.

Agreeing with the government's contention that the scope of interference with the order passed by invoking FR 56 (J) is very limited and not warranted in the instant case, the Principal Bench has come

out very straight on the face of complainant Bajaj, stating that the record of the applicant speaks for itself, and it was no longer in the interest of the department to continue the applicant in service, as "the personal life of the applicant was not only extraordinary but also dented the very reputation of the

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Dec 16: The Supreme Court Wednesday indicated that it will form a committee comprising representatives from farmer unions and the Union government to resolve the dispute related to three controversial farm laws. The apex court observed that farmers' protests around Delhi could soon become a national issue.

A three-judge bench of the apex court headed by Chief Justice Sharad A Bobde also issued notice to the Union government and state governments of Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and Uttar Pradesh in petitions seeking removal of protesting farmers from Delhi borders. The apex court also permitted the pe-

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ets beca

prevented us from

obilise farmers.

There was no time

LINGARAJ FARMER LEADER &

POKSSS' CO-CONVENER

Covid-19. The

carrying out

large-scale

awareness

activities to

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use of



titioners to implead the farmer unions in the matter and listed it for hearing Thursday. "We are proposing that we will form a committee to resolve the issue. The committee will comprise representatives from Bharatiya Kisan Union, Union government and other Kisan unions because this will soon become a national issue. You (Solicitor General) sit together and prepare the list of members," the bench said. The bench, also comprising Justices AS Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian, observed that the talks between the Union gov-



POST NEWS NETWORK

Malkangiri, Dec 16: Maoists once again made their presence felt at the Malkangiri-Chhattisgarh border. They torched six vehicles Wednesday engaged in the construction of a road at Alabada in Bijapur district of Chhattisgarh. The village is adjacent to the Malkangiri border. Following the act of arson by the Maoists, police have tightened the security in Malkangiri district.

Sources said a group of 10-12 armed Maoists arrived at the camp site and threatened the workers to stop construction of the road at Alabada village. They forced the workers to leave the place and set the vehicles including a tractor and water tanker. Before leaving, they left posters proclaiming that they were members of the Malkangiri-Chhattisgarh division of the banned CPI (Maoist).

On being informed, Bijapur police personnel and security forces rushed to the spot. They have launched a combing operation in the area. However, they are moving cautiously as the Maoists may have planted mines in the area.

Earlier this week, two Maoists including a woman cadre had been gunned down during an exchange of fire with the Special Operations Group (SOG) and District Voluntary Force (DVF) personnel at 'Swabhiman Anchal' in the district. A huge cache of explosives and Maoist literature had beenseized by the security personnel from the spot.

Home issues prevent state farmers from joining Delhi stir

UNLIKE IN PUNJAB AND HARYANA WHERE FARMERS ARE DONE WITH HARVEST AND PROCUREMENT OF PADDY, FARMERS IN WESTERN ODISHA ARE IN THE MIDDLE OF PROCUREMENT, WHILE MANDIS ARE YET TO OPEN IN COASTAL DISTRICTS

SISIR MISHRA, OP

Sambalpur, Dec 16: The farmers' protests currently raging across the country against the three new farm laws with its epicentre in Delhi have little representation from Odisha. The nationwide stir has a very subdued resonance in the state as well, making one feel as if there is no opposition to the three controversial Acts of the Centre. There are at least two prominent farmer outfits operating here.

What does it show? Does it prove farmers from Odisha have no issue with the three farm laws or they support them unlike their Punjab and Haryana counterparts? Not so.

The farm Acts have evoked equal, if not more, antipathy against the government. However, the all-India stir has come at an inopportune time for Odisha farmers. "They



have not been properly timed. The all-India farmers' stir has coincided with paddy harvest and procurement season in Odisha," Ashok Pradhan, co-convener of Paschima Odisha Krushak Sangathan Smanyoya Samiti (POKSSS), said.

Worse, farmers are currently struggling to sell their stock courtesy a number of faulty procurement policies of the state government. Unlike in Punjab and Haryana

where farmers are done with harvest and procurement of paddy, farmers in western Odisha are in the middle of procurement, while mandis are even yet to open in coastal districts.

Moreover, Covid-19 and the problems triggered by the pandemic have come in the way of farmers booking

train tickets for Delhi and created other logistics issues. "We did not get train tickets because of Covid-19. The pandemic also prevented us from carrying out large-scale awareness activities to mobilise farmers. There was no time for this," said Lingaraj, farmer leader and co-convener of the POKSSS.

The token system and the artificial capping of the quantity of paddy to be sold under MSP have rankled the farmers for years now. Despite protests from across the state against the highly-unpopular token system, the government has gone ahead with it, forcing farmers to wait in cold which eventually leads to distress sale of paddy. Secondly, the limits on quantity of paddy do not reflect the ground reality, Pradhan said.

At present, the government allows 13 and 19 quintals of paddy per acre for non-irrigated and irrigated land to be sold under MSP. However, they are way insufficient. "This year there is a bumper crop and we want the present limits to be raised to 17 and 22.5 quintals for non-irrigated and irrigated land respectively," Pradhan said, adding this together with the defective mandi and the token system have brought in a lot of miseries to farmers in western Odisha, Around 2.5 lakh packets of paddy are lying in Kuchinda block for pick-up.

The three new farm Acts are a well-oiled design by this government introduced in the guise of agriculture reforms, said Lingaraj, adding by throwing the farm sector open to private parties the government wants to completely withdraw itself. "Even a mere assurance, even if by writing, that MSP won't be tampered with won't suffice, it has to be made a legal right of farmers.













I DON'T HAVE A SMARTPHONE: NOLAN

Hollywood filmmaker Christopher Nolan, believed to be a master storyteller of sci-fi genre of cinema, has surprised everyone with his revelation that he does not own a smartphone. Instead, he has a little flip phone that he uses from time to time.

NAOMI ACKIE TO PLAY WHITNEY HOUSTO

Actress Naomi Ackie is set to portray Whitney Houston in an upcoming musical biopic of the late singer. Titled I Wanna Dance With Somebody, the film is directed by Stella Meghie and has screenplay by Bohemian Rhapsody writer Anthony McCarten.

Sonu, Shraddha named



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ARIES

FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181*

You will be very enterprising and industrious today. You make your plans very carefully and execute them perfectly. Despite this, your progress will be very slow. However, Ganesha advises

you not to despair and showers his blessings on you

TAURUS

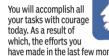
You are going to be exceptionally intense in the way you communicate your emotions and feelings. You will, no doubt, succeed in making the impact, the impression you are striving to make, says Ganesha.



You will be in a spot of bother owing to financial problems today. You will try to reduce your expenses and increase your savings, but circumstances will be such that you will have to spend your money. You will spend your day in all this financial jugglery, says Ganesha

Intimate friends will be impressed with your attitude. You will try to make them happy and spend a happy evening with them. Affection and cordial ties will linger for long and prove fruitful.

LEO



have made in the last few months will now bear fruit. You need to make a schedule of the tasks you need to tackle today. You need to guard against over stressing yourself, otherwise your health could suffer, says Ganesha



Nushrratt's pink bikini look raises heat

Mumbai: Actress Nushrratt Bharucha looks stunning in her new social media post, striking a pose in

Nushrratt posted a string of pictures from a sea facing hotel room. In the images, she is seen flaunting a svelte figure in a bubble gum pink bikini paired with a pristine white cover up. She completed her look with sunglasses

for all that I had when I had it... all that I did when I did. One year later, today I remember it all so fondly, miss it all so dearly but feel so blessed and lucky to have had it. To have lived it the way I wanted it. So thank you Universe for giving me all that you have, the way that you have! #Gratitude," Nushrratt wrote

on her next film, Chhorii. Her latest film Chhalaang, streams on OTT. IANS



a hot pink bikini.

"This is an appreciation post

alongside the image.



The actress has started working



Mumbai: Actor Kartik Aaryan flaunts his locks in a new post on Instagram, saying long hair has swag.

In the image, the actor is T-shirt

shuru karein (Long hair has a different swag. Shall we start the trend again)?" Kartik has started shooting for his next film.

PEANUTS

BREVITY

Ram Madhvani's *Dhamaka*. The film, which will be produced by Ronnie Screwvala's

a journalist who cov ers the live

broadcast of a terror attack

RSVP and Ram Madhvani Films with Co-Producer Amita Madhvani, gives a

IANS

Shraddha to quit meat. The actress never misses an opportunity to speak up for animals."Sonu Sood and Shraddha Kapoor are helping to change

the world

every time

they sit

down to

eat,'

says

PETA

India

Mumbai: Hindi film

actors Sonu Sood

and Shraddha

Kapoor are PETA

India's Hottest

Vegetarians for

2020, it has been an-

Sonu has appeared

in a pro-vegetarian

PETA India print cam-

paign, participated in the

group's 'Hug a Vegetarian'

Day, and supported a so-

cial media appeal to push

McDonald's to add a

McVegan burger to its

menu. He also rescued

an injured pigeon

while playing

cricket with his

son. A cookbook

shared by the

organisation

inspired

nounced.

Bangera.

Director of Celebrity and **Public Relations Sachin** Bangera added: "Fruits and vegetables never

Hottest Vegetarians of 2020

caused a pandemic, and PETA India is honouring Sood and Kapoor for living by example and encouraging their fans to make eating meat-free their new normal."" Past winners of the award include Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Amitabh Bachchan, Manushi

Chhillar, Sunil

Sharma, Kartik

Aaryan, Vidyut

Shahid Kapoor

Chhetri,

Anushka

Jammwal. Kangana Ranaut,

and Rekha LANS



Adah happy with response to her transgender act

Mumbai: Actress Adah Sharma is happy with the response she has been getting for her portrayal of a transgender in the recently-released web series, Pati Patni Aur Panga.

The web series directed by Abir Sengupta also features Naveen Kasturia, "I'm so glad Hiten Tejwani, Gurpreet so many people are Saini, and Alka Amin watching among others.

formed.

Adah is currently gear ing up for the second season of the show, as well as the upcoming action film Commando 4.

They can watch it in

Telugu, Tamil, Punjabi

and Bengali as well be-

cause it is dubbed in all

these languages," she in-

"I love the action genre and I'm fortunate that directors are offering me really cool stuff! I'm getting to do action, romance, comedy, drama. What more ciates vour can an actor asks for? work smiled Adah. IANS

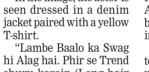


Pati

Patni

Aur Panga!





bird's eye view into the working of a news channel. Kartik Aaryan is excited to step into the thriller zone

with the film, and team up with Madhvani. He plays

in Mumbai.

tus. Ganesha says that this may be due to medium like television or due to your innovative ideas in your work place. People will be praising you and your work today. You will be more nterested in the fine arts

SCORPIO

Ganesha says that you

will be able to see a

huge change in your personal and social sta

Your energy levels are on an all time high today, as you plan to begin a new business venture. You are determined to give in your best and toil hard till you succeed in your plans. Well. and the day turns out to be fruitful and worthy when you garner compliments and positive feedback about your work from your peers, says Ganesha.

SAGITTARIUS

Your temper is as hot as a fireball today, foresees Ganesha. Not for nothing they say that anger may

destroy the world. Don't axe your own feet by your aggressive behaviour. Cool down and think before you act. There are chances that you may experience financial crunch. handle it carefully, advises Ganesha.

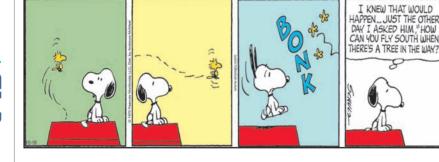
CAPRICORN

You have become worka holic and others may have complains agains

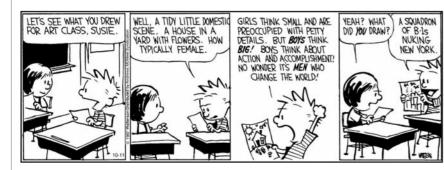
you for being so busy. But, you should not take to heart as you are finishing off assignments which have been hanging in there for a long time now. Once done with the work, you'll have ample of time for your lover.

Z The monotony of your routine will get little bit of colour with the help of your wit and humour. Your jovial nature will lighten the burden of work from the shoulders of one all, savs Ganesha. People love to be in your company and that is the reason why you are on the top of every guest list.





CALVIN AND HOBBES





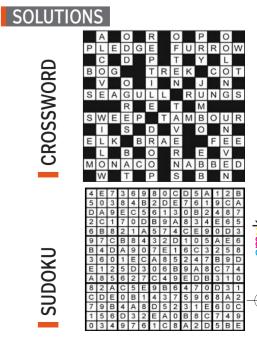


CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

SUDOKU

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

В	7	9									D		0	
_							С	4		0	1		7	E
	D		5	Е			[]		8			6		
С							0				А			2
8	0										Е			3
		D	1									3		4
							5	3	1	D		2	С	
4		5	0			7	1		2	9			В	6
6		А			5		В	D						
	3				8		4	0					Е	
3		7			Е		А		5		С			
	6		В								0	А	1	
	5	8	9				Е					4		C
1	С			7	2						4	В		0
			С	6			3		7					





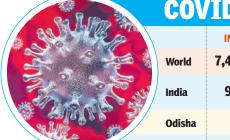






HEALTH HAZARD

Police raid a fake tobacco and gutka manufacturing unit at Jagatpur in Cuttack, Wednesday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
orld	7,40,34,165	5,20,24,767	16,46,688
dia	99,32,547	94,56,449	1,44,096
lisha	3,24,796	3,19,850	1,820

City's shelter homes

to have more beds

Lack of info mars witness protection scheme

GYAN RANJAN MOHAPATRA, OP

Bhubaneswar, Dec 16: English philosopher Jeremy Bentham has rightly said, "Witnesses are the eyes and ears of justice." At a time when involvement of high-profile people in several crimes is coming to the fore and protection to the witnesses is increasingly felt, sources at Odisha police said that no such requests have come from the witnesses. Reason: Lack of awareness among the witnesses about the existence of such a scheme.

It is alleged that the witnesses are being threatened or pressurised against revealing anything related to the crimes before the investigating officials. But, sources in police revealed that the Odisha police is yet to receive any such requests seeking protection to the witnesses or their family members despite the lapse of more than a year since the implementation of Witness Protection Scheme, 2019. No such applications have been referred to the police by any trial court too.

Meanwhile, the Director General of Police (DGP), Abhay, declared in March that office of the Crime Branch in Cuttack would work as the witness protection cell to look after proper implementation of the

SECURITY MATTERS

witness, his family members or his counsel can move the District Standing Committee comprising the District and Sessions Judge and with 'Head of the Police in the District as Member and Head of the Prosecution in the district as its Member Secretary' seeking protection

he committee after going through the 'Threat Analysis Report' will issue an order to protect the witness

nesses in the state.

he added.

enquire into the threats, if any, to the life or property of the witness concerned, his family members and five days order for the protection of wit-

Speaking to Orissa POST, a top police officer said that due to the onset of Covid-19 pandemic, the police force has been busy main-

taining law and order. So, they failed to create adequate awareness among members or his counsel can move the witnesses regarding the scheme, Notably, a witness, his family

submit the same before the standing committee within

n officer in ACP

A or DSP rank will

the Police in the District as Member and Head of the Prosecution in the district as its Member Secretary seeking protection.

Subsequently, an officer in ACP or DSP rank will enquire into the threats, if any, to the life or property of the witness concerned, his family members and submit the same before the standing committee within five days. The committee

after going through the 'Threat Analysis Report' will issue an order to protect the witness.

The officers will try to ensure that 'witness and accused do not come face-to-face during investigation or trial'. They have been asked to monitor the mail and telephone calls, make special arrangements with the telephone company to change the witness' telephone number, temporary change of their residences, and installation of CCTV cameras before the residences of the witnesses. The local police will make arrangements to escort the witness to the court.

Notably, Odisha fared worst among the states with an abysmal conviction rate (5.7 per cent) in 2018, according to a report of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB). Mizoram topped the list with a conviction rate of 93.5 per cent. The NCRB data showed that Odisha's conviction rate slipped to a new low from 9.3 per cent in 2017 when it was the second lowest after Bihar. In 2019, Odisha ranked 4th among

the states when the conviction rate was 21.5 per cent.

According to police officials, witnesses turning hostile is the biggest reason behind the extremely poor conviction rate

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 16: With the Capital city witnessing dense fog during night amid falling temperature, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC), Wednesday, decided to increase the capacity of urban shelters here to accommodate more number of homeless.

The civic authority, earlier this month, had deployed different service providing agencies to rehabilitate the urban poor and homeless in the city to SUH (Shelter for Urban Homeless). However, despite the efforts many were seen spending nights on the footpath, railway station, bus stands, under flyovers and market yards. "We have decided to increase

the capacity of beds in social equity centres from 50 to 100. The increased status will be operated as per government provision. If number of rescued persons is more than capacity of all of SUHs, the BMC would go for another 50-bed temporary SUH to accommodate inmates," BMC Commissioner Prem Chandra Chaudhary said. Presently, the BMC has seven The civic authority has deployed different service providing agencies to rehabilitate the urban poor and homeless in Capital city

SUHs: Ghatikia, Baramunda Bus Terminal, Unit VI, Ashok Nagar, Chandrashekarpur, Bhimpur and Kharavel Nagar. While the Ashok Nagar SUH is exclusively built for the elderly, the Chandrashekarpur SUH caters to female refugees only. Meanwhile, Bhimpur SUH has been exclusively made as a de-ad-

diction centre. "We are also focusing on timely and instant mobilization of the homeless and other destitute found sleeping on streets. Two agencies have been roped in for managing SUHs and instructed for regular mobilisation with the support of local police. As per the order of the commissioner, no person is allowed to sleep on roadsides or any open spaces," a senior BMC official said.

S Muralidhar named as CJ of Orissa HC

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Dec 16: The Supreme Court Collegium has recommended elevation of Justice S Muralidhar

as the Chief Justice of Orissa High Court.

The collegium also recommended transfer of Orissa High Court Chief Justice Mohammad Rafiq to Madhya Pradesh High Court. Currently, Justice S Muralidhar is a

judge of the Punjab and Haryana High Court. He assumed charge of Punjab and Haryana High Court in February this year.

He became a judge of the Delhi High Court in 2006. He was part of the High Court bench that first le-

galised homosexuality in the 2009 Naz Foundation case. Justice Muralidhar led division bench also convicted Sajjan Kumar in the 1984 anti-Sikh riots. During his tenure

as a judge at the Delhi High Court, Justice Muralidhar also got rid of the convention of judges being addressed as "Lordships".

Chennai in 1984.

Commission of India.

SANTA ON SALE



A Santa Claus figure displayed for sale at a stall in Choudhury Bazar area of Cuttack, Wednesday, ahead of the Christmas celebrations OP PHOTO

Lessons on food safety in academic curricula soon

STATE'S RANK IN NATIONAL FOOD SAFETY INDEX UP BY 13 POSITIONS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar: Dec 16: Food safety chapters will soon find place in academic curricula at school levels in an attempt to intensify food security awareness among the people and Food Business Operators (FBOs) in the state.

The decision was taken at a statelevel Food Safety Advisory Committee meeting held under the chairmanship of Chief Secretary Asit Tripathy here, Wednesday.

Tripathy directed the Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department to constitute a technical committee for working out the methods for extending the outreach of food testing activities by leveraging the existing labs of different departments and universalities.

He also directed the officials to trengthen the surveillance meas-



FOCUS ON **PUBLIC HEALTH**

Odisha has secured 5th position nationally in conduct of high-risk inspections through the application of mobile app technology

he state food testing laboratory has enhanced its capacity to meet requirement of National Accreditation Board for in number of registered and licensed FBOs in the state during the last four years.

The total number of registered FBOs increased from 5,026 in the FY 2016-17 to 57, 827 in the 2019-20, she said.

After gaining the registration of Food Safety Standard Authority of India (FSSAI), the State Food Testing Lab is now on its path towards acquiring the accreditation of NABL

Odisha, in collaboration with FSSAI, has initiated steps for addressing the gaps in food safety ecosystem of the state and for promoting the culture of safe and wholesome food.

The mobile food testing laboratory has been rolled out for food testing in different melas, public celebrations and festivals. So far, 1,768 samples have been tested in this mobile lab. Under clean street food hub initiative, around 30 food vendors have been registered and trained. The programme will be rolled out shortly.



