



CHALLENGING TASK

Actor Nushratt Bharuccha says it was an enriching experience to single-handedly headline horror movie 'Chhorii'

LEISURE P2



VARIANT STRIKES OSLO

At least 50 people in and around Norway's capital Oslo are down with the Omicron coronavirus variant

INTERNATIONAL P10



SEEKING SERIES WIN

Virat Kohli returns as India look for win to seal series against New Zealand in the 2nd Test

SPORTS P12



No work on 2nd day of Assembly session

Bhubaneswar: Pandemonium prevailed in the Odisha Assembly for the second day in a row as BJP and Congress members continued to create uproar in the floor of House over the murder of school teacher Mamita Meher. The ruckus created by the members of the opposition parties prompted speaker Suriya Narayan Patro, to adjourn the House till 4.00pm after the members had assembled at 10.00am. The situation remained the same in the post-lunch session. The House functioned for only 13 minutes before Patro adjourned proceedings till Friday. P3



World Athletics honours long jumper Anju

Monaco: Indian long jumper Anju Bobby George and World Championships bronze medallist (2003) has been bestowed with the 'Woman of the Year Award' by World Athletics for grooming talent in India and advocating gender equality. "Anju from India is still actively involved in the sport. In 2016 she opened an academy for young girls, which has already helped to produce a world U20 medallist," World Athletics said in a release. "A constant voice for gender equality in her Anju also mentors schoolgirls for future leadership in sports," it added.

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All 380 returnees to state test negative

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 2: A total of 380 people have returned to Odisha from countries hit by the new coronavirus strain, Omicron, till November 30. All have undergone RT-PCR tests and have tested negative, Health Department director Niranjana Mishra informed Thursday. In spite of testing negative, these persons will be in home quarantine for seven days.

"The list of the returnees has been given to all respective district administrations. They will trace the returnees and get their tests done on the eighth day. If anyone tests positive after that, he/she will either be sent to institutional isolation or kept under self-observation for next seven days. Besides, the positive samples will be sent for genome sequencing," Mishra said.

Out of the total returnees, 224 people arrived Monday and 156 the day after, the health official informed at a press conference here. Mishra added that the districts had been informed for their surveillance in a proper manner.

The travellers came to Odisha only after testing negative at the international airports. The WHO has said that there are 29 countries including India, where the new variant has been detected.

Odisha currently has 2,434 active Covid-19 cases, while 10.39 lakh people have recovered, including 186 in the last 24 hours, a health bulletin stated. Ten out of 30 districts of the state did not report any new coronavirus case in the last 24 hours.

Mishra also said that the Odisha government has made it mandatory for the returnees to share their travel details on the designated portal. "All the returnees are undergoing RT-PCR test on their arrival and they are being monitored accordingly," he informed.

Omicron invades India

3 primary and 2 secondary contacts of the doctor have also tested positive. However, all those who came in contact with the South African national have tested negative

AGENCIES

New Delhi/Bangalore, Dec 2: India reported Thursday the first two cases of the Omicron variant of Covid-19 from Karnataka. A South African national and a Bangalore-based doctor with no travel history and both men fully vaccinated - have been infected by the Omicron variant, officials said.

The Union Health Ministry while confirming the detection of two cases of Omicron variant in Bangalore asked people not to panic but follow Covid-appropriate behaviour and get vaccinated without delay. It also said the scientific reasoning for booster vaccine doses is under examination and that priority is to complete the task of receiving both jabs of Covid-19 vaccine. Five contacts of the doctor have also tested positive and their samples have been sent for genome sequencing.

Besides the cases detected in India, 373 cases of Omicron variant of SARS-CoV-2 have been detected in 29 nations including India so far, according to an official.

Lav Agarwal, Joint Secretary in



the Union Health Ministry, told a news conference in Delhi that both patients have mild symptoms. Severe symptoms have not been noted.

The Karnataka state authorities identified the patients as a 66-year-old South African man, who has since left for Dubai, and a 46-year-old male doctor working at a government hospital in Bangalore.

Bangalore civic agency officials said the South African national came to the city November 20 and his samples were collected at the air-

port. After he tested Covid-19 positive, his samples were sent for genomic sequencing. "The reports have come today (Thursday) confirming that the Covid-19 infection was caused by the Omicron variant," BBMP Chief Commissioner Gaurav Gupta told reporters.

"He however, has left for Dubai November 27. All the 24 primary contacts and 240 secondary contacts of the foreign national have tested negative. But they are still kept under watch," Gupta stated.

'UPDATED JAB IN 100 DAYS'

LONDON: Pfizer is working on an updated jab in response to the Omicron variant that could be ready in 100 days, according to the head of American multinational pharmaceutical giant. It also said that people may need to have annual Covid-19 vaccinations for many years to come. Pfizer's chief executive Dr Albert Bourla told the 'BBC' that he is of the view that annual vaccinations would be needed to maintain a 'very high level of protection' against the deadly disease that has claimed over five million lives across the world. He added that Pfizer had already made updated vaccines in response to the 'Beta', also first identified in South Africa, and 'Delta', first identified in India, variants but that they had not been needed.

COUNTRY-WISE LIST

Botswana	19
South Africa	77
Nigeria	3
United Kingdom	32
South Korea	5
Australia	7
Austria	1
Belgium	1
Brazil	3
Czech Republic	1
France	1
Germany	9
Hong Kong	4
Israel	4
Italy	19
Japan	2
The Netherlands	52
Norway	2
Spain	2
Portugal	13
Sweden	3
Canada	6
Denmark	4
India	2

The doctor had tested positive November 22 and has no travel history to South Africa or any other country. He got tested after developing tiredness, weakness and fever and the result was positive, Gupta said. The doctor's 13 primary and 205 secondary contacts have been tested, Gupta said. "Three primary and two secondary contacts have tested positive. They have been kept under isolation and samples have been sent for sequencing. Agarwal said 84.3 per cent of adults have got the first dose while 49% have received the second.

Plea on 'Paika Bidroha' turned down by Centre

Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik had written in July 2017 to then Home Minister Rajnath Singh to declare Paika rebellion as India's first war of Independence

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Dec 2: The Union Government has turned down the request of the Odisha government to declare 'Paika Bidroha' (Rebellion) as India's first war of Independence. The 'Paika Bidroha' took place in 1817 against the rule of the (East India) Company. The Company ruled India from 1757 to 1857 after which the British Crown took full charge.

In response to a question asked by Biju Janata Dal (BJD) MP Prashant Nanda, Union Minister of Culture and Tourism, G Kishan Reddy informed the Rajya Sabha that as per the report of the Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR), the 'Paika Rebellion' cannot be called as first war of Indian Independence.

"The Ministry of Culture received a reference from Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik through Ministry of Home Affairs requesting for declaration of 'Paika Rebellion' 1817 of Odisha as the first war of India's independence. The matter was examined in consultation with ICHR under the Ministry of HRD (Now Ministry of Education). As per comments received from ICHR, the 'Paika



Rebellion' cannot be called the 'First War of Independence', the minister told the house.

The minister however said that from a historical point of view, it can be said that the 'Paika Bidroha' had set an example for everyone to realise the importance for a free and independent India. It was the 'Paika Rebellion' that inspired thousands of others to rise against the British. Reddy also informed that it has been decided to include 'Paika Bidroha' in NCERT textbook of history.

"Considering that this is one of the beginnings of popular uprisings against the British in India, it has been decided to include the 'Paika Bidroha' as a 'case-study' in the Class VIII history textbook of NCERT, which deals with the 1857 event," the minister said.

In July 2017, Patnaik had written to then Home Minister Rajnath Singh requesting him to declare the armed rebellion as the first war of India's independence.

In the letter Patnaik had stated that the 'Paika Rebellion' took place 40 years before the sepoy mutiny and hence it qualifies to be termed as the first war of Indian independence.

250 DISASTER TEAMS READY FOR 'JAWAD'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 2: With the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) issuing red warning for Gajapati, Ganjam, Puri and Jagatsinghpur districts for Saturday and Sunday, the Odisha government said Thursday that it will deploy 250 joint disaster response teams to tackle the challenges posed by the upcoming cyclonic storm 'Jawad'.

In a separate development Thursday, the IMD which is closely tracking the developments related to the formation of a cyclone said that there is a possibility that 'Jawad' may change course. IMD DG, Mrutyunjay Mohapatra said, "There is a possibility that the cyclonic storm may change path. But whether it will cross the Odisha

coast, or not, can only be ascertained after the formation of the depression," Mohapatra said.

Briefing about the preparations to tackle the cyclone, Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) Pradeep Jena said that a total of 60 Odisha Disaster Rapid Action Force (ODRAF), 17 National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and 172 Fire Services teams will be deployed. He also mentioned that directions have also been issued to evacuate people from low-lying areas in all districts that may feel the effects of the cyclone.

In a late night development the IMD said that the low pressure area has intensified into a depression and is likely to take the form of a cyclonic storm in the next 24 hours and reach Odisha-Andhra Pradesh coast December 4.

BEATING THE CHILL



With the temperature dipping rapidly in Daringbadi in Kandhamal district, people huddle around a small fire early morning Thursday to beat the searing cold

Govt acts tough on corrupt babus

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 2: The Odisha government Thursday ordered compulsory retirement for three corrupt and inefficient officials while another was dismissed from the service for indecent behaviour.

The three officials, who have been given compulsory retirement are Community Organiser of Sambalpur Municipal Corporation (SMC) Lalita Kapoor, who also served as executive officer in Jatni Municipality and Chhatrapur NAC. Two corruption cases have been filed against her, sources said.

Similarly, Belpahar Municipality's executive officer Loknath Tiwari and Jharsuguda Municipality's former executive officer Ramachandra Pradhan have also been given compulsory retirement on grounds of inefficiency and dishonesty, the sources informed.

Manoj Kumar Parida, Revenue Inspector (RI) of Betal Circle in Puri district, has been dismissed on grounds of misbehaviour, indiscipline, negligence in duty and disobedience, informed another source. The state government took action against the above officials after receiving adverse feedback from the public under the 'Mo Sarkar' (my government) initiative, sources informed.

This apart, the government has also stopped the pension of Srikrant Mishra, former Additional SP of Bolangir and A Udaynath, former AFO of Bellaguntha block in Ganjam district, after allegations of corruption levelled against them were found to be true, they added.

Till now, 140 officials have been sent on compulsory retirement since 2019. The actions were taken as part of the government's zero-tolerance policy towards corruption, officials informed.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Let me stitch a dozen matching masks for your clothes. You never know for how long these new variants will keep coming!

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VALUE	VARIATION
SENSEX	58461.29	↑ 776.50
NIFTY	17401.70	↑ 234.80
DOLLAR	74.94	↓ ₹0.05
EURO	84.95	↑ ₹0.05
GOLD	₹47,783	↑ ₹205
SILVER	₹60,724	↓ ₹736

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP MAX	29.2°C	29.6°C
TEMP MIN	15.3°C	15.2°C
Humidity	75%	73%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Generally cloudy sky	

Kishor's barbs singe Rahul, Congress retorts

Poll strategist Prashant Kishor's comments assume significance as they come a day after Mamata Banerjee's observation that there is 'no UPA'

AGENCIES

New Delhi/Kolkata: The space represented by the Congress is vital but its leadership is not the 'divine right of an individual' particularly when it has lost 90 per cent elections in the last 10 years, poll strategist Prashant Kishor said Thursday. It was clear that he was taking an apparent swipe at Rahul Gandhi. Kishor's comment assumes significance as it came a day after



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's comment that there was no UPA anymore. Kishor, who has earlier been political ad-

visor to various parties including the Trinamool Congress (TMC), also called for democratically electing the opposition leadership.

Kishor and his I-PAC team have been working for the TMC since the Assembly polls in West Bengal. They are working on devising strategies in expanding the party nationally. His remarks come at a time the TMC has made a conscious effort to not follow Congress' leadership of the opposition in Parliament and questioned the party's ability to take on the BJP. "The IDEA and SPACE that Congress represents is vital for a strong opposition. But Congress' leadership is not the DIVINE RIGHT of an individual especially when the party has lost more than 90% elections in last 10 years," Kishor tweeted Thursday afternoon. "Let opposition leadership be decided

Democratically (sic)," he added. Kishor has been pummeling the Gandhis ever since the collapse of his talks with them regarding his joining the party. To add to the acrimony, he and Banerjee have been on a shopping spree for Congress leaders from Goa and Meghalaya. Kishor's remarks sparked a sharp response from the Congress with party spokesperson Pawan Khara saying on Twitter, "The individual being discussed here is pursuing his Divine Duty to struggle and save Indian democracy from the RSS. A professional without ideological commitment is free to advise parties/individuals on how to contest elections but he cannot set the agenda of our politics."



DAKOTA JOHNSON SAYS NO ONE ACTS NORMALLY

Actress Dakota Johnson says her professional life has been transformed by the ongoing health crisis. Johnson, who is best known for starring in the *Fifty Shades* film franchise, said: "Be it a party or some other occasion, people are not behaving normally due to Covid-19."

BALDWIN CLAIMS HE DIDN'T FIRE GUN ON RUST SET

Hollywood's veteran star Alec Baldwin says he didn't pull the trigger of the gun that fatally wounded cinematographer Halyna Hutchins on the sets of *Rust*. The star made the claim in his first sit-down interview since the incident in October, reports *bbc.com*.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
Romance will be topmost on your mind. At home, prosperity will bring peace, and vice versa. You need to go easy on expenditure and ask yourself if you really need all that stuff. That way, you may even save yourself from investing in some crooked schemes, says Ganesh.

TAURUS
Today, you will be ruled by your heart, not your head, says Ganesh. You are likely to be driven by your feelings, emotions and sentiments. Most of the decisions taken today will be based on emotion, not reason. You need to be carefully that your sensitivity and emotionality does not expose you to hurt.

GEMINI
Your interest and performance in sports will go from strength to strength, says Ganesh. You are feeling a bit anxious and will not be able to concentrate on a single job. Instead, you will move from one project to another.

CANCER
Enough of waiting on the sidelines, watching others take credit for all your hard work. Today, you will stake your claim to what is rightfully yours, the due credit for your work. Surprisingly for you, your peers and superiors will not only appreciate your work without any fuss, but also share with you the big plans they have in store for you.

LEO
Everything comes with a price tag, and the price of success is hard work. So sweat it out, says Ganesh; it is in your stars today. You may feel as if you are being made to work extremely hard in order to meet your targets, and the dividends you get may not seem to justify the efforts. But that should not cause you anxiety and trouble.

VIRGO
You are most likely to hit the mark and accomplish what you set out to do today. Work pressures will have no bearing whatsoever on you. The secret, says Ganesh, is in being patient.

LIBRA
Handling people was never so easy, points out Ganesh, as today, you do extremely well in the area of public relations. You have the answers to satisfy all, and keep them that way. So, do not be surprised if you happen to find yourself assigned to some sort of a probing and demanding job at work. When you are the best, you always seem to get the raw deal.

SCORPIO
Your kids are your pride, especially today when they come out with flying colour in their academics. It's a favourable day to invest your money in home or land. In the evening, you may just feel like going to a secluded place and enjoy the twilight.

SAGITTARIUS
Belligerent - this word describes your state today. Good news, long since awaited, will come by at the workplace. Imagination is set to fly sky-high as you while the evening away in the pleasant company of someone from the opposite sex.

CAPRICORN
Where there is a will there is a way. True, but even if it's an action driven by a strong will, a dying man cannot wage a war. You will have to be extra careful about your health today, says Ganesh. This besides, you are likely to strike a profitable deal with your clients, which may turn out to be a big achievement for your company.

AQUARIUS
Today may give you an all-time high! The day will prove important with regard to your future. Sudden and unexpected profits are on the cards, and recognition and rewards at your workplace will make you happy. Ganesh says that you should enjoy it while it lasts.

PISCES
It is a good day for you, since all the projects you take up today will reach a satisfactory conclusion. However, this does not mean that you will not be strung out, a fact you would do well to keep hidden, lest your competitors try to take advantage of it, says Ganesh.

Nushratt talks about her most difficult film

Mumbai: This was the first time Nushratt Bharuchcha was seen as a solo lead with her latest release *Chhorii*. The actress says it was daunting and an enriching experience to single-handedly headline such a movie.

Talking about *Chhorii* being her first solo lead film, Nushratt said: "It was equally daunting and enriching experience to single-handedly headline such a film. It will always remain one of the most difficult films I've done so far."

Chhorii is a horror film, which comes along with a powerful social message. The movie has garnered a good response. Nushratt calls it an impor-

tant film of her career. "*Chhorii* is indeed one of the most important films of my career, and the kind of love the film is receiving is super encouraging."

"I'm really glad that with *Chhorii*, I could put out a responsible message that is the need of the hour. It's not just any other horror film, it's a film with a perspective — one that brings to light a social evil, provoking thoughts that inspire us all to take responsibility in a manner that we move towards bringing about a change," she added.

Adarsh grateful to PC, Anupam, Irrfan!

The Indian actor will be seen sharing the screen with Hollywood biggies like Meryl Streep, David Schwimmer, and Kit Harington in drama series 'Extrapolations'

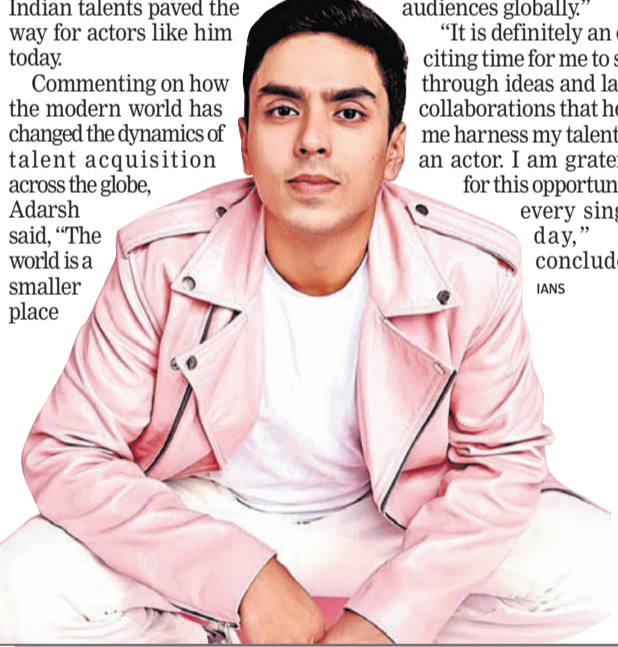
Mumbai: Indian breakout star Adarsh Gourav, who has made a mark on the international scene, feels grateful that earlier Indian talents paved the way for actors like him today.

Commenting on how the modern world has changed the dynamics of talent acquisition across the globe, Adarsh said, "The world is a smaller place

today. Lines are blurring and thresholds are being crossed as more and more actors indulge themselves in international projects."

Expressing his gratitude towards talents from India who brought recognition to the home-grown talents, he said, "Speaking about India, mainstream actors like Priyanka Chopra, Deepika Padukone, Irrfan Khan and Anupam Kher, to name a few, have been seen in Hollywood projects recently. This collaboration between the East and the West is opening us actors to newer audiences globally."

"It is definitely an exciting time for me to sift through ideas and land collaborations that help me harness my talent as an actor. I am grateful for this opportunity every single day," he concludes.



KONARK FESTIVAL- DAY 2

Enchanting Sattriya, Odissi leave audience spellbound

Sand artists at Chandrabhaga beach worked through sculptures on themes of ecotourism and 'Manabasa', a festival celebrated by married Odia women



Artistes perform during the show at Konark, Thursday

POST NEWS NETWORK

Konark: Day two of the Konark Festival 2021 witnessed an exquisite dance form of Assam - Sattriya followed by Odissi. After the lighting of the ceremonial lamp, the stage was lit with spell binding performances by Anita Sharma & Group from Guwahati and Niranjan Rout & Group from Bhubaneswar.

The first set of performances saw renowned choreographer Anita Sharma performing Sattriya with her troupe. *Krishna Vandana, Nandi Geet, Chali Nach, Rajaghoriya Chali, Sutradhari Nritya, Bhatima, Leela Govindam and Gajendra Moksh* were the eight dance recitals performed by the students of the Abhinaya Dance Academy. *Leela Govindam* was a special piece choreographed by the Sangeet Natak Akademi

awardee Anita Sharma set to Taal Suta & EkTaal. The second half of the show saw enchanting Odissi performances by the students of Nupur led by eminent Odissi exponent Guru Niranjan Rout. The troupe performed *Devi* and then to Guru Niranjan Rout's choreographies on pure Odissi dance form *Pallavi* and *Sun set* to Taal *Khemata* and *Taal Jati* respectively.

During the day, sand artists at Chandrabhaga beach worked through sculptures of the golden sand on themes of ecotourism and *Manabasa*, a festival celebrated by married Odia women.

