



## TALK OF THE TOWN

Amitabh Bachchan's granddaughter Navya Naveli Nanda is seeing *Gully Boy* actor Siddhant Chaturvedi

LEISURE P2



## N-REACTOR ON MOON

NASA has sought proposals for a fission surface power system to be taken to the moon

INTERNATIONAL P10



## FINAL T20I TODAY

With the series in pocket, India likely to test combinations in the third and final T20I against New Zealand

SPORTS P12

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## PAK HOCKEY TEAM ARRIVE IN ODISHA

**Bhubaneswar:** The junior hockey team of Pakistan arrived in the city Saturday to participate in the Junior Hockey World Cup being held from November 24 to December 5, the Pakistan high commission said. Aftab Hasan Khan, the Charge d' Affaires at the high commission extended a warm welcome to the hockey team in New Delhi, it said in a statement. It said a senior diplomat of the High Commission received the members of the team at the Indira Gandhi International airport. The visit of the Pakistani hockey team to India comes days after New Delhi decided to reopen the Kartarpur Sahib corridor. The ties between the two countries significantly nosedived after India announced in August 2019 its decision to withdraw the special powers of Jammu and Kashmir and bifurcate the state into two Union territories. **MORE ON P12**



## 68.66 PER CENT PASS IN PLUS II OFFLINE EXAM

**Bhubaneswar:** The results of Plus II offline examination-2021 conducted by the Council of Higher Secondary Education (CHSE) were announced Saturday. Total pass percentage of students stood at 68.66 as 8,460 students cleared the examination. While 6,310 students in Arts stream passed the examination, 1,501 cleared in Science, 422 in Commerce and 227 in Vocational courses in offline exam this year. Girls outshone boys with 67.76% in the examination. The pass percentage of boys stood at 62.71. The Plus II offline examination was conducted for the students who were not satisfied with their results allotted to them on basis of alternate assessment. Total 13,043 students had made registration for the examination, of which over 12,321 appeared in the examination held from October 1 to 11, 2021.

## Newborn stolen from Sonepur DHH

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Sonepur, Nov 20:** In a shocking development, a newborn girl was allegedly stolen by an unidentified woman from the district headquarters hospital (DHH) in Sonepur, Saturday. The matter came to the fore after the hospital authorities lodged a complaint at the Town Police Station in Sonepur.

According to reports, Santoshini Tandi, wife of Gajendra Tandi of Sandha village under Birmaharajpur police limits, was admitted to the Gynecology and Obstetrics Department of the hospital Friday. She was compelled to lie on the verandah due to unavailability of a bed.

Later, Santoshini gave birth to a baby girl and continued to lie on the verandah with her child for post-delivery treatment. The incident occurred when Santoshini went to the toilet after handing over her newborn to her mother-in-law. Meanwhile, an unidentified woman came there and requested Santoshini's mother-in-law to hand over the infant to her so that she could hold the baby for some time.

A while later, the woman suddenly disappeared from the spot with the baby in her arms. Panicked, Santoshini's family members tried to search for the woman but failed to trace her. Later, Santoshini's family lodged a complaint. The police have launched an investigation to trace the newborn and the unidentified woman.



## RISKY WAY

Volunteers evacuate a woman from a flooded area at Gudiyatham in Vellore district in Tamil Nadu, Saturday. At least 25 people were killed while 17 are missing in rain-related incidents in neighbouring Andhra Pradesh since Friday

PTI PHOTO

# BJD's pretence on farm laws

■ The ruling BJD has welcomed the repeal of the three controversial farm laws, but itself introduced similar Ordinances in the state

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Nov 20:** The ruling Biju Janata Dal (BJD) in Odisha has welcomed the decision of the Centre to repeal three controversial farm laws saying it always stands for the interest of farmers. However, it seems that the BJD has maintained two sets of rules on the entire issue.

Since the BJP came to power at the Centre in 2014, the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare wanted to usher in reforms in the agriculture marketing sector in the country and had drafted a model law entitled "Agriculture Produce and Livestock Marketing (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2017".

As agriculture is in the State List of the Constitution, the ministry was pushing all the states, including Odisha, to draft similar Bills for their respective states.

Accordingly, the Odisha government had brought two Ordinances, a copy-paste of the draft Bill shared by the Centre, namely the "Odisha Agricultural Produce and Livestock Marketing (Promotion and Facilitation), Ordinance" and the "Odisha Agricultural Produce and Livestock



- The BJD government had promulgated two Ordinances to pave way for implementing laws similar to the Centre's controversial farm laws in the state
- The Agri Marketing Bill was also introduced in Assembly to allow private players to exploit the farmers across the state

Contract Farming and Services (Promotion and Facilitation) Ordinance" in May 2020. The ordinances were issued at least three weeks before the promulgation of the Central Ordinances, revealing that the BJD too was in a hurry to implement the laws.

Despite opposing some sections of the farm laws enacted by the Centre, Odisha government re-promulgated the Agriculture Marketing Ordinance in November, 2020 as the tenure of first Ordinance expired. However, the government dropped the Ordinance on contract farming in the face of stiff opposition.

On the other hand, it introduced the Odisha Agricultural Produce and Livestock Marketing (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020 in the last Winter Session of the Assembly. However, as the opposition Congress and farmers opposed the move and the farmers' stir at national-level turned into a mass movement, the state government did not try to pass it.

The BJD, very cleverly had raised voices against certain provisions in the new farm laws in both Houses of Parliament. However, it never demanded scrapping the Bills - unlike few other Opposition parties.

The Agricultural Marketing Ordinance (later converted into a Bill) was brought to replace the Odisha Agricultural Produce Market Act, 1956, which was in force in the state since 1957.

As per provisions, both the Ordinances were almost similar to the Central laws. The Odisha Contract Farming Ordinance allowed a farmer to enter into a written agreement for any farm produce, which is same as the Central Acts.

Similarly, the Agri Marketing Bill aimed to ward off fragmentation of the market for agricultural produce and livestock by removing the concept of the notified market areas and ensuring effective enforcement of regulations by the Agricultural Produce and Livestock Market Committee. It also allowed

private investors to directly enter the agricultural market and buy any agricultural product from anywhere in the state. It had provisions for providing better market linkages to farmers and introduced provisions for single-point levy of market fee across the state and single trading licence statewide to realise cost effective transitions.

Both the contract farming Ordinance and the agricultural marketing Bill lapsed as they were not passed by the state Assembly within the prescribed period.

Speaking about the above Ordinance and Bill, Cooperation Minister Ranendra Pratap Swain said, "Taking advantage of the lockdown, the Centre had promulgated the Ordinances and asked all states to promulgate similar Ordinances. So we did that. But, now both the Ordinances have lapsed."

The state's further course of action will depend on the next move of the Centre, he said.

Meanwhile, Opposition BJP and Congress criticised the state government for its double standards on this issue. "They are maintaining one stand in the Parliament and another in the state. It shows BJD's opportunistic behaviour," alleged BJP leader Bishnu Sethi.

Congress leader Debasish Patnaik alleged, "As the undisclosed nexus between the state and Centre on this issue was exposed, both BJD and BJP leaders are now indulging in blame game."

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Your notings alone won't do. Please attach election schedule to every file!

## Farmers in no mood to forgive

■ The reaction to the shock U-turn in the northern states has been less than positive, a worrying sign for PM Modi

REUTERS

**Mohrniya, Nov 20:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi may have caved in to farmers' demands that he scrap laws they say threaten their livelihoods, but reactions to the shocking U-turn in rural north, where the BJP faces key elections next year, have been less than positive, a worrying sign for a leader seeking to maintain his grip on national politics.

In the village of Mohrniya, located in Uttar Pradesh, farmer Guru Sevak Singh said that he and others like him have lost faith in Modi and his party.

"Today Prime Minister Modi realised that he was committing blunder, but it took him a year to recognise this and only because he now knows farmers will not vote for his party ever again," said Singh. Thousands of agricultural work-



People serve langar to farmers protesting at Singhu border in New Delhi, Saturday

PTI PHOTO

ers have protested outside New Delhi and beyond for more than a year, shrugging off the pandemic to disrupt traffic and pile pressure on Modi and the BJP who say the new laws were key to modernising the sector.

In 2020, the BJP-led NDA government at the Centre passed three farm laws in a bid to overhaul the agricultural sector that employs about 60 per cent of India's workforce but is deeply inefficient, in debt and prone to pricing wars.

Angry farmers took to the streets, saying the reforms put their jobs at risk and handed control over crops and prices to private corporations. The resulting protest movement became one of the country's biggest and most protracted.

Leaders of six farmer unions who spearheaded the movement in Uttar Pradesh and Punjab states said they would not forgive a government that labelled protesting farmers as terrorists and anti-nationals.

## NO EVIDENCE AGAINST ARYAN: BOMBAY HC

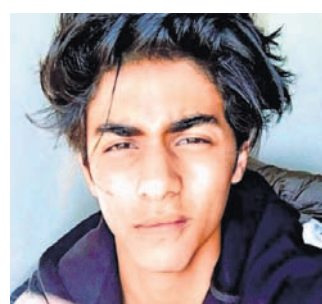
AGENCIES

**Mumbai, Nov 20:** The Bombay High Court has ruled that there was "no prima facie evidence" against Aryan Khan and co-accused Munmun Dhamecha and Arbaaz Merchant for charges pertaining to 'conspiracy' and 'common intent' in the case lodged against after the cruise ship raids.

Delivering the detailed 14-page order, Justice Nitin Sambre said that considering the material brought on record by the NCB the court has not found that prima facie, there was no positive evidence against the accused trio.

Khan, Dhamecha and Merchant were granted conditional bail by the high court October 28 vide a speaking order and the detailed order was made available only Saturday.

Justice Sambre further said that the NCB claim on the common intention to commit an offence under the NDPS Act, (accused) found to be in possession of commercial quan-



tity of drugs and hatching conspiracy is "liable to be rejected".

The court said that merely because the accused trio was travelling on the cruise cannot be grounds to invoke the offence under Section 29 (criminal conspiracy) against them. "This court is required to be sensitive to the fact that there has to be presence of basic material in the form of evidence so as to substantiate the case of conspiracy against the applicants (accused)," Justice Sambre noted.

He further said that no drugs were found on Khan.

## State relaxes Covid curbs on cultural shows

SRC PK Jena said cultural gatherings have been allowed to open with due compliance to Covid protocols

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Bhubaneswar, Nov 20:** With the improvement in Covid-19 situation, the state government has allowed cultural activities, including open air theatres, drama, orchestra and melodies from Saturday.

In an order, Special Relief Commissioner PK Jena said cultural gatherings, programmes including melodies, orchestra, jatra, opera, dances-classical, folk and other permitted dance forms, cultural competitions, open air theatres, drama, street plays and other such performances have been allowed to open with due compliance to Covid protocols.

Auditoriums, assembly halls and similar facilities are allowed to open, he said.

As per the order, local authorities (District Magistrates/SPs/Municipal Commissioners or any other officer authorised) concerned will give permission for the open air theatres, operas, subject to compliance of Covid-19 safety protocols such as mandatory wearing of face masks, physical distancing, provision of thermal scanning, among others.

Keeping the size of the open ground in view, maximum 2,000 persons will be allowed ensuring maintenance of prescribed physical distancing norm and the seating arrangement shall be made accordingly. For indoor halls, the numbers of spectators will not exceed 50 per cent of the seating capacity of the hall.

# China blocks #MeToo movement

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

**Beijing, Nov 20:** China's #MeToo movement has stumbled in the face of swift Internet censors, a patriarchal society and a legal system that places a heavy burden on the claimant.

Explosive claims this month by tennis star Peng Shuai that a former top Communist Party politician had sexually assaulted her marked the first time allegations have hit the top layer of government. But her accusations were swiftly scrubbed from the Chinese Internet, and she has not been seen publicly since. Others have faced the same fate,

with an increasingly austere Beijing cracking down on any form of grassroots social movement.

The global #MeToo movement reached China in 2018 when a wave of women published allegations of sexual harassment against university professors. Threatened by the prospect of an uncontrolled mass movement, authorities quickly began blocking social media hashtags and keywords. The phrase #MeToo is still blocked.

Prominent feminists face regular police harassment and detention - including activist Sophia Huang Xueqin, arrested in September for "inciting subversion of state



Missing Chinese tennis star Peng Shuai

power", according to Reporters Without Borders.

Although leader Xi Jinping has declared women are "an impor-

tant force driving social development and progress", there are barely any women in key government roles in China. Political leadership is a man's world, with only one woman in the Communist Party's elite 25-member Politburo.

Xi has also been aggressively pushing a conservative narrative of women as mothers and wives. New legislation clarifying the concept of sexual harassment was passed last year in China, but accusers still face major obstacles.

"You have to constantly prove you're honest... and that you're not using this issue to hype yourself," a woman who had made an allega-

tion of sexual misconduct said, asking to remain unidentified as she feared retaliation. But for the accused, "it's actually very simple", she said. "He can just deny it and does not need to prove his innocence."

The cases that see the light of day are often shot down by courts - and a large majority of cases brought under sexual harassment charges are the accused pressing back with defamation charges.