Justice Muralidhar began his law practice in

Three years later, in 1987, he shifted to the Supreme Court and the Delhi High Court. He was appointed amicus curiae by the apex court in several PIL cases. He was also a part time member of the Law



the District Standing Committee comprising the District and Sessions Judge and with 'Head of

CB affidavit to HC on Infocity 'gangrape'

CUTTACK: Additional Director General of Police (Crime Branch), Soumendra Priyadarshi, Wednesday submitted an affidavit to Orissa High Court on a case pertaining to the alleged gangrape of minor girl in Infocity area of Bhubaneswar. In his affidavit, the Crime Branch ADG informed the court that four persons have been arrested in connection with the incident. The affidavit claimed that OTV employees Aniruddha Panda and Krushna Behera and two others have been arrested in connection with the gangrape. A division bench of Chief Justice Mohammad Rafig and Justice BR Sarangi posted the next hearing on the case to January 13, 2021. It is worth mentioning here that the HC had expressed displeasure over delay in investigation into the alleged gangrape.

Cong ups the ante over fuel price hike

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 16: The Youth Congress Wednesday organised a protest rally at Master Canteen here demanding reduction in petrol and diesel prices which has seen a consistent rise during this month.

The Congress activists organised a march with senior party leaders while showing placards and raising slogans against the Union government's failure to tame the fuel prices. Senior party leaders Suresh Routray and Taraprasad Bahinipati also participated in the march.

The senior leaders accused the Union government of worsening the financial condition of the middle class and poor by not controlling the fuel prices. "When the crude oil prices were very high, under the Congress government, petrol prices



were below ₹50 per litre. Now, crude oil has hit the rock bottom, but petrol and diesel prices have reached almost ₹100 per litre,' Bahinipati said.

Suresh Routray said, "With the rise of petrol and diesel prices in the state, the prices of other essential commodities have also seen a surge. Under the Narendra Modi government, the farmers are also struggling with the new controversial farm laws.

He also said, "The people of the state are also hit as their incomes

OP PHOTO

were affected due to Covid-19. At such times, the Union government is increasing petrol and diesel prices, giving double whammy to the middle class.

Routray said, "Today, the Youth Congress organised a protest. We will go to the panchayat, block and other levels to organise a big protest over the issue

Meanwhile, Union Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan defended the government and blamed the international prices for the same. He said, "I accept that the petrol and diesel prices have increased this month. But it is not a case that it only increases. The prices rise due to changes in international prices. In the entire world the consumption of LPG rises during winter and that is why the prices take a surge but it will come down soon.'

ures. "With increasing population in cities and growth centres, food safety has become more critical both from the view points of individual and public health," he said.

The Chief Secretary directed the state police to mainstream the drive against adulteration in their work schedule. Food safety officers were asked to intensify their field visits and inspections.

Food safety commissioner Yamini Sarangi said that Odisha has secured 5th position nationally in conduct of high-risk inspections through the application of mobile app technology.

With different food safety measures, Odisha has upgraded its position to 13th in National Food Safety Index ranking for the year 2019-20 from 26th position in the previous year.

The state food testing laboratory

Testing and Calibration Laboratory

Mobile food testing laboratory has been rolled out for food testing in different melas (fairs), public celebrations and festivals

has enhanced its capacity to meet requirement of National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratory (NABL) and has also applied for its registration.

Online system for registration and licensing of FBOs has already been rolled out resulting in enhancement of revenue generation. Sarangi said that revenue rose to

around ₹7.70 crore in FY 2019-20 from ₹2.18 crore in FY 2018-19 registering a growth of around 82 per cent.

There had been a steady increase

Food safety director Pradeep Kumar Mohapatra said that special surveillance drives were taken on edible oil, milk products and additional nutritional food samples during the current year.

In 2018-19, as many as 1,926 legal and surveillance samples were picked and tested out of which 568 were found either adulterated or misbranded. In 2019-20, the sample collection was enhanced to 2,902 out of which 596 samples were found either adulterated or misbranded, Mohapatra said.

"In last four years, 58 criminal and 165 civil cases have been instituted against the offenders and ₹4,24,000 have been realized towards penalties and fines," he said.

PREP FOR SHRINE REOPENING

'Ama Pathaagaara' to rekindle library movement

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 16: A drive began here Wednesday which is expected to rekindle the library movement in the state through collection of books from willing donors.

Late Dasarathi Patnaik, fondly known as Dasia Aja and the pioneer of Odisha's library movement, had began a drive by setting up Ama Pathaagaara, a library, with just five books in his trunk. The library now houses over 1.5 lakh books and periodicals, palm leaf manuscripts, paintings and other research materials.

To pay tribute to Patnaik and rekindle the library movement, Ama Pathaagaara drive was started by actor and activist Varsha Priyadarshini through her trust 'Sammanita', in association with The Click Productions.

As part of the drive, Varsha aims



Dignitaries unveil the logo of 'Ama Pathaagaara'

to collect books from willing donors On the occasion, Varsha donated from across Odisha and beyond, two cabinets of books - ranging and donate them to children all from school textbooks and referover the state, encouraging the setence books to famed novels and biting up of libraries in each district. ographies, collected from willing A logo launching ceremony of 'Ama donors, to children at Jeevan Jyoti Pathagara' was also organized here Ashram in Khandagiri, Bhubaneswar.

The drive aims to collect books from willing donors from across Odisha and beyond, and donate them to children

Varsha said, "Through this initiative, we want to give chance to those who can't afford books to read. We will collect books and distribute them to orphanages and old age homes. We hope more and more people will help in making this initiative successful.

Dileswari Dharua from Phuljharan village in Bolangir who selflessly taught the children of her village during the pandemic to ensure they didn't lag behind due to the shutting down of government schools, was felicitated during the event.



Barricades and sheds in front of the Lions' Gate of Srimandir being made afresh ahead of the temple reopening Wednesday

Wednesday







downtown

Committed to boost judiciary: CM POST NEWS NETWORK

SANCTUARY POST NEWS NETWORK

CHILIKA ART

7 COUNTRIES

PARTICIPATE IN

Bhubaneswar, Dec 16: The Odiart Centre, Barakul has launched a month-long 'Chilika Art Sanctuary' an international folk painting exhibition, at its Purvasha Folk and Tribal Art Museum December 9.

It is part of its ongoing programme of Chilika Shelduck Folk Carnival, conducted every year since 2017.

Amidst the pandemic restrictions, only seven countries viz, South Korea, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Myanmar including India have participated in this exhibition. The exhibition theme is 'Symbiotic Relationship between Human and Nature'. The exhibition was inaugurated by Culture and Tourism Minister Jyoti Prakash Panigrahi on virtual mode. Science and Technology and Public Enterprise Minister Ashok Panda visited the exhibition and launched a sevenday long workshop on ceramics, terracotta, cowdung doll, palm leaf and Saura paintings, which will conclude December 18.

Altogether 19 artists from Bhopal, Mumbai and Odisha have joined the workshop. An international symposium was organised on virtual mode in collaboration with Odisha Dialogue on folk paintings and its significance in contemporary times. "The exhibition is rare," said PK Dash founder of Odiart centre. He also stated that the centre has the dream of making Chilika a folk art sanctuary, besides being a bird sanctuary and after Covid, many more countries will join this exhibition next year and this event will attract more attention to Indian and particularly Odishan folk paintings.

It may be noted that after the exhibition comes to an end January 10, it will be shifted to Delhi, where it will be exhibited at Lalit kala Akademi. And one folk artist will be selected for an award as International Folk Artist of the year.

Bidyashree attempts suicide

Bhubaneswar: Bidvashree Dash. wife of late social activist Aditva Dash, Wednesday allegedly attempted to commit suicide by consuming sleeping pills. Family members of Bidvashree have admitted her to a leading

government hospital in Cuttack in critical condition. According to her family members, she consumed about 41 sleeping tablets. After consuming the pills she went live on Facebook and said that she was suffering from depression as she has been blamed for her husband's death. Notably, social activist and motivational speaker Aditya Dash's mulitilated body was recovered by the GRP police on a railway track near Lingaraj Temple Road railway station here July 7.

PNN & AGENCIES

official said.

the official.

Bhubaneswar, Dec 16: The state

reported 407 new Covid-19 cases

Wednesday, taking the tally to

3,24,796, a senior Health and fam-

ily Welfare (H&FW) department

Five more deaths, on the other

Of the new cases, 236 were re-

ported from different quarantine

centres. Sundargarh recorded the

highest 62 new cases, followed by

Four districts—Deogarh

Nabarangpur, Subarnapur and

Rayagada—did not report any new

Covid-19 case in the last 24 hours,

Khurda, of which state capital

Angul (60) and Khurda (46).

added the official.

hand, raised the toll to 1,820, said

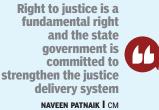
Bhubaneswar, Dec 16: The state government is highly committed ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସରକାର to achieve the constitutional goal of **GOVERNMENT OF ODISI** providing access to justice for citizens, Chief Minister Naveen Naveen and Chief Justice of Orissa High Court chief justice Mohammed Rafiq jointly inaugurated the new office building of civil judge junior division-cum-JMFC at Hinjilicut, through vir-

Congratulating the people of CM Naveen Patnaik and Orissa HC Chief Justice Mohammad Rafig inaugurate the new 'Court of the Civil Judge-cum-Hinjili for the new court, Naveen said JMFC' at Hinjilicut in Gangam through videoconferencing, Wednesday. 5T Secretary VK Pandian is also seen OP PHOTO that right to justice is a fundamental

to provide adequate funds for developing infrastructure to meet the requirements of the judiciary.

He said that despite the con-Stating that his government is straints of the Covid-19 pandemic, committed to protect the interests the government has recently esof the lawyer community, the chief tablished four new courts in the minister said that the annual grant state to decide commercial disputes. by the government to the "Odisha He also added that 45 courts have Advocates' Welfare Fund" has rerecently been established to excently been enhanced to ₹5 crore clusively try offences against women. from ₹3 crore. He added that the government is

He added that the government has taken the initiative of amending



Patnaik said here Wednesday.

right and his government is com-

mitted to strengthen the justice de-

working closely with the High Court

tual platform.

livery system.

Quick redressal of justice is vital for an effective iustice system. Despite the restrictions posed by the pandemic, the courts in Odisha are committed to provide justice to people MOHAMMED RAFIQ | CHIEF JUSTICE OF ORISSA HC A fillip to justice

Despite the pandemic, the state government has established four new courts in the state to adjudicate commercial disputes

Besides, 45 courts have Precently been established to try offences against women exclusively

he government has also amended the provisions of Odisha Advocates Welfare Fund Act. 1961 to permit usage of such funds to provide financial assistance to lawyers

the provisions of Odisha Advocates Welfare Fund Act, 1961 to permit usage of such funds to provide fi nancial assistance to the lawyers. Patnaik hoped that the new infra will

go a long way in fulfilling the aspirations of the people.

Speaking on the occasion, HC chief justice Mohammed Rafiq said the court building is magnificent, attractive and has all the infrastructure provisions to facilitate justice system.

Rafiq said that quick redressal of justice is significant for an effective justice system. Despite the restrictions posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, the courts in Odisha are committed to provide justice to people, he said, adding, the Orissa High Court has disposed nearly 40,000 cases by December 14, 2020.

Minister of State for Home Dibya Shankar Mishra said that the new court building will help in taking the justice system to the door steps of the people. Secretary to Chief Minister (5T) VK Pandian moderated the programme.

Govt orders probe into Athagarh FRA claims

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 16: The State ST and SC Development Department has now ordered an enquiry into the settlement status of Forest Rights Claims under the Forest Rights Act of the villagers of Dalabhaga under Athagarh tehsil.

The villagers recently wrote to the department and other authorities regarding the plan of the forest department to take electricity lines from some of the forest areas near their village for a proposed cement plant. The villagers had claimed that several hectares of the forest land has been planned to be diverted while their FRA claims of many such areas are yet to be settled

The ST and SC department has now written to the District Welfare Officer of Cuttack district where it asked to sort out the grievance alleged in their communication to the department as per the provisions of Forest Rights Act and its subsequent amendment rules of 2012. It also asked the DWO to file an Action Taken Report by December 12.

The Dalabhaga village has around 220 households and 1500 population where around 300 are ST population. Many of the them are dependent on minor forest produce from the nearby Subashi Reserve forest area which is situated around



500 away from the village

The villagers claimed that they had been protecting the forest for several years. The villagers in their complaint before the authorities alleged that without consultation with the villagers and without settlement of the pending FRA claims marking of trees for felling have started by the local authorities.

It has been reported that a 132 KV Power Transmission line from Khuntuni to Main Receiving Substation of the proposed cement plan at a site under Athagarh Forest Division has been recommended by the Forest department.

The villagers said that this would lead to felling of trees while the forest hosts several species of plant and tree species besides this being home to several species of animals too. The villagers complained that 4.5 hectares of forest land has been planned to be diverted for the project.

Naveen to review Mo Sarkar Dec 29

Depts were asked to attempt at least 10 calls per day and 60 per week to remain in the green zone

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 16: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik will review the progress made by various departments on Mo Sarkar programme, this December 29 at 5 pm. On Gandhi Jayanti 2019, Naveen launched the Mo Sarkar pro-

gramme to collect feed back from people regarding their experience at government offices and other facilities in the state.

Under the programme, phone calls are made every single day to collect, record and document conversations with citizens regarding their feedback on government services and departments. It was first launched in police stations and government-run hospitals. Later, it was expanded to all departments of the state. The government has set 10 calls per day and 60 per week as benchmark for every department to remain in green zone. The departments. which are lagging behind in this

STATE REPORTS 407 NEW

COVID CASES, 5 DEATHS

Odisha has so far tested 64.68L samples for Covid-19 including 31,592 Tuesday

Bhubaneswar is a part, has so

far reported 52,224 Covid-19 cases,

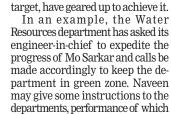
followed by Cuttack (28,428)

and Ganjam (21,748), the official

Cuttack and Sundargarh.

ing 31,592 Tuesday.

pointed out.



is not up to the mark. In between December 1 and December 14 this year, Chief Minister at-

tempted 80 calls and was able to connect 60 calls under the Mo Sarkar programme while officers in his office attempted 200 calls. of which 114 calls were connected.

School and Mass Education Minister Samir Dash contacted

SUPPLY DRY RATION **TO SEX WORKERS**, **OUTFIT URGES GOVT** POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 16: Odisha Patita Udhar Samiti (OPUS) agitated at Lower PMG square Wednesday urging the state government to provide dry ration to sex workers, in accordance with an SC ruling.

Abaharani Choudhury, secretary, OPUS, said, "In October, the Supreme Court directed all states and Union Territories to identify sex workers and provide dry ration to them in view of the Covid pandemic, saying it is a matter of survival for them and the government must come to their rescue as a welfare state." "But the state government still hasn't provided it. Many of them have not received any ration or allowance. We urge the government to provide them with dry ration, as per Supreme court orders," she added.



SUCI activists demonstrate near Master Canteen Square in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday, demanding revocation of state_ government's decision to shut down 10,000 schools OP PHOTO

MISSING MINORS

186 persons during the period under the programme while Health minister Naba Das tried 35 calls of which only 5 were connected. Forest and Environment Minister BK Arukha made one call only.

Chief Secretary Asit Tripathy attempted 282 calls and was able to get feedback from 205 persons.

Bhubaneswar, Dec 16: Biju Janata Dal (BJD) members Wednesday alleged that opposition parties were indulging in politics over the issue of missing children and Pari murder case.

POST NEWS NETWORK

While interacting with the media, party leader Amar Satpathy said that all possible steps have been taken in the case and major demands of the opposition parties have also been accepted by the ruling government of the state.

He said, "The state government is aware of the incidents and is sensitive to it too. Directions have been issued to probe into the issue of missing children and other similar cases. There is no case of delay or negligence. If the government did not act, the opposition parties could have taken any stance.³

He also said that when the government is taking steps in such cases, there is no need to raise suspicion against the government, "We were asked for an investigation through the Special Investigative Team (SIT) and we ordered a SIT probe in the case of Pari. The opposition also demanded a court monitored probe into the case. We have also written to the High Court on the matter.

"Raising slogans against the government and protesting on such issues without waiting for government report and investigation

Wait for probe report, BJD tells Opposition **BJP women wing to step up protests**

é90+

The women wing of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Wednesday announced that it would escalate their protests over missing children in the state from this month.

murder and similar cases in Jajpur minor was seen in Nayagarh district where she was found to be dead near a pond. The condition of the dead body raises doubts," she said.

was murdered and later dumped into the pond. If the girl would have died five days ago, her body was likely to spread foul smell with signs of deterioration which was not seen in the case. There was no foul smell coming from her body, there were cut marks on her face and

is not good and seems to be politically motivated," he added.

Satpathy's reaction came after opposition parties tried to corner the government on the issue of kidhas failed to probe the case properly," she said.

'We will escalate our protest from December 16 to December 24 on the issue to pressurise the government to act on the issue of missing children. The government has failed to make Operation Smile and other similar schemes a success. They only remain on paper," she said.

She said, "The NCRB report states that in the last two years, more than 4000 children went missing in the state.'

been reported from Balasore and Jajpur district. The national leadership of the Congress party and BJP have also targeted the state government over the case.

Deogarh, Nabarangpur, Subarnapur and Rayagada did not report any new Covid-19 case in the last 24 hours

Odisha's positivity rate stands at 5.02 per cent.

Meanwhile, another 358 Covid patients recovered in Odisha, taking the total recoveries in the coastal state to 3.20.208, the H&FW department tweeted.

The state has so far tested 64.68 lakh samples for Covid-19, includand 23 from Mayurbhanj.

The latest deaths were reported from Angul, Balasore, Bolangir,

The recovered cases include 43 from Khurda, 36 from Sundargarh, 29 from Angul, 26 from Cuttack







blood was oozing out from her eyes, raising doubts of drowning claims," she added.

She also expressed apprehensions on the role of the police in the case. "The police brought a dog squad and ODRAF team but they did a half baked work as they just examined one strech in the village. The villagers also doubt the police theory. Such cases are reporting

"It is quite evident that the minor

often in Nayagarh and other parts of the state but the police

napping of minor girls in the state. In the last few days, two missing cases and two cases of murders were reported from Nayagarh while similar incidents have also

CONTACT ISEMENTS BOOKING CL FIED AD OUR

Acharya Vihar-Dayal Agency-9437135727, A.P. Tours and Travel, Maitri Vihar, C.S. Pur-9861301598, Aurobindo Market-Sai Audio & Electronics-9438304668, Airport Road-Sai Baba Variety Store-9090071530, Anish Infotech- Tankapani Road-9861341488 Bapuji Nagar- Dreamland Studio- 9777517314, Baramunda Rental Colony-Maa Ramchandi Communication-9658821469, Baramunda Housing Board Colony-Pappu Variety Store-9040500106, Cuttack Road-Alishan Snacks-8984236754, District Center (Chandrasekharpur)-Sai Google Mart-9776056507, Forest Park-DTDC Couriers & Services)-7381024156, IRC Village-Bapi Xerox-9090090404, Gift Hut(Antriksh Gifts & Decors Pvt. Ltd.)-9954781084, Pruthvi Medicine-9853314816, Janpath-Krupajal Book Store-7978646669, Jaydev Vihar-AK Enterprises-7978116618, Subam Sai Books Store-8895550649, Swain Graphics- 9337121249, Jagannath Mobile Point- Janpath Road, Ram Mandir- 9938475415, Kanan Vihar-Auro Electronics-8260697560, Khandagiri- Swosti Mobile Centre- 7992914045, World Solution- 9938317559, KIIT Road-Jugad Jn-9338545031, Laxmi Sagar-Aditya Mobile-9438191836, Lewis Road-Spider Web-7809186415, Metro Satellite City-Arogya Mitra Medicine Store-9853621640, Madhusudan Nagar-Mohapatra Communication-9124446664, Maa Santoshi travels- Gajapati Nagar- 9777675867, Nayapalli- The Cake Room- 7873660137, Near Mayfair Lagoon-Cookieman-9439491273, Nigamananda-Omm Sai Travels-9668284823, Nr Cosmopolis Main Gate- Shreeram Medical Store- 8763711714, Net Square- Niladri Vihar (C.S. Pur)- 7205634821, Priyadarshini Market-Astro Point-9938134346, R.N. General Store-Nilakantha Nagar-9438642501, Sahid Nagar- Maa Communication- 9437353424, Sahini General Store- Near Patia Railway Station, Mahavir Vihar- 9937586626, Satya Nagar-Baishnavi Mixture & Sweets-7894821764, Samantapur- Download Point-7504557743, Sailashree Vihar-Harsha Book Store-8093449515, Saheed Nagar-Jagannath Graphics-7978652670, Photo World-7978468191, Sainath Photo Studio-8984436129, Shanti & Co-9937071063, Siripur-Omm Maa Sarala Communication-9777682449, Sushree fashion-Jagmara-9938714347, Shree Vision- Sailashree Vihar-9861476678, Unit-3-LIC of India Premium Point-9337787080, Unit-7- LIC Premium Point- 9338227422, VSS Nagar-Friends Cake & Bake-8658200930, Jeet Infoworld-7205195782, XIMB Square-LD Books-9658061373.