The event was attended by Chief Secretary, Government of Odisha Suresh Chandra Mohapatra, Director General of Police Abhay, Director Tourism Sachin R Jadhav and Director Odia Language, Literature & Culture Ranjan Kumar Das as guests of honour.

When Cycle plays cupid

POST NEWS NETWORK

BHUBANESWAR: Odia music video *Cycle*, yet another collaboration of veteran singer Susmita Das and Auromira, a local entertainment house, was released at a city hotel here Thursday.

Earlier, the two had teamed up for *Aigiri Nandini, Prithvi Manthan, Nua Thikana Ku, Malhara* and many others.

Director Dev Meher and actress Sheetal Patra who features in the video were present on the occasion. The music of the video is scored by Biswajit Mahapatra while the lines are penned by eminent poet Devdas Chhotray.

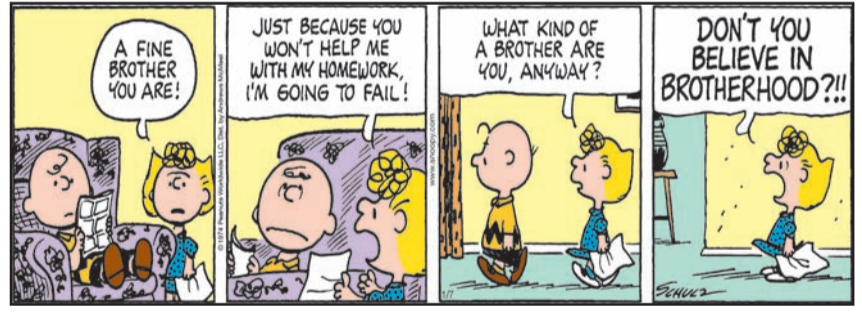
"The video narrates the childhood memories of a girl and her bicycle. The wheels of the cycle also represent the change of seasons and cycle in life," said singer Das.

Director Meher said that for most Odias, a bicycle represents the bitter-sweet memories of the past but in the video, it plays cupid in a warm love story.

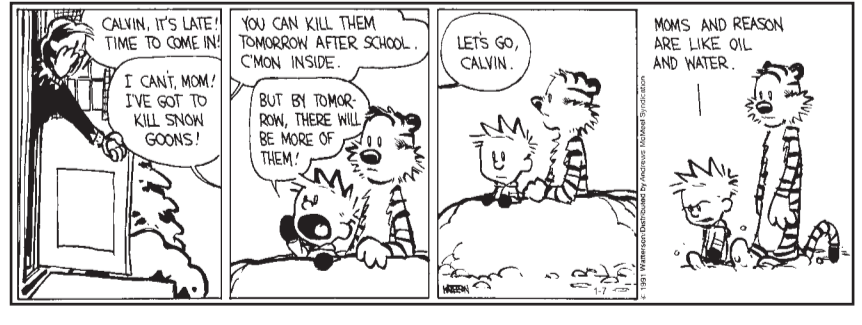
In the musical, the cycle is shown as a witness to the innocent love between two young lovers - Radha and Naresh. After years, when Radha discovers the same cycle lying in a defunct state at a corner of her village house, she turns nostalgic and starts searching for her lost love.



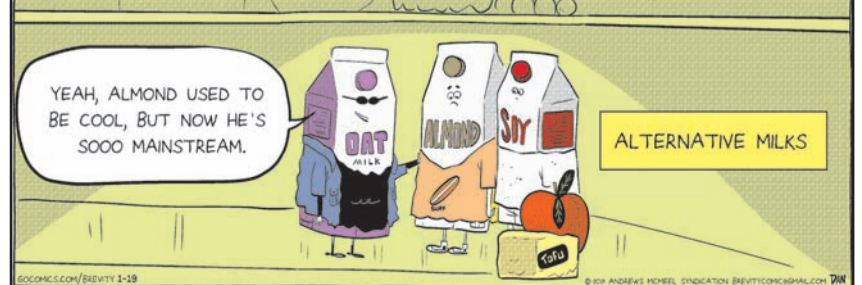
PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

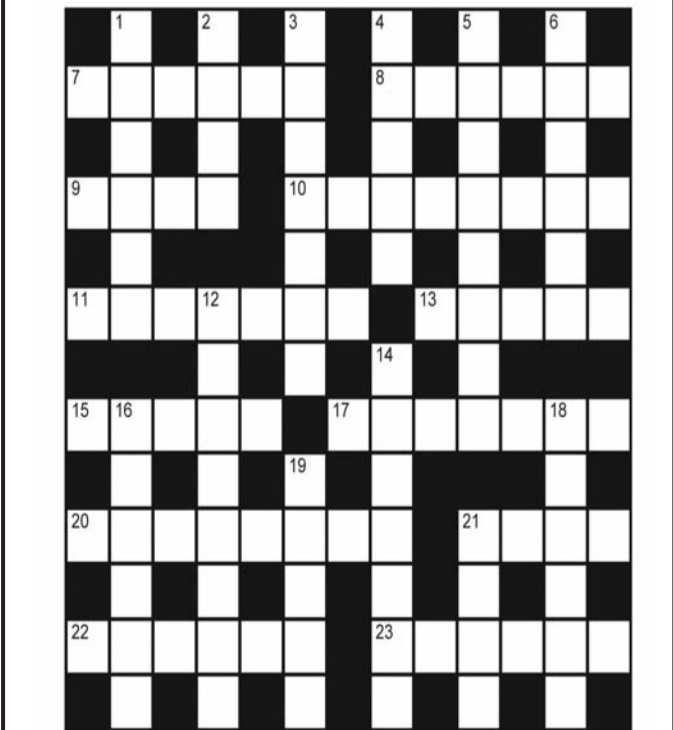


BREVITY



FUN post

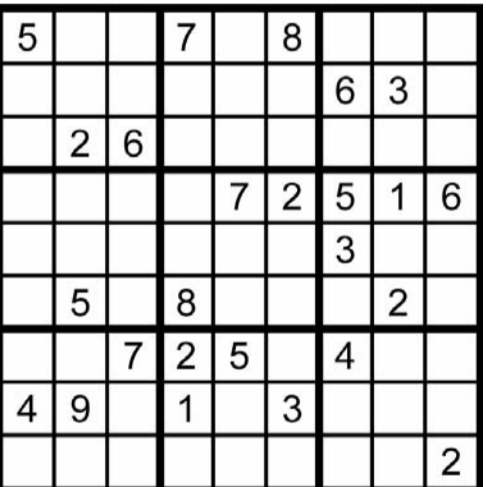
CROSSWORD



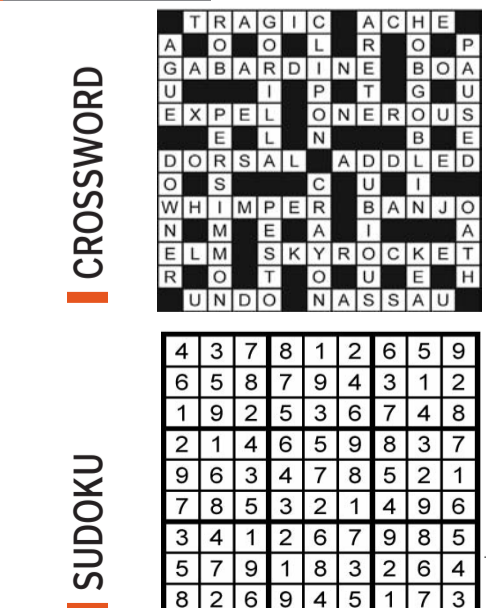
- Across**
7 Lentil, for one
8 Bread units
9 Scarf material
10 Furnished
11 Stableboys
13 Kitchen gadget
15 Ticket parts
17 Showed the way
20 Break up
21 Shipshape
- Down**
1 Dangers
2 Rubbish
3 Cooking method (4-3)
4 Permit
5 Public park
6 Ebb
7 Lay out funds
12 Kind of retriever
14 Danger for sailors
16 Motifs
18 Novelist's need
19 Artist's stand
21 T-shirts and blouses

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



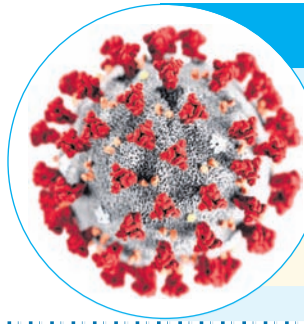
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown



PLEA TO GOVT

AYUSH doctors hold a demonstration at Lower PMG in Bhubaneswar, Thursday, seeking job regularisation



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	26,39,90,693	23,82,57,287	52,45,940
India	3,46,06,541	3,40,37,054	4,69,724
Odisha	10,49,597	10,38,971	8,415

Policy soon to attract investment in sports

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 2: In a bid to attract the leading sports goods and equipment manufacturers, the state government is planning to bring a policy to attract the sports, fitness and wellness sector companies, a senior official said Thursday.

Principal Secretary, Industries, Hemant Sharma said this while speaking at the webinar on 'Odisha - The sports destination of India'. The sports government is keen on making the sports goods manufacturing sector a priority sector and came up with a policy that would lay out attractive incentives for sports goods manufacturers and exporters who would like to invest in Odisha, he said.

Leading the sports ecosystem in the country, Odisha has hosted several international sporting events including Asian athletics championships 2017, men's hockey world cup 2018 and the ongoing hockey men's junior world cup 2021, Sharma pointed out.

To facilitate the sportspersons, he said, Odisha has built 11 high-performance centres including Abhinav Bindra Targeting Performance Centre, Reliance Foundation Athletics High-Performance Centre, Odisha JSW Swimming High-Performance Centre in 10 sports disciplines.

He further said the state has also decided to build 89 Biju Patnaik indoor stadia, 20 hockey training centres, 16 sports hostels and 314 rural mini stadia across the state to empower budding sportspersons.

He invited the participating sports goods manufacturers and exporter association to visit Odisha and explore the opportunities in the sector.

2-day conference on good governance in Capital today

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Dec 2: The Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG), in collaboration with Odisha government, will organise a two-day regional conference on "Replication of Good Governance Practices" in Bhubaneswar on semi-virtual mode Friday.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, Union Minister of Education, Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Dharmendra Pradhan and Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) of Science and Technology, Earth Sciences, Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions Jitendra Singh will address the valedictory session of the two-day event.

The main objective of the conference is to bring national and state-level public administration organisations on the same platform to share experiences and innovations in public administration, transforming future public solution for improving quality of life, e-Governance and Digital Governance.

In the conference, representatives, District Magistrates and Collectors of states are invited to make presentation on good governance practices of their respective states for wider dissemination.

Expedite work for model +3 colleges, Works dept told

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 2: The Higher Education (HE) department Thursday directed the Chief Engineer of Works department for expediting the construction of five model degree colleges in five aspirational districts - Bolangir, Dhenkanal, Gajapati, Kandhamal, and Kalahandi.

The construction work is being carried out under Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA), a flagship programme of the Ministry of Education. The Union government is pressing hard for completion of these projects by the end of financial year, so that the

model degree colleges could be functional by the next academic session.

State project director and additional secretary of HE department Rajashree Mohanty, in a letter, directed the executive engineers to expedite the construction so that the aforesaid objective could be achieved on time. The five Model Degree colleges are at Jogimunda in Patnagarh block of Bolangir, Jantaribol in Kamakhyanager block of Dhenkanal, Tamayepata in Kashinagar block of Gajapati, Dameikia in K Nuagaon block of Kandhamal and Junagarh in Kalahandi.

In 2019, the state government had released Rs 36 crore to expedite the construction of model degree

colleges in these districts.

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan had earlier informed that the Centre had approved as many as 161 higher education institutions including degree colleges and universities from Odisha under RUSA scheme.

The objective of the RUSA scheme is to improve access, equity and quality in higher education through planned development of higher education at state level. It aims at creating new academic institutions, expanding and upgrading the existing ones and creating an enabling atmosphere in the higher educational institutions to promote research and innovation.

House bedlam continues over Mamita murder

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 2: Pandemonium continued to prevail in the state Assembly for the second day, Thursday, as members of opposition BJP and Congress created ruckus over Kalahandi school teacher Mamita Meher murder case.

As soon as the House assembled for the day at 10:30am, BJP members rushed to the well holding banners and raised slogans demanding removal of MoS, Home, Dibya Shankar Mishra for his alleged link with prime accused in the case Gobinda Sahu. The BJP legislators also demanded a CBI probe into the incident.

Congress members too joined the principal opposition party members. Carrying posters and banners, the Congress MLAs too rushed to the well of the House and started shouting slogans for the same demand. Unable to run any business, Speaker Surjya Narayan Patro adjourned the proceedings till 4pm.

The situation remained the same during the post-lunch session as the opposition continued to create noise on the floor of the House over the issue. The House functioned for only 13 minutes amid uproar by the BJP and Congress members. After that, Patro again



BJP legislators during their agitation seeking removal of minister Dibya Shankar Mishra in connection with the murder of teacher Mamita Meher in Kalahandi

adjourned the House till Friday morning.

In a counter strategy against BJP, the Treasury Bench members sat on a dharna in front of the Mahatma Gandhi statue on Assembly premises protesting against the hike in prices of LPG cylinders.

Speaking to reporters outside the House, opposition chief whip (BJP) Mohan Majhi said, "We are demanding removal of Mishra and CBI probe into the Mamita Meher

murder case. When we raised this issue during the Question Hour, the Speaker did not pay heed to our demands. So, we went to the well to press our demand."

Raising questions on adjournment of the House till 4pm, the BJP legislator said the proceedings are usually adjourned for an hour during question hour. "But, today, the Speaker adjourned the House straightaway till 4pm," he said.

The BJP also brought an adjournment motion notice over the

deteriorating law and order situation in the state, he said.

"It seems that the Speaker does not want the issue to be discussed in the Assembly for which he adjourned the House till 4pm," alleged Majhi.

The BJP will continue to raise the issue in the House until the demand is fulfilled, he warned.

Senior Congress member Santosh Singh Saluja said his party

is also demanding removal of DS Mishra to ensure a fair probe.

"How will the Home department or police conduct a fair investigation if the minister in charge himself is involved in the case," Saluja exclaimed.

Congress MLA Suresh Routray also questioned the functioning of the Speaker. "Despite our requests, he did not allow the opposition to speak on the floor," he alleged.

BJD MLA Pratap Keshari Deb criticised the opposition for disturbing the House from the beginning. Though there are several public-interest issues like MSP, banking, telecom and LPG price hike, the opposition stalled the House by raking up Mamita Meher issue.

"This is a well-planned strategy of BJP and Congress to ignore important issues," Deb said.



BJD MLAs holding a demonstration near the Gandhi statue on Assembly premises to protest against the frequent hike in LPG price

ECoR opens round-the-clock disaster management cells

POST NEWS NETWORKS

Bhubaneswar, Dec 2: East Coast Railway (ECoR) has made elaborate preparations including opening of round-the-clock disaster management cells to tackle the impending cyclone effectively.

The ECoR has planned for early restoration of train traffic and railway tracks that would be affected by the storm.

Round-the-clock Disaster Management Cells have been opened at ECoR headquarters at Rail Sadan and Divisional Headquarters at Visakhapatnam, Khurda Road and Sambalpur.

ECoR has deployed special teams for early restoration of tracks, over-

head equipment, signalling system and other infrastructure. DG sets, water tanks, pumps will be kept ready at all important places, said the sources.

Action has been taken for smooth refund of ticket amount, opening of additional ticket counters and adequate availability of water at stations.

ECoR Additional General Manager Sudhir Kumar Thursday reviewed the preparedness for the cyclone in a high level meeting at ECoR's headquarters.

He directed the officials concerned to be fully vigilant over any incidents like flooding near Railway Track and to ensure safety of trains and smooth train operations.

City may see heavy rain; veggie prices up

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 2: The state Capital is set to receive at least 70 mm rainfall during weekends as far as predictions from different models are concerned. This will also be accompanied by winds ranging between 40-50 kmph during the storm.

As per the model data of NCEP-GFS, ECMWF, ACCESS-G3 and INCOIS, the Capital city will start witnessing heavy rains from Saturday midnight.

About 3-4 mm rain per hour is expected till Sunday. Similar pattern will also follow so far as Cuttack is concerned.

It can be mentioned that IMD had earlier issued orange warning of heavy to very heavy rain for seven districts including Khurda and Cuttack.

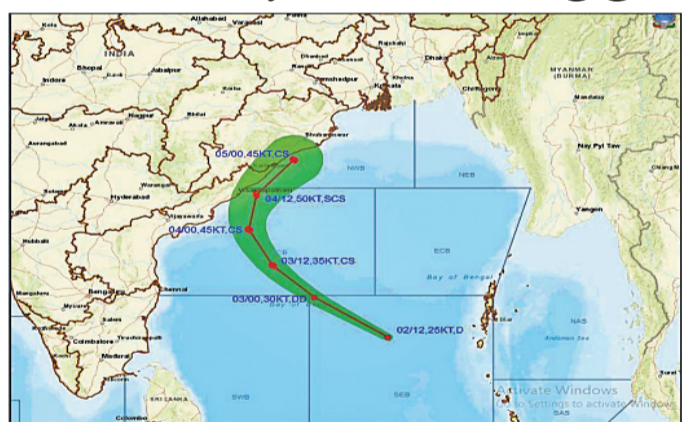
Looking at the patterns and 8-point action plan earlier issued by the Special Relief Commissioner (SRC), the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) is said to have conducted special meeting over this.

"We are in discussions with different departments. Based on the predictions, we will also shift the vulnerable groups to different temporary rescue shelters in the Capital. The shifting will be done under strict Covid protocols," said a BMC official.

Prices of essential vegetables like potato and onion have shot up while other vegetables are being sold at Rs 70 to 80 per kg.

While potato, which was sold at Rs 18 per kg, is now being sold at Rs 24 per kg, onion price has increased from Rs 35 to 40 per kg.

"With a cyclone threat around, people are stocking up vegetables in bulk as they fear its price might rise after the cyclone makes landfall," said Papu Puhan, a trader here.



Cuttack braces for Cyclone Jawad

CUTTACK: The district administration and the Cuttack Municipal Corporation (CMC) are now readying themselves to face impending cyclone 'Jawad'. The MeT department has sounded orange warning for Cuttack and predicted that the district would witness heavy rain due to the cyclonic storm.

"The district administration is getting ready to face the cyclone as per the guidelines issued by the Special Relief Commissioner (SRC). All BDOs, tehsildars and officials of various departments have been put on high alert to face any eventuality," said Collector Bhawani Shankar Chayani.

"Standing paddy crops are likely to be damaged by the heavy rains. The administration has deployed quite a few vehicles fitted with microphones to alert the farmers about this," said the Collector. "We have planned to shift people

residing in low-lying areas to nearby cyclone shelters and school buildings. Our officials are ready to face the situation," Chayani said.

The CMC is putting emphasis on measures to deal with possible waterlogging in the Silver City. "Drains are being cleared to avoid waterlogging in the city. We have identified all the low-lying areas. Cyclone shelters, dry food, drinking water and other essential commodities have been arranged to manage the situation," said CMC Commissioner Ananya Das.

CMC Deputy Commissioner Ajay Mohanty said at least 40 pumps have been deployed to dewater the low-lying areas which may face submergence. "Around 25 pumps have been kept ready to deal with the emergency situation. Our officials will monitor the situation from time to time," he said.

Puri admin cancels leaves of officials

PURI: The district administration has rolled up sleeves in view of impending cyclonic storm Jawad, an official said Thursday.

District collector Samarth Verma Thursday cancelled leaves of all government employees and activated block-level control rooms besides the integrated control room at the district headquarters.

Fishermen have been asked not to venture into sea and those in sea have been asked to return at the earliest. Fishermen have been asked to keep their boats and equipment at safety. Officials have been asked to keep ready cyclone shelters, dry food, drinking water, gen sets and essential items like live saving drugs.

"Fire Services, power supply and Works department officials have been asked to gear up their systems for any eventuality. Health workers have been asked to identify pregnant women and if needed shift them to nearby hospitals," said an official. The district administration has chalked out plans to shift people from low-lying areas to nearby cyclone shelters when needed.

Medical teams have been formed and kept ready to be deployed to the affected areas.

"Since the cyclonic storm is expected to hit the district with gale and torrential rains, farmers are advised to harvest their standing paddy crop and keep those in safe places at the earliest," said the official.

No fishing on coastline, Chilika from Dec 3 to 5

BHUBANESWAR: In view of the impending cyclonic storm 'Jawad', the Fisheries and Animal Resources Development (FARD) department Thursday banned fishing activities along the coastline of Odisha and Chilika lagoon from December 3 to 5. In a special notification by order

of the Governor, FARD Special Secretary said, "In view of the impending cyclonic storm 'Jawad', as a measure of abundant caution, there is a need to restrict fishing activities along Odisha coast and Chilika Lake from December 3 to 5." Accordingly, in exercise of the

powers conferred by the Odisha Marine Fishing Regulation Act 1982, the state government does hereby prohibit fishing within the territorial waters along the entire coastline of Odisha and Chilika by all types of fishing vessels from December 3 to 5," the notification read.

