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BHUBANESWAR | MONDAY, DECEMBER 13 | 2021



BANK DEPOSIT INSURANCE COVER UPPED TO ₹5L

New Delhi: Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal Sunday said that the Central government has increased the bank deposit insurance cover, in case of problems occurring such as closure, from ₹1 lakh to ₹5 lakh. The amount has to be refunded to the depositor within 90 days. Addressing "Depositors First: Guaranteed Time-bound Deposit Insurance Payment up to ₹5 Lakh" programme here, Goyal said, "Earlier there used to be a bank deposit insurance cover of ₹1 lakh for the deposit of the same amount or more under the 'Deposit Insurance Credit Guarantee Scheme', "Now, if a person faces any problem or setback for all of his deposits in a bank, and if the bank is incapable of returning the deposit, then the depositor will get a refund of ₹5 lakh," he added.



190 HOUTHIS KILLED IN SAUDI-LED MILITARY OPS

Sanaa: The Saudi-led coalition fighting in Yemen said that 190 Houthi rebels had been killed in military operations in the last 24 hours. The coalition conducted 36 operations against Houthi targets in the oil-rich province of Marib in the period, the Saudi Press Agency tweeted. The operations also destroyed 20 military vehicles and drone control units, reports Xinhua news agency. The coalition regularly attacks Houthi military targets to deter the militia from launching drone and missile attacks against Saudi Arabian cities, mainly in border areas. In March, the coalition completed six years of fighting the Houthis in Yemen to assist Yemeni President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi.



Odisha sees 2.08L job loss in 8 months: CMIE

Around 29.53 lakh people in the 15-29 age group had jobs during the first quarter of 2021 (January-April), but the count shrunk to 27.45 lakh during the second quarter (May-August 2021)

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 12: Around 2.08 lakh people in the 15-29 age group in Odisha, who had jobs during the first quarter of 2021 (January-April), were left jobless during the second quarter of the year (May-August), as per the latest quarterly report (May-August 2021) of the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE).

Confirming the recent NSSO report, the latest quarterly report



(May-Aug 2021) of CMIE drops the bombshell of high job loss in Odisha. According to another report, the unemployment rate in Odisha is greater than the national unemployment rate of 23.5 per cent.

As per the report, around 29.53 lakh in the 15-29 age group had jobs during the first quarter of

2021 (January-April). However, the count shrunk to 27.45 lakh during the second quarter (May-August 2021), signifying the net job loss in the state at around 2.08 lakh. The unemployment rate in the

job seekers of 15-29 age group is astronomically high, said the report. "During the first quarter of the year (January-April), the unemployment rate in the age group of 15-19 years had been astronomically high at 35.46 per cent. The joblessness rate in the age group of 20-24 years stood at 14.91 per cent, whereas the rate in the age group of 25-29 years had been 3.5 per cent." said the report.

The unemployment rate in May-August 2021 in the age group of 15-19 years had been 16.81 per cent and at 12.26 per cent in 20-24 years age group. The joblessness rate in the 25-29 years age group stood at 5.17 per cent at the end of the second quarter.

The report puts the total unemployed in the state at the quarter ending August 31, 2021 at 4.9 lakh vis-a-vis 3.14 lakh at the end of April 2021 and 2.16 lakh at the end of December 2020.

The numbers reveal that during the last eight months, the number of jobless persons in the state had risen by 2.08 lakh.

The CMIE has measured the despondency among youths in landing jobs in Odisha in the indicator of Greater Unemployment Rate (GUR). As per CMIE, the GUR is about youths who are unemployed and need a job but are not active jobseekers. The GUR in the May-August 2021

quarter had been estimated at 38.20 per cent in the 15-29 years age group and 32.27 per cent in the 20-24 years age group in Odisha. The corresponding figures at the end of December 2020 were 44.47 per cent in the 15-19 years age group, 29.56 per cent in the 20-24 years age group.

During the first quarter of 2021, the GUR in the age group of 15-19 years was estimated at a high of 56.99 per cent. It was at 33.93 per cent in the age group of 20-24 years.

Odisha had imposed lockdown to curb spread of Covid-19 from May 2021. The high unemployment rate and GUR in the pre-lockdown phase in 2021 is, therefore, eye-popping.



HOMEWARD JOURNEY: Farmers prepare to leave the Ghazipur border for homes after calling off their agitation in New Delhi, Sunday PTI PHOTO

IRREGULAR by MANJUL H

State acquired land illegally: CAG PM's Twitter hacked

No compensation was paid to the villagers in Kalahandi district who were dispossessed of their land for construction of five canals



at least 80 per cent of the compensation amount," it added.

Furthermore, the EE had intimated (November 2018) the LAO to withdraw the LA proceedings since they had decided to purchase the said land directly from the land owners. However, the withdrawal notice was not accepted due to procedural lapses. The CAG observed

by crypto scammers



AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar: Dec 12: A six-member Central team led by a Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Home Affairs Sunday left for the field verification to access the damages

done to agriculture and others due

to Cyclone Jawad, which reached

near Odisha coast in the form of a

depression before moving towards



Just an opportunity to serve your country! Have you come across any foreigen returnee? See, we couldn't trace them...

Woman Maoist lays down arms in Koraput

POST NEWS NETWORK

Koraput, Dec 12: A woman belonging to the Kalahandi-Kandhamal-Boudh-Nayagarh (KKBN) division of outlawed CPI (Maoist) surrendered before the Director General of Police (DGP) at Sunabeda in Koraput district Sunday.

The surrendered red rebel was identified as Phulabati and her surrender coincided with the visit of DGP Abhay to Malkangiri district.

Briefing the media, the DGP said that Phulabati was working as an area committee member (ACM) in the KKBN division. "She took a decision to join the mainstream after witnessing various developmental activities being undertaken by the state government in this area. I urge all other rebels to follow her path and lay down arms before the police to return to the mainstream of the society," said Abhay.

"They will receive financial assistance as per the Surrender and Rehabilitation Scheme of state government for building a house, pursuing studies and will be imparted training in a trade/vocation of her choice," the top cop added.



POST NEWS NETWORK Bhubaneswar, Dec 12: The

Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) has revealed that the state government has acquired about 44.10 acres in Kalahandi district without paying compensation to the owners, thereby violating the provisions of the Land Acquisition Act. Describing the act as a 'blatant

disregard' to the property rights of the concerned land owners, the CAG, in its latest report, held the Revenue and Disaster Management (R&DM) department responsible for illegal acquisition of private land. It found that the Executive Engineer (EE), Kalahandi Minor Irrigation Division. Bhawanipatna, had taken possession of the said land illegally and utilised it for construction of canals without providing

compensation to the owners. "The EE of the Department of Water Resources (DoWR) had filed (during October 2009 to August 2012) requisitions with the Land Acquisition Officer (LAO), Kalahandi, for acquisition of 44.10



In response to the allegations, the Board of **Revenue admitted**

acquiring private land by the Kalahandi MI **Division without the** consent of the land owners

acre private land in five villages -Badpodaguda, Tujung, Ratanpur, Krupapadar and Kushurla, for construction of five minor irrigation projects," the CAG said in its report.

"However, despite non-completion of LA proceedings in all the five cases and without paying any compensation to the land owners, the EE constructed canals on the land notified for acquisition in gross violation of the provisions of the Land Acquistion Act, which clearly states that possession of land can only be taken only after tendering

that while the LAO and EE continued to engage in sorting out procedural issues on a lapsed LA proceeding, the EE without resorting to direct purchase of land, constructed canals unauthorisedly on the land intended to be purchased directly

It may be mentioned that villagers of Badapodaguda and Tujung had submitted (February 2016 and September 2018) representations to the District Collector, Kalahandi, for payment of compensation, alleging that they had been dispossessed of their land without payment of compensation. However, no action has been taken on the grievances as of June 2019.

Meanwhile, in response to the allegations. the Board of Revenue admitted (July 2020) of unauthorised possession of the private land by the Kalahandi MI Division and construction of canal without payment of compensation or consent of the land owners. The CAG also mentioned that the matter has been reported (January 2021) to the Government of Odisha and a reply is awaited.



AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 12: Prime Minister Narendra Modi's personal Twitter handle was restored after getting 'very briefly compromised." the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said in a tweet Sunday, after it shared a link promising a Bitcoin giveaway. "The Twitter handle of PM

@narendramodi was very briefly compromised. The matter was escalated to Twitter and the account has been immediately secured. In the brief period that the account was compromised, any tweet shared must be ignored," PMO India said in a tweet

The account of Modi, who has more than 73.4 million followers, has now been restored.

Before the account was restored, a tweet was shared with a URL on PM Modi's timeline which read. "India has officially adopted Bitcoin as legal tender. The government has officially bought 500 BTC and is distributing them to all residents of the country. Hurry up." Minutes later, another tweet was posted, saving, "Yes this account is hacked by John Wick (hckindia@tutanota.com), we have not hacked Paytm Mall."

"We have 24X7 open lines of communication with the PM's Office and our teams took necessary steps to secure the compromised account as soon as we became aware of this activity. Our investigation has revealed that there are no signs of any other impacted accounts at this time," Twitter spokesperson told the media.

After Prime Minister Modi's account was compromised, #Hacked began trending in India. (More P9)

West Bengal early this month. The team members left to the affected districts after holding discussion with Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) PK Jena here The team has been divided into three units. While one unit will visit Ganjam and Puri districts, the second will assess losses in Jagatsinghpur and Cuttack dis-

> Jajpur and Kendrapara districts. The inter-ministerial Central team led by Saurav Ray, Joint Secretary (CEPI), Ministry of Home Affairs, was apprised by the state government on the damages done by the calamity. Though there were no major damages to the electrical infrastructures and buildings, the extremely heavy rainfall during the calamity had severely damaged the standing crops.

tricts. Another unit will visit the

Stating that the loss assessment of agriculture is a little difficult task, Jena said the state government will submit a report to the team.

This 'punya' market was ₹34,000

crore in 2017 and it is growing

gradually," Mishra said. The Ministry

of Social Justice and Empowerment

citing the 2011 census says India

allow the organisation to identify

beggars in Varanasi and issue them

identity cards so his group could

differentiate between those really

in need of help and those who are

aged beggars can be shifted to re-

habilitation centres while those in

He said the differently-abled and

Mishra urged the government to

has over 4 lakh beggars.

part of rackets.

Varanasi-based NGO turns beggars into entrepreneurs

Common Man Trust, a not-for-profit in Varanasi, conceptualised the initiative 'Beggars Corporation' in February and launched it in July

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, Dec 12: Nullifying the phrase 'beggars can't be choosers'. a non-profit organisation has launched a project to help them earn a living by making items such as laptop and conference bags.

Common Man Trust, a not-forprofit in Varanasi, conceptualised the initiative 'Beggars Corporation'

in February and launched it in July. Laying stress on investment. and not on donation, this corporation envisages to make Varanasi represented in the Lok Sabha by Prime Minister Narendra Modi become a beggar-free city by 2023.

The group has trained 12 families of beggars in Varanasi for different vocations and they have now shunned beggary.

"If the pilot model succeeds, it can be replicated elsewhere in the country," Chandra Mishra, who heads the Common Man Trust, said.

After the initial success, the Trust intends to turn Beggars Corporation into a profit making venture.

"Earlier, we were experimenting as to whether the beggars would



work and whether their products can be marketed. Their products have been accepted. Now, we are trying to turn it into a profit-making company," he said.

According to Mishra, the Beggars' Corporation will be reg-

istered as a 'for profit' company by March 2022 post it intends to raise ₹2.5 crore from angel investors and venture capitalists.

'We will then pick 100 beggar families in the first phase in Varanasi," Chandra said.

The Trust also runs a 'School of Life' at Rajendra Prasad Ghat in Varanasi, where 32 children from beggar families are studying.

Lauding the initiative, chairman MSME, Confederation of Indian Micro Small Medium Enterprises, Uttar Pradesh, Gaurav Prakash said, "This idea has the power to reform and transform the livelihood and give them (the beggars) dignity and respect, which will be a huge game changer in coming times

As per the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation report of 2017, Indians spend ₹34,000 crore as donation to beggars.

"Since we are highly religious. we believe we earn punya (spiritual reward) by giving alms to the poor.

the age group of 18-45 years can be trained for three months and be provided with loans to float their business on the model of Bangladesh's Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus.















elsure

EILISH WAS TOLD TO AVOID ACTING BY HER MOTHER

Popstar Billie Eilish was hosting Saturday Night Live and in her opening monologue detailed how her mother Maggie Baird, 62, had told her to give up her dreams of becoming an actress. She said: "Somebody wise once told me: 'Billie, you should never, ever act...that person was my mom!"

RAPPER RAJA KUMARI'S NEW SINGLE GET IT IN OUT

After much-celebrated numbers including City Slums, US and Firestarter, rapper Raja Kumari has come up with her new single Get It In, for those who shine their light in the dark. Penned by Sanjoy, Elvis Brown, and Sirah, the single highlights living each day like it's the last.



FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshaSpeaks.com 🔹 reliability 🔹 trust 🖌 accuracy FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

ARIES Today is a bright day, and the stars foretell success for you.

If you find yourself in a creative mood, indulge in some activity that will satisfy the urge. But, Ganesha says, if you are driving alone, exercise a great deal of caution to be on the safe side

TAURUS

Your business is going to thrive this day, says Ganesha. Your plans, pro jections, speculations and gambles are likely to pay off and give you good dividends. You will be admired and respected in the business world for your honesty and integrity. You will be in the right frame of mind to think about expanding your business.

GEMINI

You need to pay more attention to yourself today. Your kind and generous nature means you often think about others rather than about yourself. Now is the time to pay attention to your own needs You need to spend more time with your family and friends as well, says Ganesha.

You will secure your place with hard work in your iob or business. Ties with partners will improve. Closeness with spouse is indicated. Melody and joy will mark domestic bliss. You will spend the evening with your beloved. Ganesha's blessings are with you.

LEO

The pressure at work will be high. Some person may try to tempt you with lucrative offers to go against your principles. However, you will be able to resist the lure of easy money. Your health may suffer today, so be on guard, says Ganesha

You will stay calm and steady today, and there is hardly anything that can disturb your peace of mind. Your family and friends will back you fully and moti vate you to overcome hurdles. You will work with devotion, says Ganesha, You may ask for work that others may find very difficult to do.

LIBRA

Ganesha says people will try to take advantage of your amiable nature and disposition. Small issues will crop up today making your nature a little tensed and enhance

PC talks about her most intense work

Mumbai: Priyanka Chopra has completed the filming of Amazon Studios' upcoming spy thriller series Citadel. For her, the series has been the most intense experience. The actress took to her

Instagram and shared a series of pictures with her crew members.

She wrote in the caption, "Photo dump* It's a wrap on #Citadel Phew. a whole year of doing the most intense work during the most intense time. It could not have been possible without this incredible lot of people. Some you see here some you don't. It's been hard but when you all see it.. it will be worth it! Onwards and upwards (sic).

faces during the course of filming and post the wrap, she also shared a few solo pictures of herseen acting goofy and wearing the special effect makeup for her part in the series. Talking

Citadel. the se ries produced by

PEANUTS

wow!

Amazon Studios, AGBO and Midnight Radio, in addition to Chopra, also stars Richard Madden and Roland Møller. The series will also inspire spinoffs set in Italy, India, Spain and Mexico, all of which will ex-

plore the deeper layers of the storylines and will centralise into the main series. IANS

Along with the happy self where she can be







Mumbai: The Tiger Shroff-starrer Ganapath has made another addition to its cast in the form of Elli AvrRam. The actress is into martial arts, which makes her entry into the cast even more interesting given that Tiger is known for acrobatics and

martial arts skills. The actress, who earlier finished shooting the half schedule of her film *Goodbye* co-starring Amitabh Bachchan, Neena Gupta and Rashmika Mandanna, said, This year has been really grateful for me. After the success of my song Har Funn

Maula and now Goodbye, I'm very excited to begin my journey for Ganapath. I'm currently in London shooting for it. It's a really cool script and I'm very excited to be a part of the film.

The film directed by Vikas Bahl (Queen), also stars Kriti Sanon and Rashin Rahman, and is produced by Jackky Bhagnani, Vashu Bhagnani and Deepshikha Deshmukh under the banners of Good Co. Production and Pooja Entertainment.

Earlier, Elli also bagged the Best Actress honour at the Stockholm City Film Festival for her Swedish short film With You, which touched upon the topic of mental health awareness and childhood trauma.