OrissaPOST THURSDAY | DECEMBER 17 | 2020 | BHUBANESWAR

state

Land acquired for industries lies unused

STATE GOVERNMENT FACING SEVERE REVENUE LOSS WITH THE LAND LYING UNUTILISED

KALINGANAGAR CONUNDRUM

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, Dec 16: Large tracts of land acquired for establishment of industrial units in Kalinganagar in this district are lying idle, a report said.

Reports from the district administration said over 8696.748 acre of land have been handed over to several industrial units for establishment of their plants. The irony is that many of the firms which had acquired large tracts of land are lying closed now.

As a result, over 23,000 casual labourers and 4000 regular employees working in these firms have lost their livelihood during the last five years.

Out of this land, 3347.346 acre belongs to forest category, 608.407 acre of government land and 4640.475 acre of land of common people. The state government is also facing severe revenue loss with the land lying unutilised.

Reports said four industrial units have acquired 193.97 acres of land over the last five years but are yet to establish their plants. Moreover, three major firms which had established their plants on 3155.68 acre of land are lying closed now.

Take the case of Mesco group. This firm had acquired 2500 acre of land 24 years back in Kalinganagar for establishment of its steel plant in the name of Mesco Kalinga Steel Ltd. The firm had acquired the land through IDCO, a state government-owned unit. However, IDCO served a notice to Mesco in July, 2003 after it failed to

Reports said four industrial units have acquired 193.97 acres of land over the last five years in Kalinganagar. Three major firms which had established their plants on 3155.68 acre of land are lying closed now

LAND IS BECOMING SCARCE FOR OTHER INDUSTRIES WHICH HAVE APPLIED BEFORE THE STATE GOVERNMENT FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF THEIR UNITS IN THE REGION, REPORTEDLY OVER 50 SMALL AND BIG FIRMS HAVE APPLIED FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF THEIR UNITS IN KALINGANAGAR

Mesco established a separate

plant on 530.68 acre of land at

Manpur-Gobindpur. The plant

became operational in August

1996 which helped Mesco

acquire two mines in Joda

the farmers who lost their lands

were from Scheduled Caste and

with the promise of jobs in exchange

of their land. However, Mesco es-

tablished a separate plant on 530.68

acre of land at Manpur-Gobindpur.

The plant became operational in

August 1996 which helped Mesco

acquire two mines in Joda mining

division. However, this plant is lying

closed for the last three years ren-

dering over 500 permanent and 400

acquired 90.92 acres, CJ Darcel

Logistics Ltd acquired 10 acres,

Similarly, Jessica Metalics Ltd

casual workers jobless.

These gullible people were lured

Scheduled Tribe communities.

mining division

establish its steel plant.

The matter then went to the court of law and the state government got possession of the land in 2019 after a prolonged legal battle. However, the land is lving idle even as many firms interested to establish their plants are leaving the state after failing to get land.

Mesco had planned to produce 7 MT hot rolled coil, wire rod and bar and light section through its plant at Kalinganagar. The state government handed over 2500 acre of land including 1250 acre belonging to 100 farmers stretching from Jakhapura village to Ravana Square in Kalinganagar. Most of

"We will calculate the teacher's

earnings to detect the ill-gotten

Superintendent of Police,

Berhampur, Anil Kumar Patra,

said. Tuesday, the anti-corruption

wing of the Odisha Police raided

at least 12 houses, belonging to the

teacher and his relatives in

Paralakhemundi and the school

office, to unearth his alleged pos-

session of disproportionate assets.

properties,"

Chettinad Cement Ltd acquired 83 acres of government and private lands. However, these firms are yet to make any move on establishment of their plants.

Meanwhile, firms like Neelachal Ispat Nigam Ltd (NINL) which had acquired 2500 acres, Mid-East Integrated Steel Ltd which has acquired 530.68 acres and Maithan Ispat Ltd which has acquired 125 acres are lying closed for the last three years after running for a period.

As a result, land is becoming scarce for other industries which have applied before the state government for establishment of their units in the region. Reports said that over 50 small and big firms have applied for establishment of units in Kalinganagar

Under this scenario, the goal of the central and state governments to make Kalinganagar a steel capital and create employment opportunities for locals seems to be distant.

As part of the state government's rapid industrialisation programme, several acres of lands have been acquired over the last 30 years for establishment of industrial units in this district.

It is alleged that the district administration while acquiring lands of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe people has violated the Odisha Land reforms Act. The additional district magistrate (ADM) is in receipt of such complaints from time to time.

When contacted, Kalinganagar ADM, Santosh Kumar Mishra, said that discussions have been held with some firms and soon they will hand over their acquired land.



A residential training programme for traditional healers, herbal plant growers, sellers and buyers being organised by Jeypore Forest Division, Biju Patnaik Tribal Agro-Biodiversity Centre and MS Swaminathan Research Foundation at Jeypore in Koraput

Wildlife smuggling racket busted

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jajpur, Dec 16: A wildlife smuggling racket was busted in Odisha's Jajpur district Wednesday and two persons were arrested in this connection, a forest official said.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of forest officials from Jajpur Road conducted a raid in Bhikipur reserve forest area and caught the miscreants, he said.

Five antlers, a tusk and a rare chameleon, worth several lakhs,



sion. However, two others involved

in the racket managed to escape

"The arrested persons are sus-

during the raid, the official said.

pected to be the mastermind of the racket. Efforts are on to trace the others involved in the criminal activity and ascertain as to how the animals were killed," said Debendra Patnaik, Ranger of Jajpur.

Both the persons were planning to strike a deal with prospective buyers to sell the wildlife products, he said.

They have been booked under various sections of the Wildlife Protection Act and the Indian Penal Code (IPC), the official said.

Odia biochemist placed in Guinness

World Records

Ghantapada, Dec 16: Young bio-

chemist Jayram Rana from

Ambagaon village under Kantamal

block in Boudh district has en-

tered the Guinness World Records

by producing the largest arum

leaf, family members informed

According to his family sources,

Rana accidentally found an arum

plant a couple of months back,

when he was roaming in a forest in Boudh district. He then col-

lected the plant and grew it in his

house. Rana informed that he used

a unique process of farming and

used bio-chemical fertilisers to

grow the plant. His efforts bore fruit

and the plant produced a leaf 25

inches long and 29 inches wide.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Wednesday

Vig finds properties worth ₹4cr in teacher's possession

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, Dec 16: Vigilance department sleuths in Odisha have discovered properties worth over Rs 4.03 crore in the possession of an assistant teacher of an upper primary school in Gajapati district, officials said.

The belongings were found to be in the names of the accused teacher, his wife and their son, they said. During raids, officials of the department came across eight multistoried buildings in different lo-

Youth electrocuted while taking selfie in Gajapati

POST NEWS NETWORK

taking a selfie on the train when he came in contact with an overhead

cations of Paralakhemundi and eight plots of land as part of im-POST NEWS NETWORK movable properties.

Vigilance

Kendrapara/Rajnagar, Dec 16: In an alarming development, reducing flow of fresh water in Brahmani and Kharasrota rivers might lead to extinction of mangroves in Bhitarkanika National Park in this district, a report said.

This was stated by experts at a workshop 'Hydro-ecological Assessment for Integrated Management of Bhitarkanika Ramsar Site' held at Gupti in Rajnagar block in this district, Wednesday, DFO Bikash Ranjan Dash presided over the workshop organised by Rajnagar forest division in collaboration with Chilika Development Authority and GIZ-India

The wildlife sanctuary is located in the estuarial region of Bramhani and Baitarani rivers. It covers an



Mangroves threatened by 'choked' water flow

IF THIS TREND CONTINUES THEN MANGROVES MIGHT GET EXTINCT IN BHITARKANIKA BY 2050

problems of the sanctuary. at Chilika Development Authority, hour to protect the eco-sensitive zone from becoming extinct. If this trend continues then the mangroves might get extinct in the sanctuary by 2050. The park serves as nesting, feeding and breeding grounds for a wide range of invertebrates and vertebrates

Participants at the workshop said deliberated on the importance of that a master plan is the need of the wetlands. He made a video presentation describing how the reducing flow of fresh water in these two rivers might spell disaster for the sanctuary as well as for people. He said the use of river water by industries, water theft, take over by big corporations, lack of dredging of riverbed at regular intervals, and encroachment of the riverbed

FILE PHOTO

are some of the reasons behind the decline in water flow. He warned that if urgent measures are not taken then the reducing water flow might spell danger for the wildlife, avian and reptile populations.

Attending the workshop, Khuswant Singh, assistant chief executive of CDA, said the Chilika lake and the Bhitarkanika park are famous in the world for a number of reasons.

The ambience in Bhitarkanika is conducive for the survival of mammals, reptiles and marine creatures. The cacophonies of migratory birds, the nesting site of rare Olive Ridley turtles and the estuarine crocodiles attract tourists to Bhitarkanika. The survival of mangroves will help protect the coastal districts from the impact of tsunamis and cyclonic storms. District fishery officer Mama

The biochemist then applied for entry of his name in the Guinness World Records. Officials of the organisation verified his claim and he received a certificate in this regard. Rana is the head of a research lab named 'Health Science Research Foundation'. Wishes are pouring in for him from all quarters for his achievement.

Tender Amount : Varies from 16.73 lakh to 32.34 lakh Date and time of availability of bid documents in the portal for

online bidding: From 11.00 hours dt.20.12.2020 to 17.00 hours dt.

Date of seeking clarification : 24.12.2020 up to 17.00 hours

39 Nos. CLIPs on "Turnkey" and

Division, Kendrapara Installation and Energisation of

percentage rate basis. 39 Nos.

PUSH FOR AYURVEDA

Paralakhemundi, Dec 16: A youth was electrocuted while taking a selfie atop a train at Paralakhemundi railway station in Gajapati district Wednesday evening.

Reports said that the youth who is yet to be identified was charred to death after being electrocuted. Reports said that the victim was

livewire. He was immediately rushed to the local hospital where he succumbed to his injuries. Residents said that the train has been stationed

at the platform for the last few days. Later the bogeys of the train also caught fire and fire personnel rushed to the spot to bring the fire under control.

area of 672 square kilometers of mangroves and wetland.

The fear is not unfounded as the flow of fresh water to the wildlife sanctuary during monsoon has come down to 40 per cent from 70 per cent. In non-monsoonal season the water flow gets reduced to as low as 15 per cent and aggravates the

Dr Gurudeep Rastogi, scientist

Mohapatra spoke on the threat of prawn gheries to Bhitarkanika. Environmentalists Srikant Nayak, Biraja Prasad Pati, Bijay Kabi and Bhaskar Routray opposed the construction of a mega drinking water project on Kharasrota river at Barunadiha under Raikanika block.

Girl shaves head to donate hair to cancer patient

Shruti.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada, Dec 16: Having already pledged to donate her eyes, Shruti Maiti -- a college student from ward number-23 in Baripada municipality -- is in news for donating her hair to a cancer patient.

Shruti is the only child of Sudipta Maiti



Shruti's tryst with voluntarv service happened when she was studying Plus II and joined the National Service Scheme. She has so far participated in many service-oriented national and international level camps and earned laurels

my life will be fulfilled when I can help oth-

ers overcome their sorrow of having to live

a life without some vital organs," said

commonly associated with cancer patients,

I decided to donate my hair. I contacted the

health department and then a specific ladies

"After coming to know about hair issue

and Swapna. Now she is a BA final year student at Takatpur Autonomous College.

Shruti's tryst with voluntary service happened when she was studying Plus II and ioined the National Service Scheme (NSS). Always leading from the front, she has so far participated in many service-oriented national and international level camps and earned laurels.

"I will be happy if I am able to dissipate the darkness in others' lives by donating my body parts to them. I feel the purpose of parlour," she added.

I have meanwhile been able to come in contact with a cancer patient. Now I am preparing to send my hair to the address safely and, of course, hygienically.

When asked about getting her head tonsured, she said it is to inspire others to follow suit.

"My aim is to join the police department because this profession will help me deliver justice to the oppressed and suppressed," she added.

Minor girl's body fished out from well

Koraput: Under mysterious circumstances, the body of a 17vear-old girl was recovered Tuesday afternoon from a well at Chorimaliput village under Semiliguda police limits in Koraput district. The deceased girl who belonged to Sorisapadar village had an affair with Upendra Khara of Chorimaliput village in the district. The duo had secretly got married recently without the consent of Khara's family members. Hence, the youth's parents did not accept the girl as their daughter-in-law, a police official said. The minor girl died by suicide after jumping into the well at Chorimaliput village at around 5.30am, her mother-inlaw claimed. On the other hand, the bereaved family lodged an FIR at Semiliguda police station in this regard

(B) PWD road to Hatasahi.
 (C) Pipili-Jatani road Bharatipu to Atharbhaga Ujanipada

(D) Pipili-Jatani road to N. Kurki

NOTIFIED ADE		
	A COUNCIL, KESINGA	WORKS DEPARTMENT
	e No.3266 NAC (K) Dt.15.12.2020	MAYURBHANJ (R&B) DIVISION, BARIPADA
Iender ID No	D.2020_ORULB_64669	e-mail- bpd eerb@rediffmail.com
The Notified Area Counc	il, Kesinga invites online Bid in double	Government of Odisha "e" Procurement Notice
cover system through e-p	procurement.	Bid Identification No E.E22/2020-21
Name of work	Providing Sanitation Service, Man Power,	1. Number of works- 28 (Twenty eight) number of works.
	Door to Door Collection, All Equipments	Approximate estimated cost:- 1.07 lakh to 43.76 lakh.
	& Ancilaries work for 10 Nos. of Ward	3. Period of Completion:- 1 (One) Calendar month
	out of 12 Wards of Kesinga NAC.	4. Date & Time of availability of bid documents in the portal:-
Approx. value of works	10317063.00	Dt. 21.12.2020 to 31.12.2020
Period of availability of	From 10.00 A.M. on 16.12.2020 to	 Last Date / Time of receipt of bid in the portal:- Dt. 31.12.2020 up t 4.00 PM
tender for online bidding	29.12.2020 upto 05.00 P.M.	6. Date of Opening of bid:- Dt. 02.01.2021 at 11.00 AM.
Date & time of opening	11.00 A.M. on 04.01.2021	7. Name & address of the Oflice inviting bid:- Executive Engineer,
Submission of original	By Registered Post/Speed Post upto	Mayurbhanj (R&B) Division, Baripada
document	5.00 P.M. on 02.01.2021	Further details can be seen from the e-procurement pol
1. Physical documents-		http://www.tendersodisha.gov.in
Xerox copy of all docu-		Sd./- Executive Engineer, Mayurbhanj (R&B) Divisi
ments as per DTCN		No. B-534 OIPR-34025/11/0011/20
with self attested.		
2. Financial documents		ODISHA LIFT IRRIGATION CORPORATION LIMITE
(Original) i.e. Tender		(A GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA UNDERTAKING)
Paper Cost (EMD) only		OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
Class of contractor	Registered Firms/Service Providers/	LIFT IRRIGATION DIVISION, KENDRAPARA
	Registered Contractors	
Further details can b	be seen from the website:www.	
tendersorissa.gov.in		e-Procurement Notice
	Sd./- Executive Officer	Bid Identificaton No.: 1571/LID.KDP/2020-21, Date 10.12.20
	NAC, Kesinga	1. Name of the O.I.T. : Executive Engineer, Lift Irrigation
		Division, Kendrapara

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, RURAL WORKS DIVISION, PURI Tel. No. 06752222092, e-mail id- eerwpuri@gmail.com

1s	t CORRIGENDUM TO	NOTICE INV	ITING TEI	NDER TCN	NO. ONL	INE-11/2	2020-21
Lett	er No. 8335/					Dt. 1	15.12.2020
	O-747:- In continuation to this o oidable circumstances the tender						
SI. No.	Name of Work	Approximate Estimated cost (Rs in lakhs)	E.M.D. required (in Rs) @1%	Cost of tender paper (in Rs)	Class of Contractor eligible	Time of completion	Name of R.W. Sub- Division
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
5	FDR to (A) T-7 to B.S Deuli.						

8900.00

4000.00

	Sd./- Executive	e Engineer, L.I. Division, Kendrapara OIPR-32147/11/0002/202
10.	Corrigendum/addendum, if reportal.	equired shall be available in the above
9.	of Odisha, i.e. www.tenders	
8.	Date of opening of Technical & Financial Bids	: 11.00 Hours dt. 30.12.2020
	receipt of bids in the portal:	: 11.00 hours dt. 30.12.2020
7	Last date and time of	: Upto 17.00 hours dt.29.12.2020

2. Name of the Work

No. of Packages

29.12.2020

З.

4.

1 (One)

Calendar

Month

Pipili

D&C

Sd./- Executive Engineer, R.W. Division, I



8.84

for 2020-21 in the district of Puri. other terms & conditions of tender notice as mentioned above is remi R-25065/11/0014/2021





power post

FOCUS NATION

In sincerity is the certitude of victory. Sincerity! Sincerity! How sweet is the purity of thy presence? THE MOTHER



FLYING ARMY

'hat will we do when the locusts come again? Locusts are a group of short-horned grasshoppers that migrate long distances in swarms, crossing over many countries. They devour leaves, flowers, fruits, seeds, bark, and destroy plants by their sheer weight as they descend on them in massive numbers.

Four species of locusts are found in India: Desert locust (Schistocerca gregaria), Migratory locust (Locusta migratoria), Bombay Locust (Nomadacris succincta) and Tree locust (Anacridium sp.).

The desert locust is the most destructive pest in the world. Adult locust swarms can fly up to 150 km a day with the wind and adult insects can consume roughly their own weight in fresh food per day. Rains in Iran and Yemen were heavy last year, and millions of insects were born and flew, from these countries, over Saudi Arabia, landing in the eastern region of Pakistan in February, destroying the crops of cotton, wheat and maize. Their flying army was so large and so rapacious that Pakistan declared a national emergency. Crops were sprayed from the air and the armed forces and district administrations pressed into service. From there they came into India: Gujarat, Rajasthan and Punjab.

At the same time locusts were decimating crops, trees and pastureland in East Africa. A 2,400 sq.km swarm of 360 billion insects was measured in Kenya in January, large enough to consume as much food in a single day as 85 million people. Somalia declared a national emergency. The UN warned that the locust attack on Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia would result in a humanitarian crisis - meaning that everyone in the country would again have to be fed by world aid. Fourteen countries were affected. While UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has described the 2019-2020 locus attack as the worst in Kenya in 70 years, they are expecting it to be worse in 2021 and every year after that

Sardinia, a little Italian island has had its worst disaster in 60 years. Bolivia has declared a state of emergency in response to a locust plague that is destroying crops of corn, sorghum, beans and pastures.

The outbreak in India started in mid 2019. The locusts came for the rape seed and cumin crops. We claimed we brought them under control, but then we claim success in every field all the time. The truth was that thousands of acres (over 3,60,000 in Rajasthan alone) were decimated. They came in waves again in December to February, the worst attack we have ever had. Fields of mustard, cumin and wheat were devastated.

In India, the extended monsoon provided a favourable environment for locusts to multiply. Each locust lays about 150 eggs in moist soil. Experts are expecting a huge increase when the next generation hatches in June. A million locusts can eat the food of 35,000 people in one day. When they destroy pastureland, the animals grown for meat and milk also starve. For countries and tribes that depend on livestock, the effect is as devastating. In a few hours a farm growing vegetables and grain becomes a desert.