Wang Qi, a World Wildlife Fund employee who alleged online that her boss had forcibly kissed and repeatedly harassed her, was hit with a retaliatory defamation lawsuit from him in 2018. She was ordered to apol-

ogise by a court which concluded she had insufficient proof and had "spread falsehoods" about him. And a Beijing court this year dismissed the case of Zhou Xiaoxuan, who accused state TV host Zhu Jun of groping her when she was an intern. The court said Zhou had provided insufficient evidence. Zhu in turn sued Zhou for defamation.

Courts require accusers to show evidence far stronger than that provided by the accused, often turning away witnesses close to the accusers including friends and colleagues. But Beijing has allowed allegations to swirl when it suits them.



## DREW BARRYMORE ON USING DATING APPS TO FIND LOVE

Hollywood star Drew Barrymore says she finds dating application very hard because she only seems to find people who are 'too young'. . . "It's so hard on dating apps. They are too young. I dip in and out (of using them)," she said while speaking to Gayle King on her show.

## DELROY LINDO JOINS MARVEL'S BLADE

Actor Delroy Lindo is joining the cast of Marvel Studios' *Blade*, starring Mahershala Ali as the titular human-vampire hybrid. Lindo is the first actor to join the cast since Ali broke the news of the *Blade* reboot at the end of Marvel's 2019 panel at San Diego Comic-Con, reports *variety.com*.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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**ARIES**  
You are very apprehensive about your possessions today, and will not like to share them. This mood may be because of someone particular. Affairs regarding love, Ganesh says, are progressing fine, and your married life will bloom.

**TAURUS**  
A short trip could be in the offing today, says Ganesh. Before proceeding, you may, however, be compelled to make changes in your itinerary. If you are not too happy with the new schedules and decide to stick to your original plans, you are likely to feel disturbed, uneasy at the end of the day.

**GEMINI**  
You will find yourself caught in two minds repeatedly, owing to your unpredictable mood swings. This will be the cause of a lot of mental stress. You can reduce your anxiety by talking out your issues with family members and experts.

**CANCER**  
A day to indulge in fantasy. Your ideas will be fantastic. Your status and prestige go up. People will praise your efforts. (Your efforts will be appreciated). A day of creativity and success, with Ganesh's blessings in tow.

**LEO**  
A challenging day awaits you. You will face some tensions and problems, however this doesn't mean you will not be able to complete all your work successfully. Your personal life will proceed as usual, however expectations from you at the work-front will increase. You need to maintain a balance between your home and work-place, says Ganesh.

**VIRGO**  
Children will be a source of a lot of appreciation today, in and out of the classroom. Your logical abilities will become stronger. Ganesh advises you to stay peaceful, flow with the tide and enjoy yourself, regardless of what happens in the day.

**LIBRA**  
Ganesh says today is a fortunate day for starting new work. You will win the hearts of everyone with your amazing charm. Your house and its arty interior decoration will impress people.

**SCORPIO**  
Do your deeds and don't expect returns is what Indian mythology has taught us since time immemorial. Now, it's time to implement it, especially at work. You may have to wait a little longer in terms of your business and joint venture. However, don't lose hope as the fruits of patience are sweet.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
The cloud of worries is likely to keep you gloomy today. Try to burst that cloud, and take a decision that would help you to solve your troubles. There may be some delay, if you want the situation to get back to normal. However, as Ganesh says, you would be the one who would benefit at the end of the day!

**CAPRICORN**  
If you are planning to fly to foreign shores for further studies, start documentation and other preparations today, says Ganesh. Whether you are a student or not, on this favourable day, all you need to do is to make a priority list, follow it and finish off your work one by one. If you are associated with Stock Market, expect an advantageous day ahead.

**AQUARIUS**  
Are you facing a roadblock in your path? Make a minor change in your route, you will find a smooth and clear road once again, advises Ganesh. The efforts you have made in the past will come to fruition, today. Don't get satisfied with your current achievements, you still have a long way to keep working hard.

**PISCES**  
Do not commit yourself to any large investments today. It is best to avoid speculative activities. For those who have a job, the co-operation of your colleagues will help you progress, says Ganesh.

# Siddhant-Navya enjoys each other's company!

What has lent credence to the rumour is that the 'Gully Boy' actor reportedly said that there is someone special in his life who is not an actor but related to the industry

**Mumbai:** B-town's rumour mills have been working overtime about the friendship between Siddhant Chaturvedi and Navya Naveli Nanda.

The *Gully Boy* actor and Amitabh Bachchan's granddaughter seem to be enjoying each other's company. What has lent credence to the rumour is that Siddhant reportedly said that there is someone special who is not an actor but related to the industry. Navya does not

have aspiration to enter the film industry, unlike brother Agastya, who is rumoured to be part of Zoya Akhtar's upcoming film based on Archie comics.

Navya's buddy Ananya Panday is Siddhant's co-star in Shikun Batra's film. A while back, there was tattle about Nanda and Jaaved Jaaferi's son Meezaan, who claimed that they were just friends.

Navya runs an online healthcare portal while Siddhant's latest film *Bunty Aur Babli 2* with Rani Mukerji, Saif Ali Khan, Sharvari Wagh, Pankaj Tripathi and others hit the theatres Friday. AGENCIES



## 'Ek Duje Ke Liye' best ever movie shot in Goa

**Panaji:** Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant Saturday disclosed that *Sholay* was his all-time favourite film and that *Ek Duje Ke Liye*, the K. Balachander movie starring Kamal Haasan, was among the best to be shot in his state.

Soon after delivering his speech at the inaugural ceremony of the 52nd International Film Festival of India (IFFI) Saturday, Sawant engaged in a rapid-fire question-answer session with the show's host, director Karan Johar, much to the

delight of the audience. When asked about the association between Goa and IFFI, the Chief Minister said film stars and everybody else were waiting for the festival to open in Goa.

The state, Sawant added, had been hosting the festival for the past 17 years, but this year it was special because of the efforts of Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur.

What was it about this IFFI that excited him the most? The Chief Minister replied by saying that after the Covid-19 pandemic, this was the first event in which 75 film stars were participating.

"I think in the next nine days there will more film stars coming to Goa than we have seen in a long time," he said. IANS

# Art camp to promote Sambalpuri handloom

**Bhubaneswar:** A four-day mural art camp kicked off at Cadrola village in Sambalpur district to popularise Sambalpuri handloom and its stunning designs. Begun Thursday, the event, organised by Odisha Lalit Kala Akademi (OLKA) in association with Sambalpur district administration, will come to an end today.

A team of 42 artists is showcasing their craft, based on Sambalpuri handloom designs provided by the handloom artisans, by decorating the walls of 47 families at Meherpada, Brahmanapada and Kanjigouripada of the village.

Akademi secretary Panchanan Samal said, "A documentary film has been shot on the designs to promote the artisans of Sambalpuri handloom which will be screened on the concluding day of the camp. Many weavers, affected by the pandemic induced lockdown, turned to other professions to eke out a living. The Akademi, with the support of the state government, is trying to reach out to them and popularizing their skills by conducting mural art camps."

Earlier, OLKA had organised such a camp at Heritage Village Raghurajpur in Puri where 150 artists decorated houses of Pattachitra artisans with mural paintings highlighting the content of Nabakalebar, Rath Yatra, Ramayana and Mahabharata. PNN



An artist painting a wall in Sambalpur

# Spencer more impressive than Diana

**KRISTEN STEWART BRINGS LAYERS OF HUMAN COMPLEXITIES TO A FIGURE WHO, FOR ALL THE MYTH THAT SURROUNDS HER, STILL LOOMS LARGE IN THE GLOBAL CONSCIENCE**

Set in 1991, *Spencer* is a haunting reimagining of the tense three-day Christmas weekend in the life of Princess Diana which she spent with the royal family at the Sandringham Estate, a posterously large six-storey country mansion that stands on 20,000 acres off the Norfolk Coast.

This biographical film about Princess Diana is mounted like a psychological drama full of dream sequences, internal and external pain, metaphor-laden scenes, and dialogues, showing her brooding moods.

The narrative begins with Diana sporting her blonde bob-cut hair and driving her little green car alone through the countryside lost in the area where she grew up as neigh-



### MOVIE REVIEW

hours to the royal family. This clearly tells us that she is on her own, and this is no accident, and that she has lost parts of herself over the years, trying to live up to expectations. Once on royal grounds, with her two

sons William (Jack Nielen) and Harry (Freddie Spry) by her side, Diana is trapped in a loveless marriage to a diffident Prince Charles (Jack Farthing), who openly betrays her.

Feeling effectively imprisoned, Diana's anxiety and depression start to get the better of her when she

**DIRECTOR:** Pablo Larrain.

**CAST:** Kristen Stewart, Sally Hawkins, Timothy Spall, Sean Harris, Jack Farthing, Jack Nielen, Freddie Spry, Stella Gonet, Richard Sammel, Elizabeth Berrington, Lore Stefanek and Amy Manson.

finds a biography of Anne Boleyn (Amy Manson), the wife of Henry the VIII who was accused of adultery and beheaded so that her husband could marry once again, and she begins to find in Boleyn a kindred spirit.

As she's robbed of her privacy outside and inside the opulent estate, the walls of the Gothic palace feel as if they are closing in on her. She loses her grip on reality until she can break out and save herself. The director's vision is not a

straightforward interpretation of the princess' displeasure with the royal traditions and holiday spectacle. He shows us Diana during her most vulnerable moments: weak, nasty, and most of all, self-destructive.

Kristen Stewart proves entirely compelling as the moody Diana. Her role is an interpretation of a classic role, bringing layers of human complexities to a figure who, for all the myth that surrounds her, still looms large in the global conscience.

Timothy Spall, Sean Harris, and Sally Hawkins in supporting roles have their moments on screen. Jack Farthing appears as a poor caricature of Prince Charles.

Overall, Larrain's *Spencer* is much more impressive than Oliver Hirschbiegel's 2013 film *Diana* starring Naomi Watts. IANS

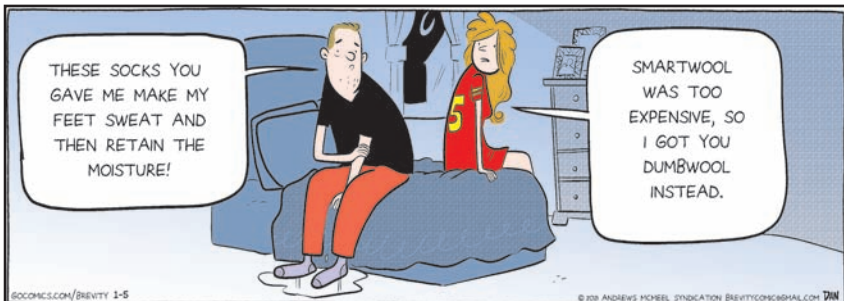
### PEANUTS



### CALVIN AND HOBBS

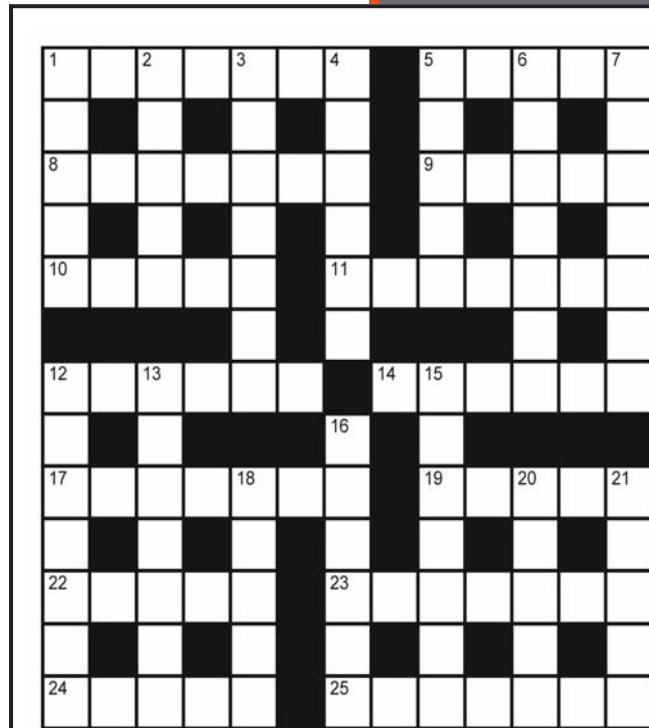


### BREVITY



### FUN post

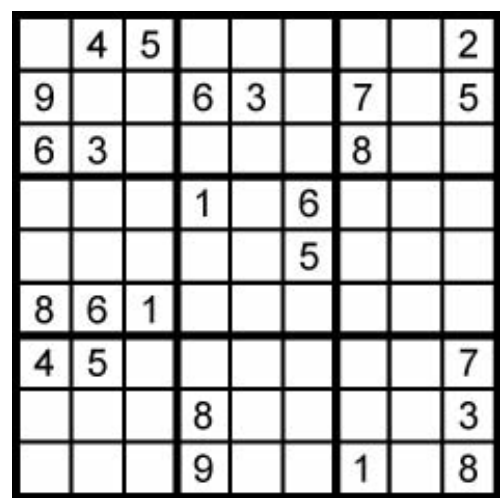
### CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Sad
  - 5 Rodeo rope
  - 8 August
  - 9 Grownup
  - 10 Marsh plant
  - 11 Zero
  - 12 Joan of Arc, e.g.
  - 14 Load
  - 17 Brisk tempo
  - 19 Breezy
  - 22 Extreme
  - 23 Spanish explorer
  - 24 Ceased
  - 25 Horse opera
- Down**
- 1 Fools
  - 2 Sensational
  - 3 Antsy
  - 4 Long and tedious address
  - 5 Smallest
  - 6 Analysed
  - 7 Eight-sided
  - 12 Use a ruler
  - 13 Associated
  - 15 Way to soar
  - 16 Russian capital
  - 18 Before canyon or duke
  - 20 Hangman's rope
  - 21 Long (for)

### SUDOKU

To solve the Sudoku puzzle, fill in the boxes in such a manner that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9, without repeating any.