KLF-21 comes to an end

Union Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas Hardeep Singh Puri attended the valedictory session and said the event, over the years, has been offering a *unique experience to the participants*

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar: Three-day Kalinga Literary Festival(KLF) came to an end here Sunday. Union Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas and Urban Affairs Hardeep Singh Puri, who attended the valedictory session of the event via video link from New Delhi, said the festival has been offering a unique experience to the participants from all sections of the society.

He appreciated the organisers for physical hosting of its ninth edition since it could not be held last year due to the pandemic outbreak. In the inaugural session, for-

mer Indian ambassador to Nepal Ranjit Rae said India needs to act upon two aspects

- identifying the areas where India has competitive advantage and investing in future technology - to become Atmanirbhar or self-reliant. He was also of the opinion that the international business agreements made by the Centre must have to meet their logical end to make a resilient India.

Participating in a session on private and corporate funding in sports in India, Paralympic medal winner Pramod Bhagat said, "Corporate investment in sports should not be based upon return on investment concept alone, since it requires nearly a decade of effort to produce an Olympic level sports person. They should have long term vision while planning an investment in this area

Quo Vadis, Aida? emerges biggest winner at 34th EFAs

SIR ANTHONY HOPKINS BAGGED THE EUROPEAN ACTOR PRIZE FOR HIS PERFORMANCE AS A MAN WITH DEMENTIA IN FLORIAN ZELLER'S PSYCHOLOGICAL DRAMA THE FATHER

CROSSWORD

10

6 Seashore

7 Scene

12 Unbiased

14 Tentacled

walkway

8 Norse capital

Mumbai: The 34th European Film Awards (EFAs), which were held virtually from Berlin, honoured and celebrated excellence in European cinema.

Bosnian filmmaker, Jasmila Zbanic's film Quo Vadis, Aida? which follows the events upto the 1995 Srebrenica massacre, has emerged as the biggest winner at the prestigious awards with top three awards to its credit: European Film 2021, Best

DE LAATSTE UREN VOOR DE VAL VAN SREBRENICA. HET VERHAAL VAN AJDA QUO VADIS. AIDA? ISHA BURGE tiff

FUN

JOST



13

20

Bosnian translator. Danish filmmaker Jonas Poher Rasmussen's animated documentary, Flee also won three awards including the Best European Animated Film, Best Documentary and the

European University Film Award. Close on the heels of the award count of both Quo Vadis, Aida? and Flee, The Father emerged as the third highest winner as Sir Anthony Hopkins bagged the European Actor prize for his performance as a man with dementia

LUX Audience Award. The award, which was launched in September 2020 by the European Parliament and the European Film Academy, in partnership with the European Commission and Europa Cinemas will be awarded to one of the three nominated films, Flee, Great Freedom and Quo Vadis, Aida?

All three films will be subtitled in all the 24 EU languages for the purpose of accessibility to a wide set of audience. The award will be given out on the basis of audience votes from a period of mid-December to May 25, 2022. The winner will be announced in a ceremony in the European Parliament June 8, 2022. IANS



chances in monetary matters. Ganesha says you need to keep your mind steady and regain your lost charm soon.

SCORPIO

Your imagination runs wild today. Though you do not travel geographically, your mind travels beyond boundaries. Think and act according to your will, advises Ganesha, However, practice caution before taking any major step.

SAGITTARIUS

Your will be loaded with responsibilities at work

today, fore sees Ganesha But, you are pro challenges and will take it up sportingly. On personal front, the list of your friends is likely to get longer. All in all. Ganesha sees you in an active avatar today

CAPRICORN

Don't let your emotions play a spoilsport while deciding about the future. Think practically, otherwise, your expec-

tations and reality will not be on the same boat, guides Ganesha. Friendly and supportive, today you will spread happiness and win the love of one and all. Whenever you get confused about which path to take, take advice from the expe rienced people around you.

AOUARIUS

Set any target, take up any activity or accept any challenge; you will succeed in any of them with flying colours, foresees Ganesha. Your well-wishers will showe

praises upon your for those hard earned achievements. Friends are like family to you, take them out and have a gala time before another busy day begins.

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PISCES

You will be busy with romance throughout the day. While singles are likely to find the person of their dreams, those who are married will establish a new closeness in their relationship. Your attitude towards work will begin to change. You will become more serious about your career, and the fruits of this transformation will be reaped by you shortly in the near future, says Ganesha.



RIDING AROUND ALL

DAY ON THE BACK OF

GIVES YOU PLENTY OF

TIME TO THINK

MOM'S BICYCLE

YOUR

CALVIN AND HOBBES

Director honour for Žbanic and European actress honour for Jasna Duricic for her performance as a

AND ABOUT WHAT

DOULD HAPPEN IF WE

RAN INTO A TREE!

WELL, YOU SHOULD

HAVE KNOWN BETTER

THAN TO ASK FOR

A RETAINER!

IT GIVES YOU TIME TO

THINK ABOUT PEOPLE

CALV

SUPPLIES

AND ABOUT LIFE.

drama, for which the actor also won an Oscar earlier, this year. The EFAs also announced the nominees for the newly-configured

in Florian Zeller's psychological

SUDOKU

SOLL

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.

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CROSSWORD		A A A B O J W	A	OU AK SA M L L	S C	A R C	R I P I R O N	E R A	B U L T C A L	E K U	C H A U C E R G
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1	Chinese	20	Fresh from the
	philosophy		shower
5	Upright	22	Luau treat
9	Become	23	Old printer
	suspicious		(3,6)
	(5,1,3)	25	Kind of panel
10	Door gordon	26	Ograa

(5,1,3)	25 Kind of panel		creature
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Intense hatred			territory
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Recurring	4 Sales outlet		call
experience? (4,2)	5 Bonus	24	Reel's partner

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



BREVITY

I THOUGHT DENTISTS

WOULD BE PRETTY IDEAL

FIRM, BUT THIS GUY JUST

KEEPS SENDING ME BOXES

OF DENTAL APPLIANCES!

1

UPPLIE

CLIENTS FOR A LAW



10

11

13

14

15







downtown



FOR PAY HIKE

Members of Vocational Trainers' Association stage a sit-in at Lower PMG in Bhubaneswar, Sunday, demanding a pay hike



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
/orld	27,01,43,542	24,29,13,262	53,20,512
Idia	3,46,90,510	3,41,22,795	4,75,434
disha	10,51,574	10,41,365	8,434

CM to distribute BSKY cards in 2 dists today

POST NEWS NETWORK

Khurda/Cuttack, Dec 12: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik is scheduled to visit Begunia Monday to launch the distribution of Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana (BSKY) smart health cards in Khurda district.

The Chief Minister will also launch the distribution of BSKY smart health cards in Cuttack district on the same day. He is also scheduled to launch a slew of development projects in the district, sources said.

Patnaik will reach Begunia in a helicopter at 11.40am, said Khurda Collector Sangram Keshari Mahapatra Sunday.

Apart from launching the distribution of BSKY smart health cards, the Chief Minister will inaugurate around 80 development projects and lay foundation stones for 221 new ones during his visit to

Preparations in progress for CM's programme in Cuttack

Begunia, said Mahapatra.

At least 16 lakh people of 4 lakh families in Khurda district will be benefitted by the smart health card

"We have set a target to distribute BSKY smart health cards among



the beneficiaries of Khurda within

a week," said the Collector. The district administration, meanwhile, has tightened security for the Chief Minister's visit.

The administration has deployed eight platoons of police personnel, two Additional SPs, four DSPs and 15 IICs to maintain law and order during the Chief Minister's visit to Begunia, said Khurda Superintendent of Police (SP) Raj Kishore Dora.

Begunia MLA Rajendra Kumar Sahoo, meanwhile, expressed his gratitude to the Chief Minister for launching several development projects for Khurda district.

"Only 300 locals and 100 officials of various departments will participate in the Monday's event. The programme will be organised with strict adherence to Covid norms,' Sahoo said.

The Chief Minister will inaugurate projects worth Rs 267 crore and lay foundation stones for various new projects in Cuttack district. The state government would spend Rs 1,455 crore for the new projects, sources said.





Helpline against atrocities on SC, ST to be launched today

scheme.

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 12: With the objective to build informed awareness about provisions of the law that are aimed at ending discrimination and providing protection to Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs), the Union government will launch a National Helpline Against Atrocities (NHAA) Monday.

The helpline will be launched by Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment with an aim to ensure proper implementation of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) (PoA) Act, 1989 which was enacted with a view to, interalia, preventing atrocities on mem-

bers of SCs and STs.

The ministry said that the NHAA will be available round the clock on toll-free number 14566 across the country. It can be accessed by making a voice call/VOIP either from a mobile or landline number of any telecom operator across the country.

This service will be available in Hindi, English and regional languages of the states/UTs. Its mobile application will also be available. The system will ensure that every complaint is registered as an FIR, relief is provided, all registered complaints are investigated and all chargesheets filed are prosecuted in the Courts for decision — all within the given timelines in the Act.

₹9.12cr wasted on Malkangiri BEd college: CAG

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 12: The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India has censured the School and Mass Education (S&ME) and the ST & SC Development, Minorities & Backward Classes Welfare (SSD) departments for their failure to operationalise a BEd college in Malkangiri, for which buildings and other infrastructure were built with an ex-

penditure of Rs 9.12 crore. In its latest report, the CAG stated that lack of coordination between the SSD and S&ME departments in assessing requirement for a BEd college for

Malkangiri resulted in wasteful expenditure of Rs 9.12 crore. The SSD department had decided in April, 2012 to set up BEd

colleges in Tribal Sub-Plan districts with an intake capacity of 100 trainees in a batch per institution for ensuring quality teaching in tribal dominated districts of Odisha, said the report. In the first phase, the construc-

tion of a BEd college at Malkangiri was proposed to be taken up in the 2012-13 fiscal. The officials were instructed to identify a suitable patch of land of about five acres in and around Malkangiri for the BEd college.

The functioning of BEd colleges in the state comes under the administrative jurisdiction of the S&ME department.

On scrutiny of records of the project administrator (PA) of Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) in Malkangiri, the audit noticed that the SSD de-



partment sanctioned Rs 10.12 crore for construction of the college building and allied infrastructure.

The college with campus area of five acres, 18,885 sqft academic buildings, 56-bed hostels for boys and girls and 17 staff quarters was completed in February, 2018 with an expenditure of Rs 9.12 crore. The college was inaugurated July

26, 2018, around five months behind the scheduled date.

On joint physical inspection of the college, the audit found that the college buildings were lying idle. It was only after a lapse of about 20 months from the completion of the building, the PA of ITDA in Malkangiri requested the Director of SSD department for handing over of the college to the SME department, observed the audit.

Thereafter, Malkangiri Collector requested the Commissioner-cum-Secretary of S&ME department to take steps to operationalise the college.

Despite this, the S&ME department did not take any step to take over the BEd college buildings and functionalise the institution, said the report.

been done by the S&ME department. Thus, except for construction of the civil structure of the college, no other measures had been taken to make the college functional even though the construction was completed three years ago, said the report. In its reply, the SSD department

The affiliation of the National

Council for Teacher Education

(NCTE), which is a pre-requisite for

functioning of BEd colleges, had not

been obtained for the college. Apart

from this, appointment of teaching

and non-teaching staff had not

stated that they had requested the S&ME department time and again to make the college functional.

Due to delay in functionalising the college, the buildings were being utilised as a Covid care hospital.

BUDDING DANCERS

'Future belongs to organic products'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 12: The twoday organic fair organised by the Press Club of Odisha here attracted good number of visitors, including many youngsters.

Stalls selling organic vegetables and foods were the main attraction of the fair that began Saturday. This apart, crafts made of waste ma terials also attracted the attention of the visitors.



Charity For Life... p_Ceremons



Girls perform Odissi at an event organised by Happiness Foundation at Sanskruti Bhawan in Puri, Sunday

Several organic farmers from various parts of the state congregated at the fair to exhibit and sell their produce.

A wide range of products, including freshly-harvested green vegetables and organic daily-use items, were displayed and sold in the two-day event that concluded Sunday. Many children also exhibited crafts made of waste materials like match sticks, water bottles, juice cans, CDs and masks at the fair.

"Our aim is to encourage recycling of waste materials. One can design decorative items and dailyuse goods from unwanted materials. We are also raising funds for the education of children by selling our products," said Shweta Agarwal of Unmukt Foundation

Visitors at the fair

who exhibited crafts at the fair.

This apart, paintings, greeting cards and calendars prepared by the children were also displayed at the fair. A class IX student drew the attention of many by designing a robot from waste materials like boxes and small cups.

"The main purpose of this fair is to encourage the production and consumption of organic produce. The Covid-19 pandemic has made people more conscious of health aspects. So, the demand

was conducted in

ent emphasis to each to

under the curve for the pre-

diction of 10-year all-cause

mortality compared with

the other scores

which was obtained from the na-

tional death registry in France.

During the follow-up period, 2,679

(8.4 per cent) patients died.

for organic products will go up manifold. The future belongs to the organic produce," said I-Concept Initiative MD Prabodh Kumar Mohanty.

Mohanty's orgnisation has been encouraging the farmers to opt for organic farming and market their products through Sabujavarna Organic Ltd, sources said.

"At present, we are working with 4,000 farmers from Bolangir, Kendrapara, Puri and Nayagarh districts," Mohanty added.

Interstate vehicle lifters' gang member nabbed in City

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 12: The twin city Commissionerate Police Sunday nabbed the member of an interstate vehicle lifters' gang active in and around Odisha, an official said.

The accused was identified as Abdul Saqoor, who hails from Chhattisgarh, was residing in Chandaka area here, added the official. About their modus operandi, a Saheed Nagar police official said that Saqoor used to get stolen vehicle from a notorious gang and tamper with their registration details before selling those to prospective buvers.

"Saqoor used to purchase damaged vehicles put on sale by a leading non-banking financial institution. After getting vehicles stolen by the gang, mostly from Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, Saqoor would change its registration details

with that of the scrapped ones. Then, he would sell those to prospective buyers in and around Odisha," said the official. A team of Madhya Pradesh police, investigating the involvement of the gang in a series of vehicle theft cases, recently visited Odisha searching for Saqoor. The team informed the matter to the Commissionerate Police and, with the help of local police, carried out

raids at several places in the City. However, they failed to trace Saqoor and returned empty-handed. Following the lead, Saheed Nagar police launched a manhunt and managed to arrest Saqoor Sunday.

The accused reportedly confessed to have sold at least 40 stolen vehicles received from the gang with forged registration numbers. The Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh police have been informed about Sagoor's arrest. They will soon reach Bhubaneswar to take the accused on remand, added the officer.

novel artificial intelligence score provides a more accurate forecast of the like-

lihood of patients with suspected or known coronary artery disease dying within 10 years than established scores used by health professionals worldwide, researchers have found. The research, presented at

EuroEcho 2021, found that the machine learning (ML) score was able to predict which patients would be alive or dead with 76 per cent accuracy.

This means that in approximately three out of four patients, the score made the correct prediction," said researcher Theo Pezel of the US' Johns Hopkins Hospital.

For the study, the team involved over 30,000 patients referred for stress cardiovascular magnetic resonance (CMR) between 2008 and 2018 because of chest pain, shortness of breath on exertion, or high risk of cardiovascular disease but

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE FOR ACCURACY

ML can predict death risk in suspected, known heart patients

For study, the team involved over 30,000 patients referred for stress cardiovascular magnetic resonance (CMR) between 2008 and 2018 because of chest pain, shortness of breath on exertion, or high risk of cardiovascular disease but no symptoms

igh risk was defined as having at least two risk factors such as hypertension, diabetes, dvslipidemia and current smoking

an of six years for all-cause death, and during the follow-up period, 2,679 (8.4 per cent) p

no symptoms.



dian of six years for all-cause death,

High risk was defined as hav-

cent were men.

clinical and 11 CMR parameters. Patients were followed up for a me-

ML was conducted in two steps. First, it was used to select which of the clinical and CMR parameters could predict death and which could not. Second, ML was used to build an algorithm based on the important parameters identified in step one, allocating different emphasis to each to create the best prediction. Patients were then given a score of 0 (low risk) to 10 (high risk) for the likelihood of

death within 10 years. step one, allocating differ-The ML score was able to predict which patients would be alive or create the best prediction dead with 76 per cent accuracy (in he ML score had a sigstatistical terms, the area under the nificantly higher area curve was 0.76).