Why are locusts thriving? About 93 per cent of heat generated from global warming has been absorbed by oceans, and, according to the Journal of Climate, the western part of Indian Ocean has heated faster than any other part of the tropical oceans. Called the Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD), the waters closest to Africa are warmer than those near Australia. The warm moist air

blowing westwards brings rain to East Africa and drought to Australia. Australia is now ravaged with fires and dust storms, while countries such as Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia have moved from droughts to floods, and this wetness is hospitable to desert locusts.

Are scientists in India working on a sustainable way to get rid of them when they come? Unchecked locust plagues will take years to control and at a cost of hundreds of crores, threaten hunger, particularly in regions struggling with food security.

Who can fight a plague of locusts? How do you chase them away? With torches of fire? Shooting in the air, waving sticks, banging cans and running around? Small planes spraying pesticide? I think not. You may drive the locusts away but the crop is poisoned. The Government of India

deploys teams to control locust swarms, which spray deadly organophosphate chemicals in small, concentrated doses. This will continue to kill people long after the locusts have been killed.

Maneka Gandhi

eat the food of 35,000 people in one day

THE IDEA OF INDIA

et me begin this piece by reiterating a personal experience. Some years back, in an interactive session with students of a Delhi school, a youngster asked me: "Why do some of the young people in your books have such funny sounding names?" He certainly had a point - names such as Thenyak, Changun and Grandma Kamlong in my book The Crystal Cave published by the National Book Trust, India, or Chowkongpen and Chowtapan in Revenge published by Children's Book Trust, New Delhi, not to mention the Hupeks, Yuriancys and Dhanais who traipse through some of my books for young adults. might sound somewhat strange and alien to the ears of an urban child from North India.

Yet these are as much a part of the pan-Indian mosaic of names as, say, the Amitabhs and Shah Rukhs more familiar to that curiosity filled youngster. I had to explain to him that, for instance, Thenyak, Changun and Grandma Kamlong belonged to the Nocte tribe who lived in the state of Arunachal, a region which, despite its enormous cultural and ethnic differences with other parts of India, flaunts its "Indian-ness" as proudly as those located elsewhere.

This brings me to the heart of the matter -- the term "India" enfolds within its ambit a mind-boggling diversity -- the metaphor that readilv comes to mind is of a gigantic and intricate web. Countless individual strands link together to make that web, yet the image presented is of oneness. The ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic multiplicity is not only at the macro-level, but at the tiniest microlevel. Arunachal, for instance, has over a hundred disparate tribal communities which have evolved independently through the centuries and thus have distinctive differences of culture and dialect. Other regions in India may not possess such extreme diversity, yet it can be safely stated that few areas in our nation display absolute cultural homogeneity.

Though a broad, common swath of history might have draped the entire sub-continent, each individual strand carries its own weight of history, thereby mak-

SPECTRUM AGRICULTURE



ing for a colourful and intricate past

for historians to delve into. India

through millennia has been a meet

ple of Caucasoid, Dravidian,

Austro-Asiatic and Mongoloid ori-

with the Aryan, the Austric-

ethnic and socio-cultural scenario.

tural streams, the South was

surged across the seas; in the

North-East elements from China.

Indo-China, Tibet and Myanmar

impinged upon the sub-stratum

thereby bringing about a cultural

complexity not to be met with any-

where else. One must note India

today has 22 official languages

and a plethora of dialects, each

Equally pertinent, India has been

the meeting point of almost each and

every religion in the world. The

broader Indian society drew all

such faiths into the societal fabric,

creating the "Idea of India," an en-

nobling amalgam of global faiths

which for centuries evolved and

intermixed while exhibiting an as-

tonishing degree of tolerance. It

may be recalled that when impe-

rialism intruded and colonised

India, reducing its native population

into second class citizens deprived

of rights and liberty, the nation

rose up as one to fight against the

British. For instance, in the 1857

Sepoy Mutiny, Muslims fought side

by side with Hindus. Similarly, dur-

ing the Freedom Movement led by

with a literary tradition.

While North India was awash

Some nefarious elements in contemporary times. backed by rabid communalists and hate mongers, are trying their best to besmirch the 'Idea of India,' and undermine the notions of plurality and inclusiveness it implies

Mahatma Gandhi, Muslims were as much in the forefront as Hindus.

It, indeed, is an unimaginably ing place of so many races, cultures rich tapestry of communities, reand religions --- it is a composite ligions, customs, cultures and lanethnological warehouse of peoguages which the abstract entity called "India" represents, a fascinating kaleidoscope of diverse gins --- the Dravidian merging flora and fauna, myriad must-visit places of interest in remote areas, Mongoloid taking in the Dravidian culinary arts, music and dance and Aryan and fusing into a unique forms, forts and palaces, animals, amalgam to create a convolute birds, and, above all, people! Issues such as the progress in strengthening our democratic mechanism, with periodic, overland ethnic culrenewing efforts at inducing a secular mentality among the new touched with similar waves which generation even as we strive towards egalitarianism and gender equality, environmental degradation, problems confronted by the deprived child, all these and more should be at the core of our preoccupations if we are to remain true to "the Idea of India."

> Yet, of late, we appear to be going against all the ideals and principles this idea encompasses! Divisive elements are having a field day, attempting to fracture society on caste, communal and ethnic lines, with those in the seats of power not doing enough to rein in these insidious elements. Such divisive forces had appeared in the scene during the independence movement itself, which in turn led to the two nation concept and later to the partition and all the horror which ensued.

> It might have been thought that seven decades should have been enough for the broader society to have overcome those developments and focus on issues which really matter and implement measures which can usher in progress and better quality of life for the people.

Yet, today, on the contrary, an environment has deliberately been created to enable those divisive elements which had been lurking in the nether world to creep out of the woodwork and begin infesting the societal fabric. The tragic outcomes of their divisive tactics have been episodes such as the communal riots in Delhi where scores of lives were lost, hundreds injured, shops and homes burned and scars inflicted on the collective psyche which will take long to heal!

Till now I had considered myself fortunate that I was born in North East where bigotry and discrimination on grounds of religion or caste did not exist. Our childhood was idyllic and we grew up in a community which displayed a truly egalitarian ethos. Given the ethnic and religious admixture which comprised the society of those days in Assam I can confidently as sert that it was an authentic representation of the Idea of India. Unfortunately, this is no longer

true. Divisive elements have penetrated into our milieu too and are trying to destroy the age-old religious harmony which has been the hallmark of our society. Today, at the national level, we appear to have become strangers to the vision of Gandhi of an equitable and egalitarian society, while at the regional stratum we seem to pay only lip-service to the teachings of the great Assamese saint Mahapurush Sankardev.

Yes, some nefarious elements in contemporary times, backed by rabid communalists and hate mongers, are trying their best to besmirch the Idea of India, and undermine the notions of plurality and inclusiveness it implies. In doing so they are, in the words of the Freedom of the World 2020 report, serving to "blur the value-based distinction between Beijing and New Delhi." It would indeed be tragic if, after over half a century of endeavour to further our constitutional objectives and strengthen our democratic institutions, the biggest "democracy" in the world allows the idea on which it was founded to be obscured!

The author, a Padma Shri awardee, is a Guwahati-based social historian and writer. © THE BILLION PRESS

The conundrum of farm laws

A million locusts can





Arup Kumar Dutta

APPEAR TO HAVE BECOME STRANGERS TO THE VISION OF MAHATMA

GANDHI OF AN EQUITABLE AND EGALITARIAN SOCIETY

India has a locust department in the agriculture ministry. But, since the last locust attack was a small one in 1993, the department is flabby and idle. What have the officials of this department done in last 25 years: gone on international jaunts to discuss the potential danger of locust invasions. What did they do when an invasion really happened? Leave it to farmers to bang utensils to scare them away. Oh, yes ... spray the most poisonous chemicals known to man - and, of course, blame Pakistan saying it failed to conduct control operations successfully.

There have to be some sensible ways to protect this country. All locustaffected countries transmit data about attacks to the FAO, which analyses the data and weather patterns and provides forecasts for locust attacks up to six weeks in advance to each country. So there is time for the country to take precautions.

What can the government and farmers do when the locusts come again? Here are two solutions from Padma Shri awardee Chintala Venkata Reddy an organic farmer from Telangana: a) Spray a concoction of linseed oil, edible soda/sodium bicarbonate and extracts of garlic, cumin and orange This mixture has no side-effects on crops; b) take 30-40 kg of sub-soil, from four feet below the earth, and dissolve it in 200 litres of water and allow it to rest for 10-20 minutes. The sieved water should be then filtered and sprayed on crops. This will make all vegetation inedible for locusts. This sand-water can be sprayed with a normal spray pump. After the locust threat is over, spraying the crop with plain water will remove the sand layer from the leaves.

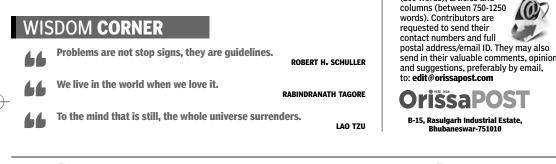
Chris Adriaansen, director of Australian Plague Locust Commission, has suggested a biological agent, based on a naturally occurring fungus in 1976. It is based on spores of the metarhizium fungus. Once spraved onto locusts it attaches and germinates, stopping the insects from feeding and reproducing.

A team of German researchers, headed by Frithjof Voss, has devised an electrical grid powered by a portable generator, run by a 12-volt solar cell powered battery, to frighten off locusts. This technology is much safer for the environment than pesticides.

Since we receive information well in time about locust swarms - unlike demonetization and lockdowns - it is possible to take action, like arranging for noise, placing 50-foot high traps in the way of the swarm, or scattering the swarms by flying airplanes through them.

No one in the Indian government is still taking climate change seriously Lip service at conferences by politicians and bureaucrats, a few attempts at solar energy generation. That's it. Our methane production has increased more cattle being grown for milk and meat and export. More coal is being used for electricity, more rice production. Extreme weather events, such as heatwaves, droughts, cyclones and floods, are set to become stronger without sharp cuts to greenhouse gas emissions. So the skies will blacken and the locusts will come. The Bible warns the end of the world, or the apocalypse, will be heralded by fires, floods and locusts.

To join the animal welfare movement contact gandhim@nic.in, www.peopleforanimalsindia.org





etters

are most welcome to contribute letters

rissapost

101

TO THE EDITOR

Readers of Orissa POST

(200 words), articles and

he whole country has been in turmoil for the last few weeks because the farmers are agitated. Lakhs of farmers are on the streets and Delhi, the national capital, is under siege. The bone of contention has been three farm laws which the government has promulgated recently, almost surreptitiously. On June 5, in the

midst of a raging pandemic when people were worried about the economy, the Government of India notified three ordinances having farreaching consequences on agriculture in the country. They were introduced in Parliament in September and rushed through quickly and received President's assent to become laws.

Each of the three laws deals with one aspect of agricultural marketing. Collectively, they are designed to eliminate or reduce the influence of traditional APMCbased middlemen and to create a unified national market. They are based on the premise that they will enable private players to invest in agrifood supply chains more easily, lead to gains in efficiency downstream along the supply chain and that these gains will be passed on to farmers to enhance their income. These laws have been variously hailed as 'revolutionary' and '1991 moment for Indian agriculture' while others have criticised them as the 'death knell for farmers'.

The first, and perhaps the most controversial of this troika, is called the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020. This Act attempts to bypass the state-level APMC Acts and has therefore been called by some as the APMC Bypass Act'. This Act permits private entities to buy and sell agricultural goods anywhere and set up private markets referred to as the "trade area". The jurisdiction of APMC is confined to the designated "market yard". The private markets are exempt from any registration charge, market fee or levy by the state governments. This will make the transactions in APMC markets more costly as they are burdened not only with fees and levies but also commission charges of 'Arhtias' or middlemen operating there. As the APMC markets become uncompetitive, traders will bypass them and they will wither away. However, there is no guarantee that the commission agents will not operate or that there will

be no cartelisation of buyers in the private markets which will operate in the shadow of regulations. The second Act, the Farmers

(Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act. 2020 is more easily referred to as the 'Contract Farming Act' and provides a template for written agreements between farmers and sponsors. It supersedes the "Model Contract Farming Act" which was circulated to the states not too long ago in 2018. It allows corporates and major buyers to have written agreements with the farmers for purchase of their produce subject to preagreed quality parameters. This is voluntary and a farmer can opt for a written contract or not. However, if he opts to do so, the terms are binding, and any deviation is punishable. Disputes are to be resolved in summary proceedings by designated revenue officers like the District Collector: The jurisdiction of courts is banned. Contract farming is not a new phenomenon. It is being practiced in products like milk, poultry and sugarcane since long. Many corporates also buy fruits and vegetables from contract farmers to meet their processing needs. Under

the Indian Contracts Act, even a verbal contract is legally binding if it is acted upon - so why was there a need to have a separate law for it? As the disputes are to be arbitrated by government officers and the jurisdiction of courts is banned, farmers fear that the decisions may be influenced by the government of the day or influential businesses.

The third Act, the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020 is perhaps the least controversial as it removes the power of the government to impose restrictions on stocking limits except in "exceptional circumstances" subject to certain triggers such as abnormal increase in retail prices. However, before the ink on the proposed bill was dry, the central government banned export of onions and imposed stock limits without a trigger. This aggravated the persistent trust deficit between the government and the farmers and gave rise to many larger issues which lie at the core of the present agitation. - To be continued The writer is a retired IAS officer and former Chairman.

Agricultural & Processed Food Products Export Development Authority.

Unprecedented drama

Obesity on the rise

Sir, A healthy population undoubtedly is the most precious asset for a country. However, to remain healthy individuals need to maintain a balanced dietary habit and physical exercise as well. The latest National Family Health Survey has brought an embarrassing figure of rising obesity in India among children as well as adult population. The report of NFHS-5 as compared to NFHS-4 of 2015-16 has registered a several fold increase in obesity among children below 5 years across India and in the similar way among the adult population. Among the States and Union Territories across India, Ladakh has registered 13.4 per cent (highest) obese children under 5 years followed by Lakshadweep, Mizoram, Jammu & Kashmir and Sikkim. Kerala and Andaman & Nicobar Islands have registered most obese women population with 38 per cent obesity. Factors such as more availability and consumption of junk food, lack of physical exercise and out-door activities, poor complementary feeding and spending more time on mobile phones and other screen gadgets are instrumental in rising obesity. Lack of awareness about high-fat and high-sugar foods has undoubtedly increased food consumption and thus led to obesity. It is high-time parents nurture good habits of food and physical exercise among children to keep obesity at bay. Lack of schooling during Covid-19 as well as slump in out-door activities among children may be the other causes of obesity. Santosh Kumar Satapathy, PARALAKHEMUNDI

Limits of authority

Sir, The JEE mains ex-Sir, The pandemonium witamination notification was nessed on Tuesday in Karnataka out on 15 December, but Legislative Council over the immediately it was taken Chairman's seat shows our leadback. Similarly, the state education minister announced the possibility of reopening of schools, but this decision was also taken back. Highly placed authorities don't know their 'limits of authority' and are making decisions without approval from the competent authority. This leads to confusion among put. Such ruckus lowers the the public. credibility of our netas. Gopal Prasad Mittal,

BHUBANESWAR

NJ Ravi Chander. BANGALORE

ers in poor light. BJP and Congress members almost came to blows after ruling party MLCs insisted on moving a no-confidence motion against Chairman Prathap Chandra Shetty. Congress members tried to drag Dy Chairman SL Dharme Gowda out of the seat of Chairman he had occupied, while BJP members wanted to ensure he stayed



'Transfer money directly to land sellers' Outfit cautions Kovind

JAMMU & KASHMIR HC ORDERS CONCERNED LAND ACOUISITION COLLECTOR TO TRANSFER MONEY DIRECTLY INTO THE ACCOUNT OF LAND OWNERS

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 16: The Jammu and Kashmir High Court has ordered immediate and direct transfer of money into the accounts of land owners in a first-of-its-kind judgement to ensure compensation for land acquired by the state for infrastructural facilities is not swindled away by middlemen.

The high court has ordered that the concerned Land Acquisition Collector shall directly transfer the amount into the account of the land owner.

Citing a leading judgement of the Supreme Court, the Jammu and Kashmir High Court earlier this month held "To protect the interest of land owners, who very often are swindled by middlemen during the process of disbursement of compensation or harassed by the officials in the office of the Land Acquisition Collector while disbursing the compensation for acquisition of land, the most sustainable way to avoid such harassment of land owners in addition to lessening the time, energy and resources of the concerned depart-

I AND COMPF ISATION

The government had announced construction of ring road from Raya Morh to Nagrota and assigned National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) to execute the project

ment is involved is that, subsequent to receipt of the particulars of the land owners eligible for compensation. the amount of compensation should be transferred in the bank account of said land owners by the Collector directly and immediately after the award is announced."

The judgement adds the Land Acquisition Collector shall depute officers subordinate to him not



below the rank of Naib Tehsildar, who shall get in touch with all the land owners andor their legal representatives and inform them about their entitlement and right to receive enhanced compensation. Directions were passed to dis-

pose of a petition filed by a Jammu resident who had challenged the acquisition of his land for construction of a 58 km ring road, thus

paving the way for completion of the 2,100 crore project hanging fire for nearly three years.

The government had announced construction of ring road from Raya Morh to Nagrota and assigned National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) to execute the project. The project, when completed, will also create infrastructural facilities in the border areas for movement of our armed forces.

The high court held that the project is meant to create infrastructural facilities in Jammu Kashmir. It will not only ease out traffic problem in Jammu City but also work as a ring road, which will originate about 20 km before Jammu city and will link the Jammu-Srinagar Highway, after crossing the Nagrota city, which is about 11 kilometers from Jammu.

Refusing to stall the construction of the road, the high court held it has been consistently opined by the courts that for the matters pertaining to acquisition of land for creation of infrastructural facilities, which are of national importance, interference of the courts should he minimal

Army celebrates Vijay Diwas in J&K

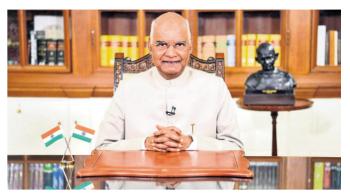
on maligning of Nehru

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Panaji, Dec 16: Claiming that top BJP leaders were slandering the image of India's first Prime Minister late Jawaharlal Nehru, the Dakshinayan Abhiyaan in Goa, in a letter to President of India Ramnath Kovind has expressed anxiety that the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the state's Liberation could be used to further tarnish Nehru with misinformation.

In the letter to Kovind, who is the main invitee for a state government event December 19, to launch the year-long celebration of Goa's Liberation from Portuguese yoke, the Abhiyaan's state president Damodar Mauzo has also said that Nehru did not intentionally delay the Liberation of Goa in 1961 and the main goal was to avoid bloodshed and violence in the quest for wresting Goa from the colonial power.

"Goans will be deeply hurt if the yearlong celebrations are marked by such unfair and twisted political statements that can damage the image of our beloved Pandit



Jawaharlal Nehru," the Dakshinayan Abhiyaan president said in his letter to the President of India.

'The young independent India that believed in Gandhian approach played its cards very wisely and resultantly, through Operation Vijay, Goa was liberated. The peace-loving people of Goa are ever grateful to then PM.

Jawaharlal Nehru whose cautious efforts led to liberation of Goa without bloodshed," the letter authored by Mauzo, a Sahitya Akademi award-winning writer said. Dakshinavan Abhivan is an

organisation started by academic scholars, artists, writers, progressive-minded intellectuals, and social activists under the leadership of Dr. Ganesh Devy with the objective of promoting progressive ideas and human values among citizens in general and youth in particular.

The letter also mentions top BJP leaders including Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, and Goa CM Pramod Sawant for making misinformed comments on Nehru, blaming the latter for delaying Goa's Liberation.

Demand to replace booth officers after complaints

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Panaji, Dec 16: Amid complaints by parties in Goa that objections about electoral rolls were being raised in the name of dead people, the office of Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Wednesday wrote to South District Electoral Officer (DEO) seeking that the Booth Level Officers (BLOs) be replaced.