### SOLUTIONS

#### CROSSWORD



#### SUDOKU



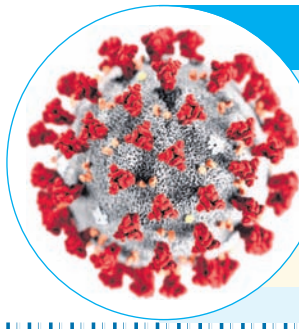
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

# downtown



## BIDDING ADIEU

Clay idols being immersed in an artificial pond on Mahanadi riverbank in Cuttack after the completion of Kartikeswar Puja, Saturday



## COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	25,71,87,968	23,22,06,744	51,59,347
India	3,44,99,925	3,39,09,708	4,65,349
Odisha	10,46,798	10,36,230	8,391

# Naveen flags off projects worth ₹2,056 crore in Angul, Dhenkanal



Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik hands over a BSKY smart health card to a beneficiary in Dhenkanal, Saturday. 5T Secretary VK Pandian (far left) and Steel and Mines Minister Prafulla Mallik (extreme right) are also seen. OP PHOTO

**Around 10 lakh people each in both the districts can avail the benefits of smart health card**

## JOURNEY SO FAR

**B**SKY smart health card programme has so far been launched in 15 districts of the state

**T**he smart health card will be provided to 3.5 crore people of 96 lakh families

**E**ach family can avail treatment cost up to ₹5 lakh per annum

**W**omen members can avail benefits up to ₹10 lakh every year

he announced ₹50 crore for the development of the tourism sector in Dhenkanal.

Around 10 lakh people each in both the districts can avail the benefits of smart health card. With this, BSKY smart health card programme has been launched in 15 districts of the state.

The smart health card will be provided to 3.5 crore people of 96 lakh families. Each family can avail treatment cost up to ₹5 lakh per annum. Women members can avail benefits up to ₹10 lakh every year.

Before the arrival of the Chief Minister in Dhenkanal, activists of the BJP and the Congress held black flag demonstrations close to the meeting venue and shouted slogans demanding the dismissal of Minister of State for Home Dibya Shankar Mishra for his alleged involvement in the murder of school teacher Mamita Meher, and justice for her family.

While BJP activists held demonstrations at Dhenkanal, Congress activists held protests in Angul. The police had taken several BJP and Congress leaders into custody prior to the arrival of the Chief Minister.

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Nov 20:** Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Saturday launched several developmental projects worth ₹2,056 crore for Angul and Dhenkanal districts.

The Chief Minister visited both the districts Saturday to launch the distribution of the smart health cards to Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana (BSKY) beneficiaries and dedicated the projects to the two districts. He launched projects worth ₹880 crore and ₹1,176 crore in Dhenkanal and Angul districts respectively.

Addressing the gathering in Angul, Naveen recalled the plight of former freedom fighters and former Chief Ministers Nabakrushna Choudhury and Malati Choudhury. Stating that the Bajirao hostel established by them is famous in the district, Naveen paid tribute to the fighters of

Talcher Prajamandal Movement. He said that the state government is now focusing on drinking water.

Naveen also said that farmers in the district have shown keen interest on Millets Mission. About 3,000 farmers have joined the programme which would strengthen the nutrition security of the state, he added.

Inaugurating various projects in Dhenkanal, he said that Dhenkanal is well known for its industrial growth and development in the horticultural sector. Besides,

# ₹500 crore for road repair, sewage work

PNN/AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Nov 20:** Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Saturday sanctioned ₹500 crore for repair and development of roads and sewage-related works in urban areas across the state.

The Chief Minister directed that work be started immediately and completed before the next monsoon season.

Several mishaps due to poor condition of the roads and sewage system have been reported in the recent past.

A 15-year-old school boy had died after falling into an open drain in September here. His body was recovered around 10 km away from the spot.

Notably, there has been a steady increase in number of road fatalities from 3,931 in 2014 to 4,738 in 2020 in the state though the deaths had come down last year due to lockdown following the outbreak of Covid-19.

# Joint account not mandatory for spouse pension: Centre

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Nov 20:** Joint bank account is not mandatory for spouse pension, the government said Saturday.

Union Minister of State for Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions Jitendra Singh said the Narendra Modi government has always sought "ease of living" for all sections of society including retirees and pensioners who are the nation's assets with all their experience and long years of service rendered by them.

He said in case the head of office is satisfied that it is not possible for the retiring government servant to open a joint account with his or her spouse for reasons beyond his or her control, this requirement may be relaxed, an official statement said. All banks disbursing central



government pension have been advised that in case the spouse (family pensioner) opts for the existing joint bank account for credit of family pension, banks should not insist on opening a new account, it said.

A joint bank account with spouse is, however, desirable and it is to be opened with their spouse in whose favor an authorisation for family pension exists in the Pension Payment Order (PPO), said the statement issued by the Personnel Ministry.

Operation in these accounts

would be on "former or survivor" or "either or survivor" basis as desired by the pensioner, Singh said.

The reason for opening of joint bank account is to ensure that family pension may be commenced without any delay and the family pensioner is not subjected to any hardships for opening of a new pension bank account, the statement said.

This also ensures minimum documentation for the family pensioner while submitting request for commencement of family pension, it said.

## HC MEDIATION CENTRE



Supreme Court Justice AM Khanwilkar inaugurates the Mediation Centre of Orissa High Court in Cuttack, Saturday. Justice AS Bopanna of the Apex Court and Orissa High Court Chief Justice S Muralidhar were also present on the occasion. OP PHOTO

# Air pollution may lead to premature birth: Experts

**N**ewborns and children are more susceptible to air pollution inside and outside their homes which may have adverse impact on their cognitive development.

The polluted air affects unborn children in mothers' womb which may lead to premature birth, affecting brain and cognitive development of the baby, said Chandra Mohan Kumar, Additional Professor of Paediatrics at AIIMS, Patna.

He said that air pollution is one of the major killers of under-five children accounting for 1 in 10 deaths indirectly as an underlying cause. More than 90 per cent children below 15 years of age are breathing toxic air and the figure goes as high as 98 per cent in low and middle income countries as compared to 50 odd per cent in developed nations, said Kumar.



Citing the reason for children being disproportionately more susceptible to the effects of air pollution, he said, "They breathe more rapidly and live closer to the ground as well, where some pollutants reach peak concentrations.

Therefore children absorb more pollutants." Post Diwali, the national capital has the worst air quality of all world capitals. The air quality in Delhi continues to be in 'very poor category'.

According to authorities, the air

**P**ost Diwali, the national capital has the worst air quality of all world capitals. The air quality in Delhi continues to be in 'very poor category'.

**T**he air quality is likely to improve from Sunday owing to relatively strong winds and may reach 'poor' category, say the Patna AIIMS authorities

quality is likely to improve from Sunday owing to relatively strong winds and may reach 'poor' category.

Rakesh Bagdi of Paediatric department at Lady Hardinge Medical College says that children are more prone to develop the symptoms of pneumonia due to the alarming air pollution. He said that the air pollution harms children during the developmental stage of their life, causing lifelong health problems.

"Exposure to air pollution at a young age can hinder lung growth, inhibit brain development and increase the risk of conditions such as asthma and can increase the risk of pneumonia," said the doctor.

Respiratory problems like difficulty in breathing, pneumonia, and infection in eyes and burning sensation are the most common symptoms in children. Hospitals in the national capital have seen an increase in the number of child patients with these symptoms.

"Keeping children indoors in the house as much as possible, giving them water and other liquid at regular intervals, berating indoor exercise and use of masks are some preventive measures for children, said Delhi based senior consultant Rajeev Ranjan. IANS

# Capital city less clean than Berhampur, Rourkela, Puri

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Nov 20:** The Capital city has made improvement in its ranking in the annual Swachh Survekshan-2021 by jumping 89 points from the previous year's 233 to 144 among 372 cities in 1-10 lakh population category. However, it lagged behind urban local bodies (ULBs) like Berhampur, Rourkela and Puri.

Indore was adjudged the cleanest city in India for the fifth time in a row in the rankings released by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs Saturday.

Bhubaneswar secured 2,908 points in the 1-10 lakh population category but stood at fifth position among nine ULBs in Odisha. With a score of 3,751, Berhampur

Municipal Corporation was ranked 56th. This was followed by Rourkela, Balasore and Puri that stood at 57th, 109th and 125th respectively. Among other cities, Bhadrak performed worst to stand at 261st position followed by Baripada Town, Sambalpur Town and Cuttack that ranked 202, 167 and 162 respectively.

"We have improved our rankings in this year's survey by focusing on efficient solid waste management programmes and urban defecation. We had planned 41 Micro Composting Centres (MCC) out of which 25 are operational. Similarly Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs) have been increased from 10 to 24. Separation of wet and dry waste at source has also helped in waste management," said a BMC official.

# COPS NAB THREE NOTORIOUS CRIMINALS AT LUNCH TABLE



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Khurda, Nov 20:** Officials of a special squad of Khurda police Saturday claimed to have arrested three notorious criminals from a restaurant at Palla Square here and seized a gun from them.

However, another dreaded criminal managed to give the cops a slip.

The special squad of Khurda police has recently launched a drive to execute the non-bailable warrants (NBWs) pending against the anti-social elements.

- The special squad of Khurda police has recently launched a drive to execute NBWs pending against the anti-social elements
- The squad had arrested altogether 521 criminals till Friday and kept tab on the activities of some others
- Tipped off about the 4 criminals having lunch at a restaurant at Palla Square around 1pm Saturday, the squad nabbed three of them

The squad had arrested altogether 521 criminals till Friday and kept tab on the activities of some others. It came to know that four dreaded criminals were having lunch at a restaurant at Palla Square around 1pm Saturday.

Soon, members of the special squad reached the restaurant in plain clothes. They initially overpowered one of the four criminals while the remaining three tried to escape the spot by threatening the squad with a gun, sources said. "After a brief scuffle, the officials of the

special squad managed to arrest three criminals while another managed to escape. The arrested criminals have been booked in several cases at various police stations in Khurda. We are interrogating them and trying to know from where they had brought the gun," said Khurda Superintendent of Police (SP) Rajkishore Dora.

Dora further informed that the Khurda police has prepared a list of all notorious criminals in the district. "Steps are being taken to make Khurda a crime-free district," he added.

SBI

**STATE BANK OF INDIA**  
 STRESSED ASSETS RECOVERY BRANCH,  
 Plot No.: 778, 1st Floor, Sahid Nagar, Bhubaneswar-751007

**POSSESSION NOTICE**  
(For Immovable Properties) [Rule- 8 (1)]

Publication of Notice regarding possession of Property u/s 13(4) of SARFAESI Act, 2002

Notice is hereby given under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002(54 of 2002) and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with Rule 9 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002, Demand Notice under section 13(2) was issued on the dates mentioned against below accounts and stated hereinafter calling upon the following Borrowers to repay the amount mentioned in the notice with interest within **60 days** from the date of receipt of said notice.

The Borrowers having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrowers and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the properties described herein below in exercise of power conferred on him/her under section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said Act on the date mentioned against below accounts. The Borrowers in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the properties and any dealings with the properties will be subject to the charge of the **State Bank of India**, for an amount stated below with interest, costs and expenses thereon.