Using the same data, they calculated the 10-year risk of all-cause death using established scores and a previously derived score incorporating clinical and CMR data.

The ML score had a significantly higher area under the curve for the prediction of 10-year all-causemortality compared with the other scores. IANS

hypertension, diabetes, dyslipidemia, and current smoking. The

ing at least two risk factors such as

Information was collected on 23

average age was 64 years and 66 per



two steps. First, it was used to select which of the clinical and CMR parameters could predict death and which could not Second, ML was used to Sbuild an algorithm based on the important parameters identified in

downtown

ODISHA PUSHTI MAHOTSAV MUB promotes enhanced dietary diversity, nutritional knowledge



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 12: In a bid to fortify nutritional knowledge in the hinterlands of the state, Odisha Livelihoods Mission (OLM) of Mission Shakti celebrated a weeklong Odisha Pushti Mahotsav across 2,500 Gram Panchayats in the state, which concluded Sunday.

Through the initiative, around 25 lakh women self-help group (SHG) members in 25,000 villages are lead ing the era of nutritional enlight enment. The Mahotsav celebrated the promotion of nutrition garden leading to enhanced dietary diversity and nutritional knowledge of rural communities in Odisha.

The Mahotsav was organised in a campaign mode from December 6 to 12 this year in partnership with the Azim Premji Foundation (APF), Women and Child Development and Health and Family Welfare departments.

As per the recent study conducted by Oxfam India, the Mo



Odisha Pushti Mahotsav as India's argest nutrition festival highlights how every rural household in the state is now nutritionally literate. With Mo Upakari Bagicha in every backyard, every family will have four-square nutritionally balanced diet

around the year MANSI NIMBHAL CEO OF ODISHA

Upakari Bagicha (MUB) programme has successfully promoted 4,74,000 nutrition gardens. Approximately 4,70,000 SHG women have been trained to adopt positive health and nutrition practices through Participatory Learning & Action - Linking Agriculture & Natural Resources to Nutrition (PLA-LANN) process. Nearly, 11,704 community cadres have been capacitated to support rural households in adopting nutrition garden and practices.

The programme has bagged many accolades including Outlook Poshan Award 2019 in the category of 'Safe and Nutritious Food', MUB is one of best practices of Mission Shakti department and is now being implemented in other states like Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh. Mission Shakti Commissioner-

cum-Secretary Sujata R Karthikeyan said, "Odisha Pushti Mahotsav is a community led celebration that signifies augmented nutritional outcomes in every village of Odisha. It is delightful to see how communities across the state have embraced the MUB programme as their own initiative." CEO of Odisha Livelihood

Mission Mansi Nimbhal said, "Odisha Pushti Mahotsav as India's largest nutrition festival highlights how every rural household in the state is nutritionally literate. With Mo Upakari Bagicha in every backyard, every family will have foursquare nutritionally balanced diet."

Sabita Bada, a member of Dharitri SHG group from Jujomara Block of Sambalpur district said, "Rural communities are welcoming" this effort of the state government with great ardour. It enhances and strengthens nutritional knowledge at the grassroots. After learning about the importance of consuming 10 food groups (pulses, grains, nuts, seeds, dairy, meat, eggs, fish, green leaf and vegetables), households in my village have diversified their everyday food platter."



The concluding event of 9th 'Odishi Raaga Mahotsav' in progress at Rabindra Mandap in Bhubaneswar, Sunday

AILY TPR DIPS TO 0.26% IN STAT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 12: Odisha's Covid-19 caseload Sunday mounted to 10,51,574 after 160 more people including 20 children, tested positive for the infection while one fresh fatality pushed the death toll to 8,434, a Health department official said.

There has been a drop in the number of new infections as the state logged 173 cases Saturday, 286 cases Friday, 195 Thursday, and 255 Wednesday.

Of the new infections, Khurda district, of which state Capital Bhubaneswar is a part, reported the highest of 86 cases followed by



10 in Sundargarh. Ten districts did not report any new cases in the last 24 hours. With 160 people testing positive There has been a drop in the number of new infections as the state logged 173 cases Saturday, 286 cases Friday, 195 Thursday, and 255 cases Wednesday

Saturday, the coastal state's daily test positivity rate (TPR) now stands at 0.26 per cent.

out of 59,346 samples tested

One fatality in Bhadrak district took the state's Covid-19 death toll to 8,434.

OP PHOTO

This apart, 53 other Covid-19 patients have died due to comorbidities so far, the Health department official said.

The coastal state currently has 1,955 active Covid-19 cases while 10,41,132 patients have recovered from the highly infectious disease, including 205 Saturday.

Odisha has thus far conducted over 2.44 crore sample tests and the state's cumulative positivity rate stands at 4.3 per cent.

As many 1,75,98,902 people have been fully inoculated with both doses of Covid-19 vaccine.

Registration open for NCC alumni assn

Cuttack, Dec 12: The NCC alumni association has been inagurated by the Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi Nov 19, 2021.

The ex cadets, serving Officers, ANOs and PI staff of NCC can register themselves as a life member or associate member with a registration fee of Rs 100 only. The association has been formed to bring NCC alumni together for furtherance of the aims of NCC. Members will be able to contribute from various spheres of life where they are currently engaged. The association aims to promote skill development and impart employable skills needed for working in the government sectors and reputed industries.

The registered alumni will have authorised access to all NCC Units and will be eligible for applying ucation, cognitive therapy, behavin the specific job openings that ior modification, and counseling." would be listed on the website

Application on for ASI posts

Bhubaneswar: Odisha Police has invited applications for the posts of assistant sub-inspectors (ASI) of police (communication). The application process will commence December 13, 2021 at 9am and end January 2, 2022. The recruitment drive will fill over 140 vacancies in Odisha Police. Odisha Police is looking for eligible candidates who have passed BSc or BTech in Computer Science /Information Technology/ Information Science and Technology / Electronics & Telecommunications / Information Technology and Management / Physics / Mathematics /Statistics / Electronics or allied subject or Bachelor in Computer Application (BCA) from any recognized University or Bachelor Degree in Engineering in Computer Science / Information Technology / Electronics and Communication / Electrical / Electronics / Instrumentation or allied subjects from a recognized university for appointment as ASI of Police (Communication) on initial appointment basis." Interested candidates can check the official notification on the official



Association pay tribute to Netaii Subhas

KIIT-IS inaugurates SEN Globe for differently-abled children

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 12: A Special Education Needs (SEN) Globe was inaugurated at KIIT International School (KIIT-IS) Sunday. The SEN Globe will set another benchmark in inclusive education with extensive infrastructure in the school

It aims to provide better remedial therapy for the Special Educational Needs' departmental wing. The SEN Globe was inaugurated in the presence of Merry Barua, Founder Director of Action for Autism National Centre for Autism, India; Indrani Basu Founder and Director of Autism Society, West Bengal; Achyuta Samanta, Founder KIIT & KISS, and Mona Lisa Bal, Chairperson, KIIT International School

In her speech. Barua said th

in Odisha by establishing SEN Globe. "It is a matter of pride that more than 400 differently-abled individuals have been employed by the KIIT Group of Institutes. KIIT has such capacity, infrastructure, and administrative mind to set up this kind of special wing," she added. Samanta said, "This wing of KIIT-

IS will be useful for differently-abled students. KIIT-IS is committed and has always recognised the importance and the role of special education."

Mona Lisa Bal said, "We have children with reading difficulties. children with attention deficit and hyperactivity, children in the autism spectrum disorder, and children with intellectual impairment. To cater to different needs of these children, we provide occupational therapy, speech therapy, special ed-

POST NEWS NETWORK

XIM varsity hosts Foundation Day

website at www.odishapolice.gov.in.

Bhubaneswar: Xavier Institute of Management (XIM) University hosted its Foundation Day Saturday at the Old Campus at Xavier Square,

Bhubaneswar. Students from the MBA-**Business Management and Executive** MBA programmes attended the event. Chandrajit Banerjee, Director General of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), was the chief guest and speaker for the event. With over 33 years of experience with CII, he has been serving as the Director General since 2008 and is responsible for the overall operations of CII. On the occasion, Banerjee was conferred with the Honorary Doctoral Degree in Business Management by the university. Banerjee addressed the gathering and shared his insights on Indian economy, calling it the largest developing country globally, and shared his dream for India 25 years down the line.

WASSUP TODAY

CUTTACK

- Distribution of BSKY smart cards by CM Naveen Patnaik, Bali Yatra Ground, 10:50am
- Book launch, hotel Dwarika. Bajrakabati Road, 5pm

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.

association's silver jubilee in Cuttack, Sunday

KIIT-IS has done exemplary work

PERILOUS PRESENTEEISM WFH leaves lowest paid at more risk of Covid infection

he latest directive from the UK government that people should work from home has led to concerns about the impact on businesses in the run up to Christmas. But it is also likely to have a devastating effect on people on low pay as they may be unable to work from home.

The same is true of new rules requiring people to self-isolate for ten days after being in contact with someone infected with the omicron variant. For those with limited access to sick pay or who are unable to work from home, both measures could lead to a rise in "sickness presenteeism"- going to work when you are ill. The risk of this happening should not be ignored as governments attempt to deal with the new Covid-19 strain.

Recent research has shown that people in low paid, insecure and self-employed roles are driven by financial necessity to presenteeism. This then spreads disease, shown in separate research which highlights the disproportionate Covid rates in low paid, manual and frontline workers.

Many of these people cannot rely on statutory sick pay, which is set in the UK at £96 per week (among the least generous levels in Europe), so they have no choice but to turn up to work. Around 1.8 million employees do not qualify for sick pay because they don't earn enough, and 5 million miss out because they are self-employed.

Many immigrants also are ineligible, and while the government offers a payment of £500 to cover a period of self-isolation, for the many thousands of workers without a contract, this is difficult to access. Recent analysis highlighted that over 5,00,000 seasonal workers employed over the festive season in the UK will not qualify for statutory sick pay.

Fairness and safety

So while the government urges people to work from home in an effort to limit the spread of omicron, there is also an urgent need to deter contagious presenteeism. As the director-general of the World Health Organization said last year,

RED FLAGS OF THE CULTURE

Presenteeism grinds down the sick worker making symptoms worse and increasing the chance of future health problems

Evidences from a number of studies also show that presenteeism is a significant predictor of long-term absenteeism, posing a risk to both immediate and future productivity

he health of co-workers could also be harmed, and their work load increased by an ill person's reduced output

Beyond the workplace, presenteeism cre-ates tensions at home and leads to a poorer quality of life for the whole family.

"With decisive, early action, we can slow down the virus and prevent infections"

But what does decisive action mean to a worker on a very low income with no access to benefits that others take for granted?

One obvious step would be to drastically improve access to sick pay, allowing people to take time off without leaving themselves in dire



More broadly, the impact of presenteeism extends beyond the employee's own health, to the organisation, and the wider economy

on presenteeism highlights the ef-

making symptoms worse and in-

creasing the chance of future health

problems. Evidences from a num-

ber of studies also show that pre-

senteeism is a significant predic-

tor of long-term absenteeism,

posing a risk to both immediate

and future productivity.

It grinds down the sick worker

fects it can have.

financial straits.

In the US for example, the introduction in April 2020 of legislation in response to Covid, which allowed for two weeks of paid sick leave, led to a reduction of nearly 50 per cent in the number of daily Covid infections.

Even in a world without Covid, the consequences of working while ill appear obvious, and research

The health of co-workers could also be harmed, and their work load increased by an ill person's reduced output. Beyond the workplace, presenteeism creates tensions at home and leads to a poorer quality of life for the whole family.

More broadly, the impact of presenteeism extends beyond the employee's own health, to the organisation, and the wider economy. And although it may seem harder to address than absenteeism (not showing up for work), it is equally as important and worthy of the same attention.

Help for the most vulnerable needs to be more widely available and easier to access. Organisations which employ agency workers, should improve transparency around terms and conditions, and be more accountable for presenteeism when it occurs. And trade unions, who have done very little to encourage unionisation of precarious workers, should demand more protection. It is at times like these when they - and society as a whole - need it most.

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state

SHORT TAKES

Teacher among 2 held for poaching

Kendrapara: A primary school headmaster was among two people arrested for allegedly killing a spotted deer by setting up traps in Bhitarkanika National Park, a forest officer said Sunday. Acting on a tip-off, forest personnel nabbed the duo in a village near the national park Friday, and seized 5 kg of venison, six traps, two nets and two sharp weapons from their possession, he said. The arrested persons, identified as Fakir Mohan Nayak, headmaster of governmentaided Bagapatia Primary School, and Baikuntha Parida were booked under several sections of the Wildlife Protection Act. 1972, and produced before a court which remanded them to judicial custody, the forest officer added.

Driver dies as truck falls off bridge

Parjang: In a tragic mishap, a driver was killed after an iron ore-laden truck fell off the Saranga bridge on National Highway-53 under Parjang police limits in Dhenkanal district, Sunday. The driver was identified as Manas Ranjan Dhibar, a resident of Pallahara in Angul district. The mishap occurred when he was enroute to Angul from Keonjhar. However, the driver lost control on the wheels and fell off the bridge following a blast on its tyre. The driver died on the spot. On being informed, Talcher fire service personnel reached the spot and launched a rescue operation. Later, police sent the body for post-mortem and launched an investigation into the incident.

Job scams alleged in 17 panchayats

Kotpad: Various projects were executed under MGNREGS in 17 panchayats under Kotpad block in Koraput district during the pandemic to create scope of labour-intensive works for local people. However, funds in many cases have allegedly been misappropriated by some contractors, panchayat executive officers and junior engineers. It was alleged that job card holders in 17 panchayats were not engaged in works, but some contractors had somehow managed to get their job cards and prepared forged muster rolls. The wages of the job card holders were embezzled. BDO Dasarathi Sorabu said

places in the district.

Patnaik also inaugurated several projects on infrastructure, education. health, livelihoods, sanitation, irrigation, energy, women, and child development worth ₹2.170 crore in

COUNTERING THE MENACE Trenches to be dug on elephant routes

Badibahal, Jogisarda and other villages for some weeks.

In view of the problem, officials of the forest department held discussion with people of Bhalupalli how to deal with the menace. ACF Babajicharan Roul, ranger Alok Majhi and forest officials were present at the meeting. Locals expressed their displeasure over the frequent entry of elephants into villages. A marauding tusker has made matters worse for locals and kiled a person in the area. The ACF said that the officials of the Bhubaneswar wildlife division have been intimated about the need of tranquilising the tusker and shifting it elsewhere. The forest officials said that

solar lights will be installed in these villages soon. Most importantly, a decision was taken to dig trenches across some elephant routes on the outskirts of Ramai and Bhaludunguri village to prevent the animals from entering human habitations.



Volunteers of National Service Scheme (NSS) of Indira Priyadarshini Higher Secondary School at G Udayagiri in Kandhamal district warming up before taking part in a sanitation drive under their NSS programme held on the college premises, Sunday

Naveen hands out BSKY health cards in Ganjam

Smart Health Card is the best gift

PNN & AGENCIES

POST NEWS NETWORK

elephant mayhem.

Loisingha, Dec 12: While people

in many villages under Loisingha

block in Bolangir district have lost

their sleep over persistent ele-

phant menace, the forest depart-

ment has decided to dig trenches

on the elephant routes in the area

to prevent the animals from caus-

ing mayhem. Besides, another

decision was taken to instal solar

lights in the villages facing

mals have damaged crops on large

tracts of land and pulled down sev-

eral houses in Bhalupalli,

According to reports, the ani-

for the people of the coastal state. Berhampur, Dec 12: Chief He said 3.5 crore people of 96 lakh families of the state will be ben-Minister Naveen Patnaik Sunday efited from the BSKY Smart visited his native Ganjam district with a trip to Maa Tara Tarini tem-Health Card. ple, followed by programmes such Patnaik praised the role of as distribution of smart health women in containing the spread cards and inauguration of a bus of Covid-19 in the Ganjam district. "The womenfolk, especially service to connect major tourist members of the Mission Shakti,

have been doing good work. They have also taken a lead role in containing the Covid-19 infection in the district", the chief minister said.

About 1.000 members of the panchavat raj and several members of the SHGs attended the meeting held near the temple.

The chief minister also launched the Ganjam Darshan, a tourism trip to cover major tourist places in the district in one day.