In a recent meeting with Chief Electoral Officer Kunal, the Goa Forward Party (GFP) had alleged that objections about the electoral rolls were raised in the name of those citizens, who have already died. Congress's Goa unit general secretary Sankalp Amonkar had also pointed it out to the election officers in Mormugao taluka. He had alleged that BLOs were involved in the "racket" in order to ensure that the names of valid voters were deleted



from the list. Amonkar had also claimed that BLOs from one particular government department were designated as BLOs in Mormugao taluka, where such instances have been reported.

The CEO is currently holding the special summary revision of photo electoral rolls undertaken by the Election Commission of India.

In the letter written to the DEO, Deputy Chief Electoral Officer Sangeeta Naik said, "In view of the concerns raised by the political parties regarding the parents offices of the BLOs of Mormugao taluka, you are requested to explore the possibility of replacing these BLOs with the staff of other government departments instead of a single department."

Naik has sought action taken report from DEO within eight days.



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, Dec 16: The Army Wednesday celebrated Vijay Diwas in Jammu and Kashmir and paid homage to soldiers who laid down their lives in the 1971 India-Pakistan war. a Northern Command spokesperson said.

A large number of Army pernnel and ex-servicemen partic-

their steadfast and lifelong commitment to their families," the spokesperson said.

"Their indomitable courage, unflagging zeal and dogged determination shall always be a great source of inspiration for all ranks of the Indian Army," he said.

India celebrates December 16 as Vijay Diwas to commemorate its victory over Pakistan during the 1971 war that led to the creation of Bangladesh."The swift and professionally planned operations executed by the Indian armed forces led to one of the greatest military victories recorded in the annals of world history," the spokesperson said. "This historic victory signifies a unique and unparalleled feat wherein our forces fought selflessly for a just and noble cause of liberation of the people of erstwhile

East Pakistan and the creation of a sovereign and independent Bangladesh," he added.

On this day in 1971, 93,000 Pakistani soldiers had surrendered before the Indian Army. Vijay Diwas was also commem-

orated at Nagrota Garrison. "White Knight Corps

Commander Lt Gen M V Suchindra Kumar laid a wreath at Ashwamedh

Kashmir reels under biting cold

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, Dec 16: Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir, experienced the coldest night of the season Wednesday as the valley reeled under cold conditions with the mercury plummeting several degrees below the freezing point owing to a clear sky, MeT officials said.

All the weather stations in the valley recorded the sub-zero night temperature owing to the clear sky and the minimum temperature settled several degrees below the normal for this part of the season, they said. The officials said Srinagar recorded a low of minus 4.8 degrees Celsius, down from the previous night's minus 3.2 degrees Celsius. The minimum temperature was about four degrees below the normal for this part of the season. This was the coldest night of the season so far in the city, they

added. The mercury in Gulmarg the famous ski-resort in north Kashmir, settled at a low of minus 11.0 degrees Celsius which is about seven degrees below the normal for this time of the season, the of ficials said.

The resort was the coldest recorded place in the union territory. Pahalgam tourist resort in south Kashmir recorded a low of minus 7.4 degrees Celsius, the officials said.

They said Qazigund, the gateway town to the valley, recorded the minimum of minus 3.3 degrees Celsius, while Kupwara, in the north, registered a low of minus 4.8 degrees Celsius and Kokernag, in the south, minus 5.2 degrees Celsius, they said.

The Meteorological Office has said the weather is likely to remain mainly dry till December 22 with the possibility of a further decrease in the night temperature.



ipated in the celebrations held at the Northern Command headquarters in Udhampur, he said.

Lt Gen YK Joshi, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Northern Command laid a wreath at Dhruva Shahid Smarak to commemorate the occasion, according to the spokesperson.

'While remembering all the bravehearts who laid down their lives for the nation, all ranks of the Northern Command reaffirmed

Shaurya Sthal War Memorial to honour the valiant martyrs of Army," a defence spokesperson said.

Officers and jawans of White Knight Corps also paid homage to the soldiers who fought in the war, he said. Speaking on the occasion, Lt Gen Kumar exhorted the troops of White Knight Corps to be "everready" to face any challenges with grit, determination and valour and emerge victorious.



Militants are high on recruitment, but weaponless

THIS DEFICIT IN WEAPONRY HAS PROVOKED DESPERATE ATTEMPTS BY PAKISTAN TO FIND NEW ROUTES AND MODES OF WEAPON DELIVERY — LIKE AIR DROPS — TO MILITANTS IN KASHMIR

AGENCIES

Srinagar, Dec 16: Militancy in Jammu and Kashmir has entered a crucial transitional phase. In the last five years, it kept surging, its lethality increasing year after year-in terms of recruitment, infiltration and violent attacks.

The year 2020 marked a remarkable shift in the trends of militancy, indicating a downgrading in lethality despite high recruitment. The recruitment numbers for the year 2020 do not show a big change compared to last year.

As per news reports, the number of local recruits for this year (till October end) stood at 145-the second highest in a decade. The spate of recruitment suggests that the counter-offensive of security forces is proving to be a zero-sum game, as for every militant killed a new one is being recruited or infiltrated. However, there is another data point which depicts a significant downgrade in militant operations. Data suggests that militants in Kashmir are witnessing a dearth of weaponry and logistics, which is severely denting their capacity to carry out big, lethal attacks.

Data accessed by ORF shows that 176 counter-militancy operations were conducted by the security forces till October end. Out of 245 weapons recovered, 101 were pistol or handguns and 144 were var-



ious types of assault rifles-AK47, AK56, M4, Insas etc.

Many operations in which militants were killed/arrested/surrender had no major weapon recovery. Recovery of ammunitions showed that the militants possessing pistols carried on an average 10 rounds for each weapon.

In the case of assault rifles, an average

of 66 rounds per weapon was recorded. A pistol is primarily a self-defence weapon and can only be used to carry out targeted assassinations at point-blank range. The above data clearly shows that the pistol-wielding members posed a lesser threat as they are not capable of carrying out big attacks against the military establishment. This also explains why there weren't any major terror attacks in the year 2020 barring a few. The nature of attacks carried out in 2020 were mostly targeted killings of civilians and stand-off attacks on cornered soldiers. Data shows that this year, only one improvised explosive device or IED was recovered compared to the 12 recovered last year. The critical metric to judge the state of militancy is not the disruption in sup-

LESSER LETHAL ATTACKS

THE YEAR 2020 MARKED A REMARKABLE SHIFT IN THE TRENDS OF MILITANCY, INDICATING A DOWNGRADING IN LETHALITY DESPITE HIGH RECRUITMENT

AS PER NEWS REPORTS, THE NUMBER OF LOCAL RECRUITS FOR THIS YEAR (TILL OCTOBER END) STOOD AT 145-THE SECOND HIGHEST IN A DECADE

DATA SUGGESTS THAT MILITANTS IN KASHMIR ARE WITNESSING A DEARTH OF WEAPONRY AND LOGISTICS, WHICH IS SEVERELY DENTING THEIR CAPACITY TO CARRY OUT BIG, LETHAL ATTACKS

ply of weapons but the surge in demand for weapons. In other words, the continuous flow of recruits suggests that the demand for weapons is much more than it has been in the last few years. Perhaps, the weapon supply chain has primarily been interrupted by shutting down of the cross-LoC trade and crackdown on the overground networks of the militant outfits.

Goa announces measures to strengthen RLBs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Panaji. Dec 16: Two days after clinching a clear Victory in Zilla Panchayat polls in Goa, the state BJP government on Wednesday announced various measures, including granting of more financial powers, to strengthen the local bodies.

The state Cabinet has increased the allocation of development grants to various Panchayats and granted more powers to Zilla or district Panchayats, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant said.

The BJP Monday made big gains in the Zilla Panchayat elections, winning 32 out of 49 seats on offer, while the opposition Congress performed poorly, bagging just four. Sawant said his government wanted to link Zilla Panchayats with departments like Agriculture and Animal Husbandry to ensure effective implementation of "Swavampurna Goa" mission.

"The development grants to Panchayats have been increased, which will provide them additional financial muscle. With financial empowerment, the Panchavats and their representatives will be able to serve the people in a better way," he added.





India and the UK will set up a joint task force consisting of designated higher education organisations from both the countries to work towards mutual recognition of academic gualifications RAMESH POKHRIYAL UNION EDUCATION MINISTER

WINTER GIFT

Inmates in the Kaushambhi district jail in UP are stitching coats for cows, using old and torn blankets



Owaisi seeks to gain foothold in UP Rahul walks out of uote Def parl panel meet

If municipal elections can take place in Hyderabad and Assam, why not here. The situation is worse than

Kashmir and is similar to that of Iran and Iraq. Didi (Mamata Banerjee) has proved that West Bengal's law and order is not conducive to go for polls

DILIP GHOSH WEST BENGAL BJP PRESIDENT

The old-timers of the party are our rea assets. The BJP is trying to coerce TMC leaders to join. It is using moneybags to break opposition parties... But, we will fight and defeat them in the assembly polls MAMATA BANERJEE WEST BENGAL CM



TRIVENDRA SINGH RAWAT UTTARAKHAND CM

SHORT TAKES

Maoist killed

Ranchi: A Maoist guerrilla was killed in a gunbattle with police in Jharkhand's Latehar district Wednesday. According to the police, the gunbattle took place at Serke Nindra forest situated under Chandwa Police Station of Latehar district. The slain Maoist belonged to Tritiya Prastuti Committee (TPC). The body of the Maoist has

Cop held

been recovered.

Mumbai: A 28-year-old constable of the Mumbai Police was arrested for allegedly molesting a 13year-old girl in suburban Ghatkopar, an official said on Wednesday. The alleged incident had occurred a few days back, but it came to light after parents of the victim girl filed a complaint against the constable, who is d to Vile Parl station, he said. A case was registered under various sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), including molestation, and under the Protection of Children against Sexual Offences act (POCSO).

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, Dec 16: Buoyed by his party's showing in the Bihar Assembly polls, AIMIM president Asaduddin Owaisi Wednesday announced his party's intention to fight the next state elections in Uttar Pradesh as part of a front led by Om Prakash Rajbhar, a former BJP ally.

"We are now part of Mr Rajbhar's morcha," he said after meeting the Suheldev Bhartiya Samaj Party (SBSP) chief here."Today I met him. So we will go along with him. We will go with the 'Bhagidari Sankalp Morcha," the Hyderabadbased leader said, referring to the front of smaller parties formed in Uttar Pradesh about a year back. The SBSP chief confirmed the de-

velopment. "We will contest the 2022 UP Assembly elections together. Till vesterday, people used to say that OP Rajbhar is all alone, and what can he do?" he told reporters. "Now. Owaisi ji has come. We will show our strength to the heavyweights." The `morcha' also includes former Bahujan Samaj Party leader Babu Singh Kushwaha's Jan Adhikar Party, Babu Ram Pal-led Rashtra Uday Party, Anil Singh Chauhan-led Janta Kranti Party and Premchand Prajapati's Rashtriva Upekshit

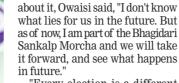


The Owaisi-Rajbhar meeting comes a day after Aam Aadmi Party leader Arvind Keiriwal announced in Delhi that his party will contest the Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls in 2022. In the recent Bihar elections, Owaisi's Ail India Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen won five seats out of the 20 it contested in the Seemanchal region bordering West Bengal."Rajbhar ji too had a role in the success we got in Bihar. We are part of the Grand Democratic

Secular Alliance," Owaisi said, referring to the Bihar front. We got a lot of confidence from the success in Bihar, and we will continue that momentum," he added. There has been some speculation that Mayawati's BSP could also join the Bhagidari front. Asked

'victory' was forced to walk thou-

sands of miles across Punjab,



"Every election is a different election. Our party workers led by UP president Shaukat Ali are working very hard and this time I am sure that our performance will be much better, and now we are part of Rajbhar's alliance," he said.

On claims that the AIMIM's role has been to split opposition votes. he said, "In a movie, it is the villain who is given the important role." He recalled that the AIMIM has fought the UP assembly elections earlier as well but without any success. Since then, the party has contested some municipal corporation polls as well. "We have been working continuously over here," he said.

In his interactions with the media, SBSP leader Rajbhar said the Bhagidari Sankalp Morcha is fight ing for education, health and jobs. Owaisi also hit out at Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee over her comment that the BJP is trying to bring the AIMIM to West Bengal to polarise Hindus and Muslims, and divide the votes of the two communities between themselves. He reminded that Banerjee was part of the BJP-led NDA when the 2002 Gujarat riots took place.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 16: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and other members of his party Wednesday walked out of a meeting of the Parliamentary Committee on Defence, alleging that the panel's time was being wasted in discussing armed forces' uniform instead of the crucial issue of national security. sources said.

Rahul Gandhi was disallowed to speak at the meeting by the panel chairman Jual Oram (BJP) when he sought to raise the issues of Chinese aggression and better equipping the soldiers at the border in Ladakh, they said.

The sources said the issue of uniforms of the Army, Navy and the Air Force was being discussed in the presence of the Chief of Defence Staff Gen Bipin Rawat when Rahul intervened to say that instead of discussing this, the political leadership should discuss the issues of national security and how to strengthen the forces who are fighting the Chinese in Ladakh

A presentation on the colour of uniforms in the Army, Navy and Air Force was being made to the Committee when a BJP mem-



form colour of the three forces as in the United States However, the former Congress

chief said the Army, Navy and the Air Force should decide what the colour of their uniform should be, and not the politicians.

"The politicians should have no business to tell the Army, Navy or Air Force which uniform to wear and it is neither their jurisdiction nor domain and should not belittle them or insult them. "The political leadership should instead provide hot tents, boots and equip the soldiers who are braving out at the border and are fighting the Chinese in Ladakh," Rahul was quoted as saying at the meeting.

SUVENDU QUITS AS MLA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Dec 16: Ending weeks of speculations, TMC heavyweight Suvendu Adhikari resigned as an MLA of the state assembly Wednesday further fuelling the theory of him switching over to the saffron camp.

Adhikari, who has resigned from the state cabinet last month and has been maintaining distance with the party leadership, arrived at the state assembly this evening and submitted his resignation to the assembly secretary.

He was TMC MLA from Nandigram assembly constituency of the East Midnapore district. "I do hereby tender my resignation from the member of the West Bengal Legislative Assembly. Steps may be taken for its immediate acceptance," Adhikari wrote in

his resignation letter. Suvendu Adhikari had helped Mamata Banerjee in her anti-land acquisition movement against the Left Front government in Nandigram in 2009 that catapulted her to power in 2011. After the efforts of rapprochement failed, Adhikari, without naming anyone, has criticised the TMC leadership on a range of issues.

According to the sources close to him, Adhikari is likely to resign from the party's primary mem bership within a day or two and is expected to cross over to the saffron camp later this week. Notably, Union Home minister Amit Shah is scheduled to be on a two-day visit to Bengal starting Saturday.

Reacting to the development TMC MP Kalyan Banerjee said, "It's a good relief". "It's a good relief that he has resigned from the post of MLA. He is overambitious and wants to join BJP as he wants to become the next CM or deputy CM. He can go ahead, we are confident of winning the next assembly polls under the leadership of Mamata Banerjee,' Banerjee said.

Sunny Deol's security enhanced

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chandigarh, Dec 16: Actor and BJP's Punjab MP Sunny Deol has been given enhanced security cover after his comments supporting the Central government over the new farm laws, officials said Wednesday. The Central government has provided Y-category security to Deol of 11 personnel, comprising two commandos. Deol, the MP from Gurdaspur, posted a statement on Twitter on December 6, saying that people were trying to stir trouble and the matter should be kept between the farmers and government. "I know that many people want to take advantage of the situation and are creating problems. They are not thinking of farmers. They may have their own agenda, he said.

Freedom at last for Jai

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Agra, Dec 16: Fifty-year-old Jai can now breathe freely and enjoy his sunset years in comfort at the Elephant Hospital on the Agra-Mathura border.

Jai, the elephant, was forced to keep moving in spiked chains from villages to towns by beggars asking for alms. The Rajasthan Forest department finally decided to book the offenders and secure the release of Jai, from the offenders. A lifetime of hardships ended and a new era has begun in the life of the hapless animal

Delhi, Madhya Pradesh and finally to Rajasthan. His painfully infected wounds that have festered due to years of neglect have severely affected his overall health condition The elephant could be transported after written permissions from the Chief Wildlife Wardens

of Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh in a specially designed elephant ambulance to help facilitate the animal's medical care. The veterinary team carried medical equipment for providing immediate relief to the pachyderm and also assessed if he was physically fit to be transported.

Raghunath Mishra, Divisional Forest Officer, Mathura said, "Rajasthan Forest Department requested to send this elephant for medical care to the Wildlife SOS Elephant Hospital and the

Uttar Pradesh Forest Department

said. "The use of spiked chains



Prime Minister Narendra Modi lays a wreath at the National War Memorial at the beginning of the Golden Jubilee of India's victory over Pakistan in the Indo-Pak War in New Delhi, Wednesday PTI PHOTO





Samai Party

Six injured

Mumbai: At least six passengers were injured when their bus suffered a tyre burst and veered off the road at Kharghar in neighbouring Navi Mumbai on Wednesday, a police official said. The accident took place around 6.30 am on the Sion- Panvel highway when the private bus was going towards Mumbai from Jalna in Maharashtra, he said. When the bus reached Kharghar, one of its tyres burst.

Two arrested

Thane: Police have arrested two persons and seized mephedrone, a banned drug, worth Rs 35 lakh from their possession in Mira-Bhayander township of Maharashtra, a police official said Wednesday. Acting on a tip-off, the Mira-Bhayander Vasai-Virar (MBVV) police intercepted the duo, who were on a scooter, near Dahisar toll naka Monday evening.

Woman dies

Bhadohi (UP): A 21-year-old woman, who was set afire allegedly by her neighbours over a property dispute about two months ago, died during treatment, police said Wednesday. Five people had barged into the house of Nirmala on the night of October 23 and set her afire by sprinkling kerosene on her, police said.



Jai, the elephant, was forced to keep moving in spiked chains from villages to towns by beggars asking for alms

issued permission so the elephant can receive medical treatment. Hemant Singh, IFS- Deputy Conservator of Forest, Jhalawar

said, "I would like to thank the team at Wildlife SOS for their dedicated efforts to provide treat ment to this male elephant who is suffering from severe health complications." Geeta Seshamani, Co-founder and Secretary of Wildlife SOS

is illegal. When pulled, the spikes tear at the flesh and create im-The elephant has been handed mense pain for the elephant and over to Wildlife SOS for longthis is how they are controlled term medical treatment and care using pain and fear. The wounds as the spiked chains had become often don't heal and can become embedded inside his leg causing infected and gangrenous over severe infection endangering his time. life. The elephant's hind limbs The Wildlife SOS Elephant

Hospital in Mathura was estabwere bound in spiked chains, lished with support from the causing chronic wounds and infection requiring immediate med-Uttar Pradesh Forest Department in November 2018 and has pro-Animal lovers reacted saying vided specialized medical treatit was indeed shocking that the ment for injured, sick and gerielephant named 'Jai' meaning atric elephants across India.

Kerala local body polls: LDF ahead

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram, Dec 16: The ruling CPI(M)-led LDF in Kerala Wednesday appeared to make a sweep of the local body polls in the state, while the BJP seemed to have made some gains, leading in Pandalam, the centre of protests against women's entry into Sabarimala, among others.

The Left front was leading in 514 grama panchayats, five corpora tions and 11 district panchayats, prompting Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan to attribute the good show to the people of the state.

The outcome of the polls is seen as an indicator of the public mood ahead of the 2021 assembly elections in the state. The Opposition Congress-led UDF was in the second spot, leading in over 400 local bodies. The Left front is also ahead in 108 block panchayats, Vijayan said here.

He also took to Twitter to thank the people for reposing faith in the ruling front."Thank you Kerala. Thank you for reposing faith in



Left Democratic Front (LDF) supporters celebrate their party's lead in the Kerala local body elections in Kochi РТІ РНОТО

LDF. We are humbled by the trust and the confidence of the people of Kerala. This is a victory for secularism and inclusive development," he said. It was "people's victory," he said, adding LDF's performance is a resounding reply to those who tried to belittle the state's achievements. The Opposition Congress led UDF was leading in 375 grama panchayats, 44 block panchayats, 45 municipalities and three district panchayats. The BJP is ahead in 23 grama panchayats and two municipalities, including Pandalam, which was the centre of protests against the entry of women of the banned age group into the Sabarimala Ayyappa shrine. The saffron party was ahead in Palakkad municipality also.