ADDING TO CITY'S CHARM



Artisans draw murals along the road connecting AG Square to Raj Bhawan in Bhubaneswar as part of the City beautification drive, Thursday

Khurda only district in yellow zone with 1,036 active cases

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 2: Odisha logged 252 more coronavirus infections, which took the tally to nearly 10.5 lakh, while two fresh fatalities pushed the toll to 8,415, the Health department said. One each in Khurda and Jajpur districts succumbed to the highly infectious disease.

The coastal state currently has 2,434 active cases, while 10.39 lakh people have recovered from the contagion, including 186 in the last 24 hours, a Health bulletin stated.

Ten out of 30 districts of the state did not report any new coronavirus case in the last 24 hours. Among those newly infected, 54 were children and adolescents in the age group of 0 to 18.

Khurda district, of which the state Capital Bhubaneswar is a

part, recorded the highest 99 new infections, followed by 34 in Dhenkanal and 19 in Cuttack, it said. Khurda is also the only district of the state in yellow zone currently with a total of 1,036 active cases. No other district has active cases more than 200, while Sundargarh and Sambalpur districts have 161 and 150 active cases respectively.

At least 57,643 samples were tested in the last 24 hours. The state's daily test positivity rate (TPR) stood at 0.44 per cent, the bulletin stated.

On Wednesday, the state had logged 237 new Covid-19 cases and two fatalities. Over 2.79 crore beneficiaries have received the first dose of coronavirus vaccine in the state and more than 1.59 crore people have been administered both the doses, the Health bulletin added.



Odisha Prof bags Infosys Prize 2021

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 2: The Infosys Science Foundation (ISF) conferred the Infosys Prize 2021 in Physical Sciences on Prof Bedangadas Mohanty from the National Institute of Science Education and Research (NISER) in Bhubaneswar. Mohanty received the prize for investigations of the nuclear force, recently.

The Infosys Prize, the highest prize for science and research in India, has been instituted to recognise and felicitate exceptional talent for contributions in science, research, and technology.

ISF awarded the winners for their outstanding contributions to science and research in six fields - Engineering and Computer Science, Humanities, Life Sciences, Mathematical Sciences, Physical Sciences and Social Sciences.

The other laureates of Infosys Prize 2021 are Chandrasekhar Nair (Engineering and Computer Science), Angela Barreto Xavier (Humanities), Mahesh Sankaran (Life Sciences), Neeraj Kayal (Mathematical Sciences) and Pratiksha Baxi (Social Sciences).

2 held with brown sugar worth ₹14L

Puri: The Special Task Force (STF) of the district police Thursday claimed to have arrested two drug peddlers after recovering around 140 gram of brown sugar from their possession. Addressing the media at Town police station here, Puri additional SP Mihir Panda said that they have arrested Sushil Kumar Sahoo, 32, and Sagar Sundar Pradhan, 24, both residents of Khurda. "Two scooters, as many cellphones, ₹2,200 in cash and 140 gram of brown sugar have been recovered from the duo. The seized contraband would easily fetch around ₹14 lakh in market," said Panda.

Crime Branch seeks info on two wanted fugitives

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 2: The state Crime Branch (CB) Thursday released photos of two absconding criminals announcing reward for the informants. The criminals on the run were involved in separate cases registered by the Economic Offence Wing (EOW) and the Special Task Force (STF) of the CB.

The EOW Thursday released the absconding fraudster's photo and urged people to share any 'actionable' information about the accused through the mobile number, 9437093414.

The absconder, Harpal Singh Bal, of Bargarh town is the proprietor of M/s Harpal Farm Equipment. Harpal was accused of misappropriating government subsidy on farm equipment to the tune of Rs 3.5 crore with forged documents of authorities of Redlands Ashlyn Motors PLC, a Kerala-based manufacturer of farm equipment, between 2018 and 2020.

"This is to inform that Harpal Singh Bal is 'wanted' in Bhubaneswar EOW PS Case No.07/2021 relating to fraud by M/s Harpal Farm Equipment in agricultural equipment subsidy fraud case. He has been absconding since long. Whoever gives any actionable information

Competent enough to take care of our dams: BJD



POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Dec 2: The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) Thursday criticised the Dam Safety Bill 2019 by saying that the Bill is against the principles of cooperative federalism.

The regional party claimed that the state governments are competent enough to take care of dams and asked the Centre to reconsider the provisions of the Bill.

BJD Parliamentary Party leader in Rajya Sabha, Prasanna Acharya, alleged that the Centre is transgressing into the state government's jurisdiction. The BJD MP claimed that the safety and management of dams are entrusted with the local governments in many countries of the world.

"State governments are competent enough to take care of the dams in their territories and look after the safety aspects. I don't understand why Centre is interfering into the issue," Acharya said.

He also raised the issue of construction of barrages by Chhattisgarh on Mahanadi River. "We are a riparian state. We are in the downstream of Mahanadi. Chhattisgarh has been constructing dams on the river. We don't know if they have received the required permission from the Centre but we were not consulted on the issue," said Acharya, adding that construction of barrages on Mahanadi by Chhattisgarh has badly affected Hirakud dam in Odisha. The BJD MP also pointed out that this Bill

doesn't have any provision for compensation to people in case of any damage or destruction caused by the collapse of a dam.

"We have every mechanism in place for proper maintenance of Hirakud dam. Central government should allow the competent states to handle dam safety. Being a federal country we must allow state governments to function independently," Acharya said.

The Dam Safety Bill 2019 which was passed by the Rajya Sabha Thursday

has provisions for the surveillance, inspection, operation, and maintenance of all specified dams across the country. The Bill entails the creation of National Dam Safety Authority as regulatory body to provide technical assistance to State Dam Safety Organisations (SDSOs).

The Bill has provisions for two state bodies—State Committee on Dam Safety and State Dam Safety Organisation. These two

No proposal from state on Puri airport: Centre

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Dec 2: The Union government Thursday said that it has not received any proposal from the Odisha government for establishing a Greenfield airport in Puri.

The Union Civil Aviation Ministry, in response to a question asked by senior Biju Janata Dal (BJD) MP Pinaki Misra, informed the Lower House that on the request of Odisha government, a multi-disciplinary team from Airports

Authority of India (AAI) had visited Puri in June, 2021 for conducting pre-feasibility study of the site identified by the state gov-

ernment for establishment of a Greenfield Airport.

The ministry further said that the report submitted by the team was sent to the state government in August. However, no proposal for establishment of an airport at Puri has been received by the Ministry from state government.

"The responsibility of implementation of airport project, including necessary approvals from Government of India, rests with the concerned project proponent i.e. the state government. So far, no proposal in the prescribed performance for establishment of a Greenfield Airport at Puri has been received by the Ministry of Civil Aviation," it said.

Earlier, Misra had asked the ministry whether it had any plan to establish international airport namely Sri Jagannath International Airport at Puri. The BJD MP had also sought to know whether the pre-feasibility study of the site had been conducted by AAI.

bodies will be responsible for the surveillance, inspection and

maintenance of dams within their jurisdiction.



ODISHA IN PARLIAMENT

WASSUP TODAY

BHUBANESWAR

Workshop to mark International Day of Disabled Persons, Orissa Association for the Blind conference hall, 11am to 2pm

CUTTACK

Degree College Principals' Meet by Bharat Scouts and Guides, Sailabala Women's College, 11.30am

Programmes/announcements for wassup today may be sent to opwassup@gmail.com for record, it must also carry the sender's mobile number for our verification, but not for publication.

RD WOMEN'S UNIV FOUNDATION DAY TODAY

'Odisha women jumped into freedom struggle with valour'

The varsity will celebrate its 7th foundation day Friday and Governor Ganeshi Lal will grace the occasion as the Chief Guest

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 2: On the eve of the 7th Foundation day of Rama Devi Women's University, a special photographic exhibition on Gandhiji and his life was organised on the university premises Thursday. The exhibition was inaugurated by Kumar Prashant, chairman of Gandhi peace Foundation, New Delhi.

Highlighting the important part played by women in the freedom

struggle, Prashant said, "Along with men, there were thousands of women who played a significant role in the freedom struggle of the country and Rama Devi was one of them. The clarion call of Mahatma Gandhi awakened thousands of women leaders in Odisha as well. The women of Odisha jumped into the Indian Independence Movement with tremendous courage and vigour sacrificing all their comforts and luxuries. Their works and self-

sacrifices provide a rich insight into our glorious past."

Prashant added that among the women freedom fighters of Odisha, Rama Devi occupied a unique and unparalleled position.

He added that today's women can build the society by taking inspirations from Gandhiji and Rama Devi. The university will celebrate its 7th foundation day Friday. Governor Ganeshi Lal is scheduled to grace the occasion as the Chief Guest.



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SHORT TAKES

₹3.36 cr allocated to Chhatrapur

Chhatrapur: Ahead of civic body elections, the state government has approved a package of ₹3.36 crore to carry out a host of developmental projects in Chhatrapur municipality. The civic authorities had earlier sent proposals for 51 projects. N Ganeshan Babu, the executive officer of the municipality, said the state government has sent a letter regarding its approval to the project proposals. He added that ₹3.36 crore will be spent for 51 projects in 14 wards under the civic body. ₹16 lakh has been allocated for four parks, ₹61 lakh for 9 public gymnasiums, ₹11 lakh for children sports parks and ₹66 lakh for 18 new roads. Moreover, ₹1.64 crore will be spent for development of 13 roads and drains while ₹18 lakh was allocated for two more roads.

Water released ahead of Jawad

Bhanjanagar: Keeping in view possible heavy rains due to cyclone Jawad, the irrigation authorities have started releasing water from various reservoirs and dams in Bhanjanagar sub-division. It was learnt that 85 per cent of water will be reserved inside the dams while surplus water is being released through canals. Dahi reservoir has water up to 96 per cent of its retaining capacity. It will be reduced to 85 per cent. Moreover, water will be released from Bhanjanagar reservoir. The release of water will add to the problem of farmers as paddy in hectares of land has already been soaked by unseasonal rains.

NTPC team joins AP babus in Kotia

Pottangi: In yet another incident of highhandedness by Andhra, a three-member team of National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) assisted by Andhra officials visited Kotia panchayat in Koraput district and conducted a survey for a power project. The team from Delhi was accompanied by a manager of New and Renewable Energy Development Corporation of Andhra Pradesh Ltd Wednesday. The team visited Dhulipadar, Neredibalsa and Tadibalsa villages and conducted a survey on a solar power project.

Indigenous paddy seed bank a ray of hope for farmers



POST NEWS NETWORK

Nayagarh, Dec 2: A community seed bank in Dasapalla block of this district housing indigenous varieties of paddy seeds has brought a ray of hope for farmers who till now depend on government-supplied high-yielding varieties of paddy seeds. Farmlands are fast shrinking in the district due to a steady rise in population. Farmers living in the riparian villages and hilly areas have almost forgotten these indigenous varieties. Indigenous varieties of paddy seeds like 'Karpurakeli', 'Bayabhandra', 'Kasurichampa', 'Mayurkanta', 'Rangamachhakanta', 'Bhuthia', 'Jangalijata', 'Kalajeera', 'Gopalbhog', 'Tulasi', 'Chinamali', 'Varsha', 'Paujni', 'Kalakoili', 'Sariageta', 'Jhumpuri', 'Boudiachampa', 'Magura', 'Nrupatibhog', 'Mukusala', 'Alandhukuta', 'Landi', 'Kajalchampa' and 'Badatulasi' are no more seen in the district. The community seed bank set up by farmers at Raisar village has come at a time when hopes of availing indigenous varieties of paddy seeds were diminishing. As of now, the seed bank stores 44 varieties of indigenous seeds as well as seeds of black grams, green grams, chana, sesame and country crops like 'Janha', 'Guruchi', 'Suan', 'Kangula' and 'Kangu'. The basic aim of this seed bank is to col-

PLGA week: OSRTC suspends bus services in south Odisha

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jeypore, Dec 2: High alert was sounded in undivided Koraput district Thursday following commencement of People's Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA) week called by the Red rebels. The Odisha State Road Transport Corporation (OSRTC) has suspended bus services in 14 out of 17 routes in Koraput district and in six routes in Rayagada from December 2 to December 8. Passenger bus services from Jeypore to Malkangiri have come to a standstill. Plying of over 35 government buses has been curtailed owing to security reasons. Among them, plying of 20 government buses in Malkangiri route



and four buses in Paralakhemundi-Phulbani route have been stopped. Six buses plying to Andhra Pradesh have also been stopped and in other routes of south Odisha. Border areas have been sealed and roads blocked at several points. Security personnel in Odisha and Chhattisgarh intensified pat-

trolling and are keeping a close watch on the movement of rebels. The ultras have become blood thirsty seeking revenge due to frequent face-offs with security personnel where they have received heavy casualties and were pushed onto backfoot. Combing operations in some pockets were also intensified. During PLGA Week, Maoist leaders visit their areas of influence to lure local youths into their outfits. Koraput police said the Maoists use public address system to call people to observe PLGA Week. When contacted, Navin Pati, station master of Jeypore OSRTC zone, said bus services have been stopped due to security reasons following the start of PLGA Week.

Covid count in Dhenkanal pvt college up to 56

POST NEWS NETWORK

Dhenkanal, Dec 2: An additional 19 students of Saikrupa Residential College (a Plus II residential college) at Kunjakanta area in Dhenkanal town have tested positive for Covid-19, Thursday. With this, the number of Covid-19 cases in the educational institution rose to 56 during last three days. Three days back, four students were found affected with Covid-19 following which the swabs of 260 students residing in the college hostel were collected and tests conducted. The reports of 210 were available by Wednesday evening out of which 33 had tested positive for the virus. The college authorities have declared the college closed and students left the hostel, Thursday morning



As part of precautionary measures, the Dhenkanal municipality authorities sealed the buildings of the college and its hostel, declaring the campus as a micro containment zone and a test was conducted on the remaining 50 students. Among them, 19 have tested positive for Covid-19, Thursday. Meanwhile, a show-cause notice has been served on chairman of the college management committee Annada Kumar Mohanty and the college principal for non adherence to Covid-19 guidelines, Collector Saroj Kumar Sethy said. The health department has been directed to visit the houses of the infected students, to undertake contract tracing and collect further details. Atanu Kumar Samant, executive officer of Dhenkanal Municipality said an FIR has been

NHAI to build underpass for jumbos in Sambalpur

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, Dec 2: The National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) will build a kilometre-long flyover with underpass in Sambalpur district to facilitate movement of elephants. This was informed by chief general manager of NHAI, Odisha, Ram Prasad Panda Thursday. The underpass will help the pachyderms cross busy highway without hindrance, the official stated. "A flyover with underpass will soon come up between Rairakhol and Sambalpur to facilitate movement of elephants. Vehicular

traffic will move on the flyover while elephants will have safe passage underneath the structure," the CGM Panda said. A second flyover which is also on the anvil will be 532 metre-long. It has been proposed at somewhere between Pallahara and Keonjhar. The state witnessed debate in September last year pertaining to protection of elephants in different districts of Odisha. At present, the state has around 14 corridors. Expressing concern over encroachment of corridors, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) has recently sought a report from the state government.

Kidnapped Gania girl rescued

GANIA: A girl student of Shree Shree Raghunathjew Degree College here in Nayagarh district, who was kidnapped by miscreants from outside the college premises, was rescued from Baliguda area in Kandhamal district, late Wednesday night. Police conducted a medical examination of the girl and brought her here for further interrogation. Her kidnappers are absconding. Police are on lookout for the accused. She was kidnapped when she was on way to her college on a bicycle accompanied by her friends. A car without registration number came from the direction of Gania market and the two occupants of the car forced the girl into the vehicle.

SALVAGING ACT



Farmers harvesting unripe paddy before the arrival of cyclonic storm Jawad at Podapadar area under Chhatrapur block in Ganjam district, Thursday

SCAM ALLEGED IN STREET LIGHTING

Lokayukta gets plaint

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, Dec 2: Irregularities to the tune of ₹3 crore have come to light in LED Street Light National Programme (SNLP) in the civic bodies like Keonjhar, Anandapur, Barbil, Joda municipalities and Champua NAC. An RTI activist, Himansu Nayak, alleging scam in the SNLP, filed a complaint at the Lokayukta against Principal Secretary of the housing and urban development department G Mathivathanan, District Collector Ashish Thakre, project director of district urban development agency Ghasinath Murmu, executive officer of Keonjhar Municipality Madhusmita

Samantray, executive officer of Anandapur Municipality Bipin Kumar Pradhan, executive officer of Joda Municipality Bichitra Nanda Nayak, executive officer of Barbil Municipality Abhisek Panda, executive officer of Champua NAC Pradip Kumar Sa and director of Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL), a private agency, which has been awarded the work of the street light projects in these towns. In Keonjhar district, Astha Electricals looks after maintenance of street lights in all these civic body areas. The work of street lights has been botched up with the use of sub-standard equipment while many poles do not have earthing.

CENTRAL SILK BOARD (Ministry of Textiles, Govt. of India) CSB Complex, BTM Layout, Madivala Bengaluru - 560 068, Karnataka Phone: +91 80 26282516, 26282517 Fax: +91 80 26681511 Advt. No. CSB/5/2021 EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI) Date: 03.12.2021 Central Silk Board invites Expression of Interest (EOI) for hiring of a Recruitment Agency under the Government including Statutory Bodies/Autonomous Bodies, Public Sector Organizations for undertaking end-to-end recruitment process for filling up direct recruitment posts in various cadres under Central Silk Board. The Expression of Interest has been published in e-Procurement Portal https://eprocure.gov.in/epublish/app (Tender ID 2021-CSB-634358-1) and also on Central Silk Board website: www.csb.gov.in Last date for submission of EOI: 27th December, 2021 by 15.00 Hrs. DAVP 41109/11/0010/2122 Member Secretary

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL OFFICER, KKDA, LANJIGARH, KALAHANDI TENDER NOTICE Date: 01.12.2021 No. CAD-2101: The Special Officer, KKDA, Lanjigarh invites percentage rate of BIDs through open tender for various Civil Works, BID documents consisting of details of work, estimated cost, cost of tender paper, EMD, time of completion, class of contractor, set of terms and conditions of contract and other necessary documents can be seen in the website www.kalahandi.nic.in. 1. No. of works : 1 2. Nature of work : Civil Construction 3. Bid Identification No. : 01-KKDA/2021-22 4. Date and time of availability of BID document in portal : 10 A.M. 02.12.2021 to 14.12.2021 upto 4 P.M. 5. Last date & time for receipt of BIDs in portal : 14.12.2021 upto 4 P.M. 6. BIDs received shall be opened on : 15.12.2021 at 11.00 A.M. at Office of the Project Administrator, ITDA, Th. Rampur at Bhanwanipatna 7. Name and address of the Officer : Special Officer, KKDA, Lanjigarh, Kalahandi. OI/PR-26051/11/0002/2122 Sd./- Special Officer, KKDA, Lanjigarh

Government of Odisha Office of the Executive Engineer, Rural Works Division, Dhenkanal E-Mail: eerwdkl@yahoo.co.in e-procurement Notice No. 18 / Building Works / 2021-22 No.: O-1175:- 1. Name of the work : Building Works 2. Total No. of Works : 04 (Four) Nos. 3. Estimated Cost : Rs.11.86 to 33.27 lakh (approx.) 4. Class Contractor : 'B', 'C' & 'D' Class 5. Period of Completion : 6 (Six) Calendar months. online for bidding : 03.12.2021 at 11.00 A.M to 09.12.2021 upto 5.00 P.M. 6. Last Date & Time of seeking : 08.12.2021 upto 4.00 PM tender clarification 7. Date & Time of opening : 10.12.2021 at 11.00AM of tender Other details can be seen from the website http://tendersorissa.gov.in. Sd./- Executive Engineer, R.W. Division, Dhenkanal OI/PR-25101/11/0011/2122

WORKS DEPARTMENT OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, BHADRAK (R&B) DIVISION No. B-718 e-mail: bhadrakrmbdivision@gmail.com Government of Odisha "e" Procurement Notice Bid Identification No. SE (R&B) BDK - 32/2021-22 No. 4892 Dt.22.11.2021 1. Nature of Work : Road and Building Works 2. Number of Works : 9 (Nine) Nos. of Road, Building works 3. Amount put to tender : Rs.10,71,478/-, 8,92,913/-, 8,03,661/-, 38,93,089/-, 39,14,325/-, 38,96,251/-, 17,86,547/-, 13,39,817/-, 13,39,732/- 4. Class of Contractor : 'D', 'C' & 'B' 5. Date & time of availability of bid document in the portal : Dt.04.12.2021 at 10.00 A.M. 6. Last date/time of receipt of bid in the portal : Dt.09.12.2021 upto 05.00 P.M. 7. Date of opening of bid : Dt.10.12.2021 at 11.30 A.M. 8. Name & address of the Office Inviting Bid : Superintending Engineer, Bhadrak (R&B) Division 9. The bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal "http://tendersodisha.gov.in". All future corrigendum will be available on ONLINE mode only. Superintending Engineer Bhadrak (R&B) Division OI/PR-34079/11/0014/2122