During his visit to his Hinjili constituency, Patnaik flagged off a special high-tech bus for the purpose. The packaged tourism trip within the district will be conducted by the Ganjam Urban **Transport Services Limited** (GUTSL). The 14-hour trip will include five hours of travel time, around 6.30 hours of sightseeing and another 2.30 hours for break fast, lunch and high-tea.

The Ganjam Darshan tour bus will start at 7.30 am from Berhampur and return to the city at 9.00 pm. During the period, the bus will travel around 190-km and cover at least eight tourist places in the district, including Silk City.

Tourist spots like Tara Tarini, Jaugarh, famous for Ashokan rock edict, Nirmaljhar, Bateswar near Potagarh, Tampara lake, Gopalpuron-sea and Bhairavi temple will be covered in the day-long trip.

Olive Ridleys spotted along Gahirmatha coast

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kendrapara, Dec 12: Olive Ridley sea turtles have begun emerging from the swirling waters of the Bay of Bengal off Gahirmatha coast marking the commencement of the mass nesting of this endangered marine species.

Forest personnel on patrolling duty have sighted pairs of turtles on the beach.

The turtle surveying teams spotted hundreds of pairs of turtles along the Gahirmatha coast, which is acclaimed as the world's largest known nesting ground of these marine creatures, officials said.

Apart from Gahirmatha, the threatened aquatic species also reach the Rushikulya river mouth and Devi river mouth for mass nesting.

Prohibition on fishing has been clamped in Gahirmatha zone to ensure the mating of the marine animals, said Debashis Bhoi, the Gahirmatha forest range officer.

After the end of the mating season, most of the male turtles usually return to the sea leaving behind the female turtles to lay the eggs.

The female turtles virtually invade the nesting beaches usually at the dead of the night for laying the eggs, a phenomenon called 'arribada'.

A female turtle usually

DGP REVIEWS SECURITY IN SWABHIMAN ANCHAL 'New strategy chalked out to counter Reds'



POST NEWS NETWORK

Malkangiri/Chitrakonda, Dec 12: DGP Abhay said that police have chalked out a new strategy to counter the Left wing insurgency in Swabhiman Anchal and will ensure peaceful and smooth conduct of the panchayat elections in the area.

The DGP reviewed security arrangements in Swabhiman Anchal under Chitrakonda block of Malkangiri district Sunday, He also visited the newly set up BSF camp at Ghanabeda where he took stock of the ongoing anti-Maoist operations by the security forces.

The DGP also talked to local res-

idents about various issues. He

said that the state government has

been carrying out various devel-

at Ghanabeda as a result of the hard work by BSF, SOG jawans and police officials braving all odds.

While interacting with the DGP, people of Ghanabeda urged him to ensure implementation of various other works in the Swabhiman Anchal.

He discussed with police officials and BSF jawans on future strategies to make the Swabhiman Anchal completely free of left wing extremism. At Ghanabeda BSF camp, the DGP recalled the sacrifices of many police, BSF and CRPF jawans in the anti-Maoist operations.

"All developmental works will be carried forward in Swabhiman Anchal. People in the area have been living peacefully and will do the same in future. I hope those who have left their villages due to Maoist threat will return to their homes. Police are always on toes to render their services," he added. Director of Intelligence Lalit Das, IGP (Operation) Amitabh Thakur, BSF DIG Sanjay Kumar Singh, SIW Anirudh Singh and Malkangiri SP Prahallad S Meena were present at the review meeting. Later, the DGP left for Koraput. He also inaugurated the new building of Pottangi police station on the Andhra Pradesh border.

that no such complaint in this regard was received. Action will be taken only after a complaint, he added.

CORRIGENDUM

Orissa POST carried a report '₹10cr NGT fine on Hindalco, GMR' on December 10, 2021 edition. The name of GMR has been inadvertently mentioned instead of Raipur Energen Ltd (REL). The error is regretted. EDITOR the district, an official said.

After he arrived at Purushottampur, the chief minister visited the Maa Tara Tarini temple, a famous Shakti shrine, and sought blessings from the presiding deity.

Addressing a gathering near the temple, Patnaik said the state government is committed to providing better medical care to the public and in this regard, Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana (BSKY)

Cong, BJP workers detained during visit

undreds of Congress and BJP workers protested against Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik's visit to Ganjam Sunday. Later, they were detained by the district police to prevent any untoward situation. A source said that the Congress workers blocked a road at RMC square in Hinjili area and waved black flags as a token of protest. The protesters demanded dismissal of Minister of State (MoS) Home Dibya Shankar Mishra for his alleged nexus with the key accused Gobinda Sahu in the murder of Kalahandi school teacher Mamita Meher. Policemen deployed at the spot dispersed many protesters and detained a few of the Congress and BJP workers well ahead of Patnaik's arrival.

about 120 to 150 eggs and leaves the nesting ground to stride back into the deep sea water. Hatchlings emerge after 45 to 60 days but many of the eggs are devoured by the predators. Besides, eggs are also washed away by sea waves during high tide. The eggs are incubated in the nests and grow, sans mothers to emerge as hatchlings. This is a rare natural phenomenon as the baby turtles grow without their mother, Bhoi said.

opmental projects like road connectivity, drinking water, schools and bridges with help of Odisha Police and security forces.

The DGP also assured locals that more projects will be taken up in the area. "Odisha Police has been working to provide security for people and ensure progress of various developmental works in the area. It will do the same in future," he observed. He expressed his pleasure over establishment of the BSF camp

MAKING A POINT



A training programme for farmers and farmwomen organised by Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Rayagada, is underway at Gunupur, Sunday

'Sudakshya' gives wings to youths' dreams

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sundargarh, Dec 12: A free coaching programme titled 'Sudakshya' launched by the district administration here has been helping educated youths in fulfilling their career dreams, a report said.

Recounting his experience, Nutap Behera, an educated youth from the district said that after finishing studies, he applied for various competitive exams with self preparation for government jobs. However, he was not well prepared to crack them.

But with the help of free coaching programme, 'Sudakshya', he tasted success and was appointed as the Junior Revenue Assistant at the Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) in Sundargarh, Behera said while sharing his career story.

Nutap hails from Gangajal village under the mining affected Kutra block of Sundargarh district. His father Yudhisthir Behera earlier worked as a security guard but now stays at home due to ill health. His mother Urmila is an Anganwadi worker. Nutap has achieved his goal with coaching and mentoring under the unique programme of the district 'Sudakshya'

'Sudakshya' has been instrumental in fulfilling the dreams of many other educated youth in Sundargarh district. The pro-



gramme, designed by the district administration and started from February 2021, has already completed coaching for 3 batches.

With free coaching at three centres spread strategically in Sundargarh, Rourkela and Bonai, as many as 245 candidates have secured jobs at various government and private institutions so far.

The District Mineral Foundation (DMF), Sundargarh supports the 'Sudakshya' programme while a voluntary organisation Niyatee Foundation is the implementation partner.

The 'Sudakshya' initiative was launched by the district administration of Sundargarh to provide free job-oriented coaching for +2 and

FREE COACHING FOR JOBS

for +2 & +3 pass out st

The new	With free
initiative of the	coaching at three
admin, which	centres spread
started from	strategically in
February 2021,	Sundargarh,
has already	Rourkela and
completed	Bonai, as many as
coaching for	245 candidates
three batches	have secured jobs

+3 pass-out students in the district. The programme entails coaching for banking and insurance, staff selection commission, Indian

Railways, Indian Army, Indian Air Force, Indian Navy, Odisha Police and various paramilitary forces.

Candidates are trained to crack various competitive exams with coaching on subjects like mathematics, reasoning, general knowledge, computers, personality development, communication skills, etc.

Besides, regular weekly tests and mock interviews are held for the candidates under 'Sudakshva'. Textbooks and previous question papers are provided to the students to prepare for different exams. Moreover, aspirants of police, armed and paramilitary forces are trained accordingly for their test on physical ability.

Candidates from the mining affected blocks like Koida, Rajgangpur, Kutra, Lahunipada, Hemgir and Kuanrmunda, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and BPL card holder families are given priority during enrolment for the 'Sudakshya' programme.

Along with free coaching, the candidates are also provided with free food and accommodation, uniforms, study materials and 24x7 internet facility with e-Library. As a result, educated youngsters from poor, tribal and middle class families in the district have been able to augment their skills and crackjobs in various government and private organisations.







power post

FOCUS INEQUALITY

Live within; be not shaken by outward happenings

SRI AUROBINDO



Olympian Boycott

he USA, under President Joe Biden, has taken on China head on, announcing diplomatic boycott of the Beijing Winter Olympic Games beginning in less than two months from now. The symbolism of the boycott is so powerful that China has immediately threatened to take 'counter-measures' without spelling out the form and shape of its counterattack. But, it is a political war spilling out of the arena of international sports of the highest calibre. The new face-off shows how the USA's relations with China and Russia have soured even as the latter two are closing ranks against the former since they began to fill the vacuum created by the US troops pullout from Afghanistan. Predictably, Australia, the UK and Canada have decided to join the USA in the boycott. There is speculation more countries, including some from Europe, will also rally behind the USA to 'expose China for its 'human rights violations' in Xinjiang, Tibet and Hong Kong.

For months, human rights groups and some politicians have urged countries to boycott the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing over the Chinese government's alleged rights abuses. The Biden administration said this week that it would not send US government officials to the Beijing Games in protest against China's 'human rights violations,' including its alleged abuses against Uyghur Moslems in Xinjiang province and anti-democratic crackdown in Hong Kong. This diplomatic boycott means the athletes will not be prevented from participating in the Games, but no officials from the USA and countries joining the boycott will attend the proceedings. This would also mean that barring exceptions, most athletes would prefer not to take any personal risks when their own country's government has taken such a severe stance. The whole exercise has a symbolic value which will eventually hurt the Chinese government. This is more so because President Xi Jinping will be denied the opportunity to showcase China's achievements in sports under his leadership on the world stage without any controversy diverting the attention from the Games and also score brownie points before his domestic audience, especially amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Bristling with anger at the potential of the boycott to lower its image internationally, China is trying to put out the message that there is no need to take the boycott seriously as it will not have any "influence on Beijing's success in hosting the Olympics." No one has much doubt that the boycott is not going to force China to change its policies of repression in Xinjiang, Tibet or Hong Kong. But, the solid gain that the USA and its allies are calculating to achieve is that China's 'record' of human rights abuse will once again be under international scrutiny in a big way. It may make it even harder for the USA and China to work together on things Beijing and Washington are expected to cooperate on, such as climate change, North Korea or the Iran nuclear deal. But, China has also much to answer for before the international sports bodies for the treatment meted out to its tennis star of international acclaim Peng Shuai, who disappeared from public eye in November after she accused on the social media China's former vice-premier, Zhang Gaoli, of sexually abusing her. "Even if it is like an egg hitting a rock, or I am like a moth drawn to the flame, inviting self-destruction, I will tell the truth about you," she said on the social media of the alleged sexual assault on her. The Women's Tennis Association and some of the world's top tennis players, including Naomi Osaka and Novak Djokovic, raised concern for her safety. China's typical response was to downplay the allegation, remove her social media post and comments on it making the allegation of scandal all the more credible.

Olympic boycotts as a political tool were resorted to several times in the past. Though their efficacy may be questionable, they do serve in some measure the purpose they are used for. The last time the US tried it in earnest - with no diplomats, no athletes, no presence at all - was during the 1980 Moscow Olympics to protest the Soviet Union's Afghanistan invasion. That was a full boycott. Though Moscow did not change its policy, the boycott did blacken the then USSR in the eyes of the international community.

The main objective of the boycott this time around is to contain China using the human rights violations issue at a time when it has become more powerful and wealthier. Earlier, the USA and several of its allies have imposed sanctions on Chinese government officials for actions in Xinjiang and Hong Kong. The USA has passed a legislation to protect democracy in Hong Kong, and the House recently cleared a Bill to limit imports from Xinjiang tied to forced labour. The boycott can create the impression that there cannot be Olympics as usual when there is a serious issue of human rights violation. The Olympic Games may raise the visibility of China's atrocities. This may mean a small victory, but a victory nonetheless. This may even put pressure on sports bodies such as the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to

TIME OF EXTREME PAIN

ddressing students of the Ahmedabad University recently, Nobel laureate Abhijit Banerjee said, "People in India are in extreme pain and the economy is still below the 2019 levels, with small aspirations of people becoming even smaller now." In July 2018, Nobel laureate Amartya Sen had said that India has taken a quantum jump in the wrong direction after 2014. He was critical of the Modi government because India was limping backward due to a decline in expenditure on health and education. We know India has the ignominy

of being a country of having the

Santosh Kumar Mohapatra

THE YEAR 2020 MARKED THE STEEPEST INCREASE IN GLOBAL BILLIONAIRES' SHARE OF WEALTH ON

RECORD

highest number of poor and hungry people in the world. In 2019, around 19.44 crore faced hunger in India. The Multi-dimensional Poverty Index (MPI) prepared by Niti Aayog revealed that one in every four people in India was multi-dimensionally poor in 2016-17. As of 2018, more than 16.3 crore Indians did not have access to safe drinking water. An estimated 3 million Indians are homeless. Women, in particular, are vulnerable to appalling violence and

sexual exploitation.

According to the World Inequality Report 2022 released by the World Inequality Lab December 7, "India stands out as a poor and very unequal country, with an affluent elite, in the world." The bottom half of the Indian population owns 'almost nothing' of the national wealth, whereas the top one per cent earned more than one-fifth of the total national income.

Measured in terms of purchasing power parity, the average national income of the Indian adult population is Rs 204,200, while the average household wealth in India is equal to Rs 983,010. The income inequality can be understood from the fact that, in 2021, while the top 10 per cent and top 1 per cent of the population held 57.1 per cent and 21.7 per cent of total national income, respectively, the bottom half held just 13.1 per cent. While the bottom 50 per cent earns Rs 53,610, the top 10 per cent earns Rs 1,166,520. The middleclass that constitutes



Evidence from across the world has shown, fast GDP growth alone doesn't help, especially when it comes to tackling inequalities in accessing education and health

40 per cent earns 29.7 per cent of income. In 2021, the bottom 50 per cent of the nation held an average wealth of Rs 66,280 or 5.9 per cent of the total pie. The middleclass had an average wealth of Rs 7,23,930 or 29.5 per cent of the total. The top 10 per cent owned 64.6 per cent of the total wealth, averaging Rs 63,54,070 and the top 1 per cent owned 33 per cent, averaging Rs 3,24,49, 360.

The report has also flagged a drop in global income during 2020, with about half of the dip in rich countries and the rest in low-income and emerging economies. But what is disconcerting is that when India is removed from the analysis, it appears that the global bottom 50 per cent income share actually slightly increased in 2020.

Most of time, those who opposed the so-called economic liberalisation and advocated higher progressive taxes on the rich and corporates were dubbed as leftists and condemned. But now the World Inequality Report defies the very logic of economic liberalisation and justifies leftist views on economic liberalisation Evidence from across the world has

shown, fast GDP growth alone doesn't help, especially when it comes to tackling inequalities in accessing education and health. According to the report, the

deregulation and liberalisation policies implemented for India's economy since the mid-1980s have led to one of the most extreme increases in income and wealth inequality. While the top 1 percent has largely benefited from economic reforms, growth among low-and middle-income groups has been

relatively slow and poverty persists. Going back in time, the report shows that income inequality in India under colonial rule (1858-1947) was very high, with a top 10 per cent income share around 50 percent. After Independence, due to socialist-inspired Five-Year Plans, this share was reduced to 35-40 per cent. Owing to poor post-Independence economic conditions, India embarked upon deregulation and loosening controls in the form of liberalisation policies. Now, a few persons have amassed wealth leading to the impoverishment of many.

The wealth of the richest individuals in the world has grown at 6 to 9 per cent per annum since 1995 whereas average wealth has grown at 3.2 per cent per year. Since 1995, the share of global wealth possessed by billionaires has risen from 1 per cent to over 3 per cent. This increase was exacerbated during the pandemic. In fact, 2020 marked the steepest increase in global billionaires' share of wealth on record.

What is reprehensible is that the share of public wealth across countries has been on a decline for decades now. This trend has been magnified by the COVID crisis, during which governments borrowed the equivalent of 10-20 per cent of GDP, essentially from the private sector.