**The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of Sub-section (8) of the section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available to them, to redeem the secured assets.**

Name of Account/ Name & Address of the Borrowers/Guarantors	Owner of the Property	Description of the Property Mortgaged / Charged	Date of Demand Notice	Date of Possession	Dues Amount
<b>Borrower:</b> M/s. Nigam Enterprises, Prop.: Shri Purnan Padhi, At: Plot No.: 250, Bomikhal, Near Geetanjali Apartment, Cuttack Road, Bhubaneswar - 751010 <b>Guarantor:</b> Shri Purna Chandra Padhi, At: Qtr. No.: DLA-23, V.S.S. Nagar, Bhubaneswar - 751010	<b>Shri Purna Chandra Padhi.</b>	All that part and parcel of the property consist of Land and Building at Mouza: Dumuduma, Tahasil: Bhubaneswar, PS.: Khandagiri, Dist.: Khurda, Khata No.: 432/1157, Plot No.: 417/1700/2301, Area: Ac.0.016 Dec. out of Area: Ac.0.061 Dec., KISSAM: Gharabari	03.12.2019	19.11.2021	₹23,07,456.34 as on 30.11.2019 + further interest from 01.12.2019, incidental expenses, costs, etc. thereon
<b>Borrower:</b> Shri Rohit Kumar Kandoi, S/o.: Pradip Kumar Kandoi, A/P.O.: MIG-28, Phase- III, Ananta Vihar, Pokhariptu, Bhubaneswar, Dist.: Khurda - 751020	<b>Shri Rohit Kumar Kandoi, S/o.: Pradip Kumar Kandoi</b>	All that part and parcel of the property consist of Vacant Land situated at Mouza: Sahaspur, PS./Tahasil: Jatni, under the Jurisdiction of DSRO, Bhubaneswar, Status: Sthitiban, Khata No.: 482/1008, Plot No.: 96/2963, Area: Ac.0.55 Dec. out of Ac.0.480 Dec., Bounded by North: Sub Plot No.: 17 and 30, South: Rev. Plot No.: 93, East: Road, West: Road	27.01.2020	19.11.2021	₹27,08,012/- as on 26.01.2020 + further interest from 27.01.2020, incidental expenses, costs, etc. thereon
<b>Borrower:</b> M/s. Shreetex Commercial Pvt. Ltd., Represented through its Managing Director: Mr. Aruna Kar, At: Plot No.: 1330/6429, Palasuni, GGP Colony, Bhubaneswar - 751025	<b>Mr. Aruna Kumar Kar.</b>	All that part and parcel of the property consist of Land and Building at , Mouza: Rourkela Town, Unit No.: 27, Jhirpani, PS.: Township, Tahasil: Rourkela, Dist.: Sundargarh, Khata No.: 171/635, Plot No.: 211/1281, Area: Ac.0.055 Dec., KISSAM: Homestead	27.01.2020	15.11.2021	₹45,66,141/- as on 26.01.2020 + further interest from 27.01.2020, incidental expenses, costs, etc. thereon

**Place: Bhubaneswar, Date: 20.11.2021** **Sd/- Authorised Officer, State Bank of India, SARB, Bhubaneswar**



SHORT TAKES

MAHANGA DOUBLE MURDER

Major blast by Maoists foiled

Koraput: Acting on a tip-off, a special team of the 151 Battalion of the Border Security Force (BSF) recovered IED making explosives hidden by Maoists from Pujariput forest area under Boipariguda block in Koraput district bordering Chhatisgarh, Saturday.

Court asks cops to submit CDR of 3 accused

STATE LAW MINISTER PRATAP JENA'S NAME HAS FIGURED IN THE FIR

AGENCIES/PNN

Bhubaneswar/ Kendrapara, Nov 20: A court in Cuttack district Saturday expressed displeasure over the slow pace of investigation into the Mahanga double murder case in which state Law Minister Pratap Jena's name had figured in the FIR.

NTPC sponsors 13 candidates

Sundargarh: NTPC Darlipali Friday gave a send-off to 13 candidates for pursuing two-year full time ITI Course at CIPET, Bhubaneswar.

had filed a charge-sheet against 14 accused people but dropped the name of the minister.

In August, the court directed the Mahanga police to reinvestigate the case as the law minister's name was not mentioned in the charge sheet though the petitioner had filed a case at the police station against 13 persons, including the minister, alleging their involvement in the murder.

The police were yet to submit the revised report. Meanwhile, the opposition Congress and BJP activists Saturday waved black flags at the law minister when he was on his way to attend a function at a government high school in Kendrapara district.

Former Mahanga block chairman and BJP leader Kulamani Baral along with his associate Dibyasingha Baral were hacked to death at Nrutanga village January 2, 2021.

Ramakant Baral, the son of Kulamani Baral, had filed a petition in the court alleging that the charge-sheet was silent on the minister's role in the double murder case.

After investigation, the police



KEEPING THE TRADITION ALIVE



Bhalumunda village under Bargaon block in Sundargarh district was declared as a folk art village at a function as tribals perform a traditional dance to welcome the guests, Saturday

POACHING MENACE TO BIG CATS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nuapada, Nov 20: An increase in poaching activities in Sunabeda wildlife sanctuary has threatened the survival of tiger population as the state government launched efforts to accord the tiger reserve status to the sanctuary, a report said.

The sanctuary was formed comprising 52 villages of 12 panchayats of Sunabeda Pati hill (Goda hill) on the western border of the state in 1984. It spread over 600 sqkm and is situated at a height of 3,000 feet above sea level bordering Chhatisgarh.

The wildlife department conducted a tiger census in the sanctuary for the first time through the identification of pug marks in 1995. The drive traced the presence of 10 Royal Bengal Tigers (RBT) and 41 leopards in the sanctuary. Among the RBTs, five were male and five female.

Similarly, among the leopards 10 were male, 10 female, 10 cubs while 11 could not be identified. Keeping the results of the census in mind, the Centre proposed to declare the Sunabeda wildlife sanctuary as a tiger reserve project in 1996. In the census conducted in 1998, 17 RBTs and 23 leopards were traced in the sanctuary. In the cen-

SUNABEDA WILDLIFE SANCTUARY



sus in 2000, 12 RBTs and 12 leopards were found to be living in the sanctuary. In 2002 census, 24 RBTs and 24 leopards were found while in 2004 census, 32 RBTs and 36 leopards were found.

However, the census programme had to be aborted after Maoists strayed inside the sanctuary and made it their safe haven. The census was undertaken 12 years later in 2016.

However, only four RBTs and 20 leopards were found living in the sanctuary. In the 2018 census conducted with the help of pug marks and camera trapping, seven to 12

ect but it has not been announced as the state government is yet to give its approval.

Increased poaching activities have threatened the survival of tigers. The poachers have become active inside the jungle as forest officials have stopped patrolling inside the jungle on the pretext of Maoists.

The forest officials raided Tipajhar village under Sadar forest range and seized a severed head of a leopard and its hide, September 20, 2020. Seven poachers were also arrested during the raid. The STF team raided Sinapali in February and arrested two traders when they were trying to sell off a leopard hide.

The forest officials raided M Rampur in Kalahandi district and seized a leopard hide and arrested seven persons, July 9 and 10, this year. The probe revealed that the hide was of a leopard from Sunabeda wildlife sanctuary. Sensing the increased poaching activities, the state government has launched efforts to declare the Sunabeda wildlife sanctuary as a tiger reserve.

Contacted, Sashi Paul, principal chief conservator of forests (PCCF), said efforts are on to fulfill the norms as required by NTCA and the sanctuary will become a tiger reserve project.

Snake venom worth ₹1.5 cr seized in Deogarh, two held

THE SQUAD MEMBERS FEIGNING AS DECOY CUSTOMERS TRIED TO BUY THE VENOM BEFORE ARRESTING THE TWO

POST NEWS NETWORK

Deogarh, Nov 20: In a major crackdown Friday afternoon, a special squad of police seized snake venom worth ₹1.5 crore and arrested two persons after a raid in Tarang village

under Riamal police limits in this district.

The accused were identified as Kailash Sahu of Sindurapanka locality under Sadar police limits and Ranjan Kumar Padhi of Sakshipada area in Sambalpur district. According to police, the special squad led by SDPO Pratyush Kumar Mohapatra got information from a reliable source that the accused from Sambalpur district were negotiating with various parties to sell snake venom.

Instead of apprehending the duo



On the spot, the police team led by sub-inspector Maguni Gadanayak followed the venom traders to Sindurapanka locality.

There the squad members feigning as decoy customers tried to strike



a deal with the two to purchase the snake venom. There the accused showed around one kg of cobra venom stored in a glass bowl and demanded ₹1.5 crore as its value. The squad members immediately

pounced on them and arrested the two. The venom kept in the bowl and two mobile phones were seized from their possession. They were taken for interrogation where they admitted to their crime.

Realam police registered a case in this connection and produced the two in court. The accused were remanded to judicial custody after the magistrate rejected their bail pleas. A detailed probe has been launched in this connection.

"It was ascertained during a preliminary probe that the market value of the snake venom would be around ₹1.5 crore," Gadanayak said.

Bid Identification No. EENH KJR-06/2021-22 No. A4/2211 Dt. 17.11.2021 e-mail: eenhkeonjhar@gmail.com Table with columns for work details, estimated cost, period of completion, etc.

AHEAD OF RURAL POLLS IN GANJAM

Cong in tatters as BJD surges

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, Nov 20: The Congress party has lagged behind others in reorganising its cadre in panchayat and civic body elections in Ganjam district. Over years, the grand old party has been losing its ground to the Biju Janata Dal (BJD).

In the past, Ganjam was a Congress fort while its main opponents were Left wing parties. The ruling BJD has broadened its base in the district while the BJP has suffered organizational loss after separation from the ruling party.

In 2000, Usharani Panda was elected on the Congress ticket from Sorada Assembly seat. In 2004, Trinath Behera was elected as MLA on the Congress ticket from Gopalpur Assembly segment while Congress's Ramesh Jena was elected from Sanakhemundi Assembly seat in 2009

However, the ruling BJD made a clean sweep in all the 13 Assembly constituencies in 2014, handing out a crushing defeat to the Congress. In the 2019 Assembly elections, Jena was the sole legislator who won



In 2000, Usharani Panda was elected on the Congress ticket from Sorada Assembly seat. In 2004, Trinath Behera was elected as MLA on the Cong ticket from Gopalpur Assembly segment while party's Ramesh Jena was elected from Sanakhemundi Assembly seat in 2009

for the Congress.

In 2004, BJP's Kishore Chandra Singh won from Dharakote Assembly seat as the BJD shared the seat with the saffron party as part of an alliance. After the alliance was severed, the BJP continued to suffer organisational loss.

A year ago, Ramesh Jena was made president of the district unit of the Congress. However, the party's hopes to gain its lost ground faded as the party shows no sign of improving.

Sources said the Congress and the BJP are not in a position to counter the BJD in the district

On the other hand, factionalism in the Congress cost it dear in Ganjam.

A year ago, Ramesh Jena was made president of the district unit of the Congress. However, the party's hopes to gain its lost ground faded as the party shows no sign of improving.

The ruling party has chalked out strategies with its MLAs and frontline leaders keeping in touch with party cadre at the grassroots. Its organisational process at the block level and in the civic body areas are going on. The party has given importance to the leadership of women, youths and student leaders.



STATE BANK OF INDIA STRESSED ASSETS RECOVERY BRANCH (SARB), SAMBALPUR, Hussain House, Ainthapali, Sambalpur-768004 (Odisha), E-mail ID : sbi.18398@sbi.co.in, Land Line No. (Office) : Phone/Fax : 0663-2540025 E-Auction Sale Notice Table with columns for borrower details, property details, and outstanding dues.



# national

## of the day quote

There should be sustained coordination between security agencies and heightened surveillance of vital installations for ensuring a secure environment for the people of the union territory

Due to the prime minister's effort to make India self-reliant, the country is progressing rapidly

Kerala is much ahead of other states in providing online education to children during the COVID-19 pandemic as 91 per cent of those in rural areas were able to continue their studies with the help of technology

## SHORT TAKES

### Five terror associates held

**Srinagar:** A sleeper cell module was busted in Pulwama district of Jammu and Kashmir and five active militant associates of Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) were arrested Saturday, police said. Those arrested were identified as Showket Islam Dar, Aijaz Ahmad Lone, Aijaz Gulzar, Manzoor Ahmad Bhat and Nasser Ahmad Shah, all residents of Lelhar in Pulwama.

### Man gets life term

**Muzaffarnagar:** A special court Saturday sentenced a man to life imprisonment for abducting and murdering a 17-year-old Dalit boy here. Special judge for Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe cases Jamshed Ali also imposed a fine of ₹40,000 on convict Rajkumar after holding him guilty under Indian Penal Code sections 364 (kidnapping), 302 (murder) and 201 (causing disappearance of evidence of offence). According to special counsel Yashpal Singh, Dalit boy Arun was abducted and murdered by Rajkumar and later dumped his body in a Ganga canal at Khanpur village in the Mansurpur area of the district on April 10, 2017.

### Two killed

**Jaisalmer:** Two persons sitting on a roadside were crushed to death by a car here, while five others sustained injuries, police said Saturday. The incident took place Friday night when both deceased, as well as the injured, were sitting on a roadside outside a railway station, police said. The deceased were identified by the police as Kailash (35) and Suresh (30), both from Bhopal.

### Nigerian held

**New Delhi:** A Nigerian national allegedly involved in cheating people by hacking their WhatsApp accounts was arrested from Bengaluru, the Delhi Police said Saturday. The accused Okwudiri Paschal (40) was arrested while he was withdrawing the cheated amount of ₹20,000 from an ATM in the Karnataka capital on November 16, they said.

### Girl rescued

**New Delhi:** A minor girl, who was kidnapped on November 12 in the national capital, was rescued by the Delhi Police from Rudrapur in Uttarakhand, an official said here Saturday. According to the official, on November 12 the father of the girl, a resident of Uttam Nagar in New Delhi came to Mohan Garden police station and reported that his 16-year-old minor daughter was missing since 4:30 pm on that day.



Naxal activities are not limited to only remote areas of eastern Maharashtra but 'urban naxalization' is being seen in big cities of the state

SHARAD PAWAR | NCP CHIEF

## WELCOME MOVE

The Union Health Ministry has activated a service on the CoWIN portal that allows anyone to check an individual's vaccination status with the person's registered mobile number and name, followed by an OTP for consent



# Focus shifts to MSP; key meet today

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Nov 20:** After its decision to repeal the three agri laws, the Centre is now facing pressure from agitating farmer unions and opposition parties to bring in a legislation guaranteeing Minimum Support Price, with ruling BJP MP Varun Gandhi also joining the chorus Saturday saying the stir won't end till this issue is resolved.