EAST COAST RAILWAY Tender Notice No. SBP-ELECT-2021-T-127/1128/17N Date: 30.11.2021 (1) Tender No. SBP-ELECT-2021-T-127 Name of the work: AUGMENTATION OF 33 KV POWER SUPPLY SYSTEM AT SAMBALPUR STATION. Approx cost of the work: ₹26,27,377.91 (2) Tender No. SBP-ELECT-2021-T-128 Name of the work: IMPROVEMENT OF LIGHTING AT RAILWAY STATIONS HAVING AVERAGE FOOTFALL MORE THAN 2000/DAY & FACADE LIGHTING ARRANGEMENT AT SAMBALPUR ROAD, BARGARH ROAD, BARPALI, BALANGIR, KANTABANJI, KESINGA, MUNIGUDA, KHARIAR ROAD & MAHASAMUD STATIONS IN SAMBALPUR DIVISION. Approx cost of the work: ₹49,43,053.48 Completion Period of the work: 180 Days (for both tenders). Date & time of Tender Closing: 22.12.2021 at 1600 hrs (for sl. no. 1) & 22.12.2021 at 1615 hrs (for sl. no. 2) No manual offers sent by Post/Courier/ Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-Tenders, even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration. Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-Tenders is available in website http://www.ireps.gov.in The tenderers/bidders must have Class-III Digital Signature Certificate and must be registered or IREPS portal. Only registered tenderer/bidder can participate on e-tendering. All relevant papers must have to be uploaded at the time of participating on e-tendering as per instruction. Note: The prospective tenderers are advised to revisit the website fifteen days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes/corrigendum issued for this tender. Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (G)/PR-602/M/21-22 Sambalpur

Govt. OF ODISHA, "e"-PROCUREMENT NOTICE Bid Identification No. S.E. PKL (R&B)-33/2021-22 E-mail address- eepwd.pkl@rediffmail.com 1. Name of the work: - Road Works 2. Numbers of work - 12 (Twelve) 3. Estimated cost: - Rs. 15.00 Lakh to Rs.48.00 Lakh 4. Period of Completion - 3 (Three) calendar months 5. Date & Time of availability of bid document in the portal - From 11.00 A.M. of dt.03.12.2021 to 05.00 P.M. of dt.13.12.2021 6. Last Date/Time for receipt of bids in the portal - 05.00 P.M. of dt.13.12.2021 7. Date of opening of Bid - 11.30 A.M. of dt.14.12.2021 8. Name and address of the officer inviting Bid - Superintending Engineer, Panikoiil (R&B) Division, Panikoiil Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal https://tendersodisha.gov.in Sd./- Superintending Engineer, Panikoiil (R&B) Division OI/PR-34067/11/0018/2122

Government of Odisha "e" Procurement Notice Bid Identification No.: Online-AGL-20 of 2021-2022 No.O-1106 1. Name of the Work : Road Works 2. Estimated Cost : Rs.20.33 lakhs to Rs.35.36 lakhs 3. Period of Completion : 01 (One) Calendar Month 4. Date & time of availability of bid document in the portal : From 03.12.2021 to 14.12.2021 upto 5.00 P.M. 5. Last Date/time for receipt of bids in the portal : 14.12.2021 upto 5.00 P.M. 6. Name & Address of the : Executive Engineer, Rural Works Division, Angul OIT Further details can be seen from the Govt. website www.tendersorissa.gov.in Sd./- Executive Engineer, R.W. Division, Angul OI/PR-25096/11/0011/2122

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, R.W.S.S DIVISION, SONEPUR Telephone No.06654-220259, email-eerwss.sonepur@gmail.com Govt. of Odisha e-Procurement Notice Bid Identification No. 02/ 2021-22. No. O-1133:- The Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Sonepur on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites Percentage bid through e-Procurement in double cover system according to norm of e-Procurement system in on-line mode for the work "Const. of OHT, Const. of Pump Chamber, SV Chamber, Laying of HDPE/G.I. Pipe, Compound Wall in different blocks under Subarnapur District. 1. Nature of Work - PWS Schemes of Sonepur District. 2. Total No. of Work - 01 no. 3. Tender Paper Cost - Rs.10000/- 4. Value of Work - Rs.70.55 lakhs 5. Class of Contractor - 'B' & 'A' 6. Period of Completion - 300 days. (Refer DTCN available in the website tendersorissa.gov.in) Procurement Officer Bid Identification No. Availability of Tender online for bidding Last date & time of seeking tender clarification Date & Time of opening of tender Executive Engineer No. 02 of 2021-22 DT. From To Dt. Technical Bid Financial Bid RWS&S Division Sonepur 03.12.21 11.00 AM. 17.12.2021 upto 5.00 PM Dt.16.12.21 up to 5.00PM 18.12.21 To be announced later. OI/PR-25037/11/0003/2122 Sd./- Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Sonepur

FOCUS ORDINANCES

FEATHERING CAGED PARROTS



The Supreme Court has been seized of the matter of frequent Ordinance making by the Centre and the state governments under Article 213. In the famous DC Wadhwa Vs State of Bihar (1986) case the court had seriously frowned upon the frequent tendency of re-promulgating Ordinances to skip discussion in the House in Bihar

Ordinance making by the Centre and the state governments under Article 213. In the famous DC Wadhwa Vs State of Bihar (1986) case the court had seriously frowned upon the frequent tendency of re-promulgating Ordinances to skip discussion in the House in Bihar. Justice PN Bhagwati has observed "the power to promulgate Ordinance is essentially a power to be used to meet an extra ordinary situation and it cannot be allowed to be perverted to serve political ends". In another case involving KK Singh Vs state of Bihar (2017), the Supreme Court with 5-1 majority had observed that re-promulgation of Ordinance is fundamentally at odds within principle of parliamentary supremacy. Justice DY Chandrachud has further amplified the scope of judicial review by suggesting that the power of the Governor and the President to approve promulgation of Ordinance is subject to judicial review, as to whether the President or Governor was spurred by an oblique motive. These judgements carry resonance of Madbury Vs Madison Case (1800)

where CJ Marshall sowed the seeds of judicial review and questioned executive overreach. There is a perception that whichever party comes to power there is tendency to use investigating agencies like CBI, ED and Income Tax to settle political scores with political adversaries. CJI Lodha had observed in 2013 that the CBI has become "caged parrot" speaking in its Master's voice. The latest move seems to indicate that the present government is feathering the nest of ED and Director CBI by dangling tenure extension. This has serious implication on the independence of agencies like ED and CBI. In our constitutional schemes, the Supreme Court, the C&G and Chief Election Commissioner are able to exercise their function as watchdog of democracy since they can be removed from office only through an impeachment procedure by both Houses of Parliament. It may be recalled that five judges were superseded in 1973 since the then PM felt that the judges were not toeing the

party line and not committed to the ideology of the ruling dispensation. The superseded judges resigned as they felt committed to the rule of law rather than to the party in power. In 1976, the story of supersession of independent-minded judges was repeated when Justice HR Khanna was superseded as CJI since he had dared to give a dissenting judgement that Right to Life cannot be taken away during the Emergency period in the ADM Jabalpur Vs SP Sukla case. Justice Khanna is still remembered as the biggest defender of Right to Life and liberty which cannot be arbitrarily snuffed-out by any party in power. The Supreme Court has shown remarkable resilience by asserting its independence by striking down the 42nd Amendment which tried to make Parliament all powerful and nullify power judicial review annuity. The C&G in India has also been showing remarkable independence by commenting adversely on Coalgate and 2G scams. Unfortunately, agencies like CBI and ED being statutory authorities do not have the Constitutional immunity that the judges, C&G and CEC enjoy. The processes are further muddied by planned civil servant would like to be complicit with the government in power. Fareed Zakaria in his book "The Future of Freedom" has observed that un-elected and independent institutions have contributed more to the growth of democracy than an elected representative. The wanton misuse of Ordinance making power, as the present case by giving five-year extension to ED and CBI, are reflective of the party in power to stultify parliamentary debate and favour committed bureaucrats who can toe the government's diktat. Ideally such agencies should be made constitutional authority so that they can exercise their power "without fear, favour or ill will" as the judges swear when they take oath of office.

The writer is Dean, School of Management, KIIT Deemed to be University, Bhubaneswar. Views expressed are personal.



Prof SN Misra

UNFORTUNATELY, AGENCIES LIKE CBI & ED BEING STATUTORY AUTHORITY DO NOT HAVE THE CONSTITUTIONAL IMMUNITY THAT THE JUDGES, C&G AND CEC ENJOY

The government has promulgated two Ordinances by amending the CVC Act, 2003 and the SPE Act, 1946 which allows the Centre to extend the tenure of Enforcement Director and Director CBI from two years up to five years. The Opposition has termed it as a brazen move to subvert parliamentary discussion, as the Parliament session began November 29. As per Article 123 of the Constitution, Ordinances are to be promulgated when Parliament is not in session to deal with situations where immediate action is necessary. Ideally every issue should be deliberated upon by the members of the Parliament before they get converted into Acts and Ordinances should be the exception without a tendency to bypass parliamentary debates on important issues.

It may be recalled that in a judgement in October 2021 (Common Causes vs. SK Mishra) involving retrospective appointment to SK Mishra, the present ED, the Supreme Court had allowed the government to go ahead with a retrospective appointment with a caveat that the tenure of SK Mishra should not be extended beyond November 18 when his extended tenure runs out. Justice N Rao and Justice Gavai had also observed that extension of tenure to officers who have attained the age of superannuation should be done only in "rare and exceptional cases, like completion of ongoing investigation only after reasons are recorded by the committee under Section 25 A of CBC Act. Quite clearly the present Ordinance of the government would nullify the Supreme Court orders that November 18 is deadline for SK Mishra to remain as ED.

Y Azad, presently CIC, has observed that such extension will demoralise young talents and undermines autonomy and independence of statutory agencies like CBI. The proposed Ordinances are not meant to reform and streamline the functioning of independent investigative agencies but designed to favour particular individuals like SK Misra.

The Supreme Court has been seized of the matter of frequent

Care not for time and success. Act out thy part, whether it is to fail or to prosper.

SRJ AUROBINDO



Digital finance sans cryptocurrencies

When Tesla CEO Elon Musk promoted the Dogecoin and Bitcoin cryptocurrencies, their prices shot up. While some countries are taking a wait-and-see attitude toward private digital money, El Salvador has embraced Bitcoin as an official currency. And the New York State Department of Financial Services (NYDFS) has been busy issuing licenses (and collecting fees) to people who want to create and trade cryptocurrencies. Taking the opposite tack, China has recently banned both the mining of cryptocurrencies and their use as a medium of exchange.

Given the diverse policy responses, how should we assess the social costs and benefits of different types of digital currency? Let us consider free-floating cryptocurrencies, stablecoins, and central bank digital currencies (CBDCs).

The prices of free-floating cryptocurrencies – of which Bitcoin is the most famous example – are not anchored to any other asset. Despite their rapid growth, it is important to remember that cryptocurrencies have no intrinsic fundamental value and are therefore vulnerable to price crashes.

The recent run-up in cryptocurrency prices recalls the seventeenth-century tulip price bubble in the Netherlands, when an initial price increase attracted more buyers to the market, pushing up prices further. But, as with the tulip mania, some seemingly random news in the future could end the cryptocurrency boom, triggering a downward price spiral as existing owners rush to the exit.

One attraction of cryptocurrencies for investors and speculators is that they resemble a lottery ticket – while the potential loss is limited to what you pay for it, the potential gains could be enormous. Although we lack precise data on who is trading cryptocurrencies, research on lottery tickets suggests that less wealthy investors are more likely to be attracted to this market. Crypto exchanges like Coinbase have made buying cryptocurrencies as easy as buying a lottery ticket, with the minimum trade as low as \$2. This means any future price crash is likely to hurt the segment of society least able to afford a drop in their savings.

In contrast to free-floating cryptocurrencies, stablecoins' value is pegged to either an official currency such as the US dollar or Japanese yen or to a precious commodity like gold or oil, and thus have a natural anchor for their prices. But investors should first ask whether a stablecoin issuer is backing their coin fully with the equivalent amount of underlying assets. Otherwise, the stablecoin's intrinsic value should reflect the risk that, in a major market crash, the coin provider may not have sufficient reserves to convert all their coins to high-quality assets without imposing a haircut on the promised value.

Even stablecoin providers who promise to hold full collateral should have their reserves regularly and independently audited. Entities such as NYDFS that issue operating licenses to coin providers typically do not perform such a function.

In countries that have a history of high inflation or hyperinflation, such as some in Latin America and Africa, there may be a case for using stablecoins as a medium of exchange. But for most countries with a reasonably well managed monetary policy, stablecoins could undermine policy effectiveness by making the overall liquidity in the economy less controllable by central banks. Moreover, both stablecoins and free-floating cryptocurrencies can be, and have been, used to launder money and for other illicit financial transactions.

CBDCs are a much better bet. For starters, they can save governments billions of dollars by removing the need to circulate and maintain notes and coins. The United States, for example, currently spends more than \$1 billion each year on minting, printing, and maintaining coins and paper notes. The savings that would result from introducing an official digital dollar could be deployed for other socially useful programs – such as providing free Medicaid to the 31.1 million Americans who are not covered by any medical-insurance program, or funding the National Endowment for the Arts five times over.

Because CBDCs are also a means of payment that could be used instead of a credit card, they can exert pressure on existing payment providers to become more efficient and reduce their transaction fees. Consumers and businesses alike will benefit.

Moreover, because official digital currencies are issued by central banks, they do not compromise the effectiveness of monetary policy. And while all digital payment and transaction systems raise questions about data security and the protection of personal information, CBDCs have as good a chance as their private-sector alternatives of addressing these concerns.

While CBDCs will help to improve the financial system's efficiency, free-floating cryptocurrencies do not have a bright future and carry the risk of financial instability. Stablecoins are somewhere in between. For these reasons, we should not be surprised to see more countries over the next few years ban free-floating cryptocurrencies as a medium of exchange, roll out official digital currencies, and impose strict regulations on stablecoins.

Shang-Jin Wei, a former chief economist at the Asian Development Bank, is Professor of Finance and Economics at Columbia Business School and Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs.

PROJECT SYNDICATE

WISDOM CORNER

- The same boiling water that softens the potato hardens the egg. It's what you're made of. Not the circumstances. UNKNOWN
- You can either experience the pain of discipline or the pain of regret. The choice is yours. UNKNOWN
- If something is important enough, even if the odds are stacked against you, you should still do it. ELON MUSK

WORDSWORTH

Carborexia

To exhibit carborexia is to have an extreme dark green attitude towards environmental issues. This can show itself as excessive recycling and in other ways, but in particular it refers to an obsessive desire to reduce one's personal carbon footprint. The adjective is carborexic. It's the newest addition to the group of words based on anorexia, in full anorexia nervosa, the medical term for obsessive desire to lose weight. Other examples are bigorexia, a slang term for muscle dysmorphia, in which a false body image leads bodybuilders to work out too much; orthorexia, in which sufferers are obsessed with eating the right diet, in particular avoiding foods thought to be harmful to health; and tanorexia, an obsessive desire for a suntan. Others of lesser staying power that have appeared in recent years are yogorexia, excessive practice of yoga to lose weight, and drunkorexia, consuming alcohol in place of food as a way to keep thin. The implication of these various forms is that -orexia is turning into a suffix that refers to an obsessive-compulsive attitude often related to body image.

SPECTRUM POLITICS

Mamata, BJP on the same track



Anita Saluja

MAMATA SHOULD REALISE THAT IN HER EFFORTS TO OVERTAKE CONGRESS, SHE MAY MISS THE OPPORTUNITY OF A LARGER GOAL OF BECOMING THE PRIME MINISTER

Ever since the Trinamool Congress trounced the BJP in West Bengal, Mamata Banerjee is considering herself to be an alternative to Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Defeating Modi in the West Bengal was not an easy task, especially when all the money-power and the muscle-power were with the saffron party. Against all odds, Mamata proved all the political analysts and psephologists wrong. In fact, even leaders like Amit Shah, who were confident of toppling Mamata government, were taken aback with the results of the Assembly elections.

The party, which was predicting that it would win more than 200 seats, secured only 76, while Trinamool Congress won 214 seats in the 294-member Assembly. Mamata, therefore, has every reason to be on cloud nine after the debacle of the BJP. However, to imagine that she can replicate the same performance on the national stage will be far-fetched. But she is moving towards the same goal. If not in 2024, then in the next five years, she is keen to emerge as the main challenger to the BJP. To accomplish her goal, she knows that she will

have to wipe out the Congress.

The recent move in Meghalaya, where 12 of the 17 MLAs ditched the Congress to switch sides to the Trinamool, depicts the hurry in which Mamata is to wipe out the Congress. Besides Meghalaya, she succeeded in winning over former Goa Chief Minister Luizinho Faleiro, former Mahila Congress president Sushmita Deb and umpteen numbers of leaders in West Bengal. Though her mission has been successful in the North-East, owing to the proximity which the region shares with West Bengal, it would not be easy for her to manage in the states in the north.

Mamata three-day visit to Maharashtra was aimed at gauging the strength of the Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi government and the relations shared by the Shiv Sena and NCP with the Congress. She met NCP leader Sharad Pawar to explore the option of forming an alternative to the UPA front, led by the Congress, with its chairperson Sonia Gandhi in command. NCP leader Sharad Pawar, who too is hoping to lead the country someday, has not quit politics so far.

With several aspirants for the

prime ministerial chair, it would not be cakewalk for Mamata. Every state regional satraps are hoping to lead the secular front, whether it is Samajwadi Party leader Akhilesh Yadav, or BSP leader Mayawati from Uttar Pradesh, or Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao. TDP leader Chandrababu Naidu was also an aspirant in the past, but due to his party's rout in the polls, he has fallen behind in the race.

Interestingly, Modi's popularity graph is still not showing signs of decline, though it has also not risen in the recent past due to various reasons like economic slowdown, price-rise, Covid mismanagement, mishandling of farmers' agitation and unemployment issues. There is nothing for the BJP to flaunt about, though they still have enough reasons to feel optimistic, given the state of affairs in the Congress party. With the Congress on the decline and the Opposition in disarray, the BJP has no worries.

In Uttar Pradesh, due to the fragmented Opposition, it is advantage BJP in the upcoming state Assembly polls. Similar is the case in all the election-going states of

Punjab, Uttarakhand, Manipur, Goa, Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh. In Punjab, the fight between two parties – Akali Dal (SAD) and Congress – now, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has also entered the electoral fray. In Uttarakhand, the BJP has an edge over the Congress, while in Goa Mamata is desperately trying to replace the Congress. With the Congress unable to set its own house in order in most of the states, it will not be far when Modi's dream of Congress-mukt Bharat will come true.

The Congress will have to mend its ways, if it wants to continue its hold in the political field. It is no longer the question of ideology, as even parties like TMC, SP, RLD, BSP, NCP and the Left, are all secular. Mamata, on the other hand, should realise that in her efforts to overtake Congress, she may miss the opportunity of a larger goal of becoming the Prime Minister. If only all the secular parties unite there is a chance of defeating the BJP.

The writer is a Delhi-based senior journalist and political commentator. Views expressed are personal.

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

Readers of Orissa POST are most welcome to contribute letters (200 words), articles and columns (between 750-1250 words). Contributors are requested to send their contact numbers and full postal address/email ID. They may also send in their valuable comments, opinion and suggestions, preferably by email, to: edit@orissapost.com

OrissaPOST
B-15, Rasulgari Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

Habibganj station

Sir, Recently, the historic Habibganj station in Bhopal was renamed Kamalapati station. In fact, Habib Ganj was named after Habib Mian, the Nawab of Bhopal. It was formerly known as Shahpur, but was expanded to the Railways and was renamed Habibganj. At that time, the name of Maharana Pratap Nagar (MP Nagar) was Ganj, then the two merged and renamed Habibganj. Habib Mian donated his land in 1979 for the expansion of the station. Its beauty has been enhanced due to the picturesque world-class railway station at Habibganj and its surrounding greenery and lakes, which have achieved ISO certification. Vijayadatta Sridhar, author and senior journalist of the book 'Choutha Padav', said that Habibganj was the name of the village. It got its name because greenery and lakes were used here to enhance its beauty. In Arabic, Habib means good and very beautiful. When the railway line was built, Budni, Barkheda, Obaidulaganj and Mandididip stations were built between Itarsi-Bhopal. According to a book, the Bhopal Nawab family also had a 122.3-km-long railway line on their land. Begum Shah Jahan donated a 70.80-km railway line from Hoshangabad (Narmada River Bridge) to Bhopal November 1, 1884. The Bhopal State Railway was then formed. Begum Shah Jahan also donated ₹50 lakh and also donated land for the 51 km railway line between Bhopal Ujjain January 1, 1891. Now the government is handing over the money-making stations to the capitalists in the name of development. Its benefits are only for the rich people, the poor will stay away from this development.