Currently, governments have more debts than assets as rich. wealthy and corporates are not paying their fair share and the government is taking recourse to debt-induced growth where the burden of debt falls on the masses through the decline in welfare expenditure while benefits of growth are garnered by the rich.

The ultra-low interest regime is also helping the rich to amass wealth at the cost of savers. Similarly, another reason for rich and corporates accumulating wealth at a faster rate is not due to hard work but bubbles and crashes of the stock market. The reduction of corporate taxes from 30 per cent to 22 per cent introduced in 2019 in India has not translated into any boom in private investment. There is an accretion to profits of corporates.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has never discussed the issue of income and wealth inequality. In his Independence Day speech in 2019, Modi said, "Let us never see wealth creators with suspicion. Only when wealth is created, wealth will be distributed." But the World Inequality Report reveals that national wealth has not been evenly distributed. Hence, the solution lies in the imposition of wealth and inheritance tax, keeping real interest rate positive, and taxing the windfall gains in share markets

The writer is an Odisha-based economist and columnist. Views are personal

SPECTRUM AGRICULTURE



The long night is over. The of NITI Aavog Arvind Panagarhia, pie The most glaring example was elections. In fact, this calls for di-

have second thoughts before accepting offers of hosting from countries like China in future.

This has also posed a grave diplomatic challenge to India. If Indian athletes and officials meekly join and participate in the Games, it could imply that India does not have the moral courage to stand up to a China-Russia-Taliban-Pakistan combination. On the other hand, if India joins the US and boycotts the Games, then it will be a clear message of where this country stands when the chips are down and issues concerning human rights violations are globally discussed.

WISDOM CORNER

- It isn't the mountains ahead to climb that wear you out; it's the pebble in vour shoe.
- MUHAMMAD ALI If you spend too much time thinking about a thing, you'll never get it BRUCE LEE

You may not control all the events that happen to you, but you can

MAYA ANGELOU

WORDS**WORTH**

decide not to be reduced by them.

Promession

his is an ecological alternative to cremation or burial. The corpse is frozen in liquid nitrogen and then shattered into powder by ultrasonic vibration before being buried in a biodegradeable box in a shallow grave. Green campaigners believe the technique could ease the crowding in gravevards and the increasingly harmful emissions from cremations. The inventor, the Swedish biologist Susanne Wiigh-Masak, claims that the process is good for the environment because the powder (which is essentially compost) breaks down in the soil more thoroughly and quickly than by conventional burial. She suggests that relatives plant a tree or bush above the grave as a long-term memorial. The first promatorium is to be opened in Sweden in 2006. Local authorities in the UK and elsewhere have also shown interest in the technique. Ms Wiigh-Masak created promession from Italian promessione, to swear to the truth. The place where the funeral is held and the process takes place has been named promatorium, a blend of promession and crematorium. The resulting powder is called promains, by analogy with the US term cremains for the ashes of a cremated person, itself a blend created from cremation remains.

LOI

A talking dog

Some race horses were staying in a Stable. One of them starts to boast about his track record. "In the last 15 races, I've won 8 of them!" Another horse breaks in, "Well in the last 27 races. I've won 19!!" "Oh that's good, but in the last 36

races, I've won 28!," says another, flicking his tail. At this point, they notice that a greyhound dog has been sitting there listening. "I don't mean to boast," says the greyhound, "but in my last 90 races, I've won 88 of them!" The horses are clearly amazed. "Wow!" says one, after a hushed silence "a talking dog."



Shivaji Sarkar THE GOVERNMENT **NEED NOT BE APPREHENSIVE OF** THE WTO OR **INTERNATIONAL**

BODIES WITH REGARDS TO THE FARMERS' ISSUES

TO THE EDITOR

are most welcome to contribute letters

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(200 words), articles and

requested to send their contact numbers and full

columns (between 750-1250 words). Contributors are

farmers called off their over vear-long stir and returned home as the Centre sent a formal letter accepting their major demands.

The farmers proved many people wrong but also gave the lesson that mere majority cannot impose even the best pro-people decisions. Farmers need the right price. In West Bengal not long ago

Marxist Left Front government had a huge majority. Yet it had to eat a humble pie when farmers in Nandigram and Singur put paid to its industrialisation plans. Maybe the state government's plans were good, but it became immaterial in the face of farmers protesting land acquisition. It is nearly similar now.

Where does the real power lie? Not in government with its elaborate security setup. Not in Parliament where laws are made. Not in the Supreme Court which can unmake laws. Real power lies only in the people. Only people are sovereign. That is what the year-long farmers' agitation suggests. This should make popular governments change their tack. The NDA government took the correct decision on junking the Land Acquisition Act and now on the farm laws. Now former Deputy Chairman

says an important aspect that crops up is the World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules on subsidies. India so far escaped with a peace clause for violating its subsidy rules. He indicates that the demand for MSP, which the WTO does not accept, may lead to a difficult global situation apart arguing that MSP would entail extra payment of Rs 1.5 trillion. He also stresses that the proposed massive transfers under MSP would bypass not only the urban poor but also the rural poor among the 46 per cent non-agricultural households

Any solution? Yes, either reform WTO or rethink on MSP. Or may be listen to another former NITI Aayog Deputy Chairman Raghuram Rajan on a TV discussion December 8. He emphasised that despite some good points in farm bills, agriculture needing reforms, India is so vast that decentralisation is essential. There could not be one solution for the entire country. India cannot be like China. Rajan gives the easy prescription. Governance should not resort to adamancy and electoral numbers are never enough to roughshod the sentiments that may not look palatable to the ruling parties. The governments in the past also had to eat a humble

the rise of NT Rama Rao in 1980s against a despotic Indira Gandhi.

At the same time, it should not be forgotten that even rich nations give farm subsidy and WTO ignores it. In the present context, the cases went for judicial review but the court did not resolve the issue. Rightfully, the popular government has taken the required decision. The government need not be apprehensive of the WTO or international bodies. If it could keep the claimate change issue at bay for several decades, it can do so for farm issues too.

The country should rather begin a new discussion on agriculture, crops, creating diverse food grain habits and sustaining ecology. Today's MSP issue is complex as farmer needs higher income. All the same the companies could not be allowed to have ways that bolster their profit at the cost the people's interests.

Despite a pan-India sentiment, it should not be forgotten that Nandigram or Singur or various long farmers' marches in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and other places, did not become national economic issues and need to observe whether the present MSP issue would rule the roost post-UP

versification of farm products and less dependence on mono or select cropping that may have led to this difficult situation post-Green Revolution.

So the debate now centres on multi-billion dollar question of how to reintroduce the diversity in food habits. In 1881, it was a nation of 220 million people eating millet and other food grains. It has changed to eating a 1.3 billion riceand-wheat eating behemoth riding on the Green Revolution. The farmers' issues are diverse and different in each region. There cannot be one-India solution be it MSP or crop pattern.

Of late, there is too much of centralisation. It is not required. This nation has to accept that it has yet to come out of the high poverty level. The Kisan Morchas should not see it beyond the corporate. Both will survive if the economics and finances are strong. The farmers' stir now should stress on having multi-pronged approach for ushering in a new diverse and strong farm environment. The government should help create that new farmer-dominated agriculture where no outsider needs to fix the MSP.

etters

101

Gift from India

Sir, For the first time since the Taliban took over Afghanistan, the Indian government has sent humanitarian aid for the people of Afghanistan. The consignment carried two tonnes of medicines which will be handed over to the representatives of the World Health Organisation for further distribution. Most importantly the labels

on the consignment of medicines read 'gift from the people of India to the people of Afghanistan'. The Taliban regime thanked India in no time. The situation in Afghanistan is catastrophic. The economic condition is going down, while the businesses in the war-ravaged country are running slow. The new Taliban regime has not got international recognition yet and this has led the people of Afghanistan to suffer. People there are deprived of food and healthcare amenities. India as a powerful country in the region has shown a big heart by initiating the help. This will be followed by other humanitarian aids in the upcoming days from India. A friend in need is a friend indeed, India is one of the first countries to send help to Afghanistan during their tough times which will help build good diplomatic and strategic ties with that country in the future. Deba Prasad Nayak, CUTTACK

Ample desecrations

Sir, Former Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi's autobiography "Justice for the Judge" unveils ample desecrations that have completely undermined the stature of the Supreme Court in handling cases. The former CJI's adamant urge to defend his reputation in the face of allegation of sexual harassment is disturbing and should be an alarm for democratic institutions to envisage impeachment against any individual holding a powerful post. Citizens' trust on the judiciary system wanes with the appointment of judges who favour their own influence and position.

Debadurllav Harichandan, BHUBANESWAR

Immense relief

Sir, Data emerging from South African hospitals showing the Omicron strain is milder than Delta comes as an immense relief. Most patients didn't require hospital visits, and even older or vulnerable patients could recover at their homes in 10-14 days. On the other hand, over 85 per cent of patients hospitalised in the country's current wave weren't inoculated, and two-thirds of them were under 40. It is also encouraging that just three per cent of hospitalised patients died, compared with 20 per cent from earlier outbreaks.

NJ Ravi Chander; BANGALORE







national



If inflation has to be brought down, then BJP will have to be defeated BHUPESH BAGHEL CHHATTISGARH CHIEF MINISTER

PLASTIC WASTE SCULPTURE MUSEUM **TO COME UP NEAR BANGALORE**

Karnataka will house a museum of plastic waste sculpture near Bangalore's picturesque holiday destination of Nandi Hills soon to sensitise people, it was announced Sunday



uote 77

Today's new India strives for solving problems, today India does not avoid problems

NARENDRA MODI PRIME MINISTER

Hindus think nothing will happen to them. We are facing challenges because of this mentality RABINDRA NARAIN SINGH

VHP PRESIDENT



CBI selectively as they continue to give selective consent in cases which suit them

DR JITENDRA SINGH UNION MINISTER OF STATE FOR PERSONNEL

SHORT TAKES

Complaint boxes soon in schools

Chennai: Tamil Nadu education department has directed all elementary and higher secondary schools in the government sector to install complaint boxes for students on campuses. According to a statement from the Tamil Nadu education department. 31.214 elementary schools and 6,177 government higher secondary schools will install complaint boxes in their respective schools.

Police, civic volunteer held

Kolkata: An assistant subinspector and a civic volunteer have been arrested for allegedly molesting a woman in Karunamoyee area, police said Sunday. The woman, in her twenties, had arrived in a bus from Asansol around midnight Thursday and sought help from the accused, they said. The duo offered a lift to the woman on

'India a country of Hindus, not Hindutvawadis'

Jaipur, Dec 12: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi Sunday said India is a country of Hindus and not Hindutvawadis, who want to be in power at any cost.

He said if there is inflation in the country and there is suffering, then this has been done by Hindutvawadis.

"This is a country of Hindus, not Hindutvawadis. If there is inflation in the country and there is suffering, then this has been done by Hindutvawadis. Hindutvawadis want power at any cost," Rahul said addressing a rally against rising inflation here. He also targeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying, "Modiji and his three-four industrialist friends ruined the country in seven years.

Describing Hindu and Hindutva as two different words, Rahul said just as two living beings cannot have one soul, two words cannot have the same meaning. A Hindu is one who is not afraid of anyone, embraces everyone and respects all religions, the Congress leader said. Mahatma Gandhi was a Hindu and Godse was Hindutvawadi the Congress leader said, stressing that a Hindu continuously searches





The Congress leader said Hindutvawadis have to be 'ousted' once again and the 'rule of Hindus' have to be brought in the country

for the search just like Mahatma Gandhi. But, in the end, one Hindutvawadi fired three bullets in his chest. Rahul said. "Hindutvawadi spends his entire life for power and he has nothing to do with truth. He only wants power and he can do anything for that, whether he has to beat or kill someone." he said in a statement. "His way is Sattagrah and not Satyagrah," Rahul said.

"On the contrary, Hindu faces his



fears and does not step back even one inch. Fear drowns Hindutvawadi and this fear creates hatred in his heart whereas a Hindu's heart contains love and strength." the Congress leader said.

"They say that they want power and they have nothing to do with truth. There is a rule of Hindutvadis in the country since 2014," he said. "I am Hindu and not Hindutvawadi," he added. Referring Hindu epics, he said it is nowhere written to kill and suppress the poor. "Be it the Ramayana or Gita, tell me where it is written that the poor has to be killed and downtrodden has to be crushed. Lord Krishna did not tell Ariun to kill brothers for power. It is written in the Gita that fight for the truth even if you have to die," he said. He

also alleged 90 per cent of the corporate profit in the country is with 20 companies. Pointing out at mediapersons, he said those who will broadcast the rally are also their 'slaves'. However, he said they are not Hindutvawadi but Hindus who have been suppressed.

"But Hindus cannot be suppressed. It did not happen in 3,000 years and it will not happen now. We are not afraid of dying," he said. Rahul said Congress governments waived loans of farmers because they are the backbone of the country but Modi "stabbed them in the back"

"He did not stab from the front, he stabbed in the back because he is Hindutvadi. When Hindu farmers stood up, Hindutvawadi said I apologise," said Rahul attacking the Prime Minister. He said Modi had promised good days but the good days have come only for Adani and Ambani.

Earlier, Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra slammed the Modi-led Union government, say ing it wants to sell to its industrialist friends whatever the Congress had built in 70 years. She alleged that the government is working for select industrialist friends instead of working for the good of people and farmers.

Pandemic becomes 'unexpected catalyst' for healthtech startups

The pandemic exposed the gaps in the healthcare industry INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 12: The Covid-19 pandemic wreaked havoc not only on human health but also on the global economy. However, for healthtech startups in India, the Covid-induced lockdowns and social distancing turned out to be a blessing in disguise and a driver of growth.

In India, the crumbling healthcare infrastructure was laid bare — poor hospital infrastructure, acute shortage of doctors, nursing staff and equipment and specialised treatment facilities, particularly in primary healthcare centres, in rural areas.

The widening gap between the number of healthcare providers and patients emphasised the role of digital technology to make healthcare available, accessible and affordable for the masses.



Further, with the pandemic propelling increased acceptance of online delivery of medicines, remote patient monitoring, digital health and tele-health, the healthcare startups began to gain a strong foothold.

According to the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI)-Praxis Global Alliance. in 2020, India's healthtech Industry was around \$1.9 billion, or under 1 per cent of the healthcare industry. With over 5.000 healthtech startups, it is estimated to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 39 per cent to touch \$5 billion by 2023.

Mehbooba Mufti under house arrest

AGENCIES

РТІ РНОТО

Srinagar, Dec 12: Authorities Sunday disallowed the youth convention of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and placed its president and former Chief Minister, Mehbooba Mufti under house arrest in Srinagar.

According to sources, the District Magistrate Srinagar has disallowed Sunday's youth convention by the PDP scheduled to be held at the high security Gupkar Road residence of Mehbooba Mufti Sources said because of the recent surge in Covid infection in Srinagar district the district magistrate decided not to allow the PDP youth convention. Sources also said Mufti has been placed under house arrest at her Gupkar Road residence in the city. The former Chief Minister of the erstwhile state of J-K charged that the government was looking for new ways to "deny rights" to the youth of Kashmir and to "pull them away from democracy and

Omicron reduces vax efficacy: WHO

The WHO said that given available data, it is likely that Omicron will outpace the Delta variant of coronavirus where community transmission occurs

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

New Delhi/Geneva, Dec 12: The Omicron coronavirus variant is more transmissible than the Delta strain and reduces vaccine efficacy but causes less severe symptoms according to early data, the World Health Organisation said Sunday.

The Delta variant, first identified in India earlier this year, is responsible for most of the world's coronavirus infections.

But South Africa's discovery of Omicron -- which has a large number of mutations -- last month prompted countries around the world to impose travel bans on southern African countries and reintroduce domestic restrictions to slow its spread.

rate of transmission was because it was less prone to immune responses, higher transmissibility or a combination of both.

Early evidence suggests Omicron causes "a reduction in vaccine efficacy against infection and transmission", the WHO said in a tech-

Omicron infections have so far caused "mild" illness or asymptomatic cases, but the WHO said the data was insufficient to establish the variant's clinical severity.

nical brief. "Given the current available data, it is likely that Omicron will outpace the Delta variant where community transmission occurs. it added.



Family members of Lt Colonel Harjinder Singh who died in the Tamil Nadu chopper crash, perform his last rites at Brar

their motorcycle and allegedly molested her, a senior police officer said, adding, they were suspended.