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM), an umbrella body of the agitating unions, is meeting Sunday to decide on the next course of action, including on the MSP issue and the proposed daily tractor march to Parliament during the upcoming Winter Session, SKM core committee member Darshan Pal said.

Farmer leaders said the protesters will stay put at border areas of Delhi until the Centre formally repeals these laws in Parliament after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's surprise announcement on Friday and indicated their stir for a statutory guarantee of MSP and withdrawal of the Electricity Amendment Bill will continue.

"Our call of tractor march to Parliament still stands. A final decision on the future course of the agitation and MSP issue will be taken in a meeting of the SKM at Singhu Border on Sunday," Darshan Pal said on Saturday.

While the opposition needed and mocked the government after it agreed to rollback the farm laws, BJP MP Varun Gandhi, who had deviated from the party line to speak out in favour of the protesters, wrote to Prime Minister



A farmer speaks on the phone at Singhu border in Delhi, Saturday

Narendra Modi, urging him to accept the farmers' demand for a statutory MSP guarantee.

The MP from Pilibhit in Uttar Pradesh said if the decision to repeal farm had been taken earlier, "innocent lives would not have been lost". "This movement will not end without the resolution of this (MSP) demand and there will be widespread anger amongst them, which will continue to emerge in one form or the other. Therefore, it is very important for the farmers to get the statutory guarantee of MSP for their crops," he wrote and also demanded that ₹1 crore compensation be given to farmers "martyred" in the movement against the laws.

Like Varun Gandhi, BSP chief Mayawati also demanded a law to guarantee MSP and withdrawal of cases against the protesters. "There should be a new law to ensure the minimum support price for the produce of farmers, and barring cases of serious nature, all cases registered against farm-

ers, who are the country's pride, should be withdrawn. This should be ensured by the Centre, and it would then be appropriate," she tweeted. The Congress and Left parties have also demanded that a law should be enacted on the MSP guarantee while repealing the three laws from last year.

Union minister General V K Singh, however, lamented the insistence of a section of farmers on a rollback of the reform legislation. "I asked a farmer leader to tell me what is black (in the farm laws). You people say this is a black law. I asked them what is black barring the ink (used). They said we endorse your view but these (laws) are still black," the former Army chief said in Basti, Uttar Pradesh. "What is the cure (for this)? There is no cure," he said expressing his exasperation. "In farmers' organisations, there is a fight for supremacy among themselves. These people cannot think about the benefits to small farmers," he said.

# Woman dies after taking Covid vax shot

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Patna, Nov 20:** A woman in Bihar's Aurangabad district has died after taking the second dose of Covid-19 vaccine Saturday, an official said.

The deceased, Rinku Devi, went to Sadar Hospital in Aurangabad and took the second dose of Covid vaccine. She collapsed on the road while returning home, in Bhadua village.

Her husband Jitendra Singh

rushed her to the Sadar Hospital where the doctors declared her dead on arrival. Angered by her death, a large number the woman's family members went to the Sadar hospital and allegedly damaged some properties, besides assaulting the medical staff including two doctors - Vikash Kumar, deputy CMO, and Amrit Kumar.

The two doctors had to escape in a bid to save themselves. The situation was normalised after over 100

police personnel arrived at the hospital and managed to disperse the mob. "My wife was healthy while visiting the Sadar hospital... She wanted to take the second dose of Covid vaccine as just couple of days remaining for our daughter's marriage. I am sure that the doctors of the hospital had given her wrong injection that led to her death. Murder case should be registered against the alleged doctors and nurses," Jitendra Kumar said.

# Stage set for Raj Cabinet reshuffle

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jaipur, Nov 20:** Ahead of the Cabinet reshuffle, all ministers in the Congress-ruled Rajasthan resigned during a meeting at Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot's residence here Saturday evening.

State Congress chief Govind Singh Dotasra, who along with two other ministers had offered to resign in a letter to party's national president Sonia Gandhi, had moved a proposal in this regard at the beginning of the meeting following which all ministers resigned.

Dotasra, Harish Chaudhary and Raghunath Sharma had expressed their desire to work for the party in the letter to the Congress president. "All ministers resigned in the meeting," Pratap Singh Khachariyawas, who held the charge of the transport minister, said here.

"We have been asked to go to the PCC office at 2 pm on Sunday where further instructions will be given by Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot,

AICC general secretary Ajay Maken and PCC chief Govind Singh Dotasra," Khachariyawas said.

Khachariyawas said it is for the chief minister and the party high command to do reshuffling and it will be known tomorrow what instructions are given by them.

"We will be reaching the PCC office tomorrow at 2 pm. We will be following further instructions given to us there," he said. Sources said the oath ceremony will be held on Sunday at Raj Bhawan.

The in-charge for Rajasthan affairs at the AICC, Ajay Maken, who arrived in Jaipur on Friday, was also present at the chief minister's residence.

The strength of the Ashok Gehlot cabinet was 21 before the ministers resigned.

Rajasthan, where the number of MLAs is 200, can have a maximum of 30 ministers, including the chief minister. The clamour for Cabinet reshuffle had been growing for the past several months.

## NOBLE GESTURE



People feed Siberian seagulls in Surat, Saturday

PTI PHOTO

## Covid patient returns home after 202 days

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Dahod, Nov 20:** A 45-year-old woman, who had tested positive for coronavirus on May 1 this year, was discharged from a medical facility in Gujarat's Dahod city, after 202 days of hospitalisation, her family members said Saturday.

Geeta Dharmik, whose husband is a railway employee at Dahod, had tested positive for the infection during the second wave of the pandemic on her return from Bhopal, they said.

She had to be hospitalised for a total of 202 days before the doctors at Dahod railway hospital decided to discharge her after her recovery, they said.

"The family members were overjoyed to receive her home from Dahod railway hospital Friday. She remained hospitalised at Dahod and Vadodara for a total of 202 days, during which she was kept on oxygen support," her husband Trilok Dharmik said. He said he had lost hope for her recovery for as many as nine times during this period, but she bounced back every time and was finally discharged.

# Clamour grows to withdraw UAPA, CAA

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Nov 20:** After the Prime Minister Friday announced the withdrawal of farm laws, clamour grows for the repeal of the contentious CAA and restoration of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir. The Muslim leaders have urged the Prime Minister for withdrawal of the UAPA and CAA while leaders in J&K have demanded the restoration of Article 370.

The Winter Session of Parliament could see the demand as opposition is up in arms to corner the government after the announcement of the repeal of farm laws which they term as victory against the government.

The opposition may jointly press

their demands, though on Article 370 and CAA there could be a division within the opposition ranks as many may not take the risk to raise the issue of CAA and 370 ahead of polls in five states.

The leaders in the opposition may be jubilant after the government decided to step back on the issue of farm laws but analysts feel if the issue of Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and 370 will be raked it will work as fodder for the BJP. The Muslim leaders, however, think otherwise. They say CAA agitation was called off due to Covid and now the government should step back on it also.

The leaders from Kashmir are also putting their demands to restore Article 370. Jammu and



Kashmir Peoples Democratic Party President Mehbooba Mufti said, "Desecrating Indian constitution to dismember and disempower J&K was done only to please their voters. I hope they course correct here

too and reverse the illegal changes made in J&K since August 2019."

Another former Chief Minister and National Conference (JKNC) leader Farooq Abdullah said that the Union government must re-

store Article 370, 35A and the statehood of Jammu and Kashmir. The CAA is mainly being opposed by the people from the Muslim community and some other sections of the society, alleging that the Act is discriminatory in nature.

Syed Sadatullah Hussaini, President, Jamaat-e-Islami Hind, said: "We now urge the government to also look at the other anti-people and anti-Constitutional laws like CAA-NRC, etc., and ensure that they too are withdrawn at the earliest. We feel delighted that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has finally acceded to the demands of the farmers. Had it been done earlier, the losses could have been averted."

President of Majlis-e-

Mushawarat, Navaid Hamid, said, "All draconian laws, including CAA and Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), need to be withdrawn. The minister whose son was involved in the killing of farmers in Lakhimpur Kheri must be immediately sacked and adequate compensation should be given to all the farmers who died during the Kisan Andolan."

The Muslim leaders say that the CAA movement encouraged the farmers to protest against the farm laws. The government should also withdraw the CAA now.

"Once again the truth has come to light that if a movement is run with honesty and patience for a legitimate cause, one day success will be achieved."









Glad to see that after more than a year of protests, the three farm bills in India will be repealed. This is proof that when workers stick together, they can defeat corporate interests and achieve progress

'BOOSTED, NOT BASTED'

Joe Biden Friday pardoned two Thanksgiving turkeys, saying that the white male birds were selected based on their "temperament, appearance and, I suspect, vaccination status." Instead of getting basted, these two turkeys are getting boosted today, Biden joked



of the day quote

The United States remains committed to preventing Iran from gaining a nuclear weapon. And we remain committed to a diplomatic outcome of the nuclear issue. But if Iran isn't willing to engage seriously, then we will look at all of the options necessary to keep the United States secure

Most of our peacekeeping missions have a political and security environment that has deteriorated. Are we equipped enough as a multilateral system to address these threats?

JEAN-PIERRE LACROIX | UN PEACEKEEPING CHIEF

This government has waged war on unnecessary, wasteful plastics - banning the supply of plastic straws, stirrers and cotton buds, while our carrier bag charge has cut consumption by 95% in the main supermarkets

GEORGE EUSTICE | UK ENVIRONMENT SECRETARY

SHORT TAKES

Russia: record virus toll persists

Moscow: Russia's record high coronavirus death toll persisted for a second straight day Saturday, as the number of new infections declined. The state coronavirus task force reported 1,254 COVID-19 deaths, matching Friday's tally. The task force also reported 37,120 new confirmed cases. The daily new infections in recent weeks appear to have a downward trend but still remain higher than during previous surges of the virus. The latest surge in infections and deaths comes amid low vaccination rates and lax public attitudes toward taking precautions.

Man convicted of threatening Pelosi

Phoenix: The US Attorney's Office in Arizona says a man from Bullhead, Arizona, has been convicted of threatening to kill or harm Nancy Pelosi, speaker of the US House of Representatives. A Friday statement from the office said a jury found 77-year-old Steven Arthur Martis guilty Thursday of one count of communicating an interstate threat to kill or harm the speaker. He is to be sentenced January 25.

Wanted fugitive in US found dead

Seneca: One of the most wanted fugitives in the United States apparently died about four months ago in a South Carolina home about 16 years after he was first wanted in San Diego for sexually assaulting children, investigators said. Frederick Cecil McLean, 70, died of natural causes in July, but his body wasn't found until November 6 when someone asked deputies to check on a neighbour who hadn't been seen in a while, Oconee County Coroner Karl Addis said.

Curbs in Canadian province post flood

Vancouver: The British Columbia government announced Friday it is limiting the amount of fuel people can purchase at gas stations in some parts of the province and is restricting non-essential travel as highways begin to reopen following torrential rains that caused floods and mudslides.

Kenosha shootings verdict: Rittenhouse acquitted

THE RITTENHOUSE TRIAL WAS THE HIGHEST-PROFILE US CIVILIAN SELF-DEFENSE CASE SINCE 2013

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Kenosha, Nov 20: Kyle Rittenhouse was acquitted of all charges Friday after testifying he acted in self-defense in the deadly Kenosha shootings that became a flashpoint in the debate over guns, vigilantism and racial injustice in the US.

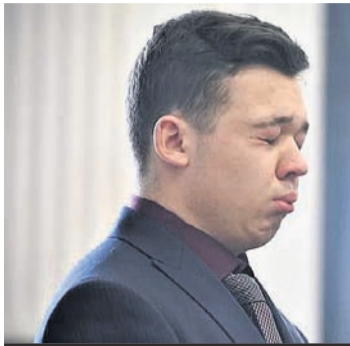
Rittenhouse, 18, began to choke up, fell forward toward the defense table and then hugged one of his attorneys as he heard a court clerk recite "not guilty" five times. A sheriff's deputy whisked him out a back door.

"He wants to get on with his life," defense attorney Mark Richards said. "He has a huge sense

of relief for what the jury did to him today. He wishes none of this ever happened. But as he said when he testified, he did not start this."

The verdict in the politically combustible case was met with anger and disappointment from those who saw Rittenhouse as a vigilante and a wannabe cop, and relief and a sense of vindication from those who regarded him as a patriot who took a stand against lawlessness and exercised his Second Amendment right to carry a gun and to defend himself. Supporters donated more than \$2 million toward his legal defense.

The Rev. Jesse Jackson, the long-time civil rights leader, said the



Rittenhouse, a then-17-year-old former police youth cadet, said that he went to Kenosha to protect property from rioters but that he came under attack and feared for his life

verdict throws into doubt the safety of people who protest in support of Black Americans.

"It seems to me that it's open season on human rights demon-

strators," he said.

Rittenhouse was charged with homicide, attempted homicide and reckless endangering for killing two men and wounding a third

with an AR-style semi-automatic rifle in the summer of 2020 during a tumultuous night of protests over the shooting of a Black man, Jacob Blake, by a white Kenosha police officer.