Though the BJP could not put up a spectacular show, it still seemed to better its 2015 record, where it won 14 grama panchayats and the lone Palakkad municipality, and if the trends hold, could nearly double its seats this time.



India ranks 131 in UN's human development index

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

ical attention.

New Delhi, Dec 16: India dropped one spot to 131 among 189 countries in the 2020 human development index, according to a report released by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Human Development Index is the measure of a nation's health, education, and standards of living. Life expectancy of Indians at birth in 2019 was 69.7 years while Bangladesh has a life expectancy of 72.6 years and Pakistan 67.3 years,

said. India, Bhutan (129), Bangladesh (133), Nepal (142), and Pakistan (154) were ranked among coun-

the 2020 Human Development Report

tries with medium human development, the report said.

India's HDI value for 2019 is 0.645 which put it in the medium human development category. India has been positioned at 131 out of 189 countries and territories, according to the report. India had ranked 130 in 2018 in the index.

Norway topped the index, followed by Ireland, Switzerland, Hong Kong and Iceland, the report showed. Talking to reporters, UNDP **Resident Representative Shoko** Noda said the drop in India's ranking doesn't mean "India didn't do well but other countries did better".

Noda said India can help other countries too and lauded its commitment to reduce carbon emis-



sions. According to the report published by the United Nations Development Programme on Tuesday, India's gross national income per capita fell to USD 6,681 in 2019 from USD 6.829 in 2018 on pur-

chasing power parity (PPP) basis. Purchasing power parity or PPP is a measurement of prices in different countries that uses the prices of specific goods to compare the absolute purchasing power of the countries' currencies.

The report said evidence from Colombia to India indicates that financial security and ownership of land improve women's security and reduce the risk of genderbased violence, clearly indicating that owning land can empower women. It further said indigenous children in Cambodia, India and Thailand show more malnutritionrelated issues such as stunting and wasting. "In India different responses in parent behaviour as well as some disinvestment in girls' health and education have led to higher malnutrition among girls than among boys as a consequence of shocks likely linked to climate change," the report said.

The report said that under the Paris Agreement, India pledged to reduce the emission intensity of its GDP from the 2005 level by 33-35 percent by 2030 and to obtain 40 percent of electric power capacity from non-fossil fuel sources by 2030. "As part of the plan, the National Solar Mission aims to promote solar energy for power generation and other uses to make solar energy competitive with fossil fuel-based options. Solar capacity in India increased from 2.6 gigawatts in March 2014 to 30 gigawatts in July 2019, achieving its target of 20 gigawatts four years ahead of schedule. In 2019, Indiaranked fifth for installed solar capacity," the report said.













We are a country where the growth of communication technology is phenomenal. This presents a tremendous scope for the entertainment and media industry

PRAKASH JAVADEKAR UNION INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING MINISTER

MOUNT ABU SHIVERS

As the temperature continues to plummet in Rajasthan, hill station Mount Abu registered a minimum temperature of 1.4 degree Celsius, making it the coldest place in the desert state



PHASE 1 TRIAL FINDING Covaxin triggers immune response

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 16: The interim findings of phase 1 clinical trial of COVID-19 vaccine Covaxin, indigenously developed by Bharat Biotech in collaboration with the ICMR, showed that it was well tolerated in all dose groups with no serious or adverse events. The vaccine induced robust bind-

ing and neutralising antibody re-

sponses which were comparable to those observed in the convalescent serum collected from patients who had recovered from COVID-19, according to the findings which have appeared on medRxiv, a preprint server.

A preprint is a version of a scientific manuscript posted on a public server prior to formal peer review. One serious adverse event was reported, which was found to be unrelated to vaccination, the findings

ble-blind randomised controlled phase 1 clinical trial to evaluate Covaxin (BBV152).

BBV152 is stored between 2 degrees Celsius and 8 degrees Celsius, which is compatible with all national immunisation programme cold chain requirements and further efficacy trials are underway. According to the "A Phase 1: Safety and Immunogenicity Trial

vaccination, local and systemic adverse events were predominantly mild or moderate in severity and resolved rapidly, without any prescribed medication.

A similar trend was observed after the second shot was administered. Pain at the injection site was the most common local adverse event. "One serious adverse event was reported. The participant was vaccinated on July 30.

Five days later, the participant reported symptoms of COVID-19 and was found to be positive for SARS-CoV-2," according to the findings.

"The symptoms were mild in nature, but the patient was admitted to the hospital on August 15. The participant was discharged on August 22 following a negative nucleic acid result. The event was not causally associated with the vaccine," the findings showed.

To ensure generalisability, the trial was

eral operational challenges, the overall participant retention rate was 97 per cent," the findings showed. The sample size was intentionally large to enable the inference of meaningful conclusions regarding immunogenicity and

8 killed, 21 hurt in road accident

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sambhal (UP), Dec 16: Eight people died, while 21 more sus-___ tained injuries Wednesday morning when an Uttar Pradesh Roadways hus collided with a gas tanker here amid reduced visibility due to fog, police said.

BHARAT

showed. It was a dou-

6

the safety and immunogenicity of The document mentions that

calls on PM Modi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 16: British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi Wednesday and discussed the vast potential of the India-UK part-



RAPE CONVICTION RATE REMAINS ABYSMAL

OUT OF A TOTAL OF 1, 62,741 RAPE CASES WHICH WENT TO TRIAL IN 2019,

THE COURT CONVICTED PEOPLE IN ONLY 4,640 CASES

perts, one of the reasons why crimbeing done with scientific tools, inals do not get convicted is poor the rate of conviction in all cases investigation by the police, family in India gets lower." The United Nations Children's pressure on victims, hostility of

Fund on Monday revealed that Dalit girls and women face multiple barriers to justice in India, with conviction rate for rapes against Dalit women being under two per cent as compared to a much higher conviction rate in rape cases against all

women. The Nirbhaya case is one such case in which not only were the culprits convicted but were also hanged by the noose. Condemned convicts -- Vinay, Akshay, Pawan and Mukesh were executed on March 20 at 5:30 a.m., over seven years after the crime took place in

the national capital. The case pertains to the gruesome rape of a 23-year-old physiotherapy student, later dubbed 'Nirbhaya', by six men in a moving bus on December 16, 2012. She had succumbed to her injuries 13 days later. The attackers inserted rods inside her vagina and ripped her intestines apart. The brutality of the crime shook the nation to the core, leading to widespread protests and a drastic change in the country's rape laws.

After the Nirbhaya incident, Justice J.S. Verma Committee formed the basis of the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act of 2013 to set the maximum punishment for rape as death penalty rather than life imprisonment.

In 2013, the Criminal Law (Amendment) Ordinance, 2013 was promulgated by then President Pranab Mukherjee which provided for the death penalty in cases of rape. The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 was also passed, allowing for juveniles in conflict with law, involved in heinous offences, to be tried as adults.

not get convicted is poor investigation by the police, family pressure on victims, hostility of witnesses and complainants, absence of forensic labs and

fast-track courts Advocate Aparna Bhatt. former member of Delhi's rape crisis cell, said that the conviction rate will go up only when a support system is created for complainants. "They

In 2018, however, the

rate was 27.2 per cent,

down from 32.2 per cent

in 2017 and 23.9 per cent

reasons why criminals do

the year before that.

According to legal

experts, one of the

should be able to complain in a proper way. Thereafter,

support should be given through a medical

examination and in the court," she emphasised

46% Indians taking online consultation: Survey

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 16: At least 46 per cent Indians still prefer to connect to their doctors over call for medical consultation instead of physical visits to the doctors, a new survey has revealed Wednesday.

The survey conducted by online doctor consultation platform -- Mount Virtual Hospital -- was done across

tor positively in times to come. survey were 2,406 which included Sanjay Singh, Founder of Mount 1.455 males and around 951 females. The findings showed that about 70 per cent of the respondents

who had diabetes, heart problems, blood pressure issues, cancer or kidney diseases, who are at increased risk of severe illness from the Covid-19, still want to get the lated to dermatology, nutrition consultation done with their docand diet and mental health issues. tors over call be it for follow up con-The data also showed that 80 per

Virtual Hospital, said in a statement. According to the report, 60 per cent of the women surveyed in age group of 18-45 years, wanted to connect digitally with their doctors for getting consultation re-

The crash took place in the

Today, on the occasion of Viiav Diwas, I salute the tradition anti-rape laws in place. valour of the Indian Army, I remember the bravery of those courageous soldiers who wrote a new tale of

cases

courts.

emphasised.

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

witnesses and complainants, ab-

sence of forensic labs and fast-track

member of Delhi's rape crisis cell,

said that the conviction rate will go

up only when a support system is

created for complainants. "They

should be able to complain in a

proper way. Thereafter, support

should be given through a medical

examination and in the court," she

Advocate Geeta Luthra, how-

ever, said, "It is low because the

investigation is very poorly con-

ducted without any scientific

tools, forensic and medical evi-

dence of the victim or the ac-

cused. As a result, because of the

risk of false implication in cases

where the investigation is not

Advocate Aparna Bhatt, former

uote

The Centre and the state

should work as

"Team India" in addressing the needs of the

affordable credit

of courage and

governments

farmers. Apart from ensuring

M VENKAIAH NAIDU VICE PRESIDENT

remunerative prices, the farmers

should be provided with timely and

RAJNATH SINGH DEFENCE MINISTER

valour during the 1971 war

The state government may approach the Supreme Court against the Bombay High Court's order staying Mumbai suburban district collector's allotment of 102-acre Kanjurmarg salt pan land for Metro car shed

AJIT PAWAR MAHARASHTRA DEPUTY CM

SHORT TAKES

Rs 57L looted

Agra: Four armed bandits have disappeared with Rs 57 lakh from a branch of the Indian Overseas Bank in Agra after holding the bank staff hostage They have vanished without a trace, police said. The loot took place in the IOB branch near Rohta on Gwalior Road on Tuesday evening, A police investigation is underway.

.....

Elephant dies

Kolkata: An adult male elephant was killed after it was knocked down by a speeding truck near Jaldapara National Park in West Bengal's Alipurduar district, a forest official said. The 'Makna' (male elephant without tusks), aged around 15 years, was possibly crossing a highway at Madarihat on Monday night when it got hit by the truck which sped away, the official said









of an Inactivated SARS-CoV-2 Vaccine BBV152", after the first

conducted on volunteers from diverse geographic locations and socioeconomic conditions, enrolling 375 participants across 11 hospitals. "Despite the fact that enrolment occurred during a national lockdown, which led to sev-

safety, the document said.

2 killed, 1 hurt

Gopalganj: Two persons were killed and one injured when their car collided with a truck in Bihar's Gopalganj district Wednesday, police said. The incident took place on NH 28 near Sirsiya village under Kuchaikot police station when the car which was on its way to Gorakhpur collided head on with a truck coming from the opposite direction, Kuchaikot police station SHO Ashok Kumar said.

Naxal killed

Raipur: A Naxal was killed in an encounter with security forces in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district Wednesday, police said. The incident occurred around 10:30 AM in a forest near Miliampalli-Rajpenta villages under Jagargunda police station area when a joint team of security forces was out an anti-Naxal operation, Inspector General of Police (Bastar range) Sundarraj P said.

nership in the post-Brexit world, and launching of a 'vaccines hub' which will share best practice for clinical trials and foster innovation besides helping in shared fight against coronavirus.

In a tweet after the meeting, Modi said he was looking forward to UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson's visit to India to be the Chief Guest at the Republic Day celebrations next month."Excellent meeting with Dominic Raab, UK Secretary of State of FCDOGovUK. Discussed the vast potential of the India-UK partnership in the post-COVID, post-BREXIT world," Modi tweeted.

During the meeting, Modi recalled his recent telephone conversation with Prime Minister Johnson, and stressed the importance of the India-UK partnership in the post-COVID world, a statement from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said.

The Prime Minister called for an ambitious and outcome-oriented 360-degree roadmap covering trade and investment, defence and security, migration and mobility, education, energy, climate change



British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab handed over a letter from Johnson, inviting the Prime Minister to the G7 meeting

and health, in order to tap the full potential of the bilateral relation ship.

Foreign Secretary Raab conveyed greetings of Johnson to Prime Minister Modi and thanked him for participating in the recently held Climate Ambition Summit co-hosted by UK. Raab also stressed the priority that the UK government attaches to elevating relations with India, based on shared values and interests and the potential to address common global challenges together.

During the meeting, Foreign Secretary Raab also handed over a letter from Johnson, inviting Prime Minister Modi to the G7 meeting to be chaired by UK in 2021.

"This chapatti-making machine

metros covering Delhi-NCR, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. The data was collected from age group of 20 to 85 years. The total respondents in the

sultation or new consultation. "With people using digital mediums to connect to doctors, we are observing behavioural change and it will impact the health care sec-

ALWAYS ALERT



Indian army soldiers patrol near Line of control in Poonch district, Wednesday

cent of the men in the age group of 45-85 years of age still prefer to have online consultation due to fear of Covid infection keeping their age in mind.

Dhanari police station area, they added."Eight people have died in the accident involving a bus of UP Roadways and a gas tanker. All the injured have been hospitalised. The number of injured persons is 21. The bodies of the deceased have been sent for postmortem examination. Traffic has been diverted since there is still some gas in the tanker," Moradabad Inspector General of Police (IG) Ramit Sharma said.

Earlier: Superintendent of Police Chakresh Mishra had put the number of injured at 25 and said that the head-on collision took place on the Agra-Moradabad road. Police said the deceased are yet to be identified. District administration and police officials are at the spot and rescue operations are on, they added.

SIKH CLERIC **ENDS LIFE**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, Dec 16: A Sikh preacher supporting the farmers' agitation against the Centre's agriculture laws allegedly committed suicide near the Singhu border in Delhi Wednesday, police said.

A handwritten note in Punjabi, purportedly left behind by the deceased, says he was unable to bear the "pain of farmers". The note is being verified by police.

An official of the Sonipat police said they had received a call that Sant Ram Singh (65), who hailed from Karnal, allegedly shot himself. The deceased was rushed to a hospital in Panipat where doctors declared him brought dead.

The official said the exact spot where the incident took place is being verified. SAD spokesperson and Delhi Sikh Gurudwara Management Committee president Manjinder Singh Sirsa ex-and urged farmers to exercise restraint.

Technology powering farmers' protest at Singhu border

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 16: It's been over two weeks since thousands of farmers arrived at Delhi's Singhu border to demand a repeal of the Centre's agri reforms. Over the days, Good Samaritans, gurdwara committees and NGOs have pooled technological resources to ensure the agitation isn't hampered by the lack of basic amenities.

Gigantic machines that belt out 1,000-1,200 chapattis in an hour, washing machines and solar panels installed on tractor-trolleys for charging mobile phones -- technology is keeping the protesters camping at this highway-turned-town-



ship going. The chapatti-makers ensure timely meals for the prois fully automatic, you just have to testers and that 'langar' is served put the dough inside. It cuts the smoothly till midnight. dough into circles and in no time you

get the chapattis. "We start the machine around 7 am and it runs till 12 am. We serve meals to over 5,000 people every day," Hardeep Singh from Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee, which manages one of the 'langars' at the protest site, said.

Living away from the comfort of their homes, another issue faced by the farmers was washing clothes. Initially, some of them bathed and washed their clothes at petrol pumps. But as the temperatures in the national capital dipped and the number of protesters swelled, some farmers and Good Samaritans arranged for washing machines. On one of his trips back home to

Ludhiana in Punjab to wash his clothes, 30-year-old Prince Sandhu decided to bring two washing machines with him so that he and his fellow protesters didn't have to worry about the chore.

Soon after, someone donated another washing machine and the 'laundry sewa' has been going on in full swing ever since."Nearly 250 people come here every day to wash their clothes. Many do it on their own. We help out the elderly who don't know how to operate washing machines," said Sandhu, who joined the protest on November 27.

"I wake up at 6 am and help people wash their clothes till 8 pm, he said. Not far from the laundry spot is Pushpinder Singh's phone charging station. Singh, 36, said he knew protesters would face problems in charging their mobile phones and hence decided to install two 100 watt solar panels atop his tractor trolley before he set out from home in Harvana's Karnal.

"Mobile phones are our only source of knowing what is happening around us. I knew charging them would be a problem. So I bought these two solar panels for Rs 2,400 each before I got here. Not only are they helping us in charging mobile phones but also with lighting," he said."Now I see many others have also installed solar panels, which is good," he added.









OrissaPOST THURSDAY | DECEMBER 17 | 2020 | BHUBANESWAR international



The hurt and anguish that has been caused in New Zealand's history is inexcusable CHRIS HIPKINS | MEMBER OF THE NEW ZEALAND PARLIAMENT

LAB-GROWN MEAT

Lab-grown chicken meat will make its debut at a Singapore restaurant in a culinary first this weekend after the company behind the product announced its inaugural sale Wednesday





Britain and the European Union have moved closer to sealing a new trade deal but it was still unclear if they would succeed

URSULA VON DER LEYEN | EUROPEAN COMMISSION PRESIDENT

It's not for government to tell people exactly how to handle this pandemic situation ROBERT JENRICK UK HOUSING SECRETAR

The hostilities are not just for Trump's America, which ends when he leaves. Obama's America also did bad things to you and the Iranian nation AVATOLIAH ALI KHAMENEL IRAN'S SUPREME LEADER

SHORT TAKES

Khamenei hits out at the US

Dubai: Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Wednesday used his first public appearance in weeks to suggest the United States would remain hostile towards the Islamic Republic even after President-elect Joe Biden takes office. Speaking at his first public function since rumours surfaced in early December that his health was deteriorating, Khamenei said Washington could not be trusted - a remark indicating a wary attitude towards President Donald Trump's successor.

B'desh celebrates 50th Victory Day

Dhaka: The people of Bangladesh on Wednesday celebrated the 50th Victory Day. On December 16, 1971, Lt. Gen Amir Abdullah Khan Niazi, the Chief Martial Law Administrator of East

London enters highest Covid alert

AGENCIES

London, Dec 16: The UK government is reviewing the tiered lockdown allocations for different parts of the country as scheduled by law Wednesday, even as millions of more people in and around London moved into the highest alert level of Tier 3 coronavirus restrictions after a worrying spike in infections. With the addition of the UK

capital and surrounding areas of Essex and Hertfordshire to Tier 3, or near complete lockdown, around 61 per cent of England's population is now living under the toughest lockdown rules which impose a ban on interhousehold mingling indoors and a closure of all restaurants and bars except for takeaways and de-

liveries. "The number of COVID-19 cases in London has increased significantly over the past two weeks and we continue to experience the highest case rates of anywhere in the country," said Professor Kevin Fenton, London Regional Director for Public Health England.

WHO TEAM TO **TRAVEL TO CHINA** Geneva, Switzerland: The World

Health Organization said Wednesday that a team of international experts would travel to China next month to help investigate the animal origins of Covid-19. "I can confirm that this will take place in January," WHO spokesman Hedinn Halldorsson told AFP when asked about reports that the expert team, which includes epidemiologists and animal health specialists, would finally go to China next month. Meanwhile, the World Health Organisation in Europe warned Wednesday of a "further resurgence" of Covid-19 in early 2021, as it urged families to wear face masks during this year's Christmas gatherings.

AUSTRALIA TAKES CHINA TO WTO

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Sydney, Australia, Dec 16: Australia called Wednesday for the World Trade Organization to investigate Chinese tariffs on barley imports, turning to an "independent umpire" to adjudicate one of several bitter politically tinged disputes between the two nations.

Trade Minister Simon Birmingham denounced Beijing's 80 percent surcharge on Australian barley shipments as "not underpinned by facts and evidence", and suggested further WTO action could be in the pipeline.

"We have continued to raise our concerns with China on numerous occasions." Birmingham said. lamenting that efforts to reach a negotiated settlement had failed.

We now believe that calling in the independent umpire is the most appropriate course of action to resolve this dispute," he added, admitting the process of arbitration and appeals could take vears.

JOYFUL MOOD



An employee dressed in a Santa Claus costume plays with cats at the Catgarden in Seoul, South Korea

'Trump still involved in ongoing litigation'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, Dec 16: US President Donald Trump is still involved in ongoing litigation related to the November 3 presidential election, according to a top White House official.