Asit Mohanty, JAJPUR

Social media addiction

Sir, These days most of the youngsters spend much time on social media due to which they are becoming victims of social media addiction. This affects their daily routine and studies. The excessive use of social media not only causes unhappiness and dissatisfaction with life in users, but also increases the risk of mental health issues such as anxiety and depression. Now it has become an issue of concern for the students because it's erecting a wall for them from achieving their goals. Deleting our social media is not a solution but we have to keep control on ourselves. We should remove our smartphones from our morning routine, turn off notification, and keep our phones away as much as you can. By following all these points we can stop our addiction of social media

Mitesh Rao, UJJAIN

national

of the day quote

Constitutional provisions provide the state to develop educational and economic interests of the SCs and STs, but a lot remains to be done by the country and society

To oppose and defeat the BJP, a broad-based understanding and cooperation among secular, progressive and democratic political parties on people's issues is the need of hour. That will connect with people's expectation

First, there is no government job, if some opportunity comes then the paper gets leaked, if you give the exam there are no results for years, then it gets canceled in some scam. 1.25 crore youths are waiting for Railway Group D exams for two years. Same is with the Army recruitment. How long should the youth of India have to be patient?

SHORT TAKES

Module busted

Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir Police in North Kashmir's Baramulla district busted a terrorist module of proscribed terror outfit Lashkar-e-Taiba -- The Resistance Front (LeT-TRF) by arresting three terrorist associates involved in Palhallan Grenade attack, officials said Thursday. "Police along with 29RR and SSB 2nd Bn established a joint MVCP/naka at Wussan Pattan and intercepted three suspicious individuals who tried to flee from the spot after watching the joint naka party," police said.

8 fishermen missing

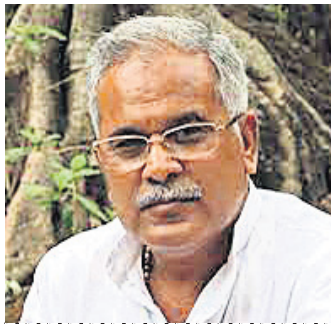
Gandhinagar: The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) Thursday received information about an incident of drowning of fishing boats and missing fishermen off Gir-Somnath coast of Saurashtra region of Gujarat owing to unfavourable strong winds and turbulent seas. At least 8 to 10 fishermen are believed to be missing. The Coast Guard has launched a search operation in the area.

Narrow escape

Chennai: Tamil Nadu Health Secretary J. Radhakrishnan escaped unhurt when the vehicle in which he was travelling in hit a barricade and then a median near the Madurai airport Thursday. The front part of the vehicle was totally damaged. Radhakrishnan was in the convoy of state Health Minister Ma Subramanian, who had visited the Madurai international airport for inspection of Covid-19 screening facilities for the Omicron variant. The convoy of the minister was then headed to the Rajaji Government Medical College hospital when the accident took place.

Mamata to visit Goa

Panaji: Trinamool Congress (TMC) chief Mamata Banerjee is scheduled to visit Goa on December 13, a senior party functionary said Thursday. This would be her second visit to Goa in less than two months with Assembly elections in the state due early next year. The West Bengal chief minister had last visited the state in October last week. This time, the TMC supremo's nephew and party MP Abhishek Banerjee would accompany her, the party office-bearer said. The details regarding Banerjee's visit and her programme scheduled would be revealed later, he added. During her three-day visit to Goa in October, Banerjee had attended a number of events.



I think the root cause of the problem (Naxalism) has been either misunderstood or ignored earlier. After we took over, we realised that only guns and bullets cannot solve the problem

BHUPESH BAGHEL | CHHATTISGARH CM

MASK RULE ENFORCEMENT BACK IN TELANGANA

With the threat of new Covid variant Omicron looming large, authorities in Telangana have decided to once again strictly enforce the rule for mandatory wearing of masks in public places



Modi, Putin to discuss ways to boost ties

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 2: Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Russian President Vladimir Putin will review the state of bilateral ties and discuss ways to further strengthen the strategic partnership between the two countries at their summit talks on December 6, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said Thursday.

MEA spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said the 21st India-Russia summit in Delhi will offer an opportunity to the two leaders to exchange views on regional, multilateral and international issues of mutual interests.

It is expected that the two leaders will deliberate on the situation in Afghanistan as well as to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic among other issues. The Russian President is visiting India on December 6 for the summit.

Giving details of the engagements between the two sides on December 6, Bagchi said Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will hold a meeting with his Russian counterpart Sergey Shoygu India-Russia under the framework of the India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission on Military-Technical Cooperation.

Separately, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will hold talks with his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov. "We foresee a



MEA spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said the 21st India-Russia summit in Delhi will offer an opportunity to the two leaders to exchange views on regional, multilateral and international issues of mutual interests

IT IS EXPECTED THAT THE TWO LEADERS WILL DELIBERATE ON THE SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN AS WELL AS TO DEAL WITH THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AMONG OTHER ISSUES. THE RUSSIAN PRESIDENT IS VISITING INDIA DECEMBER 6 FOR THE SUMMIT

very intensive engagement during the day that will culminate in the summit," the MEA spokesperson said.

Following the two meetings, the foreign and defence ministers of the two countries will hold the inaugural 2+2 ministerial dialogue that is expected to discuss bilateral, regional and international issues.

"In the afternoon, the 21st India-Russia annual summit will be held and we look forward to welcom-

ing President Putin for the summit," Bagchi said at a media briefing. He said the leaders will review the state and prospects of the bilateral relations and discuss ways to further strengthen the strategic partnership.

"The summit will offer an opportunity to exchange views on regional, multilateral and international issues of mutual interests," he said. "A joint statement is pro-

posed to be issued at the end of the summit which will encapsulate the discussions, understandings and agreements signed during and the run-up to the summit," Bagchi said.

He said Lavrov and Shoygu are expected to arrive in Delhi on December 5. India has the '2+2' ministerial format of dialogue with very few countries including the US, Japan and Australia.

The Modi-Putin summit is expected to produce specific outcomes in further expanding ties in areas of defence, trade and energy. It is learnt that the two sides are going to firm up a number of agreements in the areas of defence, trade and investment, and science and technology at the summit.

A framework for military-technical cooperation is set to be renewed for the next decade at the summit besides announcing a joint commission on technology and science. India and Russia have also reached the final phase of negotiation for a logistics support agreement and it is likely to be signed either during the two-plus-two talks or at the summit.

The pact will allow militaries of the two countries to use each other's bases for repair and replenishment of supplies, besides facilitating scaling up of overall defence cooperation. Russia has been a time-tested partner for India and the country has been a key pillar of New Delhi's foreign policy.

Pak turns down India's wheat transit proposal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Islamabad, Dec 2: Pakistan has turned down India's proposal to transport 50,000 metric tonnes of wheat as humanitarian assistance for Afghanistan either in Indian or Afghan trucks through the Wagah border crossing, according to a media report Thursday.

Pakistan last week formally informed India about its decision to allow the transportation of wheat and life saving drugs to neighbouring Afghanistan through its territory on an exceptional basis for humanitarian purposes.

Official sources here alleged that New Delhi was dragging its feet by suggesting unfeasible options for transportation of wheat to Afghanistan, the Express Tribune newspaper reported.

India said Thursday that discussions with Pakistan are going on to finalise the modalities for the transportation of its aid to Afghanistan through Pakistani soil and insisted that no conditionalities should be attached for sending the humanitarian assistance.

In New Delhi, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said that humanitarian assistance should not be subject to conditionalities.

It is learnt that the modalities for the transportation of the Indian aid are yet to be thrashed out as Islamabad has put certain conditions for providing the transit facility.



An exhibitor arranges products for display at the Punjab International Trade Expo (PITEX) 2021, in Amritsar. Traders from countries like Thailand, Egypt, Afghanistan, Turkey and Iran are taking part in the PITEX

Shah woos farmers, invokes Kairana 'exodus'

With the next Assembly elections just months away, the BJP leader praised the Yogi Adityanath government, saying it has ensured the rapid clearing of the backlog of payments to sugarcane farmers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Saharanpur, Dec 2: Union Home Minister Amit Shah Thursday accused the previous state governments of conspiring to sell off co-operative sugar mills and targeted them for filing "one-sided cases" during riots, alluding also to the "exodus" of Hindus from another western UP town some years back.

With the next Assembly elections just months away, the BJP leader praised the Yogi Adityanath government, saying it has ensured the rapid clearing of the backlog of

payments to sugarcane farmers.

Apart from Punjab and Haryana, western Uttar Pradesh - on which Shah is focusing his campaign - contributed the most to the protest over the recently repealed farm laws. Bhartiya Kisan Union leader Rakesh Tikait hails from this region.

Shah was addressing a rally here after laying the foundation stone for the Maa Shakumbhari Devi University. He also referred to the ongoing construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya, the enactment of a law against instant triple talaq and the abrogation of special sta-



tistics during his term as chief minister with those under Adityanath's BJP government. "From which spectacles does Akhilesh ji see," he asked, and also claimed there was a "mafia raj" under Yadav and criminals "felicited".

Without naming Shamli's Kairana town or elaborating on the details, the home minister said when he came to Saharanpur itself ahead of the 2017 polls, people asked him what the party intended to do about "palayan" (exodus, migration).

ZyCoV-D to be used in seven states initially



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 2: Zydus Cadila's COVID-19 vaccine ZyCoV-D will initially be used in seven states, including Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal, which have been recommended to identify the districts with a high number of beneficiaries who have not received a single dose of a Covid vaccine for its introduction.

Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan, who reviewed the status and progress of the "Har Ghar Dastak" campaign with the health secretaries and National Health Mission (NHM) directors of the states and Union territories through a video-conference on Thursday, advised the seven states to identify the districts with a high number of first dose left out for the introduction of ZyCoV-D, a statement issued by the health ministry said.

The seven states are Bihar, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

ZyCoV-D, which is the first COVID-19 vaccine to be cleared by India's drug regulator for those aged 12 years and above, will only be administered to adults in the seven states as of now, sources said.

The national training process for ZyCoV-D administration has been completed, the statement said. The seven states have been asked to plan sessions based on the PharmaJet injector and identify vaccinators to be trained for using it for vaccination, it added.

The cumulative number of COVID-19 vaccine doses administered in the country has crossed 125

The seven states are Bihar, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal

crore. A total of 79.13 crore (84.3 per cent) beneficiaries have received the first dose and 45.82 crore (49 per cent) have received the second dose of the vaccines, according to a provisional report.

Drug firm Zydus Cadila on November 8 said it had received an order to supply one crore doses of ZyCoV-D to the Indian government at Rs 265 per dose.

"Zydus Cadila has received an order to supply one crore doses of ZyCoV-D, the world's first Plasmid DNA Vaccine, to the Government of India at Rs 265 per dose and the needle-free applicator being offered at Rs 93 per dose, excluding GST," the pharma firm had said in a regulatory filing.

The vaccine will be administered using a needle-free applicator called "PharmaJet", as opposed to the traditional syringes.

A needle-free applicator ensures painless intradermal vaccine delivery, which also leads to a significant reduction in any kind of major side-effects.

ZyCoV-D is the first DNA plasmid vaccine in the world for human use, developed indigenously by the company against COVID-19, Zydus Cadila said.

The three doses of ZyCoV-D are to be administered 28 days apart. The vaccine was given emergency use authorisation (EUA) by the Indian drug regulator on August 20.

ARMY TO GET NEW COMBAT UNIFORM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 2: The Army is set to introduce a light and more climate-friendly combat uniform for its personnel from next year, people familiar with the matter said Thursday.

The new camouflage uniform will be based on a "digital disruptive" pattern and they are expected to be showcased at the Army Day parade on January 15, they said. It is learnt that the new combat uniform has been finalised after wide-ranging discussions and analysis of military uniforms of several countries, the people said. They said the new uniform will be much more durable as well as comfortable in both summers and winters.

TEA TO THE RESCUE

Kolkata police offer tea to tired drivers

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kolkata, Dec 2: Prompted by the observation that most of the accidents happen at the dead hour of night or early hour of the morning because of extreme tiredness of the drivers, the Kolkata Traffic Police has started offering hot tea to the men on the wheels.

The decision of the Kolkata police came only a few days after a truck carrying a dead body hit a stone-chip laden truck standing by the side of the road killing 18 people and injuring many more. Though initially it was suspected that the driver was drunk, the post-mortem report said that there was no alcohol in the stomach.

"As the driver died it is impossible to find out what really hap-



The decision of the Kolkata police came only a few days after a truck carrying a body hit a stone-chip laden truck standing by the side of the road killing 18 people and injuring many more

pened that night, but from our experience it can be said that there is every possibility that the driver fell asleep while driving. This occasionally happens with tired drivers driving on a highway. In most of the cases they drive the whole night and at the dead of the night in most of the cases they feel sleepy. Tiredness is their biggest enemy," a senior police officer said.

It has been also said by the police

that the drivers feel asleep because of extreme tiredness. It has been observed that in many cases the driver doesn't even get the time to sleep all through the day and as a result it leads to fatal accidents. The recent cases of accident of singer Kalikapradas or police officer Deboshree Chattopadhyay where both of them died - are glaring examples.

To enervise the tired hands, the Kolkata traffic police has decided

to offer tea to them. "Occasionally they have to stop because their papers need to be checked. They get some time. So, they can have tea in between. We have decided to offer them tea when we are checking their papers. This is not only a welcome gesture but this is important for the safety of the drivers and other people too," a senior police officer of the Kolkata Traffic Police said.

According to an estimate in the last three months there have been 32 accidents in and around Kolkata because of the driver falling asleep. Three persons died in these accidents. The number of accidents increases during the winter because of the fog. "We are trying to stand by the drivers so that these kinds of accidents can be avoided," the officer added.

OFFICE OF THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL, SUNDARGARH
No.6048 D/01.12.2021

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR SELECTION OF SHELTER MANAGEMENT AGENCY (SMA) FOR OPERATION AND MANAGEMENT OF SHELTER FOR URBAN HOMELESS UNDER DAY-NULM UNDER SUNDARGARH MUNICIPALITY

No.C-1453:- Sundargarh Municipality, Sundargarh invites "Request for Proposal (RFP) from the registered bodies / Agency of at least 5 years of Existence such as Homeless person's collectives, Youth and Women's community based groups, Universities and Institutions, Nehru Yuva Kendra's, Unorganized worker's trade unions, AGENCYS and CSOs registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860 and Trust Acts or other similar laws of the State Governments, Self Help Groups, ALF and committees recognized by the State Govt./ Urban Local Governments, Resident Welfare Associations and Public / Private Sector Companies or Associations for Operation and Management of Shelter for Urban Homeless in Sundargarh Municipality as delineated in the RFP document. For further details and any queries, Please refer to the RFP documents available in District Website of Sundargarh www.sundargarh.nic.in from 1st December 2021 and can be downloaded for reference. The RFP document supported by relevant details and proof of their eligibility will be submitted to Executive Officer, Sundargarh Municipality, Sundargarh. The last date of submission of proposals is 16th December 2021 till 4.00 P.M. by Speed Post / Hand in the address below.

Any change / correction / corrigendum in respect the above shall be placed on Sundargarh District website. All bidders are requested to go through the website before submission of proposal.

Sd./J- Executive Officer, Sundargarh Municipality
OIPR-13130/11/0046/2122

Maha Cong livid as Mamata writes UPA's epitaph

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, Dec 2: Relegated to the political pavement as West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee stormed Mumbai in her two-day-long high-profile trip which ended Thursday, the Maharashtra Congress unanimously slammed her for her 'RIP'-ping comments spelling doom for the UPA.

Banerjee met leaders of two of the three ruling allies - Nationalist Congress Party President Sharad Pawar and Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut and Tourism Minister Aditya Thackeray, besides civil society members, some industrialists, film personalities, but obviously she had no love lost for the state Congress.

The visiting leader's shocker came during her brief media interaction, when she virtually blurted out - "What UPA? There's no UPA now..." stunning the Congress and momentarily even the NCP supremo Pawar seemed dazed but kept his legendary cool.

An enraged Congress top brass hit back, though diplomatically - to avoid antagonising the Sena-NCP leaders or even remotely appearing siding with the BJP - and harked on the grand old party's contributions, the Gandhi's leadership while blaming Banerjee's "personal ambitions and ego" and painting the BJP as the real villain.

"The BJP is a threat to the Constitution and democracy.



Congress president Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi are constantly challenging the dictatorial attitude of the BJP," said state Congress president Nana Patole.

The Congress Legislature Party Leader Balasaheb Thorat dismissively said, "No individual party can fight the BJP if that party only thinks of its own political gains and personal ambitions" and the Congress remains the sole viable option before the country.

AICC Secretary Sanjay Dutt said,

"If there is one party which has been fighting fascist forces and standing up for the people of India, it's the Congress", and others are now posturing only to grab the 'chair' (power). "If any other party leader makes any baseless, sarcastic or mala fide comments about Rahul Gandhi, we will give a befitting reply and show them the mirror of their past stance and statements," hissed Dutt.

State PWD Minister Ashok Chavan hit back at Banerjee say-

Banerjee met leaders of two of the three ruling allies - Nationalist Congress Party President Sharad Pawar and Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut and Tourism Minister Aditya Thackeray, besides civil society members, some industrialists, film personalities, but obviously she had no love lost for the state Congress

ing the "Congress and its leadership needs no certification for its commitment to democracy and Constitution, or its tireless struggle against the BJP's policies".

"Since before Independence, Congress has been fighting for the commoners, the rights of the people... The (BJP) central government is using the 'divide-and-rule' policy on the opposition parties. In such a scenario, it becomes the responsibility of all non-BJP parties not to indulge in politics that supports this policy of the Centre," said Chavan sharply.

Patole pointed out how Rahul Gandhi has stood firm against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP, on the land acquisition law and the three black agriculture laws, the BJP's divisive policies, inflation, unemployment, etc.

"The country is more important than personal ambitions or egos... A political party restricted to one state cannot provide an alternative to the BJP. Given the gravity of the situation, all like-minded parties must come together in the national interest," urge Patole, adding only Congress is the viable option to the BJP.

Thorat cautioned that criticising Rahul Gandhi would only help the BJP which he has fearlessly challenged, plus the Congress and the entire Gandhi family has borne the oppression of the BJP, but they were not cowed down.

Some political commentators have claimed that despite the All India Trinamool Congress (AITC) venturing into uncharted territories where it is barely known or has any base; ultimately they will need Congress support to form the government as it happened during the tenures of the former Prime Ministers HD Deve Gowda or IK Gujral.

Besides Congress, even the Opposition BJP leaders attacked Didi, questioning her 'private' meeting with Shiv Sena leaders and asked whether Maharashtra would go the West Bengal way.

Ex-Mumbai police chief Param Bir Singh suspended

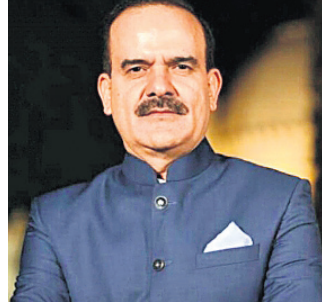
AGENCIES

Mumbai, Dec 2: In a significant decision, the Maharashtra government has suspended former Mumbai Police Commissioner and current Commandant-General, State Home Guards, Param Bir Singh, it was announced Thursday evening.

The suspension of Singh, an IPS 1988 batch officer and declared a 'Proclaimed Offender' by a Mumbai court last month - follows a probe report submitted by Additional Chief Secretary Debashish Chakravarti to the state government. Among other things, the report had recommended action against Singh for defying the All India Civil Service Rules, even as he became "untraceable" for nearly six months and resurfaced a week ago (last Thursday) in Mumbai.

Singh is facing several cases of extortion and corruption with cases lodged in Mumbai and Thane, bailable and non-bailable arrest warrants, plus the government-appointed retired Justice KU Chandiwal Commission of Enquiry.

Meanwhile, a magistrate court here Thursday cancelled its proclamation order against Singh in an



extortion case registered against him in suburban Goregaon.

Additional chief metropolitan magistrate SB Bhajipale had November 17 issued the proclamation order declaring former Singh as an absconder. However, after Singh appeared before the court last week, his lawyer moved an application seeking cancellation of the proclamation order.