Rittenhouse, a then-17-year-old former police youth cadet, said that he went to Kenosha to protect property from rioters but that he came under attack and feared for his life. He is white, as were those he shot. The anonymous jury, whose racial makeup was not disclosed by the court but appeared to be overwhelmingly white, deliberated for more than three days.

President Joe Biden called for calm, saying that while the out-

come of the case "will leave many Americans feeling angry and concerned, myself included, we must acknowledge that the jury has spoken." Former President Donald Trump, who at the time of the shootings said it appeared Rittenhouse had been "very violently attacked," issued a statement Friday congratulating Rittenhouse on the verdict, adding "if that's not self defense, nothing is!"

Rittenhouse could have gotten life in prison if found guilty on the most serious charge, first-degree intentional homicide, or what some other states call first-degree murder. Two other charges each carried over 60 years behind bars.

Europe: COVID crisis pits jabbed against unjabbed

SPIKING INFECTIONS AND MEASURES TO REIN THEM IN ARE COMBINING TO USHER IN A SECOND STRAIGHT GRIM HOLIDAY SEASON IN EUROPE



Thousands protest upcoming lockdown

Vienna: Thousands of protesters gathered in Vienna Saturday after the Austrian government announced a nationwide lockdown to contain the quickly rising coronavirus infections in the country. The far-right opposition Freedom Party was among those who have called for the protest and vowed to combat the new restrictions. Demonstrations against virus measures were also expected in other European countries including Switzerland, Croatia and Italy. The Austrian lockdown will start early Monday and initially will last for 10 days, and will then be reevaluated. At the most it will last 20 days.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Brussels, Nov 20: This was supposed to be the Christmas in Europe where family and friends could once again embrace holiday festivities and one another. Instead, the continent is the global epicentre of the COVID-19 pandemic as cases soar to record levels in many countries.

With infections spiking again despite nearly two years of restrictions, the health crisis in-

creasingly is pitting citizen against citizen - the vaccinated against the unvaccinated. Governments desperate to shield overburdened healthcare systems are imposing rules that limit choices for the unvaccinated in the hope that doing so will drive up rates of vaccinations.

Austria Friday went a step further, making vaccinations mandatory as of Feb 1. While Austria so far stands alone in the European Union in making vaccinations

'Orgy of violence'

The Hague: Police opened fire on protesters in rioting that erupted in downtown Rotterdam around a demonstration against COVID-19 restrictions late Friday night. The Dutch city's mayor called it "an orgy of violence." Police said that two rioters were hospitalised after being hit by bullets and investigations were underway to establish if they were shot by police. The condition of the injured rioters was not disclosed. Officers arrested 51 people, about half of them minors, police said Saturday afternoon.

mandatory, more and more governments are clamping down.

Starting Monday, Slovakia is banning people who haven't been vaccinated from all nonessential stores and shopping malls. They also will not be allowed to attend any public event or gathering and will be required to test twice a week just to go to work.

It is not only nations of central and eastern Europe that are suffering anew. Wealthy nations in the west also are being hit hard and imposing restrictions on their populations once again.

Greece, too, is targeting the unvaccinated. Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis announced a battery of new restrictions late Thursday for the unvaccinated, keeping them out of venues including bars, restaurants, cinemas, theatres, museums and gyms, even if they have tested negative.

In a first: Zero COVID death in B'desh

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Dhaka, Nov 20: Bangladesh Saturday reported zero Covid fatality for the first time since the pandemic broke out in the South Asian country in March last year. The first Covid death was reported March 18, 2020.

Dr Ayesha Akhter, Assistant Director (Admin) of the 250-bedded TB Hospital of Dhaka, told IANS that 190 patients also recovered

from the coronavirus in the last 24 hours, adding the recovery rate now stands at 97.72 per cent.

Praising Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Dr Ayesha said, "This good news makes people very happy... I must say, PM Hasina's contribution to the healthcare sector is behind the success."

However, sounding a warning, she said, "Pandemic is on the rise all over the world. The relief is that the death toll came down to

zero. But if the people do not stay aware, it could rise again."

She also urged the people to follow the Covid-19 protocols.

It (Covid-19) can become strong any moment. Everyone should remain alert, she said. Bangladesh reported seven Covid deaths and 253 cases Friday. With the latest fatalities and fresh infections, the death toll in the country rose to 27,946 while the caseload increased to 15,73,889, respectively.

NASA SEEKS IDEAS FOR A NUCLEAR REACTOR ON MOON

The proposal requests are for an initial system design and must be submitted by Feb 19

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Boise (US), Nov 20: If anyone has a good idea on how to put a nuclear fission power plant on the moon, the US government wants to hear about it.

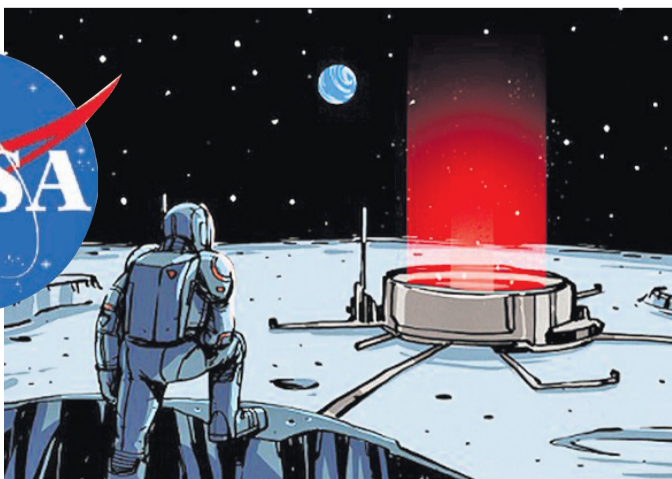
NASA and the nation's top federal nuclear research lab Friday put out a request for proposals for a fission surface power system.

NASA is collaborating with the US Department of Energy's Idaho National Laboratory to establish a sun-independent power source for missions to the moon by the end of the decade.

If successful in supporting a sustained human presence on the moon, the next objective would be Mars. NASA says fission surface power could provide sustained, abundant power no matter the environmental conditions on the moon or Mars.

"I expect fission surface power systems to greatly benefit our plans for power architectures for the moon and Mars and even drive innovation for uses here on Earth," Jim Reuter, associate administrator for NASA's Space Technology Mission Directorate, said in a statement.

The reactor would be built on



Earth and then sent to the moon. Submitted plans for the fission surface power system should include a uranium-fueled reactor

core, a system to convert the nuclear power into usable energy, a thermal management system to keep the reactor cool, and a distribution sys-

tem providing no less than 40 kilowatts of continuous electric power for 10 years in the lunar environment.

Some other requirements include that it be capable of turning itself off and on without human help, that it be able to operate from the deck of a lunar lander, and that it can be removed from the lander and run on a mobile system and be transported to a different lunar site for operation.

Additionally, when launched from Earth to the moon, it should fit inside a 12-foot (4-meter) diameter cylinder that's 18 feet (6 meters) long. It should not weigh more than 13,200 pounds (6,000 kilograms).

The proposal requests are for an initial system design and must be submitted by February 19.

The Idaho National Laboratory has worked with NASA on various projects in the past. Most recently, the lab helped power NASA's Mars rover Perseverance with a radioisotope power system, which converts heat generated by the natural decay of plutonium-238 into electrical power.

The car-sized rover landed on Mars in February and has remained active on the red planet.

The Energy Department has also been working to team up with private businesses on various nuclear power plans, notably on a new generation of smaller power plants that range from small modular reactors to small mobile reactors that can quickly be set up in the field and then removed when not needed.



A krathong (floating basket) floats on a canal during the Loy Krathong festival, which is held as a symbolic apology to the goddess of the river, in Bangkok, Thailand

Taliban to pay overdue salaries of govt workers

Thousands of Afghan government workers are owed at least three months of salary

REUTERS

Kabul, Nov 20: Afghanistan's Taliban administration will begin paying the overdue salaries of government workers from Saturday, officials said.

Thousands of Afghan government workers are owed at least three months of salary, one of the many crises faced by the Taliban since the Islamist movement took over the country in August.

The finance ministry says that, starting today, the past three months salaries of all government workers and staff will be paid totally, Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said on Twitter.

It was not immediately clear where the funds to pay the salaries would come from.

Even before the Taliban seized control last in August, many public sector workers said they had not been paid for weeks. After the movement took power, billions of dollars of Afghan government funds parked abroad in the United States and Europe were frozen.

Foreign governments have been unwilling to fund the Taliban-led



administration directly to help with financial commitments such as payment of workers. Global financial institutions have also halted funding.

After a meeting Thursday between the special envoys of Germany and the Netherlands and Taliban officials in Kabul, the envoys expressed willingness to explore paying health and education sector workers directly through international organisations.

It is unclear if the Taliban's announcement Saturday is related to this.

Another Taliban spokesman, Inamullah Samangani, said on Twitter Saturday that the daily revenue collections of the Taliban administration had been increasing daily.

Minor Hindu boy sexually abused, murdered in Pak

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

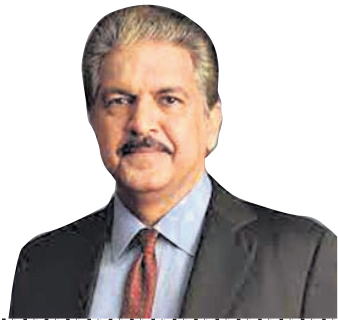
New Delhi, Nov 20: While the world observes 'World Children's Day', an 11-year-old Hindu boy was sexually assaulted and brutally murdered in Pakistan Sindh, Express Tribune reported.

His body was found Saturday in Babarloi town in Khairpur Mir. According to family members, the boy, Kaana Sachdev, went missing Friday evening and his body was later found in an abandoned house within the limits of the Babarloi police station.

The entire family was busy in Guru Nanak's birthday events. We do not know how the child went missing. He was found dead in the house at 11 pm, Raj Kumar, a relative of the child told The Express Tribune. He was a grade five student, and was born in 2011, Kumar said, adding that the whole area was gripped by fear after the horrific incident, the report said.

Soon after the incident, police and local representatives of the Child Protection Authority shifted the body to Civil Hospital Sukkur for a postmortem examination.

The SHO of the Babarloi police station said that the boy was strangled to death before the culprits sexually assaulted him.



Someone saw this online and alerted me. I need to make people aware that this is completely fabricated & fraudulent. Takes fake news to a new level. Ironically, I have not invested a single rupee in cryptos

**ANAND MAHINDRA** | CHAIRMAN, MAHINDRA GROUP

## AIRASIA INDIA RESUMES INFLIGHT F&B

Budget airline AirAsia India Saturday said that it has resumed inflight food and beverage (F&B) service across all its routes. The move, it said was in line with relaxations in the regulatory guidelines issued November 16, which had restricted meal service on flights less than 2 hours



## of the day quote

We've resolved these things in the past and I believe we'll resolve them in the future. It is our expectation that there will be a resolution so that UK consumers are not impacted

**VASANT PRABHU** | CFO, VISA

Business and leaders today are preparing for never normal, a new age which will be characterised by rapidly evolving cultural, social values and attitudes such as increased demand for good corporate governance and enhanced brand intent

**DHIRENDRA PAL SINGH** | CHAIRMAN, UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION

The weight of the world is now behind this, wind and solar - you could argue - led the way and the weight of the world was not behind wind and solar, but there is so much momentum amongst the private sector and the public sector

**NOEL QUINN** | CEO, HSBC

# EPFO gets nod to invest in InvITs

At present, the National Highways Authority of India and Power Grid Corporation have launched public sector infrastructure investment trusts (InvITs)

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Nov 20: The central board of trustees of the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) has approved the government's proposal to allow the retirement fund body to invest up to 5% of its annual deposits in alternative investments funds including the infrastructure investment trusts (InvITs).

The decision was taken at the 229th meeting of the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation's apex decision making body - Central Board of Trustees (CBT), headed by Union Labour Minister Bhupendra Yadav.

Asked whether the EPFO will invest in private sector InvITs, Yadav told reporters after the meeting here, "At present we have decided to invest in only newly added government instruments (bonds and InvITs). It will be decided on case to case basis by FIAC."

However, this will be on a case to case basis and on approval from the Finance Investment and Audit Committee (FIAC) and the investments will initially be restricted to public sector funds only.



THE GOVERNMENT RECENTLY ADDED NEW INSTRUMENTS LIKE INVITs IN THE PATTERN OF INVESTMENT FOR PENSION FUNDS

THE BOARD DECIDED TO EMPOWER FIAC TO DECIDE UPON THE INVESTMENT OPTIONS, ON A CASE-TO-CASE BASIS

THE CENTRALISED SYSTEM WILL FACILITATE DE-DUPLICATION AND MERGER OF ALL PF ACCOUNTS OF ANY MEMBER. IT WILL ALSO REMOVE THE REQUIREMENT OF TRANSFER OF ACCOUNT ON CHANGE OF JOB

Explaining the rationale behind the decision, Labour Secretary Sunil Barthwal told reporters, "If we want to provide high rate of interest then we have to follow guidelines of finance ministry. There are certain instruments (prescribed in norms) where we were not able to invest due to various reasons. Now we would be in a position to invest in those instruments."

However, he added that at present only public sector bonds and InvITs will be considered.

Two committees on establishment related matters and futuristic

implementation of Social Security Code will be headed by the Minister of State Labour and Employment. The remaining two committees on digital capacity building and pension related issues will be headed by the Union Labour and Employment Secretary.