Couple found hanging at home

Jaipur: A man and his wife were found hanging from ceiling fans in two separate rooms of their house in Raiasthan's Bhilwara district. police said Sunday. Prima facie, it appears to be a case of suicide, they said. The incident occurred in the Beegod area, where Deepak Nagori (33) and his wife Kavita Nagori (30) were found hanging Sunday morning, SHO Thakkar Ram said. Kavita was Deepak's second wife. He had two children from his first marriage.

20 Bangladeshi nationals nabbed

Kolkata: Twenty Bangladeshi nationals were Sunday nabbed from a building in Anandapur area in the city for allegedly staying in the country illegally, a police officer said.

Kidnapper killed

Diphu (Assam): A member of a gang that had abducted a man was killed during an operation by security forces to rescue him in Assam's Karbi Anglong district Sunday, police said. The abducted person, an employee of a company engaged in four-laning work of a stretch of the national highway, was rescued safely, they said. A team of local police and the CRPF carried out the operation in Kania Engti village in the district, and during an exchange of fire, one of the gang members was killed, a senior official said.

to the WHO on November 24. manufacturers The WHO said Omicron had Vaccine spread to 63 countries as of Pfizer/BioNTech last week said December 9. Faster transmission three doses of their jabs were still was noted in South Africa, where effective against Omicron. Delta is less prevalent, and in Countries with sufficient vac-

Britain, where Delta is the domicine supplies such as Britain and France have encouraged their pop-But it stressed that a lack of data ulations to receive a third "booster" meant it could not say if Omicron's jab to fight Omicron



nant strain.

South Africa reported Omicron Square in New Delhi

Look at criminal's mental state too: SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 12: It is the duty of courts to take into consideration not only crime but also the criminal, his state of mind and his socioeconomic conditions, the Supreme Court has said. A bench headed by Justice L Nageswara Rao said it is the duty of courts to take into consideration the probability of the accused being reformed and rehabilitated.

"In view of the settled legal position, it is our bounden duty to take into consideration the probability of the accused being reformed and rehabilitated." "It is also our duty to take into consideration not only the crime but also the criminal, his state of mind and his socioeconomic conditions." the bench



also comprising Justices B R Gavai and B R Nagarathna said.

The observations were made by the top court while converting death sentence awarded to a man, convicted for killing two of his sib-

lings and his nephew over a prop erty dispute, to life imprisonment for a period of 30 years. The top court said the state (Madhya Pradesh) has not placed on record any evidence to show that there is no possibility with respect to reformation or rehabilitation of the convict.

push them on the path to violence".

The appellant comes from a rural and economically poor background. There are no criminal antecedents. The appellant cannot be said to be a hardened criminal. "This is the first offence committed by the appellant, no doubt, a heinous one. The certificate issued by the Jail Superintendent shows that the conduct of the appellant during incarceration has been satisfactory," the bench said.

The apex court said it cannot therefore be said that there is no possibility of the appellant being reformed and rehabilitated foreclosing the alternative option of a lesser sentence and making imposition of death sentence imperative.

Learning losses could ruin a whole generation: WB report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 12: The present generation of students risks losing \$ 17 trillion in lifetime earnings in present value, or about 14 per cent of today's global GDP, as a result of Covid-19-related school closures, according to a new report prepared by the World Bank in collaboration with UNESCO and UNICEF.

The report reveals that the impact is more severe than previously thought, and far exceeds the \$10 trillion estimates released in 2020

The report, titled "State of the Global Education Crisis: A Path to Recovery report", shows that in low- and middle-income countries, the share of children living in learning poverty -- already 53 per cent before the pandemic -- could

potentially reach 70 per cent given the long school closures and the ineffectiveness of remote learning to ensure full learning continuity during school closures

The Covid-19 crisis brought education systems across the world to a halt. Now, 21 months later: schools remain closed for millions of children, and others may never return to school. The loss of learning that many children are experiencing is morally unacceptable. And the potential increase of learning poverty might have a devastating impact on future productivity, earnings, and wellbeing for this generation of children and youth, their families and the world's economies," said Jaime Saavedra, World Bank Global Director for Education. The report pointed out that simu-



lations estimating that school closures resulted in significant learning losses are now being corroborated by real data.

"For example, regional evidence from Brazil, Pakistan, rural India, South Africa, and Mexico, among others, show substantial losses in math and reading. Analysis shows that in some countries, on average, learning losses are roughly proportional to the length of the closures. However, there was great heterogeneity across countries and by subject, students' socioeconomic status, gender, and grade level," it

said. The report highlighted that, to date, less than three per cent of governments' stimulus packages have been allocated to education and much more funding will be needed for immediate learning recovery.

It also noted that while nearly every country in the world offered remote learning opportunities for students, the quality and reach of such initiatives differed -- in most cases, they offered, at best, a rather partial substitute for in-person instruction.

"More than 200 million learners live in low- and lower middleincome countries that are unprepared to deploy remote learning during emergency school closures. Reopening schools must remain a top and urgent priority globally to stem and reverse learning losses. Countries should put in place learning recovery programs with the objective of assuring that students of this generation attain at least the same competencies of the previous generation

"In terms of improving the efficiency of learning, techniques like targeted instruction can help learning recovery, which means that teachers align instruction to the learning level of students, rather than an assumed starting point or curricular expectation.

"Targeted instruction will require addressing the learning data crisis by assessing students' learning levels. It also necessitates additional support to teachers so that they are well-equipped to teach to the level of where children are, which is crucial to prevent lossesfrom accumulating once children are back in school," it added.



AFSPA key issue in poll-bound Manipur

After the ruling BJP's two vital allies -- NPF and NPP -- the main Opposition Congress in Manipur demanded the withdrawal of AFSPA from the northeastern state

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Imphal, Dec 12: After firing by the security forces killed 14 civilians and injured 30 others in neighbouring Nagaland December 4, the repeal of the Armed Forces (Special Power) Act, 1958 is likely to be a top issue in the upcoming Assembly elections in Manipur scheduled early next year.

After the ruling BJP's two vital allies -- Naga People's Front (NPF) and National People's Party (NPP) -- the main opposition Congress in Manipur Saturday demanded the withdrawal of AFSPA from the northeastern state.

The NPP and the NPF had recently reiterated their demand to repeal of the 'draconian' law, as it did not 'help in any way' to tame the insurgency in the northeastern region

Manipur Pradesh Congress Committee's working president Keisham Meghachandra Saturday urged Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh to press Prime Minister Narendra Modi to repeal AFSPA in the ongoing Winter Session of the Parliament.

"Manipur Cabinet must adopt a resolution for the immediate removal of the AFSPA from the entire state," he told the media.

Meghachandra said the Congress government had earlier removed AFSPA from seven Assembly constituencies in Manipur.



"If Congress comes back to power in the 2022 elections, the first cabinet meeting would decide on the immediate and complete removal of AFSPA from the entire state of Manipur," the Congress leader said.

With not much time left for the Assembly polls, political parties are busy campaigning in Manipur, including the BJP, Congress, NPP and others.

BJP president JP Nadda has visited the northeastern state thrice since October, addressing many election rallies, while Home Minister Amit Shah visited the

state once and virtually addressed a function with an eye on the elections

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh, NPP President and Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma and many other politicians have also visited the poll-bound state to kick start the campaign for the vital elections

Elections to the 60-seat Manipur Assembly are likely to be held in February-March next year, along with Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Uttarakhand and Goa. The Election Commission has also initiated various exercises to hold the elections

in the state. The ruling BJP has been running the government since 2017 with the support of the NPP and the NPF, which has organisational base both in Manipur and Nagaland.

After 15 years, the Congress was ousted by the BJP-led alliance in 2017, despite emerging as the single largest party with 28 seats. But the saffron party, which had bagged 21 seats, stitched together a coalition government with the support of four NPP MLAs, four NPF members, the lone Trinamool Congress MLA and an Independent member.

Ahead of elections, AAP hits Congress where it hurts most

The Kejriwal-led party is focussing on two issues -- education and illegal sand mining -- in its fight against the Congress

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 12: As elections to the Punjab Assembly near, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has intensified its attack on the Congress government in the state.

The Kejriwal-led party is focussing on two issues -- education and illegal sand mining -- in its fight against the Congress.

It all started with Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia's visit to a primary government school in Punjab's Chakalan village followed by another visit to Makrauna Kalan -- the village of Chief Minister Charaniit Singh Channi's maternal grandfather in his Chamkaur Sahib Assembly seat.

There, Šisodia, who also holds the education portfolio in Delhi government, saw the dilapidated condition of the schools and said that if the Punjab government deems itself to have the best education system then it is lying and messing up with the future of millions of children and thereby, that of the country's.



Both he and Punjab Education Minister Pargat Singh got into a war of words over the issue with the former challenging the latter to present a list of 250 schools within 24 hours that have undergone major reforms in terms of good infrastructure, enhanced curriculum, teacher training programmes and showed improved results under the Congress regime.

"Punjab has the right to know the Congress party's contribution in the field of education in the state in the last five years," the AAP leader had said while releasing the list. The Punjab minister, on the other hand, failed to provide the list, giving the Delhi-based party an opportunity to attack the government.

Since coming to power in Delhi in 2015, the AAP-led Delhi government has claimed it has transformed the education system there. Earlier November 27, Delhi Chief

Minister Arvind Kejriwal reached Mohali where he met contractual teachers, who were protesting for the regularisation of their services and said, "When AAP forms government in Punjab, like Delhi, all the issues of the teachers here will also be resolved," further alleging that both Akali Dal and Congress had 10 and eight years in government respectively, but neither did anything for the teachers.

The AAP national convener made eight promises to the teachers guaranteeing them of changing the future of Punjab with good governance. He promised them that once in power all outsourcing and contractual teachers would be made permanent. He told them if the Channi government does not accept the demands of the strik ing teachers, then he (Kejriwal) will join them in their dharna. Kejriwal also promised them that a transparent transfer policy in Punjab will be implemented and non-teaching work burden will be taken off the teachers' shoulders. all vacancies will be filled, teachers will be sent abroad for training, promotion policy will be introduced and cashless medical facilities to teachers and their families will be provided.

Hit by climate change, yak farming gets a lifeline



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hoshiarpur (Punjab), Dec 12: Villagers here accorded a rousing reception to farmers who returned to their homes from protest sites on Delhi's borders following the suspension of their agitation against the Centre's three agriculture laws. The farmers were felicitated

with 'Siropas' (robe of honour). by the central government recently. reached the district.

A number of people from all walks of life reached Cholang Toll

Farmers returning to homes get rousing welcome

The villagers showered flower petals on them and distributed sweets for the 'victory' of their protest against the three contentious laws, repealed Victory processions were taken out at Cholang Toll Plaza, near Tanda, and Mehtiana after convoys of tractor-trolleys carrying farmers

Plaza, Tanda on Jalandhar-



on Hoshiarpur-Phagwara Road on scooters, motorcycles, cars, jeeps and tractors to welcome the farmers.

The Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), an umbrella body of 40 farmers' unions, had Thursday decided to suspend its agitation on

and congratulated them for the 'historic victory' on the repeal of the farm laws Farmer Ranjit Singh Bains told

reporters that farmers' agitation had not only forced the central government to repeal the contentious laws but also strengthened brotherhood among farmers across the country especially in Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. Having spent a long time at the Singhu border protest site, he appreciated the people of Haryana for their love and support to the farmers from Punjab.

"While starting our return journey Saturday from there, I along with other farmers met those families there who extended love and support to us during the agitation. All those families were in tears when we were preparing to leave

After Maradona's watch. more items recovered from accused's house PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, Dec 12: Several memorabilia, including a cap, shoes and a doll, have been recovered from the residence of the person who has been arrested in Assam's Sivasagar district for allegedly stealing football legend Diego Maradona's limited-edition watch from a Dubai repository.





President of Doaba Kisan Committee (Tanda block) Jangveer Singh, who was among farmers returning from the Singhu border

India has around 58,000 aks, found on the heights of the Himalayan belt Arunachal Pradesh has the largest population of round 24,000 yaks mostly in Tawang and West Kameng districts	Yak is a lifeline for pastoral nomads in th higher reaches of the Himalayas where other bovines would not survive or at lea not without difficulty				
	Yaks play a multidimensional socio- cultural economic role for the pastoral nomadic communities who rear yaks for earning their livelihood				
Lately the economic dividends arising from vak farming are declining					

Lifeline **of nomads**

ning tely, the economic dividends arising from yak farming are declini and this is further reflected in the dwindling yak population on a year-by-year basis

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

yaks, f

the la

around

Itanagar, Dec 12: Hit by climate change and other adverse factors, including dwindling habitats, yak farming has got a boost in the Himalayan region with support from ICAR and NABARD.

The domesticated cattle yak is found throughout the Himalayan region -- Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, northern West Bengal, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir in India while wild vak is found in Tibet.

Amidst the challenge of climate change, fodder crisis, unfriendly habitat, livelihood predicament, the yak farmers in the high mountains of Arunachal Pradesh now have a reason to smile, thanks to a novel initiative of the ICAR-National Research Centre on yak and a positive response from the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD).

Responding positively to the proposal of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), banks have come forward, showing their willingness to provide loans to vak farmers as well as others keen to earn a livelihood through the farming of this bovine species.

The ICAR-National Research Centre on yak, in Arunachal Pradesh, Director Mihir Sarkar said that the credit proposal and related plans approved by the NABARD were found to be feasible for credit support by the banks and have been included in the Potential Linked Credit Plans.

He was confident the support would promote yak husbandry and yield economic dividends for yak herders. Sarkar said that yak farmers can avail the loan for yak farming, their housing, animals' feed,

treatment and procurement. Under the new scheme, a yak farmer is entitled to get a loan up to Rs 5.65 lakh with a very low interest rate and a period of moratorium as well as subsidy

The ICAR scientist said that they would soon call a meeting of bank officials, yak farmers and all other stakeholders to discuss the nitty-gritty of the scheme before its execution.

"Steps would be taken to put in place this scheme in Ladakh where a regional centre on yak research had been approved by the government," Sarkar told IANS over phone.

The ICAR-National Research Centre on Yak played a key role in ensuring an insurance scheme for the jumbo animal with the National Insurance Company Ltd which recently decided to insure the highly-valuable Himalayan cattle.

Sarkar said that the animal being vulnerable to harsh and inclement weather conditions because of climate change, diseases, attack by wild animals, are some of the prominent reasons for the huge losses incurred by yak farmers.

Animal expert Apurba Kumar Dey said that in the recent years the summer has extended and the temperature has risen. "Yaks usually live in temperatures below 10-15 degree Celsius and can't tolerate rising temperatures. Familiar to very cold temperatures, the yak is able to survive up to minus 40 degree Celsius but finds it difficult when the mercury crosses 13 degree Celsius," Dey told IANS.

Pathankot GT Road and Mehtiana

Delhi's borders after the Centre in Delhi, thanked the people of

Ranjit Singh said.

Ex-B'desh PM's daughter, who sheltered in Tripura in 1971, back to say thanks

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sonamura (Tripura), Dec 12: Sixty-year-old Seemin Hossain Rimi, daughter of the first prime minister of Bangladesh who along with her family escaped to Tripura after a murderous military crackdown during the 1971 war for liberation of Bangladesh, has made the journey back to thank the people of the tiny northeastern state. Sonamura a small town bordering Comilla district of Bangladesh, sheltered thousands of refugees from East Pakistan during the war and also housed a training camp for Mukti Bahini (Free Bangladesh forces) as well as a makeshift hospital for them. Rimi, now a Member of Bangladesh's Parliament, is the daughter of Tajuddin Ahmad, who led the Provisional Government of Bangladesh as its prime minister during the Liberation War in 1971 and is regarded as one of the lead-

ers instrumental for the birth of Bangladesh. "I cannot believe that I am standing before the bungalow of the then Sub-divisional Officer, who arranged for our shelter and gave us security. My tears now are of joy ... The educational institutions were closed in Tripura during that time to provide us shelter," she said while reminiscing of those tumultuous days Thursday.

She went to Delhi to attend a programme to celebrate 50 years of Bangladesh's freedom and friendship between the two countries and on the way back made a detour to Tripura for three days to pay her 'tribute to the people' of the state. When her father was despatched to India by the Awami



Seemin Hossain Rimi (Second for right), Bangladesh MP and daughter of former Bangladesh PM Tajuddin Ahmad, at Sonamura, Tripura, where she and her family took refuge during the 1971 war of liberation for Bangladesh. PTIPHOTO

League to lead his countrymen's war efforts, her mother Syeda Zohura Begum along with four minor children went into hiding to escape the marauding Pakistan army, and then moved from one safe home to another on her way to India and safety. She narrated the family's harrowing seven-day-long journey from Dhaka to Boxanagar, a distance of about 80 kms.