Under Section 82 of the CrPC (Code of Criminal Procedure), a court can publish a proclamation requiring the accused to appear if the warrant issued against him cannot be executed.

Further, as per Section 83 of the CrPC, after issuing such a proclamation, the court may also order attachment of the proclaimed offender's properties.

Naga peace agreement not far: Guv

THE CENTRE AND THE STATE GOVERNMENT ARE WORKING TOGETHER TO BRING LASTING PEACE TO THE LAND, THE GOVERNOR SAID



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kohima, Dec 2: Nagaland Governor Prof Jagdish Mukhi has said that the signing of the much-awaited "peace agreement" on the Naga political issue between the Centre and the Naga negotiators is not very far.

"The Centre and the state government are working together to bring lasting peace to the land. The day is not very far for signing the much-awaited peace agreement with Naga rebel groups," said Mukhi while addressing the inaugural function of the 10-day

long Hornbill Festival of Nagaland at Kisama here.

"We as beneficiaries should make up our minds and create a conducive atmosphere for welcoming the new dawn of a peaceful and progressive Nagaland," he said.

The Governor also greeted the people of the state on the occasion of 59th Statehood Day being celebrated Wednesday. He paid his homage to those who toiled hard for the formation of the state.

Nagaland is bestowed with rich biodiversity both flora and fauna, which needs to be harnessed for the development of the state, he said.

"Eco-tourism has huge potential for the socio-economic growth of our society. It can address the unemployment issue to a considerable extent," Mukhi said.

The Centre under Prime Minister Narendra Modi is committed to ensure development of the north eastern region, he added.

The Centre had entered into dialogue with NSCN(IM) since 1997 and signed the Framework Agreement in August 2015. It is holding parallel talks with the working committee of the Naga National Police Groups (NNPGs) since 2017 and had inked the agreed position in November same year.

Talks were said to have concluded in October 2019 but there is solution yet to the persistent NSCN(IM) demand for a separate flag and constitution for the Nagas.

The Central government and the NSCN have been holding peace conferences to settle the decades-long Naga political dispute since the year 1997. The framework agreement (FA) was signed in the year 2015 and discussions were expected to have ended in the month of October 2019.



A thick layer of haze over city skyline on a cold winter day in Mumbai, Thursday

PFI PHORO

3,300 people died of AIDS in Mizoram since 1990

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Aizawl, Dec 2: Around 3,300 people have died of complications caused by Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) in Mizoram since the deadly virus was first detected in the state in 1990, a senior health department official said Wednesday.

Speaking on the occasion of World AIDS day, state Health Secretary R Lalramghaka said that a total of 25,080 people have been infected with HIV since 1990.

Of them, 3,294 people have succumbed to the disease, he said. The World AIDS Day event was graced by Health Minister Dr R Lalhangliana and a run was organised in Aizawl to mark the occasion.

With over 2.30 per cent of its total 10.91 lakh population (2011 census) being infected, Mizoram currently has the dubious distinction of being the highest AIDS prevalent state in the country, followed by Nagaland, which has 1.45 per cent of its population afflicted with the deadly disease, according to National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO).

More than 78 per cent of HIV-positive cases in the state were sexually transmitted, while about 20 per cent cases were transmitted through sharing needles by intravenous drug users.

It has been estimated that about 1.19 per 1,000 people are diagnosed with HIV positive in Mizoram, ac-



With over 2.30 per cent of its total 10.91 lakh population being infected, Mizoram currently is the highest AIDS prevalent state in the country

cording to Mizoram State AIDS Control Society (MSACS). The AIDS incident rate was highest among youths in the age group of 25-34, followed by people in the age group of 35-49 at 26.49 per cent, it said.

Tech fiesta from Dec 6 for students, IT enthusiasts

THE EVENT, BACKED BY INDUSTRY LEADERS INCLUDING, INCLUDES FREE ONLINE TRAINING SESSIONS TILL DEC 20 TO HELP INDIVIDUALS BRUSH UP ON THEIR IT SKILLS

AGENCIES

Pune, Dec 2: Both 2020 and 2021 have been incredibly challenging for IT companies and learners as the Covid-19 pandemic prevented them from applying their knowledge and skills to real-world situations. To address this, The Data Tech Labs (TDTL) in Pune is launching Techknow Fiesta 2021, an event that promises to bring the zing back for all tech enthusiasts with multiple opportunities to showcase their technical prowess and quick-thinking.

The fiesta, with its motto 'Skill up to Scale up', is intended for students and corporates. All training sessions would be held online from December 6-20 and will be free of cost. The event is backed by industry leaders like Infosys and Amazon Web Services (AWS) and it will also assist organisations with employee engagement, retention and skilling.

Dr Amit Andre, Founder and CEO of TDTL, said, "At The Data Tech Labs, having served 87 countries, we understand the problem statement of major corporates when it comes to resources where today students learn emerging technologies from various sources at zero cost to few thousands but still lack skills which can be utilised by corporates. The main reason for this is the focus on 'what', rather than



'how' or 'why'. With the help of case studies, projects, internships and sponsorship for startups, we want to extend this platform to all students in rural as well as urban regions of India. With an aim to scale up five lakh students in the first phase, we extend 200+ nuggets of learning."

"Students will get industry-ready recognition in the form of certification, experience and media exposure to scale up their portfolio. It will also extend endless opportunities to diversify skill sets based on different emerging skills in the industry. Global leaders like Amazon Web Services (AWS) are

also extending scholarships and prizes up to \$10,000 as part of the exercise," Dr Amit added.

College and university students will also explore hands-on applications with emerging technologies, get exclusive internship opportunities, chances to showcase their participation with certificates, perform for incubating new entrepreneurs with ideas and get up to 70 per cent discount on learning and certification on emerging industry needs.

The fiesta will also provide an opportunity to touch base with a few key topics like cloud technology essentials including

hands-on lab exercise, implementing AI/ML using cloud services with hands-on lab access, data analytics for HR/L&D and organisation-wide cloud skills analysis to identify and forecast gaps with ROI.

On the other side, companies and working professionals will benefit by gaining an increase in employee engagement and retention, exclusive employee skilling initiatives, exclusive learning need analysis by industry leaders on approval and access to knowledge as a service platform with a platter of learning content across domains.

Maoists suspend ideologue Gandhi

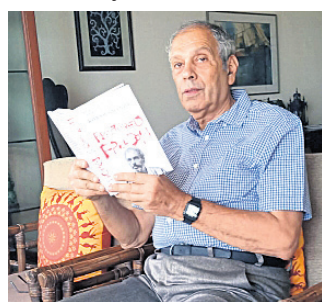
INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Nagpur, Dec 2: The Central leadership of the Communist Party of India (Maoist) has suspended its top cadre Kobad Gandhi for anti-revolutionary policy. Gandhi, 74, has spent nearly four decades in Maoist activities including 10 years in prison across six Maoist affected states.

In a statement issued on Wednesday night, CPI(Maoist) said it took action against Gandhi following his book 'The Fractured Freedom' in which he expressed his support to the government.

His book is a prison memoir, which is against the ideologies of Carl Marx, Lenin and Mao.

The book was published after he came out of jail in October 2019. First edition of the book was published in March this year. The CPI (Maoist) in its statement accused Gandhi of abandoning the dialectical and historical materialism principles of Marxism. Gandhi was also accused of not contacting the party leadership after his release from jail.



national

of the day quote

Our special relationship with the Afghan people and UNSC Resolution 2593 would continue to guide India's approach to Afghanistan



V MURALEEDHARAN | MINISTER OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

JD(S) is a party of family politics, now the eighth member from the family (Deve Gowda family) has entered politics.



Remaining members of the family will also become (elected representatives). Where they can win, they field family members. In places they will lose, they field others. This is family politics

SIDDARAMAIAH | SENIOR CONGRESS LEADER

The new super mutant Covid variant Omicron appears to be very transmissible



DR GAGANDEEP KANG | TOP MICROBIOLOGIST AND VIROLOGIST

SHORT TAKES

27 school students test Covid positive

Chennai: As many as 27 school students of a private school in Dharapuram in Tamil Nadu's Tiruppur district have tested Covid-19 positive, the Tamil Nadu Health Department said Thursday. State Health Department officials said that 374 swab samples were tested and 27 tested positive. The school decided to conduct swab tests on students after two Class 10 students from the school were admitted in hospital with Covid-like symptoms and subsequently, were admitted to Government hospital, Dharapuram with Covid-19.

Naxal couple surrenders

Dantewada: A Maoist couple who were allegedly involved in two major attacks on security forces in the last two years surrendered in Dantewada district of Chhattisgarh Thursday, a police official said. Pojja alias Sanju Madavi (24) and his wife Lakkhe alias Tulsi Madavi (22), who carried a reward of Rs 5 lakh each on their heads, turned themselves in before police here, said district Superintendent of Police Dr Abhishek Pallava. The couple cited disillusionment with the "hollow" and "inhuman" Maoist ideology as the reason for surrender, he said.

16 J'khand migrant workers rescued

Ranchi: As many as 16 migrant workers of Jharkhand who were allegedly held captive at an island in Andhra Pradesh for fish farming have been rescued, an official release here said Thursday. The workers, shifted to the island November 15, were apparently forced by a contractor to work for 22 hours a day and abused and beaten up on occasions for refusing to work, it said.

4 hacked to death

Kolkata: In a shocking incident, four members of a family were hacked to death allegedly by one of their relatives at Nandabazaar area in Singur in Hooghly district of West Bengal Thursday morning. According to the local people, four members of the Patel family - Dinesh Patel, 50, his wife Anusua, 45, his father Mavji, 80, and his son Vabik, 23 were found lying in a pool of blood in front of their house. The local people with the help of police sent the four to the local hospital where Dinesh and wife were declared dead. Mavji and Vabik were sent to SSKM in a very critical condition where they died in the afternoon.



This time our (AAP) government will be formed in Punjab and this black person (Kejriwal) will fulfill all his promises

ARVIND KEJRIWAL | DELHI CHIEF MINISTER

BOOSTING TIES

India and the European Union have vowed to scale up cooperation in areas of clean energy with a focus on offshore wind, green hydrogen and solar power besides deciding to encourage investments in the field of energy efficiency



Oppn accuses govt of mishandling 2nd wave

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 2: The Opposition Thursday hit out at the government over Covid-19 management, accusing it of mishandling the second wave and demanded that international flights be stopped in view of the emerging scenario due to the new strain of coronavirus. Participating in a discussion on the Covid pandemic in Lok Sabha, the Opposition demanded that the government should inform the House about the roadmap for vaccination and booster dose and should also clarify as how many actual deaths have taken place due to Covid-19, even as the government hailed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's steps to combat the pandemic.

Initiating the debate, Shiv Sena leader Vinayak Raut lamented that Parliament was discussing the issue 21 months after the outbreak of the disease and at a time when cases were on the decline. Referring to the Omicron variant of the virus, he demanded close co-ordination among state governments and the Centre.

On Covid-19 vaccination, Raut accused the Centre of allocating vaccine doses to BJP-ruled states in excess and at the cost of non-BJP ruled states.

BJP's Jagdambika Pal said both Opposition and the Treasury benches sharing views on Covid was a step that reflected "strengthening of democracy". He hailed the prime minister's resolve to build an 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' following the Covid outbreak.

Pal dismissed Opposition criticism that BJP-ruled states were



The Prime Minister's responsibility is for the entire 130 crore population. It should not be so that you look at Maharashtra with a sly glance, help Gujarat in good measure and make maximum allocations to Uttar Pradesh because it is going to polls. Allocations should be made on the basis of the population

VINAYAK RAUT | SHIV SENA LEADER

favoured in battling Covid and said there was no discrimination in fighting the pandemic.

Gaurav Gogoi of the Congress charged the government of ignoring various warnings leading to shortage of bed, oxygen and

India will have 9 N-reactors by '24

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 2: The nation will have nine nuclear reactors by 2024 and a new nuclear project, the first in northern India, will come up 150 kms away from Delhi in Gorakhpur of Haryana, the government informed the Rajya Sabha.

"We are going to have a nuclear project, the first of its kind, in North India just about 150 kms from here in a small township called Gorakhpur in Haryana," said Jitendra Singh, also Minister of State in Prime Minister's Office. Asked whether the government is thinking of phasing out nuclear power plants on account of safety, the minister said, "We have not only increased the number but are also trying to make a pan-India generation project."

The minister said that nuclear energy will soon emerge as one of the most important sources of alternative or clean energy for the increasing power demand of the country. As far as the cost is concerned, though it varies from plant to plant and on the age of the plant, Singh said on an average it comes to about Rs 3 per unit and while the Kudankulam plant has about Rs 4 per unit and Tarapur has lesser cost. But in the times to come, with more plants the cost would reduce, he said.

Singh said it was during the tenure of this government that a bulk approval of 10 indigenous reactors was done in a single cabinet decision, which is a record in itself and has never happened in the history of independent India. In order to promote the setting up of new projects and to overcome the financial constraints that

By 2024 you will have nine nuclear reactors plus 12 new additional ones which were approved during the Covid times with a capacity of 9000 MW. Five new sites are also being identified, in different parts of the country

JITENDRA SINGH | UNION MINISTER

are faced in such situations, the prime minister took an out-of-box decision of allowing the atomic energy department to enter into joint ventures, which was never happening before, and the insurance pool has also been increased, Singh told the upper house.

On the expansion of Kudankulam nuclear plant, the Minister also said that "hopefully in 2021, we plan to start the construction of unit 5 and unit 6 as well." Meanwhile, India will not be sending back the spent fuel generated at the nuclear power plants located in Tamil Nadu's Kudankulam as it considers it as a material of resource, Jitendra Singh has said. He also said there is a need to have a deep underground geological disposal facility for spent nuclear fuel in the near future.

Singh, in a written reply in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday to a question raised by DMK's TR. Baalu, said the India-Russia Inter-Governmental Agreement of 2010 facilitates storage and reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel generated at Kudankulam Nuclear Power Project (KNPP).

1,622 complaints received against judiciary in last 5 years: Centre

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 2: Over 1,600 complaints were received in the Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS) on the functioning of the judiciary, including judicial corruption, during the last five years, the Rajya Sabha was informed Thursday.



These 1,622 complaints were forwarded to the Chief Justice of India or concerned chief justices of the respective high courts as per the established "in-house mechanism", Law Minister Kiren Rijiju said in a written reply.

Accountability in higher judiciary is maintained through "in-house mechanism", he said.

The Supreme Court, in its full court meeting May 7, 1997, adopted two resolutions - "The Restatement of Values of Judicial Life" which lays down certain judicial standards and principles to be observed and followed by the judges of the Supreme Court and high courts, and "in-house procedure" for taking suitable remedial measure against judges who do not follow the universally accepted values of judicial life, including those included in the Restatement of Values of Judicial Life, he noted.

SC's tough warning over Delhi pollution

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 2: The Supreme Court Thursday minced no words to slam the Centre and state governments over the severe air pollution in the national capital and expressed concern that nothing was happening on the ground to improve the air quality.

The top court questioned the utility of having a commission for air quality management, if it ends up having on board people from different departments and seems like having no power to enforce decision, and gave 24 hours to the government to come up with concrete ways to curb air pollution.

A bench headed by Chief Justice NV Ramana and comprising Justices DY Chandrachud and Surya Kant said the emergency situation needs emergency measures. The Chief Justice told Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, representing the Centre, "You have to work with creativity...if things are not working."

In connection with measures to curb air pollution, the Chief Justice added, "We have to do something extraordinary...we cannot enforce or induce creativity in your bureaucracy, you have to come up with some steps." The bench asked Mehta, "what is the Commission for

Schools closed till further orders

The Delhi government Thursday announced the closure of all schools in the national capital till further orders because of an increase in the air pollution levels. However, board exams will continue as scheduled and teaching-learning activities will be conducted online, it said. The decision came hours after the Supreme Court pulled up the Delhi government for resuming physical classes in schools despite an increase in the air pollution levels in the city.

Air Quality Management doing and pointed out that the judges went through the names and designation of people in the commission.

Justice Chandrachud said: "Looks like the problem is that this commission has no power of enforcement." During the hearing, the bench queried, "Despite our orders, pollution level is only going up. Where is it coming from?"

The top court made it crystal clear that it needs to take action within 24 hours to curb air pollution in the capital.

BREATHTAKING STUNTS



Indian Navy personnel display their skills during Navy Week 2021, at the Gateway of India in Mumbai

PTI PHOTO

Meta to expand FB Protect programme to India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 2: Meta (formerly Facebook) Thursday said it is expanding its Facebook Protect security programme for users like journalists and government officials, who are likely to be highly targeted by malicious hackers.

The programme, which was first tested in the US in 2018 and expanded during the US 2020 elections, is now being rolled out to nearly 50 countries - including India - by the end of the year.

Users who fall within these groups will soon start seeing a prompt from Facebook asking them to turn on the 'Facebook Protect' option. Designed to protect accounts against cyberattacks, the pro-

grammmandates that the user turns on the two-factor authentication (2FA) for their accounts. The company, as part of its efforts to enhance security for users, is also making it easier for these groups of people to set up 2FA.

The programme will be expanded to India by the end of the year. As part of our ongoing im-

provements to security, we're expanding Facebook Protect, a programme designed for people that are likely to be highly targeted by malicious hackers, including human rights defenders, journalists, and government officials.

No action is required unless you're prompted to enroll, Meta Head of Security Policy Nathaniel Gleicher said.

Urban clusters learnt nothing from Bhopal gas tragedy

THIRTY-SEVEN YEARS AND SOME THREE GENERATIONS LATER, THE DARKNESS OF THAT NIGHT WHEN 40 TONNES OF LETHAL METHYL ISOCYANATE LEAKED OUT OF THE UNION CARBIDE PLANT HANGS LIKE AN IMPENETRABLE CLOUD OVER THE LIVES OF UNTOLD THOUSANDS

AGENCIES

Agra, Dec 2: "Callous negligence on the part of the regulating agencies and citizens in emerging urban clusters of India is the primary cause of man-made disasters."

This was the consensus of a meeting of green activists and environmentalists on the eve of the Bhopal Gas Tragedy day.

Several speakers recalling the grim Bhopal tragedy of 1984, criticised the general attitude of laxity and carelessness that had become part of our national character.

Green activist Dr Devashish Bhattacharya said: "There is a Bhopal in every locality, in the form of illegal godowns, factories,

workshops, choked sewer lines emitting toxic gases, cold storages, oil mills with steam boilers. Government agencies entrusted with the task of regular monitoring and inspecting show no urgency or seriousness, with the result there is a major fire outbreak almost every month in Agra in some residential area or the other."

The Petha industry, the shoe factories, and hundreds of illegal manufacturing units in colonies not only add to the pollution level but pose a hazard to the safety of life, Bhattacharya added.

River Connect Campaign member Jugal Kishor said the city's traffic system itself was so chaotic and accident-prone leading to fre-



quent loss of life and property on roads. This was because no one bothered about following rules and

restrictions. Senior citizen Sudhir Gupta told IANS "the attitude of carelessness begins right from

home, from kitchen and bathrooms. People are neither careful about gas cylinder pipelines nor about electrical fittings which often lead to short-circuiting." Right now the whole city has been dug up and frenzied construction activity is on in the city.

The builders and colonizers who have used every vacant plot of land in the city, have not cared to connect to sewer lines. The consensus was to sensitise people towards health hazards from carelessness. A sustained campaign to educate the younger people towards existing norms and standards to inculcate a sense of responsibility and concern for others was the need of the hour. Activists demanded that the

state pollution control board and other regulatory bodies should ensure strict compliance with safety norms in the industries, as the number of accidents due to negligence and lack of mechanisms to monitor critical types of equipment like boilers, was on the rise.

So many deaths have occurred due to failure to follow the rules books. Cases of gas leaks from cold storages, boiler blasts, hazardous effluents being discharged in community water resources without treatment, gutter cleaning mishaps, etc., have resulted in the loss of life and property but the official agencies have not shown a sense of urgency in dealing with the problems.

international

of the day quote

We have concerns about the military capabilities that the PRC continues to pursue, and the pursuit of those capabilities increases tensions in the region



LOYD AUSTIN | DEFENSE SECRETARY, US

May God make it easy, not difficult. My God, help bring things to a beneficial conclusion. Give us truth in our work, make us successful



NUREDDIN NEBATI | TREASURY AND FINANCE MINISTER, TURKEY

The climate crisis is hitting the world's most vulnerable people first and worst. Protracted conflicts grind on, and instability has worsened in several parts of the world, notably Ethiopia, Myanmar and Afghanistan



MARTIN GRIFFITHS | HEAD OF OCHA

SHORT TAKES

Russian missiles near Pacific Islands

Moscow: The Russian military has deployed coastal defense missile systems near Pacific Islands also claimed by Japan, a move intended to underline Moscow's firm stance in the dispute. The Bastion systems were moved to Matua, a deserted volcanic island in the middle of the Kuril Islands chain. Japan claims four southernmost islands. Russia's Defense Ministry posted a video Thursday showing massive missile carriers moving ashore from amphibious landing vessels and driving along the coast of the volcanic island to take firing positions as part of drills.