The draft 68th annual report on the functioning of the EPFO for the year 2020-21 was also approved in the meeting, with the recommendation to place it before Parliament.

"Approval was accorded for development of centralised IT-enabled systems by C-DAC. Post this, the field functionalities will move on a central database in a phased manner enabling smoother operations and enhanced service delivery," the statement said.

## EPFO net adds 15.41L subscribers in Sept

Retirement fund body EPFO net added 15.41 lakh subscribers in September 2021, reflecting a growing trend in net payroll additions post the second wave of the pandemic. The provisional payroll data of EPFO released today highlights that the EPFO has added around 15.41 lakh net subscribers during the month of September 2021, a statement by the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) said Saturday. For the month of September, the net subscriber addition has increased by 1.81 lakh (or over 13 per cent) as compared to the previous month of August 2021 when it was 13.60 lakh. The data reflects a growing trend in net payroll for the first six months of the current financial year except in May, when the nation was reeling under the second wave of Covid-19.

abled systems by C-DAC. Post this, the field functionalities will move on a central database in a phased manner enabling smoother operations and enhanced service delivery," the statement said.

# MTNL, BSNL assets worth ₹970cr on sale

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Nov 20: The government has listed for sale real estate assets of state-run telecom firms MTNL and BSNL at a reserve price of around Rs 970 crore, according to documents uploaded on the DIPAM website.

"Non core asset monetisation commences with the first set of six properties of BSNL/MTNL bid out on the MSTC portal," DIPAM Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey tweeted Saturday.

BSNL properties located in Hyderabad, Chandigarh, Bhavnagar and Kolkata have been posted for sale at a reserve price of around Rs 660 crore.

The Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) website has listed MTNL assets located in Vasari Hill, Goregaon in Mumbai for sale at a reserve price of around Rs 310 crore.

MTNL's 20 flats located in Oshiwara have also been put up for sale as part of the asset monetisation plan of the company.

The flats include two units of 1-room set, 17 units of 1 bedroom hall and kitchen (BHK) and one unit of 2 BHK. Their reserve prices range from Rs 52.26 lakh to Rs 1.59



The monetisation commenced with the auction of first set of six properties belonging to the telcos

crore. The e-auction for MTNL assets will take place December 14.

The asset monetisation is part of the Rs 69,000 crore revival scheme for MTNL and BSNL which was approved by the government in October 2019. Both the public sector firms were to identify and monetise assets worth Rs 37,500 crore by 2022.

"We will proceed as per market demand for asset monetisation," Purwar added.

## SHORT TAKES

### Ola expands test rides of e-scooters

New Delhi: Electric vehicle (EV) manufacturer Ola Electric Saturday announced that customers in over 1,000 cities and towns will be able to test ride and experience the Ola S1 electric scooter. The test rides will be initially open only for those who have purchased or reserved the Ola S1 and S1 Pro scooters. "Amazed and proud to see the strong response to our S1 test rides! Thousands of you have tried and loved it!" Bhavish Aggarwal, Founder and CEO, Ola tweeted. We are now expanding test rides to 1000+ cities across India by December 15, he added. The next leg of customer test rides will be commencing from November 27 onwards, in 11 more cities including Surat, Thiruvananthapuram, Kozhikode, Visakhapatnam, Vijayawada, Jaipur Coimbatore, Vadodra, Bhubaneswar, Tiruppur and Nagpur.

### Pre-owned Audi showroom in city

Bhubaneswar: Audi, the German luxury car manufacturer, opened its pre-owned luxury car showroom - Audi Approved: plus, in City. Spread over an area of 4,500 sq ft, this state-of-the-art showroom will cater to the increasing demand for high-quality pre-owned luxury cars in Bhubaneswar and the nearby areas. Balbir Singh Dhillon, Head of Audi India, said, "This facility will offer a wide range of pre-owned Audi cars that come with complete peace of mind for customers. Audi India offers industry best 2 years unlimited kilometers warranty on its certified pre owned cars. With this showroom, we are set to bring the Audi experience to newer regions." The showroom can display seven cars and every car that is sold via the pre-owned outlet undergoes over 300 multi-point checks, said an official.

### West Elm enters Indian market

Mumbai: Global design home retailer West Elm has entered the Indian market and has launched two stores here in partnership with Reliance Brands. It has opened its first brick-and-mortar store in India this October 2021 at Jio World Drive, followed by a store at the Ambience Mall in Gurgaon this week, said a statement from Reliance Brands. West Elm, a Brooklyn-based retailer, is known for its modern designs for the home, offering an array of conscientiously made products including functional furniture, bedding and bath, kitchen and dining, lighting, décor and more.

# Builders face huge challenge over raw materials' price hike

The realtors seek state government's assistance and urged to take proactive steps to resolve the issue at the earliest

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Nov 20: The members of Credia Bhubaneswar, a leading real estate body, raised concerns over the unprecedented rise of construction raw materials and sought the state government's intervention to address the issue.

The builders expressed that the real estate sector, which has already been hit by the coronavirus pandemic, is being pushed into a crisis due to the steep hike in the cost of sand, cement, steel and transportation costs etc.

Kantilal Patel, President, CREDAI Bhubaneswar said, "Real Estate is one of the major sectors which was badly hit by the Covid pandemic and subsequent lockdown which resulted to labour migration, shortage of raw material, and affected the selling of the units. Now post pandemic when the industry is trying to normalise its operation, the rise in the price of the materials like steel, cement, sand etc is putting a big hurdle. The steel price was between Rs 43000 and Rs 48000 in 2020 but now it ranges



between Rs 58000 and Rs 65000, a tonne, respectively. The corresponding rates for cement, which ranged from Rs 200 to Rs 250 for a 50kg bag, now costs between Rs 300 to Rs 350, respectively.

Overall, the cost of construction has increased by 40 - 50% in Odisha. The builders are worried as they would have to bear the extra cost amounting nearly to Rs 8 lakh to Rs 10 lakh per unit if the cost escalation was to be borne by them in view of the RERA rules.

Umesh Patnaik, General Secretary said, "In recent time the transportation price is also hiked due to increase of fuel prices. The increase in petrol/diesel prices has a major effect on material prices as there is an increase in transportation cost."

## ANTI-MONOPOLY CRACKDOWN

# China fines tech giants

Each violation carried a penalty of 500,000 yuan (\$80,000), the regulator said

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Beijing, Nov 20: Chinese tech giants including Alibaba Group and Tencent Holdings were fined Saturday for failing to report corporate acquisitions, adding to an anti-monopoly crackdown by the ruling Communist Party.

The companies failed to report 43 acquisitions that occurred up to eight years ago under rules on "operating concentration," according to the State Administration for Market Regulation. Beijing has launched anti-monopoly, data security and other crackdowns on tech companies since late 2020. The ruling party worries the companies have too much control over their industries and has warned them not to use their dominance to gouge consumers or block entry to new competitors.

"With the in-depth advancement of anti-monopoly law enforcement, the awareness of corporate operators' concentration declarations



has continued to increase, proactively sorting out and reporting concentration that has not previously been declared illegally, and actively cooperating with investigations," the market regulator said, as per the report.

Other companies fined in the latest round of penalties include online retailers JD.Com Inc, Suning Ltd and search engine operator Baidu Inc. The companies "failed to declare illegal implementation of operating concentration," the regulator said on its website.

Alibaba was fined \$2.8 billion in

April for practices that regulators said suppressed competition. Meituan, a food delivery platform, was fined \$534 million October 8.

The report also pointed out that dealing with undeclared cases in accordance with the law can not only help maintain the authority of the anti-monopoly law, and continuously optimize a transparent and predictable environment of fair competition, but also effectively urge enterprises to enhance their compliance awareness and capabilities, and promote sound development of enterprises and industries.

## BIZ BUZZ

### Vizous Interio opens new centre

Bhubaneswar: Vizous Interio Pvt Ltd, one of most trusted modular furniture brand of Odisha and Chhattisgarh, Saturday, opened second extension centre in Laxmisagar, Bhubaneswar. Odia film actress Anu Choudhury inaugurated the new centre in presence of Chandrakanta Das and Rakhal Nayak, director of the company. The new centre is spread across 5000 sq/ft with wide range display of modular products. All products are made on high precision Italian and German machines with technologically advanced manufacturing facility resulting in fine finish, best quality & top notch looks. Das said, "In the last decade when we looked for factory for finished customized modular products, we could not even source a single manufacturer in Odisha. Thus we decided to set up a high precision modular factory in 2012 to provide factory finished elegant products to customers. Since then we have taken huge initiatives to provide fine quality finished products & have emerged as one of the 'Most Prominent Service Provider of Customized Modular Products in Odisha & Eastern India.'



## DISAPPOINTING MARKET DEBUT

INVESTORS AND ANALYSTS WHO EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER THE IPO VALUATION OF THE LOSS-MAKING PAYTM AT ABOUT \$18.7 BILLION HAD CAUTIONED THAT FROTHY VALUATIONS WITH UNCLEAR BUSINESS MODELS MIGHT NOT END UP WELL IN THE CURRENT MARKET

# Skies darken for Indian IPOs post Paytm's failure



AGENCIES

Mumbai, Nov 20: Paytm's dismal stock market debut this week is likely to put a damper on future offerings after the IPO of the digital payments firm ranked among the worst-performing in Indian history, six analysts and

bankers said Friday.

Indian companies have raised a staggering \$9.7 billion through initial share sales in the first nine months of 2021, for the highest such tally in any of the corresponding periods of the last two decades, said accountants EY.

But offerings planned for later

It will take three to four months for people to forget Paytm and that it destroyed wealth. Until that time, it's going to be tough for all super-expensive IPOs

**JIMMET MODI** | FOUNDER, SAMCO SECURITIES

this year, such as those by payments rival Mobikwik and hotel aggregator OYO, will face questions after Paytm's debut plunge of more than 27%, as investors turned queasy at its lack of profits and lofty value.

"This episode should hopefully bring some realism to valuations that promoters expect from the public markets," said Kristy Fong, a senior investment director at fund manager abrdn, based in Singapore.

But the debut of Paytm, which is backed by Ant Group and SoftBank, was in stark contrast to that of food delivery firm Zomato, which surged 66% in July after

raising \$1.2 billion.

Similarly, shares in FSN E-Commerce, which owns cosmetics-to-fashion platform Nykaa,

jumped 80% on their debut this month.

Now analysts fear that even approaching IPOs which have seen huge demand may take a beating on listing.

"This will put spokes in the market... even the ones that have seen huge subscriptions will see a drop in the premiums," Arun Kejriwal, founder of independent research firm KRIS, told agencies.

## BEHEMOTH LIC IN THE WINGS

As eyes are turning to plans for India's biggest-ever IPO, that of state-owned life insurance behemoth LIC, which is expected by the end of March 2022 and could raise more than \$10 billion if the government offers a stake of 10%. Some analysts see little risk from the Paytm fallout for LIC, however, as it is a household name in India, commanding more than 60% of the life insurance market, with assets exceeding \$500 billion. Some say concerns over LIC cannot be ruled out, though, despite a business model that is starkly different from that of Paytm. "Everybody will be in a bit of a learning mode after this (Paytm) listing," said one of the investment bankers working on LIC's IPO, adding that they remained confident about its chances.

# Time to tinker!

With the series in the pocket, Rohit may try new combinations giving chance to reserve players in the third and final T20I against New Zealand



Ishan Kishan, Ruturaj Gaikwad, Yuzvendra Chahal and Avesh Khan might get into the playing XI in the inconsequential third T20I in Kolkata, Sunday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kolkata, Nov 20:** Captain Rohit Sharma will not waver from his ruthless approach but might try out a few of his reserve players as India aim for a clean sweep against New Zealand in the third and final T20I, here Sunday. Bilateral T20I series in various parts of the globe is fast losing its context due to too many private leagues but for Indian team, after their World Cup disaster, a series win might help in partially healing the wounds. For New Zealand, it's more about completing the assignment after a punishing schedule that will see them play five games (since T20 WC semifinal) in less than two weeks. The inhuman scheduling means that, a 0-3 defeat without services of skipper Kane Williamson will bruise egos but not deflate them as results of bilaterals count very little in the long run. Having already pocketed the series with a couple of near perfect chases on Jaipur and Ranchi bel-

ters, there couldn't have been a better venue than Eden Gardens for skipper Rohit to end the series on perfect note and also try out some of his reserve bench players. The first series as full-time T20 captain has gone well for Rohit as he won two tosses, his bowlers put a stranglehold on Black Caps batters during end overs and then as a batter he provided great starts to set the platform. The script has been flawless so far and before Rohit goes into the break, a 3-0 annihilation of New Zealand in 'City of Joy', where he once scored an epic 264 in an ODI, will be like an icing on the cake. For coach Rahul Dravid, a dominant performance like this will also help him settle the nerves into the new role before the marquee Test series against the same rivals starting in less than a week's time. Having already won the series, Rohit and Dravid will now like to maintain a fine balance between winning and also trying out all their available resources to see how each and every individual is placed.