The statement from White House Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany came a day after members of the Electoral College met in various states and formally elected Joe Biden, a Democrat, as the 46th President of the United States. Biden is scheduled to be sworn-in on January 20.

"The president is still involved in ongoing litigation related to the election. Yesterday's vote was one step in the constitutional process. So, I will leave that to him," McEnany told reporters on Tuesday at a news conference.



McEnany was responding to a question if Trump, a Republican, has any plans to invite Biden to the White House now that the Electoral College has voted. "Does the president acknowledge that Joe Biden is the president-elect," she

The statement from White House Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany came a day after members of the **Electoral College met** in various states and formally elected Joe Biden, a Democrat, as the 46th President of the United States

was asked. "The president is pursuing ongoing litigation." McEnany said. "Yesterday was one step in the constitutional process leading up to the January 20th date in the Constitution," she said.

McEnany defended Trump's litigation against elections. President Trump still refuses to concede, making unsubstantiated claims of widespread fraud during the presidential election won by Biden.

REUTERS

"I think pursuing legitimate litigation through the judicial system is in no way assaulting democracy. In fact, it's using democrat institutions in the manner they are to be used: to pursue legitimate claims with sworn affidavits and additional evidence," she said. Trump, she said, believes he certainly was under assault when it comes to the investigations into his administration. "The Mueller probe, the unfortunate way that our FBI was mishandled by folks like Andy McCabe, by folks like Jim Comey, and weaponised in a political way against his candidacy and then against his presidency," she added.

INDIAN ORIGIN MAN **KILLED IN CHICAGO** AIRPORT ACCIDENT

BOKO HARAM BEHIND

People party on a street as pubs shut

for the night due to tier

"We are now in a situation of

exponential growth which, if

left unchecked, would lead to a

rapid escalation in cases and

hospitalisations that could over-

whelm our NHS (National Health

Service) services over the fes-

tive period and into the New

Year. Whilst no-one wants to see

London under tighter restric-

tions, the stark reality of the situation means we have no

choice," he said. The outcome of

a review of the tiers for other

parts of the country is expected

to be announced Thursday.

Medical experts have raised con-

cerns over the government's ex-

emption for a so-called "Christmas

bubble" to allow up to three house-

holds to meet up over the festive

period under looser restrictions

UK Housing Secretary Robert

Jenrick laid some speculation

over a reversal of that policy to rest

when he urged the public to "use

their own judgement" on who to

see over that five days period.

"You can come together as three

families and bubble for up to five

davs – but I suspect many, many

people across the country will

choose to do less than that to pro-

tect themselves, their loved ones

and broader society," the Cabinet

minister told the BBC.

between December 23 and 27.

REUTERS

3 restrictions in Soho

SCHOOLBOYS' ABDUCTION

communicate with humans'

'Kangaroos can learn to

McElligott, the Irish researcher

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Pakistan and Commander of Pakistan Army forces located in East Pakistan had signed the Instrument of Surrender the led to the formation of Bangladesh. Niazi had signed the Instrument and Surrender in the presence of Jagjit Singh Aurora, who was representing the Indian and Bangladesh Forces in Dhaka.

PIA clears 110 pilots

Islamabad: The Pakistan Supreme Court was informed that the national flag carrier, Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has cleared 110 pilots out of the 141 whose licences had been suspended in the wake of the fake degrees controversy. On Monday, senior advocate Salman Akram Raja, representing the PIA, also informed the three-judge apex court bench headed by Chief Justice Gulzar Ahmed that the airline had cancelled the licences of 15, while 14 others had been declared to be unfit to fly. Dawn news said in a report.

Taliban delegation in Pakistan

Islamabad: A delegation from Taliban's Qatar-based political office is reaching Islamabad Wednesday on a three-day trip for consultations on ongoing Afghan peace process. The delegation led by Taliban's deputy chief for political affairs Mullah Abdul Ghani Barader will meet Prime Minister Imran Khan and Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi during its stay in Islamabad, the Dawn reported.

REUTERS

Maiduguri, Nigeria, Dec 16: - A man identifying himself as the leader of Nigeria's Boko Haram said on Tuesday the Islamist group was behind the abduction of more than 300 schoolboys, as anxious parents begged the government to secure their release

Pupils who escaped kidnap on Friday, by jumping over the fence of the Government Science secondary school in Katsina state in northwestern Nigeria and fleeing through a forest, said the attackers were armed with AK-47 assault rifles and rounded up their victims before marching them off.

Boko Haram, whose name means "Western education is forbidden" in the local Hausa language, has waged an insurgency in the northeast of Nigeria since 2009 but has not previously claimed attacks in the northwest. The claims in the audio tape, if true, could mark a



A view shows an empty classroom with school bags and wares belonging to pupils at the Government Science school where gunmen abducted students

widening influence of jihadist groups operating in northeastern Nigeria, political analysts said. They could also signal that jihadists have formed alliances with militant groups operating in the Sahel, which could further destabilise the impoverished north of

Africa's most populous nation which plays a pivotal role in regional stability The United States on Tuesday condemned "in the strongest terms' the abduction and was investigating Boko Haram's claim, a spokesperson for the State Department said

Sydney, Dec 16: Kangaroos can learn to communicate with humans similar to how domesticated dogs do, by using their gaze to "point" and ask for help, researchers said in a study pub-

lished Wednesday. The study involved 11 kangaroos that lived in captivity but had not been domesticated. Ten of the 11 marsupials intently gazed at researchers when

they were unable to open a box with food, according to the report. Nine alternately looked at the human and at the container. as a way of pointing or gesturing toward the object

"We interpreted this as a deliberate form of communication. a request for help," Alan

who led the study, told Reuters in a call from Hong Kong. "Wild species are not really expected to behave as those subjects were and that's why it is surprising." The findings challenge the notion that only domesticated ani-

mals such as

dogs, horses of

goats commu-

nicate with hu-

mans, and sug-

gests many

more animals

could grasp

how to convey

meaning to hu

mans, the paper asserts.

"We've previously thought only domesticated animals try to ask for help with a problem. But kangaroos do it too," concluded co-researcher Alexandra Green from the University of Sydney. "It's more likely to be a learned behaviour when the environment is right.'

New York, Dec 16: An Indian origin man has been killed in an accident involving airport equipment in Chicago, according to news reports.

Jijo George, 35, whose family is from Kerala, was crushed to death by the equipment on Sunday in a hangar at the Chicago O'Hare Airport, where he worked as a maintenance mechanic, the Chicago Sun-Times reported on Tuesday. The publication said that according to police he was found "unresponsive" under an equipment used to move airplanes on the ground, and taken to a hospital.

George died at the hospital and a post-mortem report by the local medical examiner ruled the death an accident, according to the Sun-Times. He worked for Envoy Air and the publication quoted its spokesperson Minnette Velez-Contly as saying, "Currently, the situation is under investigation by our safety organisation."

SPACEX CREW-3 MISSION

Indian-American Raja Chari among 3 astronauts selected by NASA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, Dec 16: Indian-American US Air Force Colonel Raja Chari has been selected as the Commander of the SpaceX Crew-3 mission to the International Space Station (ISS) by NASA and the European Space Agency

Chari, 43, will serve as the commander while NASA's Tom Marshburn will be pilot and ESA's Matthias Maurer will serve as a mission specialist for the SpaceX Crew-3 mission to the ISS, which is expected to launched next year.

A fourth crew member will be added at a later date, following a review by NASA and its international partners, NASA said in a statement Monday "Excited and honored to be train-

ing with @astro_matthias and @AstroMarshburn in prep for a trip to the @Space_Station," Chari said in a tweet Monday. "Proud to be working and training with Matthias Maurer and Thomas Henry Marshburn in preparation for a mission to the International Space Station aboard the SpaceX Crew Dragon," he posted on his

Facebook page. This will be the first spaceflight for Chari, who became a NASA astronaut in 2017. He was born in Milwaukee, but considers Cedar Falls, Iowa, his hometown, NASA said

He is a colonel in the US Air Force and joins the mission with extensive experience as a test pilot. He has accumulated more than 2,500 hours of flight time in his career.



Chari was selected earlier this month as a member of the Artemis Team and is now eligible for assignment to a future lunar mission, it said in a statement.

Chari's father Srinivas Chari came to the US at a young age from Hyderabad for an engineering degree. "It's official... Next stop: International @Space_Station! In late 2021, I'll fly to humankind's orbital outpost for the first time, continuing our quest to discover more in space for #Earth. Get ready for #cosmickiss – a declaration of love for space," Maurer tweeted.

Maurer comes from Sankt Wendel, in the German state of Saarland. Like Chari, Maurer will be making his first trip to space with the Crew-3 mission. Before becoming an astronaut, Maurer held a number of engineering and research roles, both in a university setting and at European Space Agency (ESA).

Marshburn is a Statesville, North Carolina, native who became an astronaut in 2004. Prior to serving in the astronaut corps, the medical doctor served as a flight surgeon at NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston and later became medical operations lead for the International Space Station. The Crew-3 mission will be his third visit to the space

mission. When Chari, Marshburn, and Maurer arrive at the orbiting laboratory, they will become expedition crew members for the duration of their six-month stay. The crew will have a slight overlap with the Crew-2 astronauts, who are expected to launch in the spring of 2021. This will not be the first commercial crew mission to overlap. The Crew-1 astronauts, who are currently on the station, and the Crew-2 astronauts, also are expected to coincide in their sojourns for a short time. Increasing the total number of astronauts aboard the station is allowing the agency to boost the number of science investigations conducted in the unique microgravity environment, NASA said

station and his second long-duration













The WEF has long encouraged policymakers to broaden their focus beyond shortterm growth to long-term prosperity. The study by WEF makes clear the priorities for making economies more productive, sustainable and inclusive as we emerge from the crisis KLAUS SCHWAB | FOUNDER AND EXEC CHAIRMAN, WEF

NDB TO LEND \$1BN

The Central government and the New Development Bank (NDB) Wednesday signed a loan agreement for lending \$1 billion for supporting India's economic recovery from Covid-19. The loan from the NDB will support expenditures on rural infrastructure related to NRM and rural employment generation



uote

While managing a crisis is extremely difficult, the RBI has been successful in preserving the financial stability of the economy

during the present Covid-19 crisis D SUBBARAO FORMER RBI GOVERNOR

The pandemic has had a profound effect on supply chains, businesses and economies. In the last few months, substantial positive movement has been felt for growth in business volumes versus previous guarter and this is also reflected in surge in volumes on M1xchange (TReDS)

SUNDEEP MOHINDRU CEO, M1XCHANGE

Today, there is an import of Rs 8L cr crude oil in the country. Instead, we can build Rs 2L cr ethanol economy by tapping into domestic resources. The gap between India and Bharat is still wide but with our motto of reform, perform and transform, we can definitely overcome the challenges NITIN GADKARI UNION MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Sensex, Nifty

hit record high Mumbai: Equity benchmarks Sensex and Nifty raced to new peaks Wednesday as participants took note of continuously improving macroeconomic indicators and positive trends in global markets. The BSE Sensex settled 403.29 points or 0.87% higher at 46,666.46, while the NSE Nifty climbed 114.85 points or 0.85 per cent to 13,682.70 -- record closing for both the benchmarks. Both the indices also marked their all-time intra-day highs of 46,704.97 and 13,692.35, respectively.

Investors gain **₹2.93L cr in 4 days**

New Delhi: Investors have

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 16: Issues concerning cyber security and data protection must be addressed to gain confidence of the excluded section in use of technology, which is necessary for promoting financial inclusion, Reserve Bank (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das said Wednesday

"Technology, though being a great enabler, can also lead to exclusion of certain segments of society." Das said in his keynote address at a webinar on 'Investing in Investor Education in India: Priorities for Action', organised by the NCAER. The RBI Governor added that it was imperative to build trust in



formal financial services among the hitherto excluded population. "Adequate safeguards need to be reinforced to address issues of cyber security, data confidentiality, mis-

Adequate safequards need to be reinforced to address issues of cyber security, data confidentiality and customer protection through appropriate financial education and awareness. These cast great responsibility on financial education providers SHAKTIKANTA DAS I RBI GOVERNOR

Cyber security must to promote financial inclusion: Das

selling, customer protection and grievance redress through appropriate financial education and awareness. These cast great responsibility on financial education providers," he emphasised.

Financial inclusion in the country, he said, is poised to grow exponentially with digital savvy millennials joining the workforce, social media blurring the urbanrural divide and technology shaping the policy interventions.

For harnessing the near universal reach of bank accounts across the length and breadth of the country, there needs to be greater focus on penetration of sustainable credit, investment, insurance and pension products by addressing demand side constraints with enhanced customer protection, Das said.

The interventions in financial education would have to be customised in local language and local

settings keeping the different target audience in mind, he pointed out.

The scaling up of Centre for Financial Literacy (CFL) projects across the country at the block level would be the cornerstone of community-led participatory approaches in the journey towards greater financial literacy, he added

The Governor also stressed that in a large country like India with an aspiring population, financial education cannot remain just the responsibility of financial sector regulators.

This aspect has been highlighted in the National Strategy for Financial Education (NSFE 2020-2025) document which recommends a multi-stakeholder led approach to achieve financial wellbeing of all.

The \$400 million Second

Accelerating India's Covid-19 Social

Protection Response Programme

project will support India's efforts

at providing social assistance to

the poor and vulnerable house-

holds, severely impacted by the

This is the second operation in

a programmatic series of two. The

first operation of \$750 million was

approved in May 2020. It enabled im-

mediate cash transfers to about

320 million individual bank ac-

counts identified through pre-ex-

isting national social protection

schemes under the Pradhan Mantri

Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKY)

and additional food rations for

The second operation will com-

plement the expansion of India's

safety net programmes to create a

portable social protection platform

ensuring food and cash support for

poor households, urban migrants.

and unorganised sector workers

across state boundaries, it said.

about 800 million individuals.

Covid-19 pandemic.

PPT inaugurates two innovative projects

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar: Dec 16: Paradin Port authorities have taken an environment friendly measure by setting up auto sprinkling system inside Harbour area for usage of water collected from Sewage Treatment Plant. The project was

commissioned Wednesday. For this, storage sump has been constructed for collection of treated



water from STP which will in turn be utilised in the sprinkling system. Previously it was being done manually through tankers and this practice will be discontinued soon.

Taking further step to make the township disaster resistant, underground cabling system has been put in place in the Port Township and now in the Harbour area it is being carried out.

Apart from this, large DG Sets have been installed at different sub-stations, so that during natural disaster uninterrupted electricity and water supply in the Port area will be ensured.

As per SOP to tackle cyclonic storms and other disasters, an **Emergency Response Centre was** started at Gate No.-4. At the time of Natural disaster. CISF Control Unit along with Port officials will function from the place to mitigate any eventuality. A rest room for the staff deployed will soon come up near the location.

Kia Motors India sells 100K connected cars



AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 16: Automobile major Kia Motors India on

Telecom equipment from China to face fresh curbs

CABINET APPROVES BUYING ONLY FROM 'TRUSTED SOURCE'

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 16: Telecom equipment from China may face fresh curbs after the Cabinet on Wednesday cleared a proposal to secure telecom infrastructure by designating a "trusted source" for the purchase of equipment by service providers

Briefing reporters after the meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Law, Telecom and IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said a National Security Directive on Telecommunication Sector has been framed keeping in mind the

national security. "Considering the need to ensure India's national security, the Cabinet has accorded approval for the National Security Directive on Telecommunication Sector," Prasad said

Under the provisions of this directive, the government will declare a list of trusted sources and trusted products for installation in the country's telecom network.



"The methodology to designate trusted products will be devised by the designated authority, the National Cyber Security Coordinator. Telecom service providers are required to connect new devices that are designated trusted products," Prasad said.

In recent months, India has banned the import of equipment from China for use in sectors ranging from telecom to power citing national security reasons. These bans were driven by concerns such as spyware or malicious software - known as "malware" - being embedded in

the imported equipment. "The list of the trusted source and product will be decided based on ap-

Auction of spectrum worth ₹3.92L cr gets nod

New Delhi: The Union Cabinet Wednesday approved a proposal for the auction of 2,251.25 megahertz of spectrum worth Rs 3.92 lakh crore at the base price. The telecom ministry plans to issue a notice to invite bids in December and hold the spectrum auction by March, telecom minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said. The government, however, has decided not to auction frequencies in 3,300-3,600 Mhz bands that were identified for 5G services. "The auction will be for spectrum in 700 MHz, 800 MHz, 900 MHz, 1800 MHz, 2100 MHz, 2300 MHz and 2500 MHz frequency bands.

proval of a committee headed by the deputy national security advisor.

"The committee will consist of members from relevant departments, ministries and will also have two members from the industry and independent experts. The committee will be called the National Security Committee on Telecom," Prasad said

New Delhi, Dec 16: The World Bank (WB) Wednesday approved four India projects worth over \$800 supply and benefit from the exmillion to support development panded social protection schemes initiatives. of the government," he added.

AGENCIES

The projects that have been approved are: Chhattisgarh Inclusive Rural and Accelerated Agriculture Growth Project (CHIRAAG); Nagaland: Enhancing Classroom Teaching and Resources Project; and Second Dam Improvement and Rehabilitation Project (DRIP-2).

"The projects support a range of development initiatives-strengthening India's social protection architecture, promoting nutritionsupportive agriculture for tribal households in Chhattisgarh, enhancing quality education in Nagaland and improving the safety and performance of existing dams across various states in India." the World Bank said in a release.

Junaid Ahmad. Country Director. World Bank India said the four projects will support India's efforts to build back better by creating a sustainable and resilient economy.

BIZ BUZZ Walmart to begin deliveries with

FB to test relaunched Instagram Lite in India

Development work today has an additional responsibility - to help poor and vulnerable families roll back the adverse impact that the

projects worth \$800mn pandemic has had on their lives, he said. "These projects will help many such families access better income opportunities, education, water

WB approves four India

crore over the past four sessions as equity markets continued their winning momentum amid unabated foreign fund inflows and supportive global cues. The 30share BSE Sensex climbed 403.29 points Wednesday to close at its all-time peak of 46,666.46. The BSE benchmark has gained 706.58 points in four trading sessions. The market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies zoomed Rs 2,93,826.28 crore to Rs 1,85,13,978.81 crore in four days.

Wipro completes acquisition

New Delhi: IT services major Wipro Wednesday said it has completed the acquisition of 83.4% equity stake in Chennai-based Encore Theme Technologies. In October. Wipro announced signing a definitive agreement to acquire Encore Theme, a specialist in providing SaaS and Cloud solutions in financial services, for up to Rs 95 crore. "The company has completed the acquisition of 83.4% equity stake in Encore Theme.

22% rise in paddy procurement

New Delhi: Paddy procurement has increased 22% so far in the ongoing kharif marketing season at 390.79 lakh tonne, valued at Rs 73,781.36 crore. The kharif marketing season (KMS) starts from October. Paddy procurement for kharif 2020-21 is continuing smoothly in Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Telangana, Uttarakhand, Tamil Nadu, Chandigarh, Jammu & Kashmir, Kerala, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, an official statement said.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 16: Telecom major Reliance Jio once again topped the 4G download speed chart with average download speed in the state in November 2020, as per the latest 4G download speed chart published by TRAI. The data claimed that Jio topped with average 4G download speed of 31.7 megabit per second (Mbps) in same month.

On the other hand. Airtel stood at 5.7 Mbps in download speed in state and Vodafone recorded an average 4G download speed of 4.4 Mbps, TRAI said.

In terms of average 4G upload speed in Odisha, Vodafone topped with 6.3 Mbps followed by Reliance Jio with 4.6 Mbps and Airtel with 2.9 Mbps average 4G upload speed, tively. according to data published by

Nationally, Reliance Jio once again topped the 4G download speed chart with an average download speed of 20.8 megabit per sec-

Jio tops in 4G download

speed chart in Nov: TRAI



ond (Mbps) in November, 2020

As per the data published by TRAI, Jio recorded more than double the average 4G download speed of its closest competitor Vodafone, which recorded an average download speed of 9.8 Mbps in November, followed by Idea and Bharti Airtel with an average 4G download speed of 8.8 Mbps and 8 Mbps, respec-

In terms of average 4G upload speed Vodafone was ahead of others with 6.5 Mbps speed in November, followed by Idea with upload speed of 5.8 Mbps, Airtel 4 Mbps and Jio 3.7 Mbps.

driverless trucks

start deliveries with

San Francisco: Taking its autonomous vehicle pilot with a startup called Gatik to the next level, retail giant Walmart is now planning to driverless truck in the US state Arkansas starting next year. "This achievement

marks a new milestone that signifies the first-ever driverless operation carried out on the supply chain middle mile for both Gatik and Walmart." Tom Ward, Senior Vice President of Customer Product, Walmart US said in a statement. The move comes after Walmart last year began an autonomous vehicle pilot with Gatik to move customer orders on a two-mile route between a dark store -- a store that stocks items for fulfillment but isn't open to the public -- and a neighborhood market in Bentonville. Arkansas. The pilot has since then registered over 70,000 operational miles in autonomous mode with a safety driver.