Erdogan replaces Finance Minister

Ankara: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan appointed a new treasury and finance minister early Thursday after Lutfi Elvan stepped down from the post as the currency has been tumbling to record lows. Erdogan named Nureddin Nebati, who was deputy minister, to the post, according to an announcement published in the Official Gazette. It said Elvan asked to be "pardoned from the job" and that his request was accepted.

China: Boeing 737 Max to fly again

Beijing: China's aviation regulator cleared the Boeing 737 Max Thursday to return to flying with technical upgrades more than two years after the plane was grounded worldwide following two fatal crashes. China is the last major market where the Boeing 737 Max was awaiting approval after the United States allowed flights to resume in December 2020 and European Union regulators gave permission in January. Brazil and Canada also have given approval.

10 oil workers killed in attack

Damascus: Ten people were killed and one person was injured in an attack on a bus carrying workers in an oil field in Syria's government-held areas, Syria's state news agency reported Thursday. No details were offered of the nature of the attack or who was behind it. The news agency SANA called it a "terrorist attack" and said the workers were employees of the government-controlled Kharata oil field in Deir el-Zour province. Islamic State militants have been active in the desert area in east and central Syria despite losing territorial control in the country since 2019.



The ECI provides the fountain of knowledge, understanding, and experience for all of us as electoral management bodies that are serving throughout the world

GLEN MASHANINI | CHAIRPERSON OF IEC, SOUTH AFRICA

JAPAN RETRACTS NEW FLIGHT BOOKINGS BAN

Japan says it has retracted a ban on new incoming international flight bookings to defend against the new variant of the coronavirus after receiving criticisms from inside and outside the country that the ban was too strict



Laos-China railway to launch as debt to Beijing mounts

The line through lush tropical mountains from the Laotian capital, Vientiane, to Kunming is one of hundreds of projects under Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative

ASSOCIATED PRESS

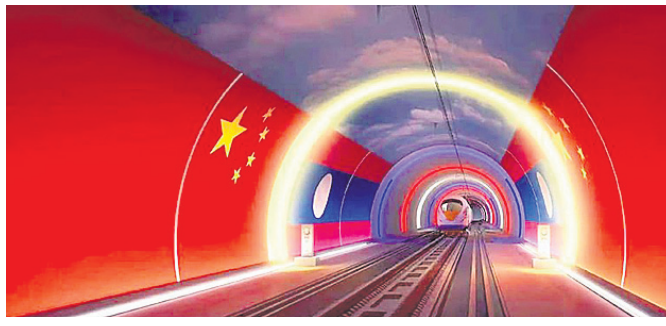
Beijing, Dec 2: Laos, a nation of 7 million people wedged between China, Vietnam and Thailand, is opening a \$5.9 billion Chinese-built railway that links China's poor

southwest to foreign markets but piles on potentially risky debt.

The line through lush tropical mountains from the Laotian capital, Vientiane, to Kunming is one of hundreds of projects under Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative to expand trade by building ports, railways and other facilities across Asia, Africa and the Pacific.

The 1,035-kilometer (642-mile) line opens this week to cargo but no regular passengers due to anti-pandemic travel curbs.

Poor countries welcome China's initiative. But the projects are financed by loans from Chinese state-owned banks that must be repaid.



Some borrowers complain Chinese-built projects are too expensive and leave too much debt.

The Kunming-Vientiane railway is a link in a possible future network

to connect China with Thailand, Vietnam, Myanmar, Malaysia and Singapore. That would give southern China more access to ports and export markets.

'Omicron may soon cause over half cases in Europe'

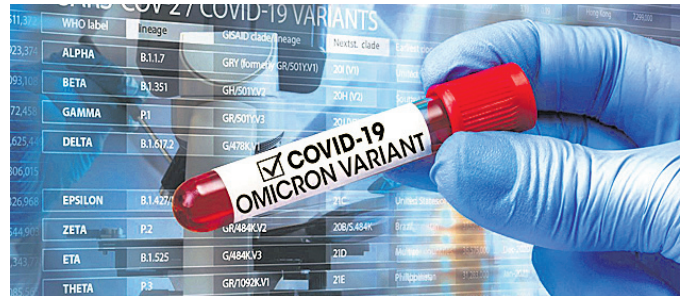
REUTERS

Brussels, Dec 2: The European Union's public health agency said Thursday that the Omicron variant could be responsible for more than half of all COVID-19 infections in Europe within a few months.

The estimate could lend weight to preliminary information about the very high transmissibility of the Omicron variant, above that of the Delta variant, which before Omicron was considered the most contagious of the main coronavirus strains.

Based on mathematical modeling conducted by ECDC, there are indications that Omicron could cause over half of all SARS-CoV-2 infections in the EU/EEA within the next few months, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control said in a statement.

There is no conclusive evidence about Omicron's transmissibility so



far but the World Health Organisation's lead person on COVID-19, Maria van Kerkhove, said Wednesday the agency expected to have data on this within days.

Europe has so far recorded a few dozens of infections with the Omicron variant, which was first detected in southern Africa last month. The European Union and European Economic Area (EEA) include the 27 EU member states plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

Earlier Thursday, the French

government's top scientific adviser Jean-Francois Delfraissy said that Omicron could take Delta's place already by the end of January.

Norway reports large outbreak

Copenhagen: At least 50 people in and around Norway's capital have been infected with the omicron coronavirus variant and the cases are connected to a Norwegian company's Christmas party in an Oslo restaurant, officials said Thursday. "More cases are expected. Effective tracing is being done to limit transmission routes and prevent major outbreaks," the Oslo Municipality said in a statement. The government agency said that there was "a high vaccination coverage" in the group, adding that overall "more than 50 cases" have been recorded in Norway.

Biden to launch winter booster campaign

Washington: President Joe Biden is set to kick off a more urgent campaign for Americans to get COVID-19 booster shots Thursday as he unveils his winter plans for combating the coronavirus and its omicron variant with enhanced availability of shots and vaccines but without major new restrictions. The plan includes a requirement for private insurers to cover the cost of at-home COVID-19 tests and a tightening of testing requirements for people entering the US regardless of their vaccination status. But as some other nations close their borders or reimpose lockdowns, officials said Biden was not moving to impose additional restrictions beyond his recommendation that Americans wear masks indoors in public settings.

Court backs Meghan in dispute on privacy

ASSOCIATED PRESS

London, Dec 2: The Duchess of Sussex on Thursday won the latest stage in her long-running privacy lawsuit against a newspaper publisher over its publication of parts of a letter she wrote to her estranged father.

The Court of Appeal in London upheld a High Court ruling in February that publication of the letter that the former Meghan Markle wrote to her father Thomas Markle after she married Prince Harry in 2018 was unlawful and breached her privacy.

In a statement, Meghan, 40, said the ruling was "a victory not just for me, but for anyone who has ever felt scared to stand up for what's right."

BELARUS SLAPPED WITH COORDINATED SANCTIONS

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Brussels, Dec 2: The United States, European Union, Britain and Canada Thursday slapped simultaneous sanctions on dozens of officials, organisations and companies in Belarus, with the EU taking aim at those accused of taking part in a "hybrid attack" on the bloc using migrants.

The four have targeted Belarus since President Alexander Lukashenko won yet another term in office last year after elections that the West and other observers say were fraudulent, and over the security crackdown on peaceful protesters that followed.

The US State Department said the US Treasury has "identified

three aircraft as blocked property and designated 32 individuals and entities, including Belarusian state-owned enterprises, government officials, and other persons, who support the regime and facilitate its repression."

The EU, meanwhile, imposed travel bans and asset freezes on 17 more people, including senior border guard and military officials, government representatives and judges.

The measures also hit air carriers and travel groups accused by the EU of helping to bring migrants to Belarus with the aim of helping them cross into the 27-country bloc, chiefly through Poland, Lithuania and Latvia.

Israel calls on world powers to stop Iran N-talks immediately

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Jerusalem, Dec 2: Israel Thursday urged world powers to halt nuclear talks with Iran immediately, citing a UN watchdog's announcement that Tehran has started producing enriched uranium with more advanced centrifuges.

Iran is carrying out nuclear blackmail as a negotiating tactic, and this should be answered by the immediate halt to negotiations and the implementation of tough steps by the world powers, Prime Minister Naftali Bennett's office quoted him as saying in a call with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said Wednesday that Iran had started the process of enriching uranium to up to 20% purity with one cascade, or cluster, of 166 advanced IR-6 machines at its Fordow plant, dug into a mountain.

Iran and major powers are trying, in talks in Vienna, to revive a 2015 deal under which Tehran limited its nuclear programme in exchange for relief from US, EU and UN economic sanctions. The United States withdrew from the pact in 2018, during the administration of then-President Donald Trump, and Iran responded by violating the agreement's limits.



Iran and major powers are trying, in talks in Vienna, to revive a 2015 deal under which Tehran limited its nuclear programme in exchange for relief from US, EU and UN economic sanctions

An Israeli official said Bennett told Blinken of his objections to any lifting of sanctions against Iran, particularly under an interim deal, which would effectively mean the massive flow of funds to the Iranian regime.

Under the 2015 deal, no uranium enrichment is supposed to be carried out at Fordow at all. Until now Iran had been producing enriched uranium there with IR-1 machines and had enriched with some IR-6s without keeping the product.



An anti-abortion rights activist holds a baby doll during a protest outside the Supreme Court building, ahead of arguments in the Mississippi abortion rights case Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health, in Washington

Island turns into open-air lab for tech-savvy volcanologists

THEY ARE APPLYING CUTTING-EDGE TECHNOLOGIES TO SCRUTINIZE A RARE VOLCANIC ERUPTION FROM THE LAND, THE SEA, THE AIR AND EVEN SPACE

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Las Manchas, Dec 2: They come with eagle-eyed drones and high-precision instruments. Aided by satellites, they analyse gas emissions and the flows of molten rock. On the ground, they collect everything from the tiniest particles to "lava bombs" the size of watermelons that one of nature's most powerful forces hurl as incandescent projectiles.

Scientists from around the world are flocking to La Palma, one of Spain's Canary Islands in the Atlantic Ocean, to take advantage of a volcanic eruption happening just an hour's drive from an international airport and the safety of being able to work under the

escort of military brigades. They are applying cutting-edge technologies to scrutinize a rare volcanic eruption from the land, the sea, the air — and even space.

As in the two dozen other major live eruptions across the planet, from Hawaii to Indonesia, the ultimate goal on La Palma is to use a unique window of opportunity to better understand volcanic eruptions how they form, develop and, even more crucially for the islanders, how and when they end.

But despite recent technological and scientific leaps, the researchers can only do a lot of estimating of what happens in the underworld where magma is formed and melts any human-made equipment. The deepest that humans



have been able to drill into the planet's crust has been just over 12 kilometers (7.6 miles), a feat that Soviet scientists achieved in 1989.

"There has been a lot of progress in the last 30 or 40 years in the un-

derstanding of geological and evolutionary processes, but it's still difficult to know for sure what happens at 40 to 80 kilometers (25 to 50 miles) of depth, said Pedro Hernandez, an expert with the Canary Islands'

volcanology institute, Involcan. "We are probably beginning to know the stars better than what happens under our feet," he said.

Volcanic eruptions are a one or, at most, twice-in-a-generation event in the Canary Islands archipelago, which lies 100 kilometers (62 miles) northwest of Africa. Some of the Canary Islands are still growing due to magma accumulating underneath and, as is happening in La Palma, by forming lava peninsulas beyond the coastline.

The last eruption, a decade ago on the southern island of El Hierro, happened just off the coast, which made it more difficult for volcanologists trying to collect samples

"It's been mind-blowing, literally, to see this dynamism in ac-

tion," the geologist said. "We are learning so much about how volcanoes work." Still, trying to compare notes with previous eruptions involves delving into centuries-old records, some from a time when photography did not exist.

When magma started accumulating deep under La Palma's Cumbre Vieja range, scientists weren't able to predict the exact time of the eruption, but their assessments prompted authorities to begin the first evacuations just hours before it took place Sept 19.

Much of that is due to new technologies in volcanology everything from drones that allow scientists to peek into a volcanic cauldron to supercomputers that run prediction algorithms.

business

of the day quote

Delivering the thousandth Mercedes-Benz within a short span under the Retail of the Future platform strongly validates our vision of reimagining customer excellence while empowering the franchise partners financially with this new business model

MARTIN SCHWENK | MD & CEO, MERCEDES-BENZ INDIA

Biogas industry can help reduce yearly import bill by ₹1.1 lakh crore post commissioning of proposed government target of 5,000 biogas plants

AR SHUKLA | PRESIDENT, INDIAN BIOGAS ASSOCIATION

Cement demand saw a robust growth of over 20 per cent in the first half this fiscal, but should moderate to 3-5 per cent in the second half, primarily because of a high base effect, translating to 11-13 per cent growth for this fiscal

ISHA CHAUDHARY | RESEARCH DIRECTOR, CRISIL

SHORT TAKES

IFFCO number one cooperative in world

New Delhi: Fertiliser major IFFCO Thursday said it has been ranked number one cooperative among the top 300 cooperatives in the world. The ranking is based on the ratio of turnover over the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited (IFFCO) said in a statement. The ranking is as per the 2021 edition of the 10th Annual World Cooperative Monitor (WCM) report published by the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA).

L&T, ReNew tie up for green H2 projects

New Delhi: Indian engineering conglomerate Larsen & Toubro said Thursday it will jointly own and operate green hydrogen projects with Goldman Sachs-backed green energy producer ReNew Power. The partnership between L&T and the renewable energy company is the latest big-ticket entry into the green hydrogen production space in India, following announcements of ambitious plans by Mukesh Ambani and Gautam Adani, two of Asia's richest men.

Meta's revenue up by 16% in FY21

New Delhi: Meta's (formerly Facebook) total income in India grew 16 per cent YoY to about ₹1,485 crore in 2020-21, while its net profit dipped 6 per cent to ₹128 crore, as per regulatory documents. Its gross ad revenue saw a 41 per cent jump to ₹9,326 crore for the fiscal ended March 2021, as per a filing with the Registrar of Companies, showed. Meta's total income in India stood at about ₹1,277 crore, while its net profit was at ₹136 crore in FY20. A Meta spokesperson said India's dramatic shift to digital continues.

PhonePe's Health insurance at ₹999

New Delhi: PhonePe, India's leading digital payments company, launched its latest health insurance plan, Health@999 catering to young buyers, who are buying their first health insurance cover. It offers coverage for hospitalisation expenses including in-patient and ICU hospitalisation, day care procedures, ambulance charges, and Ayush treatment among others. The cashless hospital network for the plan stretches across 7600 hospitals in the country.



As on 26th November 2021, the total coal stocks available with 136 linkage-based power plants monitored on a daily basis in Central Electricity Authority (CEA) was 18.958 MT, which is sufficient to run these plants for an average of 9.5 days

RK SINGH | POWER MINISTER

JET IN TALKS FOR \$12BLN ORDER

Jet Airways is in talks with planemakers Boeing Co and Airbus SE for an order worth \$12 billion, Bloomberg/Quint reported Thursday. The airline's new owners, UAE-based businessman Murari Lal Jalan and UK investment firm Kalrock Capital, told Bloomberg that Jet could buy at least 100 narrow body aircraft



MARUTI, BENZ, AUDI TO HIKE PRICES FROM JAN

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 2: Car market leader Maruti Suzuki India along with luxury carmakers Mercedes-Benz and Audi Thursday said they will increase prices from January to offset rising input and feature enhancement costs.

While Maruti said the price rise planned for January 2022 will vary for different models, Mercedes-Benz India said its hike will be on select models by up to 2 per cent due to feature enhancement and rising input costs.

On the other hand, Audi said its price increase effective January 1, 2022 will be up to 3 per cent across its entire model range owing to rising input and operational costs.

The auto major has already hiked the vehicle prices three times this year -- by 1.4 per cent in January, 1.6 per cent in April and 1.9 per cent in September, taking the total quantum to 4.9 per cent.

Mercedes-Benz noted that in order to offset the costs for feature enhancements amidst rising inputs costs, it will upwardly revise the ex-showroom price of only se-



Maruti Suzuki has been forced to take price hikes, with the increase in prices of essential commodities like steel, aluminum, copper, plastic and precious metals over the last one year

SHASHANK SRIVASTAVA | SENIOR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MSI

lect models. The price revision ranging up to 2 per cent will be in effect from January 1, 2022, it added.

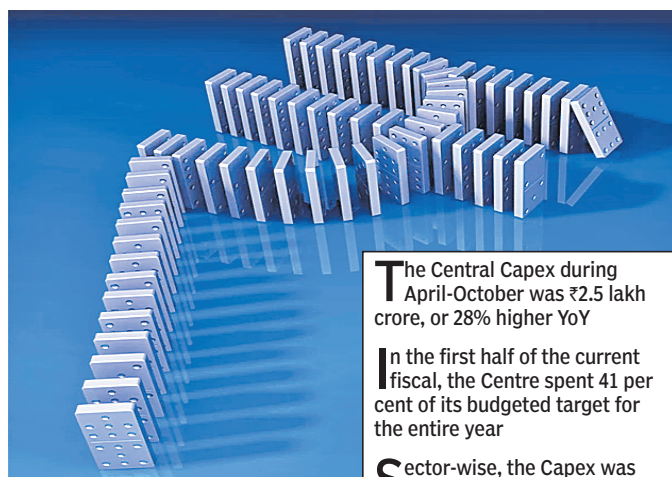
Similarly, Audi announced a price increase of up to 3 per cent across its entire model range, effective from January 1 next year, owing to a rise in input and operational costs.

"The new price range of our select vehicles will ensure the brand's premium price positioning thereby assuring sustainable growth both for the brand and our dealer partners, Audi India Head Balbir Singh Dhillion said in a statement.

GOVT SPENDING SEEN SOARING 12%

Capex inching above pre-pandemic levels

If the budgetary targets for Capex are met by both the Centre and states this fiscal, the pre-pandemic decadal trend for the overall Capex will be revisited, said Crisil



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

The Central Capex during April-October was ₹2.5 lakh crore, or 28% higher YoY

In the first half of the current fiscal, the Centre spent 41 per cent of its budgeted target for the entire year

Sector-wise, the Capex was higher over H1 of fiscals 2020 and 2021, in road transport and highways, railways, housing, telecommunication and health

Maharashtra, Odisha and Jharkhand lagged, having spent under 20% of the budgeted Capex in H1

Mumbai, Dec 2: Indicating durable recovery to the pre-pandemic levels, the public Capex cycle has turned the corner with the Central and states capital expenditure nearly crossing FY20 levels, growing faster than the gross domestic product rate, according to a report.

While the Central Capex has already crossed the pre-pandemic trend line, states too should do so if the budgetary targets are met, which implies that the pandemic did not cause a major permanent loss in the government Capex in terms of trend, said a Crisil report released Thursday.

Despite a tight fiscal position, the Central Capex grew 31 per cent over the last fiscal and if the trend is maintained, it is set to overshoot by 12 per cent pre-pandemic trend level, and for the states it expects them to meet 80-85 per cent of their Capex target, added Crisil.

The budget targets a 26 per cent increase over the revised estimates

of the last fiscal and if this is met, Central Capex could outpace the pre-pandemic decadal trend by 12 per cent. Put another way, Central Capex will have to grow 19 per cent in the second half year-on-year to achieve that.

Despite this, the Central Capex was 31 per cent higher than that of fiscal 2021, while the states saw a modest rise in fiscal 2020. It can be noted that the state Capex is typically 1.4 times higher than Central Capex, thereby playing the predominant role in infrastructure building.

On the other hand, the states spent 29 per cent of their targets (based on data available for 16 major states -- Andhra, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Haryana, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, MP, Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, and UP -- which account for 80 per cent of state Capex). In the first half (April-September), Capex rose 78 per cent for these 16 states. These states spent 29 per cent of their budget estimates in H1.

Studies show public Capex has a higher multiplier effect on economic output over revenue spending. For instance, a 2019 Reserve Bank report found that the Central Capex has a multiplier of 3.25 -- a ₹1 rise in Capex pushes output up by ₹3.25 and by states it pushes output by ₹2.

State logs 64% rise in GST collection in Nov



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 2: Odisha has recorded 64 per cent growth in GST collection in November as compared to the corresponding month of the last fiscal, officials said Thursday. The state has collected GST of ₹4,136 crore last month as against ₹2,528 crore collected in November 2020.

The growth of collection during November 2021 has remained highest amongst major states for the third consecutive month. It is also the highest ever gross collection of GST by the state since its implementation began, the office of GST Commissioner, Odisha said in a statement.