"I was nine and started our journev from Dhaka by a motor launch with my mother, sisters and one year-old brother. There was not a single drop of drinking water, so I lifted water by a mug and drank ... But after five minutes saw blood soaked bodies floating in the river whose water I was drinking," she said.

I cannot believe that I am standing before the bungalow of the then Sub-divisional Officer, who arranged for our shelter and gave us security. My tears now are of joy... The educational institutions were closed in Tripura during that time to provide us shelter SEEMIN KOSSAIN RIMI

During the Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971, Tripura had sheltered refugees from the other side of the border surpassing its own population. The state was also the war headquarters of the liberation forces, from where they launched guerrilla attacks on the Pakistani army in different parts of the then East Pakistan. **Bangladesh Prime Minister**

Sheikh Hasina while visiting the convocation programme of the Tripura University in January 2012, had said "Tripura was in those days flooded with refugees, who were more than its own pop ulation. It was indeed a unique situation. Nevertheless, through the nine months of our liberation war, the people of Tripura and India stood by our side and helped selflessly the forsaken millions, giving them food, shelter and other basic necessities.'

It is being ascertained how much of all that has been recovered belonged to the late Argentinian footballer, the police said Sunday.

"Ref recovery of @hublot Watch of Late Diego Maradona, more memorabilia have been recovered. Jacket, track pant, T shirt, Shoes, toy doll, Squash racket, watch, lighters, Cap and iPads," special DGP (Law and Order) GP Singh tweeted.

He added that the origin of the items is being ascertained.

The Sivasagar Police stated on its Twitter handle that a search operation was conducted at the house of the accused Saturday night.

"It is to be ascertained how much of them belong to Maradona," the tweet added.

The accused, who worked as a security guard at a Dubai company that preserves belongings of Maradona, was held from Sivasagar Saturday on the charge of stealing a limited-edition Hublot watch of the late footballer, Assam DGP Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta had said Saturday

After working in the UAE for a few days, the accused apparently took leave to return to Assam in August, stating that his father was unwell, he said.

The Assam Police swung into 🛁 action after the Dubai Police reached out to India with information about the accused, Mahanta said

Subsequently, the man was arrested from his residence early on -(Saturday and the watch was recovered, the DGP added.











The Modi government at the **Centre repeatedly questions** what Congress has done in 70 years. I say leave the talk of 70 years. Tell us what you have done in seven years PRIYANKA GANDHI VADRA CONGRESS LEADER

UNABATED COLD WAVE IN KASHMIR, LADAKH

Cold wave continued unabated in Kashmir and Ladakh Sunday as the night temperature remained below the freezing point with icy winds adding to the chill factor. An official of the Meteorological Department (MeT) said the minimum temperature remained below the freezing point in Kashmir and Ladakh region, while at minus 17.8 degrees Celsius, Drass town was the coldest





congress leader NH-334B is nearing completion with 93% progress and is targeted for an early completion by 3 months in January 2022

NITIN GADKARI UNION ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS MINISTER

Kerala government never desires the post of Chancellor of state universities. I request Governor Arif Mohammed Khan not to guit the post

PINARAYI VIJAYAN KERALA CHIEF MINISTER

Go after the cyber criminals come what may there should be no compromise, we have zero tolerance for them and the time has come to wage a war on cyber crimes

BASAVARAJ BOMMAI KARNATAKA CHIEF MINISTEF

SHORT TAKES

Compulsory vaccination

Pondicherry: Compulsory vaccination against Covid-19 has become mandatory in Pondicherry from Sunday, Lt Governor Tamilsai Soundararajan said. Addressing reporters, she said that she was keen that Pondicherry emerge as a fully vaccinated Union Territory. She called upon the people to carry the vaccination certificate with them at all times as there would be surprise check. Visiting the Viliannoor Primary Health Centre for a direct check on the vaccination drive, Soundararajan was full of praise for the health staff who were implanting vaccination even Sundays.

10 arrested in murder case

Thiruvananthapuram: Ten accused were arrested Sunday in the brutal murder of



New Delhi, Dec 12: Several Opposition leaders Sunday expressed concern over Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Twitter account being hacked briefly, and said this exposes chinks in the cvber security.

They said cyber security was as important as border and internal security and asked whether the Aadhaar data of all Indians was safe.

Congress spokesperson Jaiveer Shergill said, "Hacking of Twitter handle of Prime Minister Narendra Modi is an issue of big concern, worry and exposes the chinks in cyber security. With advancement and reliability on technology, policy makers must realise that cyber security is equally important as border, internal security.

Shiv Sena deputy leader in Rajya Sabha Priyanka Chaturvedi said, "Prime Minister's account hacked briefly. Cyber security level exposed greatly." Another Congress spokesperson, Shama Mohammed, said, "PM Modi's Twitter handle was hacked last night. This is a major security breach." "If the government cannot adequately secure the account of the Prime ignored," it said. Minister, how is it protecting the

biometric aadhaar data of crores of Indians which it insisted on collecting," she asked. Indian Youth **Congress president BV Srinivas** made a cheeky comment in response to a tweet on the hacking.

"Good Morning Modi ji, Sab Changa Si?" he said in response to the tweet that claimed India has "officially adopted bitcoin as legal tender" was put out from

the hacked account. Srinivas also asked, "When hackers were selling Bitcoin from Modi ii's account, where was the 'chowkidaar'at the time." "So the hackers knew, Modi ji's password didn't have the 'STREANH'?(sic)" he said in another tweet. Prime Minister Modi's Twitter handle was briefly hacked Sunday, and a tweet claiming that India has "officially adopted bitcoin as legal tender" was put out from it. The Prime Minister's Office later said the account was immediately secured after the matter was escalated to Twitter. "The Twitter handle of PM @narendramodi was very briefly compromised. The matter was escalated to Twitter and the account has been immediately secured. In the brief period that the account was compromised, any Tweet shared must be

Chandigarh/Bangalore, Dec 12: Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Chandigarh reported their first Omicron case Sunday, while Maharashtra and Karnataka each recorded one more case of the Covid-19 variant, taking the tally in the country to 38.

AGENCIES

All the five persons in the cases reported Sunday had arrived from foreign countries.

According to state health officials, a 20-year-old fully vaccinated man who came to Chandigarh from Italy to meet his relatives and a 34-year old foreign traveller, who came from Ireland to Mumbai and then to Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh, have tested positive for the variant. Kerala Health Minister Veena George said the first case of Covid-19 variant Omicron has been confirmed in the state. In a video posted on her Facebook page, the minister said that the patient was a Kerala native who recently came from the United Kingdom. The patient's condition is stable and there

FEARLESS ACT



1st Omicron case in AP, C'garh, Ker

THE NUMBER OF OMICRON PATIENTS IN INDIA TICKED

was no need to panic as the government was taking all necessary steps to curb the spread of the new variant of the virus, she said.

A man who had arrived from South Africa became the third person to test positive for the Covid-19 variant in Karnataka, while a 40-year-old man tested positive after returning to Nagpur in Maharashtra from a West African country, taking the state's tally of Omicron cases to 18. With this, Omicron has been detected in Maharashtra (18), Rajasthan (9), Karnataka (3), Karnataka (3), Kerala (1) and Andhra Pradesh (1) and

Union Territories of Delhi (2) and Chandigarh (1). The man in Chandigarh had landed in India on November 22 and is currently in institutional quarantine. His seven high-risk family contacts were put under quarantine and were tested for Covid-19 by the RT-PCR method. All of them tested negative, an official statement said.

It said the traveller has been asymptomatic throughout. "He is fully inoculated with Pfizer vaccine which he got in Italy. He has been kept in isolation for the last 11 days." "His report for whole genomic sequencing was received late night on December 11 and has been found positive for Omicron variant," the statement said.

In the Andhra Pradesh case, the state health department said the person, who first landed in Mumbai from Ireland, was tested and found negative for Covid-19. He was then allowed to travel onward to Visakhapatnam November 27. "On conducting a second RT-PCR test in Vizianagaram, he tested positive for Covid-19. The person, however, did not have any symptoms and a re-test December 11 showed he was Covid-19 negative. The Omicron variant was first detected in India in Bangalore with two people testing positive for it comprising a South African national of Indian origin and a doctor.

"Third case of #Omicron has been detected in Karnataka. A 34-year-old male returning from South Africa has tested positive. He is isolated and being treated in a govt hospital. 5 primary and 15 secondary contacts have been traced and samples sent for testing," state Health Minister Dr K Sudhakar tweeted.

UP Assembly polls: 2 sitting **MLAs join SP**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow. Dec 12: Ahead of the crucial 2022 Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections, the Samajwadi Party got a shot in the arm Sunday when two MLAs joined the party at its headquarters here in presence of SP chief Akhilesh Yadav.

The legislators are Vinay Shankar Tiwari from Chillupar assembly seat in Gorakhpur, who was expelled from the BSP recently, and Digvijay Narayan alias Jai Chaubey (BJP) from Khalilabad constituency in Sant Kabir Nagar.

Former chairman of the UP Legislative Council Ganesh Shankar Pandey, who was fielded by the BSP in 2010 for the post of council chairman, also joined the Samajwadi Party. Apart from these prominent leaders, a large number of Brahmins from different political parties also joined the party. The BSP had Monday expelled Tiwari, his elder brother and former MP Kushal Tiwari and their relative Pandey from the party.





(JeM) terrorist was killed in an encounter with security forces in Pulwama district of Jammu and Kashmir Sunday, police said. Security forces launched a cordon and search operation in Baragam area of Awantipora in the south Kashmi

district after specific inputs about the presence of terrorists there, an official said. "During the search operation, as the presence of the trapped terrorist was ascertained, he was given ample opportunities to surrender. However, he denied and fired indiscriminately upon the joint search party which retaliated, leading to an encounter," a police spokesman said. In the ensuing encounter, the terrorist was killed and his body retrieved from the site of encounter, he said. The spokesman identified the slain terrorist as Sameer Ahmad Tantray, a resident of Baragam.



A youngster performs stunts at Marina beach in Chennai

Hyd doctors perform first Kashi Vishwanath corridor set to be inaugurated by PM breathing lung transplant

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

a man in the Pothencode area of the state capital, police said. Police suspect 11 people to be behind the murder, which took place Saturday. Sudheesh, 32 was attacked in his home by a gang. The attackers threw country-made bombs and then hacked Sudheesh to death.

Army officer commits suicide

Jammu: An Indian Army officer reportedly committed suicide Sunday in a camp in Jammu and Kashmir's Ramban district. Police sources said an 'Army Major shot and killed himself with his service rifle inside a camp in the Banihal town of Ramban district'.

Delhi records coldest day

New Delhi: The national capital recorded its lowest temperature of the season at 6.4 degrees Celsius Sunday morning, which was two notches below the season's average, the Met office said. The chilly morning gave way to a sunny and pleasant day as the maximum temperature settled at 23.9 degrees Celsius, a notch above the season's average, it said.

..... Man hacked to death

Thiruvananthapuram: A man, wanted in an attempt to murder case was hacked to death and his leg chopped off a day ago by a gang of 12 assailants, four of whom have been taken into custody, police said. The four arrested include an auto driver whose threewheeler was used by the assailants to reach the victim's house and then flee from the spot, an officer of Pothencode police station said.

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad, Dec 12: Doctors at the Krishna Institute of Medical Sciences (KIMS) Hospitals Sunday performed what is claimed to be India's first-ever breathing lung transplant.

The transplantation (Xvivo organ perfusion system) was done in a middle-aged patient with end stage interstitial lung disease on 10 litres of oxygen support waiting since August 2021.

This procedure was performed in Hyderabad by Dr Sandeep Attawar of KIMS Hospitals and his team Sunday morning. Breathing lung procedure can help in mitigating the ill-effects of cold ischemia time and improves lung function there by increasing the organ utilisation. This results in 30 per cent more donor lung to be utilised, benefiting more recipients who are waiting for lung transplant. The idea of 'breathing lung' is to run the lungs through



a device that cools the organ while it breathes, nourishes it with a substrate enriched solution that has antibiotics which wipe out small traces of infection. Cleaning of the air passages by means of bronchoscopy can be performed while on the machine as well as several tests can be done simultaneously to further assess and enhance the performance of the lung before it is cooled and then transplanted into the recipient, the doctors said. "This paradigm is

The transplantation (Xvivo organ perfusion system) was done in a middle-aged patient with end stage interstitial lung disease on 10 litres of oxygen support waiting since August 2021

the cutting edge of lung transplantation and is part of the organ regeneration concept. We at KIMS Hospitals are the first to take this unique approach in India, and with this we could provide best results in the long term. Only a select few transplant institutions in the US, Canada, and Austria take this approach to enhance lung transplant outcomes." said Dr. Sandeep Attawar. Program Director - Lung Transplant program, KIMS Hospitals.

Varanasi, Dec 12: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will dedicate to the people Monday the ambitious Kashi Vishwanath Corridor in the heart of Varanasi, a mega project that is expected to boost tourism in the ancient city in a big way.

The inauguration of the state-ofthe-art infrastructure surrounding the historic Kashi Vishwanath Temple near the iconic Dashashwamedh Ghat comes ahead of the assembly polls in Uttar Pradesh early next year.

The gateways and other structures have been built with stones and other material using traditional craftsmanship.

There is a palpable excitement among majority of the residents of the temple town and domestic tourists flocking the holy shrine of the Hindus in the run-up to the high-profile event, in view of which the police security in Varanasi has been stepped up. From saints and seers to shopkeeper and hotel owners, there is a smile on people's faces as they await the inaugura-



PTI PHOTO

tion day with visible excitement.

In a statement, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said Modi will visit the temple at around 1 pm and inaugurate phase one of Shri Kashi Vishwanath Dham, constructed at a cost of around ₹339 crore, after offering prayers.

It was Modi's vision for a long time to facilitate pilgrims and devotees of Lord Shiva as they had to encounter congested streets and surroundings with poor upkeep while they went about the age-old custom of taking dip in the holy river, collecting its water and offering it at the temple. A total of 23 buildings will be inaugurated in the phase one of the project.

They were expelled for allegedly creating indiscipline in the party and for improper behaviour with senior leaders Hitting out at Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the SP chief said, "In the last four-andhalf years (of the BJP rule), work has been done with discrimination. The way in which the British practised 'divide and rule', in the same way, the BJP wants to rule the people by making them feel afraid and killing them. In the upcoming polls, the people will teach a lesson to the BJP." The SP chief, on this occasion, also accused the government of mismanagement during the Covid-19 pandemic, saying that no one can forget the shortage of oxygen in hospitals, floating bodies in rivers and other irregularities. The SP chief said that the BJP government, in its final days, is talking about the election promise of giving tablets to students. which they had made in 2017. "It is being heard that these items could be imported from China," he said.

India sees drastic drop in wildlife crime incidents

THE WILDLIFE CRIME CONTROL BUREAU HAS TAKEN SEVERAL STEPS TO PREVENT ILLEGAL TRAFFICKING OF ENDANGERED ANIMALS AND WILDLIFE SPECIES AND TO CONSERVE THE FLORA AND FAUNA OF THE COUNTRY

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 12: Incidents of wildlife crime have come down drastically in the country in the current year, owing to the stringent measures adopted by the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB). According to the data accessed

by IANS, there has been a drop of 127 per cent this year in comparison to 2020. As per the data available with WCCB, provided by state forest and police authorities, a total number of 281 wildlife crime cases were registered this year. In 2020. they stood at 601 and a year before in 2019, at 805. The second wave of

the Covid-19 pandemic too played a major role in the reduction in such incidents. From time to time, the department is conceiving, planning and coordinating nationwide 'species specific operations' like Save Kurma, Turtshield, thunder series, etc, with the focus on coordinated action on transnational wildlife crime particularly along the borders of India with Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar and Nepal.

The WCCB has been conducting joint operations with state enforcement agencies to apprehend criminals involved in smuggling wildlife. A total of 16 species specific operations have been carried out till



now in collaboration with Interpol and other enforcement agencies.