Giving Venkatesh Iyer a go with the ball with the evening breeze from River Hooghly aiding a bit of movement won't be a bad idea but it depends whether Rohit wants a sixth bowler. Hence the likes of Ruturaj Gaikwad, Avesh Khan and Ishan Kishan will expect that their skipper consider them for a game in this series. Gaikwad, who came into the series with an Orange Cap in the IPL might get a look-in in the top three where he is the most comfortable batting. But for that to happen, either skipper himself or his deputy KL Rahul might have to take rest for the game, which is more of an academic interest and gives an ideal premise to check the bench strength. Resting Rahul looks more logical as he is supposed to play a rigorous Test series in four days time and one T20 International won't make much of a difference for the stylish right hander. Similarly, the exciting Avesh Khan could be tried in place of either Deepak Chahar or

Bhuvneshwar Kumar while Yuzvendra Chahal wouldn't mind getting a game in place of Axar Patel or Ravichandran Ashwin. Similarly, Rishabh Pant, who has been playing non-stop since start of the World Test Championship, may be rested and Kishan can be given a go in the last game. If one looks at the series, the biggest gain has been Ravichandran Ashwin's form in white ball cricket after the previous regime kept him in the cold for four years as they never believed in him. Figures of 2/23 and 1/19 from two games has put Ashwin firmly in contention for a 'Player of the Series' award. Harshal Patel has carried on from where he left at the IPL and a Player of the Match performance on debut will boost his morale going into the season. India's playing XI (probable): Rohit Sharma, Ruturaj Gaikwad, Ishan Kishan, Suryakumar Yadav, Shreyas Iyer, Venkatesh Iyer, R Ashwin, Bhuvneshwar Kumar/Deepak Chahar, Harshal Patel, Yuzvendra Chahal & Avesh Khan.

## BFC register classic victory versus NEUFC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bambolim, Nov 20:** Bengaluru FC beat NorthEast United FC 4-2 in a thrilling ISL match that saw six different players scoring goals here Saturday. Cleiton Silva (14th minute), Jayesh Rane (42nd) and Prince Ibarra (81st) provided the fireworks for Bengaluru FC, while Deshorn Brown (17th), Mathias Coureur (25th) scored for the Highlanders along with Mashoor Shereef (22nd), who unfortunately found his own net. An entertaining 11 minutes ensued with four goals, two at either end. First up, Brazilian target man Silva made most of Udanta Singh's build-up play to leave NorthEast defenders high and dry with a fine goal. Three minutes later, Brown was to have his say in the game. VP Suhair, on the left flank, brilliantly found Brown who, with a controlled first touch, smashed into the net to draw level. NorthEast then shot themselves in the foot. Ashique Kuruniyan lobbed the ball in from range and it rebounded off the crossbar and came back into play. Mashoor Shereef, instead of clearing it, scored an own goal. On the other end, new signing Mathias Coureur made amends for his teammate. Suhair yet again set up the move for Coureur to slot it in on the second time of asking, equalising for the second time in the night. Sunil Chhetri, desperate to get into the act, squandered a chance but it was Jayesh Rane right before half-time who drove down a left-footer to bring up the fifth goal of the game. There was one bit left, where Alan Costa's long ball found Prince Ibarra, who cut in and finished with style.

## Blues extend lead as Foxes outfoxed



REUTERS

**Leicester, Nov 20:** American forward Christian Pulisic was back among the goals as Premier League leaders Chelsea extended their advantage at the top of the table to six points with a comfortable 3-0 win at Leicester City Saturday. The visitors raced into a two-goal lead inside 28 minutes after Antonio Rudiger climbed highest from a corner to head home and N'Golo Kante arrowed in a rare goal. Chelsea put the game to bed when Pulisic, who has endured a frustrating, injury-interrupted season, stepped off the bench and scored in the 71st minute. The victory, Chelsea's fifth from six away league games this season, moved the Blues onto 29 points, six clear of second-placed champions Manchester City. The Foxes are well off the pace in 12th after their fifth loss of the season. Chelsea started brightly, with former Leicester full back Ben Chilwell denied by the crossbar early on. The goal that gave the vis-

itors the lead was always likely to come via one route though: Coming into the match, no side had scored Premier League goals with headers this season than Chelsea, and no team has conceded more via headers than Leicester. Sure enough, some slack Leicester marking allowed Rudiger in to head home. It was all too easy for Chelsea thereafter, with Leicester offering no response. With Leicester also allowing far too much space ahead of them, Kante took advantage to make it two, given time to carry the ball to the edge of the home penalty area before firing in. It took the hosts until the 58th minute to create a shot on or off target, with substitute James Maddison shooting straight at Chelsea goalkeeper Edouard Mendy, before Daniel Amartey did actually force Mendy into a fine stop. Chelsea's strength in depth was clear for all to see as two substitutes combined to put the game to bed, as Hakim Ziyech fed Pulisic, who scored his first Blues goal since August at the near post.

## India campaign ends at Indonesia Masters

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bali (Indonesia), Nov 20:** Double Olympic medallist PV Sindhu and Kidambi Srikanth crashed out of the Indonesia Masters Super 750 badminton tournament after suffering straight game defeats in the women's and men's singles semifinals respectively to bring the curtains down on Indian campaign here Saturday. Sindhu lost to Japanese top seed Akane Yamaguchi while Srikanth was outplayed by third seed Anders Antonsen of Denmark. Even though Sindhu had a superior 12-7 head-to-head record against the Japanese shuttler going into the tie, having won both the meetings between the two this year, the Indian was no match for her rival, losing 13-21, 9-21 in a one-sided duel that lasted just 32 minutes. Sindhu, seeded third, was not at her usual best and trailed her Japanese opponent from the start in both the games. In the second game, Sindhu had a brief lead before Yamaguchi dominated her rival throughout to seal the issue in her favour. The Japanese will now play the winner of the other semifinal between fourth seed An Seyoung and Thailand's Phittayaporn Chaiwan. Srikanth lost 14-21 9-21 to



Antonsen in 41 minutes in the men's singles semifinals. The former World No.1 Indian was able to hold on to Antonsen initially, levelling the scores at 3-3, 4-4, 5-5 before falling behind. Srikanth made another fine recovery in the first game, narrowing down the gap to 12-11 but eventually lost steam. In the second game also, both were tied at 4-4 but the Dane took eight straight points to zoom to 12-4. The Indian could not recover from there while Antonsen never let his guard down to win the second game and the match.

## Odisha begin their journey in ice skating

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Nov 20:** Odisha, after making a mark in many sports fields, is all set to begin a historic journey when they make their debut in ice skating. Without even having ice skating rink or infrastructure, they will turn participants for the first time as a 12-member team will represent Odisha at the National Ice Skating Camp for the upcoming National Ice Skating Championship. Ice skating is a popular Olympic sport started in India in 2002 by Ice Skating Association of India (ISAI). Renowned coach Partha Sarathi Jena introduced the sports in the state. Jena, himself is a former state champion and national-level ice skater. The national camp will take place at ISKATE, Gurgaon November 22-26 as informed by Jena, secretary of Odisha Ice Skating Association (OISA). **THE TEAM** Arman Subudhi, Ashlesha Panda, Sai Sriyansu Rout, Aditya Mishra, Biren Das, RN Ayan, Swayansu S. Kanungo, Kaustav Patnaik, Krupa Doshi and Kushi Agarwal; Coach: Susant Kumar Sahoo; Official: Jatin Panda.

## SA, Korea arrive in Bhubaneswar

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Nov 20:** Teams of South Africa and South Korea have arrived Saturday for the FIH Odisha Hockey Men's Junior World Cup, to be played at the iconic Kalinga Stadium November 24-December 5. South Africa, who arrived in the morning, have been grouped in Pool A alongside Belgium, Chile, and Malaysia. South Korea, who arrived in the afternoon, have been clubbed with in a challenging Pool C along with Spain, the Netherlands and United States. "It's been a period of difficult two years due to the pandemic with lots of training and preparations getting disrupted. But we have prepared the best we can back at home. So, no excuses, every team has faced similar challenges, and we are ready to go," asserted Sihle Ntuli, head coach, South Africa. Excited to compete at the iconic Kalinga Stadium, Ntuli said, "I believe it is the best stadium in the world and I am very happy for my players getting the opportunity to play at the stadium. We are very excited." South Korea captain Soung Min Bae talked about their preparations for the event. "We prepared for the World Cup in Donghae, in Korea. We held a national camp where we had to play at least 10 matches, which has made our team stronger. Our players do not have much experience of playing in



Members of the South Africa team (top) and South Korea team pose for group photos upon their arrival in Bhubaneswar, Saturday

such a big stadium, just like most players from all teams, but we are confident we will get better as the tournament progresses," he said. South Africa will face off against

Belgium in the first game of the tournament November 24, while Korea will take on the Dutch team in their campaign opener November 25.

## Lewis wins pole for inaugural Qatar Grand Prix

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Losail, Nov 20:** Lewis Hamilton and Max Verstappen qualified 1-2 for the inaugural Qatar Grand Prix, setting up a showdown between the Formula One championship contenders at the very start of Sunday's race. The race is the first in a 10-year deal between F1 and Qatar. Hamilton won the 102nd pole of his career, fourth of the season and first since the Hungarian Grand Prix in August. Hamilton trails Verstappen by 14 points in the championship fight with three races remaining. He beat Verstappen by 0.455 seconds Saturday to win the pole at Losail International Circuit. The seven-time champion said his stomach had been bothering him since he arrived in Qatar, but a good night's sleep helped his recovery. Verstappen said Red Bull was lacking pace and noted that teammate Sergio Perez failed to advance to the final qualifying group. Perez will start 11th. Valtteri Bottas, teammate to Hamilton at Mercedes, qualified third and was followed by Pierre Gasly of AlphaTauri. Gasly has been fast all weekend but a tire puncture near the end of qualifying slowed him. Fernando Alonso qualified fifth and was followed by Lando Norris and Carlos Sainz.

# PENG TO 'SHOW UP IN PUBLIC' SOON!

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Beijing, Nov 20:** An employee of Chinese state TV has posted photos of missing tennis star Peng Shuai online in a new effort to dispel concern about her disappearance after she accused a senior leader of sexual assault. The photos appeared Friday Twitter, which cannot be seen by most internet users in China. The state TV employee, Shen Shiwei, wrote they were on Peng's account on the WeChat message service with the comment, "Happy Weekend." The ruling Communist Party faces mounting appeals from tennis stars and the sport's professional tour to prove Peng, a three-time Olympian and former No.1-ranked women's doubles player, is safe and let her speak freely. Meanwhile, the editor of a newspaper published by the party said Peng would "show up in public" soon. The controversy is politically awkward as the Chinese capital prepares to hold the Winter Olympics



in February. A Foreign Ministry spokesperson Friday denied knowing about the outcry over Peng's disappearance. Peng, 35, hasn't been seen in public since posting a statement on social media this month accusing Zhang Gaoli, a former member of the party's Standing Committee, the ruling inner circle of power, of forcing her to have sex despite repeated refusals. Shen works for CGTN, the English-language arm of China Central Television that is aimed at foreign audiences. His Twitter post came after CGTN this week

distributed a statement it said came from Peng that retracted the accusations against Zhang. The editor of Global Times, an English-language newspaper published by the Communist Party, said on Twitter he had confirmed from unidentified sources that the photos "are indeed Peng Shuai's current state." "In the past few days, she stayed in her own home freely and she didn't want to be disturbed," wrote the editor, Hu Xijin. "She will show up in public and participate in some activities soon." The photos showed Peng with a

## Tennis players take on China's Communist Party

**NEW YORK:** Some of the world's most famous tennis players, distraught by the disappearance of colleague Peng Shuai, are challenging China's Communist Party to get answers. So far it's a standoff with little visible impact as tennis players like Naomi Osaka, Serena Williams and Novak Djokovic - joined by tennis governing bodies, human rights groups, retired players, and several athletes' lobbies - try to turn their profiles into power. China is just two-and-a-half months from hosting the Beijing Winter Olympics. China's Foreign Ministry has repeatedly disavowed any knowledge of the case. "Censorship is never OK at any cost," Osaka wrote on social media, adding the hashtag #WhereisPengShuai. Williams added: "This must be investigated, and we must not stay silent." The Professional Tennis Players Association has called for player solidarity to defend Peng. Despite Peng being a former Olympian, the IOC has remained quiet. Kirsty Coventry, the head of an IOC's Athletes' Commission that is supposed to represent the interests of Olympic athletes, has not commented.

## Djoko backs WTA's China pull-out threat

**TURIN:** The tennis world continues to demand to know the whereabouts and welfare of missing Chinese player Peng Shuai, who disappeared after accusing a former top Chinese official of sexually assaulting her. The Women's Tennis Association (WTA) Friday threatened to pull out of the lucrative Chinese part of its tour unless it is proved that Peng is safe. "There's too many times in our world today when you get into issues like this that we let business, politics, money dictate what's right and what's wrong," WTA chairman Steve Simon said in an interview on CNN. "And we're definitely willing to pull our business and deal with all the complications that come with it because this is bigger than the business." Men's World No.1 Novak Djokovic backed that stance. He said: "It's important because this is horrifying. I mean, a person is missing. China is a huge country. It's a very important part of the world especially for the WTA. They have many tournaments there. I mean, this is necessary for us to take whatever action. I heard just now that the WTA is willing to pull out from China with all the tournaments unless this is resolved. I support it 100 per cent." Legitimacy of the statement released by CGTN. Simon said it "only raises my concerns as to her safety."