Progressive GST collection till November of the current financial year was ₹28,032.98 crore as against ₹17,229.26 crore collected till November of last fiscal, thereby registering a growth of 62.71 per cent, it said.

Similarly, the state has recorded a growth of 69.76 per cent in collection of Odisha GST (OGST) during November. The OGST collection during the month was ₹1,157.69 crore against a collection of ₹681.96 crore during November 2020.

Progressive collection of OGST

Progressive GST collection till November stood at ₹28,032.98 crore as against ₹17,229.26 crore collected till November of last fiscal

up to November of FY2021-22 was ₹7,977.60 crore while the state had collected ₹5,013.50 crore during the same period last financial year. The progressive OGST collection has recorded a growth of 59.12 per cent till November.

Similarly, there was a collection of ₹1,001.08 crore in Central GST, ₹1,223.24 crore in IGST & ₹753.77 crore in Cess during November 2021. There was a growth of 87.62 per cent in collection of CGST, 55.31 per cent in IGST and 43.26 per cent in Cess over November 2020.

The total collection of VAT (petrol & liquor) was ₹844.45 crore during November, 2021 whereas ₹601.65 crore was collected from those sources during November 2020.

This growth during November 2021 is a result of increase in collection from automobile, mining and manufacturing sectors, said an official.

Target of 40% power from non-fossil fuel sources achieved

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 2: India has achieved the target of 40 per cent of its installed electricity generation capacity being from non-fossil energy sources, an official statement said Thursday.

At COP21, as part of its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), India had committed to achieving 40 per cent of its installed electricity capacity from non-fossil energy sources by 2030.

The country has achieved this target in November 2021 itself, the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy said.



According to the statement, the country's installed renewable energy (RE) capacity stands at 150.05 GW, while its nuclear energy-based installed electricity capacity is 6.78 GW.

This brings the total non-fossil fuels based installed energy capacity to 156.83 GW -- which is 40.1 per cent of the total installed electricity capacity of 390.8 GW, in line with the Prime Minister's announcement at the recently concluded COP26 climate change conference.

The government is committed to achieving 500 GW of installed electricity capacity from non-fossil fuel sources by 2030, the statement added.

RBI initiates insolvency proceedings against RCL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 2: The RBI Thursday filed an application for initiation of Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP) against debt-ridden Reliance Capital at the Mumbai bench of the National Company Law Tribunal.

The Reserve Bank had November 29 superseded the board of Anil Ambani-promoted Reliance Capital Ltd (RCL) in view of payment defaults and serious governance issues. The central bank had also appointed Nageswar Rao Y (former executive director, Bank of Maharashtra) as the administrator of the company.

In a statement Thursday, the Reserve Bank said it has filed an application for initiation of CIRP against Reliance Capital Ltd under various sections of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) before the Mumbai bench of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT).

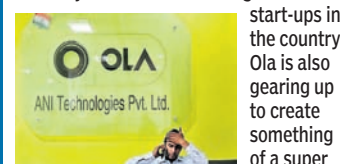
As the RBI has moved NCLT, an interim moratorium would be applicable on Reliance Capital.

The interim moratorium would also be on transferring, encumbering, alienating or disposing of by the corporate debtor any of its assets or any legal right or beneficial interest therein. As per the Financial Service Providers Insolvency Rules, an interim moratorium commences on and from the date of filing of the application till its admission or rejection.

This is the third large NBFC against which the central bank has initiated bankruptcy proceedings under the IBC recently. The other two were Srei Group NBFCs and Dewan Housing Finance Corporation (DHFL). In September, Reliance Capital in its annual general meeting (AGM) had informed shareholders that the company's consolidated debt was ₹40,000 crore.

Ola plans IPO in '22, readies 'super app'

MUMBAI: Indian ride-hailing company Ola plans to go public in the first half of 2022, Chief Executive Officer Bhavish Aggarwal said Thursday, undeterred by the recent volatility and lackluster listing of some



start-ups in the country. Ola is also gearing up to create something of a super app with plans to broaden its services beyond mobility to include personal finance and micro insurance, Aggarwal added. Indian companies have raised a staggering \$9.7 billion through initial public offerings (IPOs) in the first nine months of 2021. Ola has plans to raise up to \$1 billion through this IPO.

Now book your Uber ride via WhatsApp

New Delhi: Uber and WhatsApp Thursday announced a partnership that will allow people in the country to book a ride via WhatsApp -- a global-first initiative by the ride-hailing platform. With this integration, riders will no longer need to download or use the Uber app. Everything from registration, booking a ride and getting a trip receipt will be managed within the WhatsApp chat interface, a statement said. It is being rolled out on a pilot basis in the northern part of Lucknow first and will be expanded to other Indian cities soon.

Swiggy to infuse ₹5,250cr in Instamart

Bangalore: Online food delivery platform Swiggy Thursday announced to invest \$700 million (over ₹5,250 crore) in its express grocery delivery service Instamart that delivers groceries in 15-30 minutes -- at a crucial time when its closest rival Zomato discontinued its in-house grocery delivery services. Launched in Gurugram and Bengaluru in 2020, Swiggy Instamart is now serving customers across 18 cities, and doing over one million orders per week.

Amazon exploiting sellers, to pocket \$121bln this yr

OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS, AMAZON HAS FACED GROWING SCRUTINY FOR SPYING ON SELLERS, COPYING THEIR PRODUCTS, AND GIVING ITS OWN BRANDS PREFERENTIAL PLACEMENT IN SEARCH RESULTS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 2: A significant report from a US-based non-profit organisation has claimed that Amazon is exploiting its position as a gatekeeper to impose steep and growing fees on third-party sellers, raking in big money.

In 2019, Amazon pocketed \$60 billion in seller fees and this year, its take will soar to \$121 billion, according to the report titled 'Amazon's Toll Road' by the Institute for Local Self-Reliance.

Even as these exorbitant fees bankrupt sellers, they are generating huge profits for Amazon, a fact that the tech giant conceals in its financial reports.

"These profits are not only the spoils of Amazon's monopoly power:



They are the essential fuel that feeds its market-dominance strategies, enabling it to absorb massive, predatory losses designed to lock-in market control and fund break-neck expansion," said study author Stacy Mitchell.

Amazon Founder Jeff Bezos recently told the US Congress that the increasing amount of money going from sellers to Amazon is something of an optical illusion.

"I think what you're seeing there when you see these fees going up,

According to the report, the staggering scale of these fees provide evidence of Amazon's monopolisation of the online market

Amazon has also compelled sellers to buy its warehousing and shipping service, Fulfillment By Amazon

By compelling this captive base of businesses to use its shipping service, Amazon has grown into a major logistics provider almost overnight

what's really happening is that sellers are choosing to use more of our services that we make available," Bezos had replied to a question.

In a statement to TechCrunch, Amazon called the report inaccur-

rate, and added that it conflates Amazon's selling fees with our optional add-on services.

"Using a variety of fees, Amazon now pockets a 34 per cent cut of the revenue earned by independent sellers on its site, our analysis found. That's up from 30 per cent in 2018, and 19 per cent in 2014," she noted.

According to the report, over the last few years, seller fees grew much faster than every other major revenue stream at Amazon.

Amazon's algorithms heavily favour sellers who do so, making FBA all but required in order to generate sales on the site. As a result, the share of sellers who have left other carriers and signed on to FBA has soared in recent years, the report further said.

Weather, combination worry for skipper Kohli as India face New Zealand in second Test, starting today

SERIES ON LINE



What Kohli says...

FIRST TEST AT WANKHEDE SINCE 2016

Mumbai: The iconic Wankhede Stadium, which has hosted several high-profile matches, including the 2011 ODI World Cup final, will host a Test after almost five years when India take on New Zealand in the second match of the series. The last Test, which the South Mumbai ground hosted was against England from December 8-12, 2016 against England, which the hosts won by an innings and 36 runs. The venue has hosted 25 Test matches and India have won 11 of them while losing seven and rest of the seven were drawn games. India had recorded their first Test win at the Wankhede against New Zealand in 1976 by 162 runs. For the record, the visitors New Zealand last played a Test here in November 1988 and had won that game by 136 runs. The Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) is taking all precautions on its part and is adhering to the COVID-19 protocols laid down by the Maharashtra government with only 25 per cent spectators allowed on each of the five days. Last time, when India played here, skipper Virat Kohli has scored a monumental 235, so come Friday it remains to be seen where the skipper, who had taken break for the first test, can score another daddy hundred, which has been missing for past two years.

ON TEAM COMBINATION: There is a weather change and we have to keep that into account and pick the combination accordingly. At the end of the day, you cannot assume weather conditions will remain like this over the five days. So, we need to see what bowling combination should be picked that can tackle in different conditions. If we reach a common understanding and if everyone agrees, we go in with that combination.

SAHA'S FITNESS: As of now, Saha is fit. He has recovered from his neck spasm and is absolutely fine now.

WANKHEDE PITCH: This is a pitch which demands a lot of discipline, but at the same time, the rewards of the discipline are also much higher in the percentage as compared to some of the other venues, where spin might be dominant and fast bowlers don't come into play. But at the Wankhede, that has never been the case. All the fast bowlers, especially in red ball cricket, really enjoy playing on this pitch and even the batsmen love batting here. A great cricketing wicket.

KANPUR MATCH (1ST TEST): I watched the game and I think we tried everything we could as a team. Obviously, everyone has different way of approaching things,

probably would have been able to answer that if I was in that situation, but I was not in that situation so, I know that the team tried everything that it could. Sometimes when you are not able to pull off a result, you also have to give credit to the opposition for them to bat out 10-12 overs in the end with the last wicket, was very good effort from them as well, so you have to be realistic about the scenario.

SOUTH AFRICA TOUR: You want to seek clarity as soon as possible, so we have spoken to all the senior members of the squad. Obviously

Rahul bhai (Dravid) has initiated a conversation within the group, which is very important to know. We have been talking to the board and we are pretty confident within a day or two or pretty soon, we will have absolute clarity as to what is going on.

INDIA'S LIKELY XI

Shubman Gill, KS Bharat, Cheteshwar Pujara, Virat Kohli, Ajinkya Rahane, Shreyas Iyer, Ravindra Jadeja, Ravichandran Ashwin, Umesh Yadav, Ishant Sharma & Mohammed Siraj.

Rahane for all the wrong reasons after 12 successive failures in 2021, it is unlikely that the man, who was captain in the last match, will be dropped in the very next game due to lack of form.

a middle of the road approach, one can certainly expect that Mayank Agarwal will be disposed off for perhaps being a low hanging fruit.

Shubman Gill scored an attacking fifty in the first innings and despite his not so great defensive technique with a yawning

ing Wriddhiman Saha, who has been suffering from stiff neck, could actually save the team management from actually taking tough calls for the match.

For the Kane Williamson-led New Zealand, they missed Wagner badly in Kanpur where his presence could have spelled more trouble for India in the second innings. The rain and a pitch devoid of sunlight could mean that both pacers and spinners would be in equation. New Zealand's three-pronged attack could spell trouble for India on a spiced up track and Will Somerville, who played a gutsy knock in Kanpur, might have to sit out.

India may bring in Mohammed Siraj into the equation with Ishant Sharma looking completely out of rhythm but with turn expected, three spinners may be persisted with.

And that too on his home turf. But every extra chance given to him effectively means that criticism about not sending a strong signal would get louder.

The second cause of concern is Cheteshwar Pujara, who has time and again forgotten that cricket is not merely about survival. Every Test at home or abroad, every bowling attack - formidable or run of the mill - has been putting him in a spot.

He looked to have a changed mindset briefly in England but in Kanpur, he again got himself into a rut. However, when the team travels to South Africa, Kohli knows that he has only one man, who can blunt the new Kookaburra against Kagiso Rabada and Anrich Nortje. So, Pujara and Rahane backers can rejoice as their favourite players aren't going anywhere for this game unless they are injured.

The Kohli baiters would then say that it's not just Rahane who hasn't been scoring for two years, even the Indian skipper hasn't had a three-figure mark against his name in any form for more than two years now.

And now with Dravid for company, someone famous for taking

gap between bat and pad, he will be persisted with as he is being looked as a long-term middle-order solution.

Kohli will be a straight replacement for Agarwal. The question then arises on who will open alongside Gill. It either has to be Cheteshwar Pujara or wicketkeeper batsman KS Bharat.

Pujara could turn out to be a poor choice given his current form, while Andhra man Bharat has the requisite experience at the first-class level with a highest score of 308. Bharat replac-



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 2: Virat Kohli's return after a well-earned break couldn't have come in a more unenviable setting as he needs to tread the fine line between tough and prudent in his selection calls when India take on New Zealand in the second and final Test at the rain-soaked 'Maximum City' from Friday.

After an anti-climactic end to the first Test where New Zealand escaped with a creditable draw defying the Indian spinners on a slow turner, the home team under its regular captain would certainly go for a slight rejig in the combination.

Also, at the Wankhede, the hosts may only get four days to enforce a positive result due to heavy rains that could be a dampener on day one and the underlying moisture which will also

bring an extra Black Caps pacer Neil Wagner into the equation. Historically,

Indian cricket teams have never believed in a shake-up of the status quo and therein lies the problem that Kohli and new coach Rahul Dravid face with the current set-up. Two of the team's players have not been scoring runs.

Despite that Shreyas Iyer, who scored 105 and 65 under pressure in Kanpur, is not assured of a place despite a dream start to his career. It happened with Karun Nair after a triple ton but one could argue that it came in an inconsequential fifth Test against a tired attack and the team wasn't under any pressure.

While the spotlight is on Ajinkya

Germany test awaits colts at FIH Junior WC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 2: High-flying defending champions India would bank on their solid defensive structure and drag-flicking prowess to outsmart six-time title-winners Germany in the semifinal of the FIH Junior Men's Hockey World Cup at the Kalinga Stadium here on Friday.

After a disappointing start to the tournament when they were stunned 4-5 by France, India lifted their game by leaps and bounds to qualify for their second consecutive semifinal in the Junior World Cup.

India produced a defensive master-class Wednesday to eke out a narrow 1-0 win over European giants Belgium with the likes of Yashdeep Siwach, vice-captain Sanjay Kumar and Shardanand Tiwari shining bright in the backline.

India's two goalkeepers - Prasanth Chauhan and Pawan, in particular - were terrific against Belgium

and produced some breath-taking saves to deny their opponents.

With four quality penalty corner specialists - Sanjay Tiwari, Arajjeet Singh Hundal and Abhishek Lakra - in their ranks, India's strength lies in set pieces and it has been quite evident in the tournament so far.

The hallmark of India's performance against Belgium was the calm and composed mindset of the players when put under pressure and chief coach Graham Reid too accepted the fact.

But the Germans would be a tough nut to crack as they would be aiming to reclaim the world title after a hiatus of eight years. Germany last won the Junior World Cup title in 2013 in New Delhi but since then, a third place finish in the last edition in Lucknow in 2016 was the best they could achieve.

Meanwhile in the other semifinal, tournament's surprise package France will be up against Argentina.

Sindhu joins Lakshya in knockouts

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bali, Dec 2: Double Olympic medalist PV Sindhu Thursday joined compatriot Lakshya Sen into the knockout stage of the BWF World Tour Finals, while Kidambi Srikanth's fate hung in balance after suffering defeat in his second group match, here.

The 26-year-old Sindhu, the only Indian to win the prestigious title in 2018 and a finalist a year before, outplayed Germany's world number 23 Yvonne Li 21-10, 21-13 in 31 minutes in her second group A match to ensure a place in the top two.

The reigning World Champion will square off against top seed Pornpawee Chochuwong of Thailand next in her last group match.

Lakshya, who was guaranteed a place in the semifinal after two of his opponents in group A - Japan's Kento Momota and Denmark's Rasmus Gemke - pulled out due to injuries, lost 15-21, 14-21 to Olympic champion Viktor Axelsen.



Earlier, World No.14 Kidambi Srikanth, who had reached the knockout stage in the 2014 edition of the year-ending event, jeopardised his chances of making it to

the next stage after going down 18-21, 7-21 to three-time junior World Champion Thailand's Kunlavut Vitidsarn in his second men's singles group B match.

Indian women's doubles pair of Ashwini Ponnappa and N Sikki Reddy too suffered a defeat, going down fighting 19-21, 20-22 to Bulgaria's Gabriela Stoeva and Stefani Stoeva to bow out of contention. The Indian duo will face England's Chloe Birch and Lauren Smith in their last Group B match.

The top men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty handed a walkover to top seeded Indonesian pair of Marcus Fernaldi Gideon and Kevin Sanjaya Sukamuljo after the former complained of knee pain.

Wednesday, Lakshya, the youngest Indian to qualify for the year-ending event, made it to the semifinals after his opponent Momota retired with a back injury and Gemke, who is also in Group A, conceded his match against Axelsen due to a knee injury.

Liverpool thrash Everton in EPL

ASSOCIATED PRESS

London, Dec 2: Only two points separate Chelsea, Manchester City and Liverpool at the top of the Premier League. There's no doubting who the entertainers are with the most high-powered attack.

Liverpool hit four goals for a third consecutive game by beating Everton 4-1 Wednesday. Jürgen Klopp's 2020 champions remained in third. Manchester City won 2-1 at Aston Villa to stay a point ahead of Liverpool in second and Chelsea remains a point better off at the top after beating Watford by the same score.

The top three pulled away from fourth place after West Ham was held 1-1 by Brighton. Leicester and Southampton also drew 2-2.

Salah is fronting Liverpool's scoring charge and he now has 19 goals in as many appearances this season in all competitions after his double at Goodison Park.



Captain Jordan Henderson gave Liverpool the lead. Demarai Gray pulled a goal back for Everton just before halftime. Diogo Jota struck Liverpool's fourth.

Former Liverpool captain Steven Gerrard couldn't help out his old team in his third game in charge of Aston Villa. Bernardo Silva's volley from Gabriel Jesus' cross followed Ruben Dias' goal for Manchester

City in the first half at Villa Park. Ollie Watkins reduced the deficit in the 47th with a first-time finish.

Hakim Ziyech scored his first league goal of the season to clinch Chelsea's 2-1 win at Watford in a match that was halted for 32 minutes in the first half after a spectator suffered cardiac arrest. Mason Mount opened the scoring for Chelsea before Emmanuel Dennis equalized.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Benzema seals Real win

MADRID: Shortly after Karim Benzema scored again for Real Madrid, the "Ballon d'Or" chants began echoing from the Santiago Bernabéu crowd. Madrid fans made it clear who they felt deserved the player of the year award that was won by Lionel Messi Monday. The France striker netted a first-half winner that gave Madrid a hard-fought 1-0 win over Athletic Bilbao in the Spanish league. Benzema's league-leading 12th goal allowed Madrid to extend their winning streak to seven matches in all competitions. Benzema finished fourth in the Ballon d'Or vote, upsetting many Madrid fans and some players. The win extended Madrid's unbeaten streak to 10 matches in all competitions. Madrid opened a seven-point lead over both Atlético Madrid and Real Sociedad. It has 36 points from 15 matches.

WTA suspends play in China

BEIJING: China Thursday criticised the WTA's decision to suspend all its tournaments in the country due to concerns surrounding the whereabouts of former Grand Slam doubles champion Peng Shuai, saying it is opposed to "acts that politicise sports". WTA (Women's Tennis Association) President and CEO Steve Simon announced halting events in China, including Hong Kong, after failing to get a satisfactory response on Peng's well being following her accusations that the nation's former Vice-Premier Zhang Gaoli forced her into a sexual relationship. "We have already elaborated our position. We are always firmly opposed to acts that politicise sports," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin told a media briefing here in response to questions on WTA's announcement. WTA has asserted that Peng has not been allowed to communicate freely and has been pressured to contradict her allegation of sexual assault. Wang declined to elaborate further on questions on Peng and the WTA's decision.

Djokovic lifts Serbia

MADRID: After having to play in an empty arena in the group stage, Novak Djokovic relished being in front of Davis Cup fans again. Djokovic fed off the energetic crowd from the start Wednesday, leading Serbia into the semifinals with a 2-1 come-from-behind win over Kazakhstan at the Madrid Arena. The top-ranked Djokovic kept Serbia alive in the quarterfinal by defeating Alexander Bublik in straight sets in his singles match, then teamed up with Nikola Pietrangeli in the deciding doubles for a 6-2, 2-6, 6-3 win over Andrey Golubev and Aleksandr Nedovyesov. Serbia reached the last four for the first time since 2017 and will face Croatia.

Nice end PSG's perfect home record with a goalless draw

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain dropped points at home for the first time this season by drawing 0-0 with Nice in the French league as the high-powered attack led by newly crowned Ballon d'Or winner Lionel Messi came up empty. PSG maintained a 12-point lead atop the standings. PSG had won every home game in all competitions this season and was on a four-game winning streak in the league. Before kickoff, Messi showed the spectators the record seventh Ballon d'Or trophy he won Monday as the world's top player.