Tax refunds worth ₹1.48L cr issued: I-T dept

New Delhi: The income tax department (I-T dept) Wednesday said it has issued refunds of over Rs 1.48 lakh crore to more than 1.02 crore taxpayers till December 14. Of this, personal income tax refunds worth Rs 45,264 crore and corporate tax refunds of Rs 1.03 lakh crore have been issued. "CBDT issues refunds of over Rs 1,48,274 crore to more than 1.02 crore taxpayers between April 1, 2020, to December 14, 2020. "Income tax refunds of Rs 45,264 crore have been issued in 1,00,02,982 cases and corporate tax refunds of Rs 1,03,010 crore have been issued in 2,00,854 cases," the department said in a tweet.

New Delhi: Facebook Inc said Wednesday it is testing a new, less data-intensive version of its photo and video sharing app Instagram in India, a key growth market for the US social media giant. The app, Instagram Lite, is less that 2MB in size, which will help it run smoothly on low-memory smartphones and broaden its userbase, the Menlo Park, California-headquartered company said. The company is relaunching the Lite app after closing down a previous version, which operated chiefly in emerging markets, earlier this year. "With the test of Instagram Lite... we're aiming to democratise expression and creativity for a greater number of people in India," Instagram vice-president of product Vishal Shah said at Facebook's first 'Fuel for India' event, where the company showcased its products and services. India is Facebook's biggest market by users.

Wednesday said it has became the first carmaker in the country to sell 100,000 unit of connected cars in India.

According to Kia, vehicles equipped with 'UVO' connect in-car technology contributes more than 55 per cent of the total sales of the brand in India.

The company said that 'Seltos GTX Plus DCT 1.4T Petrol' is the top selling connected car variant which contributed to almost 15 per cent of the total connected car sales

"As a disruptor brand and a strong market challenger, Kia strives to stay ahead of the curve in terms of technological innovation by facilitating an enhanced drive experience for its customers," the company said in a statement.

"Kia's growth trajectory in such a limited time period, amid the stiff competition in the market showcases how innovation is imperative to be able to cater to the new-age Indian consumer."

Tax burden on cigarettes in India far below int'l standards'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

TRAI.

New Delhi, Dec 16: The current tax burden on cigarettes in India is far below the standard of international best practice, a new study showed Wednesday that named Australia and New Zealand as top-performing countries for significantly reducing

the affordability of cigarettes. In the first edition of the International Cigarette Tax Scorecard, compiled by Tobacconomics, India got an overall score of 1.88 out of 5 possible points, which is slightly better than the South-East Asia average (1.82), but lower than the global average (2.07) and scores of top-performing countries (4.63).

The top-performing countries are Australia and New Zealand, which reflects their high, uniform

specific cigarette excise taxes with regular increases that have significantly reduced the affordability of cigarettes," said Tobacconomics after assessing the performance of cigarette tax policies in over 170 countries including India. Tobacconomics is based at the

University of Illinois at Chicago's Institute for Health Research and Policy, conducts economic research to inform and shape fiscal policies for health globally.

It said the scorecard assessed countries' cigarette tax policies based on international best practices using data from the World Health Organization from 2014-2018. Nearly half the countries scored

less than two out of the five-point maximum. There has been little improve-

ment from 2014-2018 -- the global



average score rose only slightly from 1.85 in 2014 to 2.07 in 2018. Regarding India, it said the country had significantly improved its score on cigarette taxation policy from 1.38 in 2014 to 2.38 in 2016 after

which it declined to 1.88 in 2018 due to the lack of tax increases on tobacco and increasing affordability of cigarettes.

Overall scores, however, improved in 89 countries. Introduction

of significant cigarette excise taxes, simplification of previously complicated tiered cigarette excise tax structure and large tax increases are the reasons why some countries improved their scores, and they are already reaping the rewards of higher revenues and lives saved.

"The scorecard shows considerable untapped potential for cigarette tax increases to raise revenue for a COVID-19 recovery and importantly, prevent premature deaths and promote a healthy and productive workforce," said Tobacconomics director and lead author of the scorecard, Frank J Chaloupka.

"The current tax burden on cigarettes in India is 52 per cent and is far below the standard of international best practice. The lack of increase in taxes on tobacco products after the introduction of the GST in the year 2017 has increased the affordability of cigarettes in India," said Dr Rijo John, a health economist and adjunct professor at the Rajagiri College of Social Sciences, Kochi.

Dr John suggested that India must reduce the number of tiers for the purpose of cigarette taxation and significantly increase its existing excise taxes on tobacco products to save lives and raise much-needed revenue.

"Indian and global studies are providing clear evidence of how tobacco use in all forms, whether smoking or chewing, is leading to severe COVID-19 manifestations and adverse outcomes," said Dr Harit Chaturvedi, Chairman of Max Institute of Cancer Care.













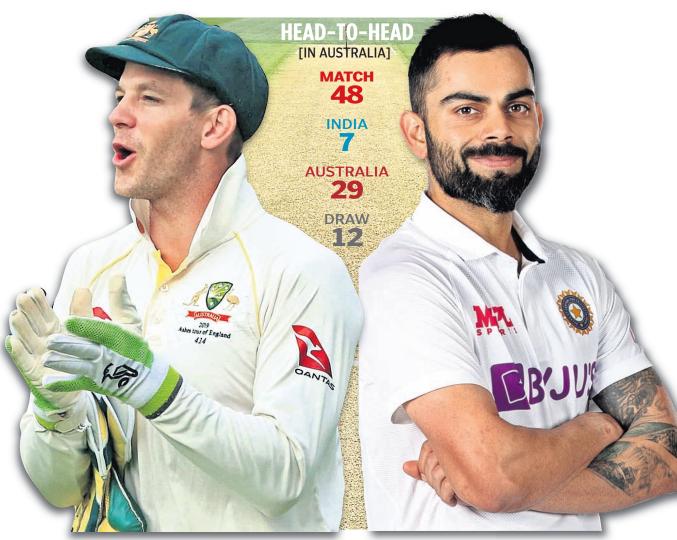








sports



TWILIGHT PUNCH

Team combination on focus as India face Aussie might in Pink Ball affair; Virat would like to end his Tour Down Under on a high

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Adelaide, Dec 16: A peerless Virat Kohli and his 'fearless' India would look to unleash their might on an Australian team which is ready for revenge but not exactly in 'pink of health' ahead of the first Day/Night Test starting here Thursday.

Media mogul Kerry Packer, while promoting his path-breaking 'World Series Day/Night Test matches' on Channel 9 back in late 1970s, had an unforgettable caption 'Big Boys Play At Night'.

Even in 2020, there couldn't have been a more appropriate catch-line for a series where Kohli's magnificence meets its match in Steve Smith's manic consistency, Cheteshwar Pujara's doggedness challenged by a much younger Marnus Labuschagne, ready to show the world that he isn't a oneseason wonder. All this would be under lights at the Adelaide Oval. And then there are those mean fast men on both sides aiming to in-

still the fear of pink ball in twi-

THE SQUADS

INDIA (PLAYING XI) Mayank Agarwal, Prithvi Shaw, Cheteshwar Pujara, Virat Kohli (C), Ajinkya Rahane, Hanuma Vihari, Wriddhiman Saha (wk), Ravichandra Ashwin, Mohammed Shami, Jasprit Bumrah & Umesh Yadav.

light zone, creating all sorts of doubts in the batsmen's minds.

A Josh Hazlewood versus Mohammed Shami will be as enticing a sub-plot as Jasprit Bumrah bowling those yorkers in reply to Pat

Cummins' barrage of bouncers. With a workhorse like Ishant Sharma missing from Indian ranks and the enforcer David Warner absent in the Australian line-up, the teams are evenly placed in terms of strength.

However, there will certainly be some distinct home advantage for Australia along with the experience of playing more Day/Night

AUSTRALIA Tim Paine (C & wk), Joe Burns, Pat Cummins, Cameron Green, Marcus Harris, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head, Moises Henriques, Marnus Labuschagne, Nathan Lyon, Michael Neser, James Pattinson, Steven Smith, Mitchell Starc, Mitchell Swepson & Matthew Wade.

Tests

A day/night Test match has its own little grammar where batsmen are expected to attack in the first session while bowlers are at their peak once the sun sets, allowing the pink kookaburra to pick its pace up.

Never has an Indian team been so spoilt for choices with multiple options in place for various positions. But Indian skipper Virat Kohli made it clear that Shubman Gill and KL Rahul will have to wait for their chances with the management deciding to stick to an outof-form Prithvi Shaw in the opening slot. For the much-speculated wicketkeeper's slot, Wriddhiman Saha was preferred over the explosive but erratic Rishabh Pant.

In the build-up to the series, Saha's fifty in the red-ball firstclass match was achieved in a tougher setting than Pant's 73-ball 100 under lights against a second string Australia A attack.

Also, Umesh Yadav predictably, after his good show in the practice game, got his place in the side as the third pacer.

India's top batters were being troubled by Thangarasu Natarajan's incoming deliveries with pink kookaburra at the Adelaide nets, Tuesday.

If Natarajan, at 130-plus, can trouble them so much, then Mitchell Starc, the world's top wicket-taker in pink ball Tests, can be menacing.

At times, less options make it easier to choose and Kohli would hope that he has made the right choices so that Ajinkya Rahane can help India do an encore once he takes a break.

Odisha eye revival of fortunes



Odisha FC players go through their training drills ahead of their ISL encounter with Bengaluru FC, Thursday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bambolim, Dec 16: Struggling Odisha FC will look to arrest their slide in the Indian Super League when they face a formidable Bengaluru FC at the GMC Stadium here Thursday.

The numbers for Odisha don't make for good reading. They have just one point from five outings and have scored the least number of goals in the league so far.

Both their goals came against Jamshedpur FC when the latter was down to 10-man. And Thursday, Odisha will take on former champions Bengaluru, who are unbeaten in the league so far.

Stuart Baxter's side averages just 2.4 shots on target per match so far and the Englishman stressed the need for his side to be more attacking in nature.

Benzema brace helps Real beat 10-man Bilbao

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Madrid, Dec 16: Karim Benzema scored two late goals to give Real Madrid a 3-1 win over 10-man Athletic Bilbao, helping lift his team level on points with the frontrunners of the Spanish league Tuesday.

Bilbao proved to be tough opponent at Alfredo Di Stefano stadium despite playing most of the match with only 10 men. But when the Basque Country team was threatening to at least salvage a point, Benzema scored his teamhigh ninth and 10th goals of the season.

Madrid were in third place behind league leader Real Sociedad and second-placed Atletico Madrid on overall goal difference. Atletico has two more games in hand to play.

Bilbao lost Raul Garcia in the 14th minute after the forward earned his second yellow card for a stomping the foot of Toni Kroos during a tackle

"We certainly need to be better at attacking based on our possession. If we can gain momentum and take momentum away from the opponents, that will help us," Baxter said on the eve of the game.

Odisha's defence has conceded seven goals so far, four of which have been from set-pieces - three penalties and a free-kick. They have conceded a goal in almost every match. But Baxter was firm in defend-

ing his backline and called for a collective performance by the team. 'I don't think conceding goals is the direct responsibility of the centrebacks and I don't think the centrebacks' performances have been sub-standard. We have defended very well in some games.'

Bengaluru, on the other hand, have scored a good chunk of their goals from set-pieces so far, including three from throw-ins, and

will look to exploit Odisha's vul-

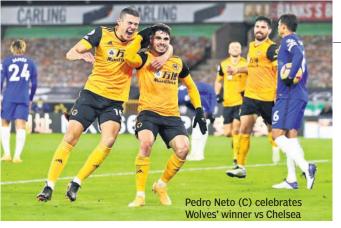
nerability in this regard. They are also high on confidence, coming off a huge win against Kerala Blasters, in which the likes of Cleiton Silva and Sunil Chhetri managed to find the net.

Bengaluru coach Carles Cuadrat will expect his players to pick up from where they left off against Kerala. "I know my players, there is no complacency. They are competitive and for sure, they will try to get the three points. We are never

complacent against any team in the ISL because we know that any team can beat any team in this league," said Cuadrat. "For sure, teams like Odisha are

very dangerous. We are all conscious of that. We know that they have been fighting for the points, but it has not been happening until now.'

Chelsea lose; Man City play stalemate



ASSOCIATED PRESS

London. Dec 16: Two losses in four days has stalled Chelsea's serene progress in the Premier League, turning the spotlight onto their expensively assembled attack that remains a work in

Tottenham and Liverpool. Chelsea's setback at Molineux followed a 0-1 loss at Everton Saturday and both defeats have highlighted the importance of playmaker Hakim Ziyech, who missed them through injury.

climb into first place, at least for one

night, while City squandered an opportunity to move within sight

of the top two in the division,

Steve 5 batting at the	g 🛛 🗍 🕴					4-1-2-1-1	Indian players go through their training drills	
	LAST 5	TESTS		Highest to	tals (Since 2000)	Mos	t runs (current squad)]
YEAR	VENUE	WINNERS	MARGIN	INDIA	705/7D (SYDNEY, 2004)	IND:	VIRAT KOHLI, 1274 RUNS (12 TESTS)	
2019	Sydney	Draw		AUSTRALIA	659/4D (SYDNEY, 2012)	AUS:	STEVE SMITH, 769 RUNS (4 TESTS)	
2018	Melbourne Perth	India Australia	137 runs 146 runs	Lowest to	tals (Since 2000)	Most	wickets (current squad)	1
2018 2018	Adelaide	India	31 runs	INDIA	140 (PERTH, 2018)			
2013	Sydney	Draw	JI TUIIS	AUSTRALIA	140 (PERTH, 2018) 151 (MELBOURNE, 2018)	IND: AUS:	MOHD. SHAMI, 31 WKTS (7 TESTS) NATHAN LYON, 51 WKTS (11 TESTS)	1

Kohli finds sledging 'pointless', Tim thinks otherwise

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Adelaide, Dec 16: A pandemic-struck 2020 has taught people different things. For India captain Virat Kohli, it has made him realise how 'pointless' sledging is and he promised that 'unnecessary stuff will be filtered out' during the upcoming Test series against Australia. His Australian counterpart Tim Paine, however, is ready to push the envelope if the game situation demands that.

"I think this year (because of pandemic) also has made people realise a lot of things which might not have been necessary in the past where you hold grudges or you have unnecessary tension between teams or individuals, which is absolutely pointless," Kohli said on the eve of the opening Test, a day-nighter here.

JUSTIN LANGER: Will (Pucovski) has had multiple concussions now. We're obviously keeping a close eve on him. He's back home with his family at the moment. (Look) it's (bouncers) part of the game. Unfortunately, we get hit. I can only go from personal experience. what I've felt and also seen. But if you can get through it then there's no reason why you can't have a long and very successful career

Paine, on his part, agreed that there isn't a need to get aggressive but he and his men won't take a 'backward step' if need arises.

"Yeah, look, in terms of what goes on in the field, we'll have to wait and see," Paine said during his media interaction. "You certainly don't go into it planning to have run-ins or be overly aggressive or anything of SACHIN TENDULKAR: Having interacted with Ajinkya Rahane, I know he has a very smart brain and he is bal anced. He is aggressive but it's controlled aggression. Whatever time I have spent with him, I know he is a hard-working player. He takes nothing for granted, and if you're working hard, if you're sincere and honest in your preparation, the result will invariably follow

that. We just sort of go out, try and execute our plans, firstly with our skill, with bat and ball." But on field. things do heat up at times, conceded Paine. And should that happen, "There's no doubt that this team won't be taking a backward step." The Indian captain, however, feels that there is no need to get personal even if one were to get aggressive.

"You're still going to be professional and make sure that you are positive and aggressive in your body language and the way you go about the things on the field," he said.

"But I don't think that things are going to be as personal as they used to be before, also because of the fact that we all understand that we are contributing to a larger cause and it's the quality, if cricket that has to stand out.'

"At the end of the day the unnecessary stuff, it's going to get filtered out pretty much by itself. 'Yeah, it could be a culmination of playing a lot of IPL. Australia changing their approach to an extent, and also as I said just the way things have panned out this year, everyone is just grateful for the opportunity to be back on the field.

Kroos put Madrid ahead on the

last kick of the first half. The Germany midfielder rifled in a pass from Vinicius Junior from outside the area between the post and Spain goalkeeper Unai Simon.

Bilbao compensated with solid team defending and pressed for an equaliser, which it found on the counterattack in the 53rd Right back Ander Capa exchanged passes with Oscar de Marcos before beating Thibaut Courtois by finishing off his first shot that the Madrid keeper knocked back to him.

Two drab draws for Manchester City in the same period is raising even more questions — notably, what has happened to what was once the most entertaining team in England?

It was an evening to forget for two of the league's supposed title contenders Tuesday, with Chelsea's 1-2 loss at Wolverhampton — sealed by a winning goal in stoppage time - followed by City's 1-1 draw at home to West Bromwich Albion, one of the favorites for relegation this season.

Chelsea missed the chance to

Olivier Giroud opened the scoring in the 49th minute. Wolves roared back and equalized through Daniel Podence in the 66th before his fellow Portugal international, Pedro Neto, broke forward on the counterattack and drove home the winner in the fifth minute of stoppage time.

As does Pep Guardiola, with City languishing in sixth place after a tepid display against West Brom, which grabbed a point thanks to an unfortunate own-goal by City defender Ruben Dias in the 43rd

Krishna spot-kick lifts ATKMB

POST NEWS NETWORK

Goa, Dec 16: ATK Mohun Bagan (ATKMB) managed to get their winning groove back in the Indian Super League (ISL) as they edged FC Goa 1-0 in a hard-fought contest at the Fatorda Stadium, here Wednesday.

Roy Krishna (85th minute) netted the winner from a spot-kick to ensure Antonio Habas' side climbed back to second spot on the ISL table.

The first half belonged to the Mariners despite Goa enjoying the lion's share of possession. They nullified the Gaurs' attacking threat and controlled the midfield as Juan Ferrando's side failed to register a single shot on target.

Habas' side, on the other hand, looked lively in attack and fashioned a couple of good chances but failed to break the deadlock.

David Williams was presented with an early chance to put ATKMB ahead in the ninth minute. Krishna pounced on a miscued pass from Edu Bedia and played it to Pronay Halder, who chipped the ball for Williams in the box. The Australian's lob was safely collected by Goa custodian Mohammad Nawaz, who rushed out of his line in time.

While the hosts were happy to sit back and absorb pressure, Goa



failed to penetrate the opposition deat Nawaz. fense and couldn't test ATKMB keeper Arindam Bhattacharja.

ATKMB once again came close to taking the lead just before halftime in what was the best chance of the game. However, they were denied by the woodwork.

Receiving a long diagonal ball from the left, Williams cut inside by making space following a delightful touch. The striker launched a pile driver that managed to beat Nawaz but not the upright.

Goa began the second-half with vigour and managed to create better chances. They registered their first shot on target in the 56th minute. Alexander Jesuraj whipped a cross in the box for an unmarked Noguera, whose header was straight

The Gaurs made two attacking substitutions after the hour mark, bringing on Brandon Fernandes and Jorge Ortiz Mendoza, whose arrivals provided them some much

needed impetus. Goa had a claim for a penalty during the 79th minute but the referee did not deem it so. The tables turned just minutes later as ATKMB won a penalty at the other end and finally took the lead through Krishna, who scored his fifth Hero

ISL goal of the campaign. Krishna was brought down in the box after an ill-timed tackle from substitute Aibanbha Dohling. The Fijian drilled his spot-kick hard into the bottom left-hand corner, leaving Nawaz with no chance.

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