In the last 7 years from 2014 to 2021, the WCCB conducted 717 joint operations resulting in the arrest of 1488 wildlife criminals and profiling of 3248 wildlife offenders

There were large seizures of ivory rhino horns, tiger skins/body parts/ bones, leopard skins, pangolins, turtles, mongoose hair, monitor lizards, shark fins, sea horses and others. According to the data, 153 joint operations were conducted

in 2019-20 which led to the arrest of 344 wildlife criminals while in 2020-21, 101 joint operations resulted in the arrest of 304 criminals and in 2021-22 till September, 74 joint operations have been conducted in which 202 wildlife criminals have been apprehended. The proactive approach of the WCCB seems to be instilling a sense of fear in the minds of the criminals involved in such activities. Wildlife crime is considered an environmental offence. Recently, the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change too released the overall data but it was only till 2020. The Crime in India report released for 2020 indicated that the number of cases registered for environmentrelated offences has increased from 34.676 in 2019 to 61.767 in 2020.

Apart from the WCCB's tough approach towards the criminals, it is conducting sensitization programmes for officials of the Border Guarding Forces, Customs, Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), Judicial officers, RPF, GRP and other forces/ stakeholders. In 2020-21, 108 such programmes were conducted and 8603 officials sensitised. This year, till September, 76 online webinars have been conductedthrough which 4480 stakeholders have been sensitised.





international



If the US lifts anti-Tehran sanctions, a "good agreement", which the Islamic Republic is looking for, will be reached in the ongoing negotiations over the 2015 nuclear deal EBRAHIM RAISI | IRANIAN PRESIDENT

BOOSTING TIES

South Korean President Moon Jae-in left for Australia Sunday for a four-day state visit that is expected to focus on deepening bilateral ties



uote

Our country has attained all capabilities to protect its independence and sovereignty if it is attacked by any external aggressor or an enemy

SHEIKH HASINA BANGLADESH PM

Cambodia, the incoming chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) for 2022, will promote the bloc's spirit as a "united family' in order to maintain peace and

prosperity in the region and beyond PRAK SOKHONN CAMBODIA FOREIGN MINISTER

In a few days, we will witness the withdrawa of all combat forces of the international coalition from Iraq according to the ent with the strategic agree American side MUSTAFA AL-KADHIMI IRAQI PRIME MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

📕 4 dead, 7 missing

Beijing: Rescuers are searching for seven crew members who went missing after their cargo ship sank on Sunday off the coast of Yantai City in China's Shandong province, which killed four people, authorities said. According to the Beihai Rescue Bureau of the Ministry of Transport, a total of 14 crew members were on board when the accident occurred, reports Xinhua news agency.

Quake hits Japan

Tokyo: An earthquake with a magnitude of 5.0 Sunday struck Japan's eastern Ibaraki Prefecture, authorities said. According to the Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA), the temblor occurred at around 12:.31 p.m., with its epicentre at a latitude of 36.1 degrees north and a longitude of 139.9 degrees east, and at depth of 50 km, reports Xinhua news agency.

G7 warns Russia of 'huge' consequences

G7 Foreign and Development Ministers pose for a group photo in Liverpool England **AP/PTI PHOTO**

pens

prohibited under international

law. Russia should be in no doubt

that further military aggression

against Ukraine would have mas-

sive consequences and severe cost

in response," the statement said.

The US and its NATO and G-7 al-

lies worry that the movement of

Russian troops and weapons to

the border region could be pre-

cursor to an invasion, and have

vowed to inflict heavy sanctions

on Russia's economy if that hap-

Moscow denies having any plans

to attack Ukraine and accuses

Kviv of its own allegedly aggres-

sive designs. Truss, who discussed

the crisis with US Secretary of

State Antony Blinken and other

G-7 diplomats, said the group was

sending a "powerful signal to our

"We've been clear that any in-

Top diplomats from the G-7 na-

tions — the UK, the United States,

Canada, France, Germany, Italy

and Japan — are likely to deliver

a stern warning to Moscow as part

The G-7 called on Russia to "de-escalate, pursue diplomatic channels, and abide by its international

commitments on transparency of military activities," and praised Ukraine's "restraint"

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Liverpool, Dec 12: The Group of Seven economic powers told Russia Sunday to "de-escalate" its military buildup near the Ukrainian border, warning that an invasion would have "massive consequences" and inflict severe economic pain on Moscow.

adversaries and our allies.3 G-7 foreign ministers, joined by the European Union's foreign affairs cursion by Russia into Ukraine chief, issued a joint statement dewould have massive consequences for which there would be a severe claring themselves "united in our condemnation of Russia's military cost," she said at a news conference buildup and aggressive rhetoric on the final day of the weekend towards Ukraine. meeting.

The G-7 called on Russia to "deescalate, pursue diplomatic channels, and abide by its international commitments on transparency of military activities," and praised Ukraine's "restraint." "Any use of

Austria ends curbs for vaccinated people

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Vienna, Dec 12: Austria ended lockdown restrictions for vaccinated people across most of the country on Sunday, three weeks after reimposing strict rules to combat a rising wave of coronavirus infections.

The rules, which vary by region within the country, largely allow for the reopening of theaters, museums and other cultural and entertainment venues on Sunday. Shops will follow on Monday. Some regions are reopening restaurants and hotels on Sunday, while others will wait until later in the month.

In all cases, there will be an 11 pm curfew for restaurants, and masks will still be required on public transportation and inside stores and public spaces

Chancellor Karl Nehammer last week called the move an "opening with a seatbelt," giving each of Austria's nine regions the ability to loosen or tighten restrictions based on the local situation

Unvaccinated people will still be subject to the lockdown restrictions and should remain at home for all but a handful of specific reasons, like buying groceries, going to the doctor or exercising. Since the start of the lockdown, new case numbers have plummeted in the small Alpine country.

On Friday, Austria reported 367.5 new infections per 100,000 inhabitants, down from 1,102.4 on the first day of the lockdown in November.

However, hospitalisations from the virus have not dropped as sharply as new case numbers. There are currently 567 coronavirus patients in intensive-care units across the country, only slightly down from 572 on the first day of the lockdown last month.

Austrian officials have stressed that high rates of vaccination are necessary to control the virus.

CREWS SEARCH FOR THE MISSING AFTER DEVASTATING TORNADOES

The storm was all the more remarkable because it came in December, when normally colder weather limits tornadoes

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Mayfield (US), Dec 12: Rescuers in an increasingly bleak search picked through the tornado-splintered ruins of homes and businesses Sunday, including a candle factory that was bustling with night-shift employees when it was flattened, as Kentucky's governor warned the state's death toll from the outbreak could top 100.

Factory workers sought refuge in what was supposed to be the safest part of the building, but it may not have mattered because the twister Friday night was so monstrous, Gov. Andy Beshear said. Authorities on Saturday reported rescuing 40 of the 110 people who were in the building at the time, but by Sunday, hope of finding anyone else alive had all but evaporated.

"It'll be a miracle if we pull anybody else out of that. It's now 15 feet deep of steel and cars on top of where the roof was," the gover-nor said on CNN. "Just tough. "Jeremy Creason, Mayfield's fire chief and emergency services director, said rescuers had to crawl over the dead to get to the living.

A nursing home and an Amazon distribution center also were smashed in other states in the unusual mid-December swarm of twisters."I can tell you from reports that I've received I know we've lost more than 80 Kentuckians. That number is going to exceed more than 100," Beshear said on the Sunday morning talk shows.

"I've got towns that are gone, that are just, I mean gone. My dad's



hometown - half of it isn't standing. It is hard for me to describe. I know people can see the visuals, but that goes on for 12 blocks or more in some of these places."He said that going door to door in search of victims is out of the question in the hard-hit areas: "There are no doors."

The tornado that carved the path of destruction in Kentucky touched down for more than 200 miles (320 kilometers) in the state. Eleven people were reported killed in and around the city of

Bowling Green. If early reports are confirmed, the twister "will likely go down perhaps as one of the longest track violent tornadoes in United States history," said Victor Gensini, a researcher on extreme weather at Northern Illinois University.

The storm was all the more remarkable because it came in December, when normally colder weather limits tornadoes. The outbreak also killed at least six people in Illinois, where an Amazon facility in Edwardsville was hit; four

in Tennessee: two in Arkansas where a nursing home was destroyed; and two in Missouri.

Debris from destroyed buildings and shredded trees covered the ground in Mayfield, a city of about 10.000 in western Kentucky Twisted sheet metal, downed power lines and wrecked vehicles lined the streets. Windows and roofs were blown off the buildings that were still standing.

The missing at the candle factory included Janine Denise Johnson Williams, a 50-year-old mother of four whose family members kept vigil at the site Saturday.

"It's Christmastime and she works at a place that's making candles for gifts," her brother, Darryl Williams, said. "To give up the gift of life to make a gift. We haven't heard anything, and I'm not presuming anything. But I'm expecting for the worst."He said Johnson Williams called her husband overnight to report the weather was getting bad, the last time anyone heard from her.



of their conclusions to the conforce to change borders is strictly ference later Sunday **OMICRON FIGHT COVID** boosters for all over 30 in UK

and more than 22 million peopl

Three killed

Sanaa: Three Yemeni civilians were killed in a blast caused by a landmine in the country's northeastern province of al-Jawf, a government official said, "A large landmine explosion struck a civilian vehicle carrying local citizens in the turbulent province of al-Jawf, killing three people at the scene," the official told Xinhua news agency. He confirmed that the explosion destroyed the vehicle and critically injured five people who had been transferred to a nearby hospital for treatment.

1 dead in Spain

Madrid: Swollen rivers burst their banks in north and northeastern Spain, with the flooding blamed Sunday for the death of at least one person. Emergency services said they retrieved the body of a 61-year-old man from inside the cab of his submerged van in a river in the Navarra region. The man was reported missing on Friday and his vehicle was spotted the following day, but the fast-flowing river made rescue operation impossible, officials said.

TERS FILE PHOTO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, Dec 12: Britain's health authorities said Sunday that bookings for the COVID booster vaccines for everyone aged 30 and over in England will be open from Monday, as one of the key actions aimed at tackling the rapid spread of the Omicron variant of COVID-19 in the country.

There are around 7.5 million people aged 30 to 39, and 3.5 million of those are eligible for boosters from Monday, NHS England said. It comes as early analysis shows booster jabs being effective against the Omicron variant, the first cases of which have started

being hospitalised now. There is no reported death from the variant in the UK yet, but experts warn that it is set to take over from Delta as the dominant coronavirus variant by the end of this year.

"The COVID-19 booster programme is accelerating rapidly in the UK have already received their top-up, securing vital protection ahead of Christmas." said UK Health Secretary Sajid Javid.

"This is our national mission the most recent data shows boosters are the essential defence against Omicron and we are doing everything in our power to get jabs into arms as quickly as possible. We are now expanding the offer to over-30s - so please come forward as quickly as possible to get boosted and help our country get ahead in this race with the variant," he

said. The expansion of the booster programme follows updated advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), allowing millions more people to book their third top-up dose.

The booking can be made two months on from their second dose, which is a month in advance of becoming eligible to receive the jab - a gap set at three months from the second dose by the JCVI. "Booster vaccines are the best

way to protect yourself and your loved ones from this virus and new variants," said UK Vaccines Minister Maggie Throup.

Runners dressed as Santa Claus in action, during the annual Christmas race in Middelfart, Denmark

AP/PTI PHOTO

Imran promises action against illegal fishing

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 12: After weekslong protests by the people of Gwadar for fundamental rights, Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan Sunday said the government will take "strong action" against illegal fishing by trawlers off the Gwadar coast, Express Tribune reported.

In a tweet, the premier said he had taken notice of the "very legitimate demands" of the hardworking fisherfolk of Gwadar, a linchpin of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project.

According to the premier, he will also speak to Balochistan Chief Minister Abdul Quddus Bizenjo so the reservations of the Balochistan fishing community



could be addressed.

The people of Gwadar have been staging a sit-in in the port city for

their fundamental rights for more than 20 days. The sit-in is being led by Maulana Hidayat-ur-Rehman, the provincial general secretary of Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Balochistan.

Several rounds of talks between the Balochistan government and the protesters have failed, as the demonstrators said they will not end their protest on mere verbal promises, the report said.

3 dead, 6 missing

Milan: Firefighters in Sicily were digging through the rubble of a collapsed apartment building Sunday in the search for six missing people after an explosion apparently caused by a gas leak killed at least three, authorities said. The building was occupied by nine members of an extended family, and two visiting relatives - a heavily pregnant woman and her husband were also on the premises when the explosion occurred late Saturday in the town of Ravenusa, firefighters said.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, Dec 12: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson came under growing pressure Sunday as an image emerged of another alleged party held at Downing Street in December last year at a time when social mixing was banned due to the COVID-19 lockdown rules.

'The Sunday Mirror' published a picture of Johnson at a so-called Christmas quiz, which it said took place on December 15, 2020. Downing Street admitted the UK

PM "briefly took part virtually" to thank staff for their work during the pandemic.

But the Opposition Labour Party declared it was a breach of the rules in place at the time. "What do we see in that picture? We see a Prime Minister on a virtual quiz night for 10 to 15 minutes to thank his staff, who by the way, had no choice but to come in every single day," UK Education Secretary Nadhim Zahawi told 'Sky News' in defence of his boss, the Prime

Minister.



Boris under pressure over Downing Street parties

"Sitting in his office are the two people who are closest working with him, no alcohol on the table, not drinking, on a Zoom call or a team's call, a virtual call respecting the lockdown rules. Many people would have had similar Zoom quiz nights around the country," he said.

The image is from when England was under Tier 2 restrictions, banning indoor household mixing, apart from support bubbles. Official guidance at the time stated: "You must not have a work Christmas lunch or party, where that is a primarily social activity and is not otherwise permitted by the rules in your tier.'

According to the 'Sunday Mirror', workers who took part in the Christmas quiz reportedly huddled around computers, with groups said to have broken rules on gatherings, and drinking alcohol bought from a nearby supermarket.

A No. 10 Downing Street statement said: "This was a virtual quiz. Downing Street staff were often required to be in the office to work on the pandemic response so those who were in the office for work may have attended virtually from their desks. "The Prime Minister briefly took part virtually in a quiz to thank staff for their hard work throughout the year.

The latest Downing Street party adds to an already brewing controversy around breach of lockdown rules at the Prime Minister's office after a video emerged earlier of senior staff joking about a "fictional party" on December 18. It resulted in the tearful resigna-tion of Allegra Stratton, a senior UK government spokesperson.









business

One is that you outright ban it (cryptocurrency)... and second is that you don't outright ban it but define it. It is ruled out that it will be defined as a currency... that is ruled out RAJNISH KUMAR | EX-CHAIRMAN, SBI

SPICEJET EYES DRONE DELIVERY SERVICES

SpiceJet hopes to introduce drone delivery services soon, said the company's Chairman and Managing Director Ajay Singh Saturday. Accordingly, the airline plans to introduce 'SpiceXpress' drone delivery service to strategically expand its logistics platform while building a unique supply chain competence



Bank deposit insurance cover raised to ₹5L ONGC seeks \$4 for uote

present, there is a shortage of chips... We need to prepare ourselves for the long term. We wanted to expand our base and make India as export hub for neighbouring markets

Though at

RAJEEV CHABA PREZ AND MD, MG MOTOR

We have been a profitable company, we have shown good growth. In the first half of this year, our transaction value went up by 51 per cent, our revenue went up by 36 per cent and our profit

went up by 73 per cent RISHI GUPTA MD AND CEO. FINO PAYMENTS BANK

Presently, the Indian beer market is underpenetrated and it has immense potential led by

factors including a sizeable young population, growing prosperity and rising urbanization

RISHI PARDAL CEO AND MD, UBL

SHORT TAKES

Power consumption up 1.3% to 34.23 bln

New Delhi: India's power consumption grew by 1.3 per cent in the first ten days of this month from December 1 to 10 to 34.23 billion units (BU) over the same period a year ago, according to power ministry data. In 2020, power consumption was 33.78 BU during December 1 to 10. In the entire month of December 2020, consumption was 105.62 BU, up from 101.08 BU in December 2019. Experts are of the view that power consumption as well as demand would grow at a steady pace in December with improvement in economic activities across the country.

FPIs net sellers at **₹8.879cr in Dec**

New Delhi: Foreign portfolio

Citing the latest NFHS data, Modi pointed out that, 80% of women have their own bank accounts

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 12: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Sunday said deposit insurance reforms undertaken by the government will instil confidence in account holders on the banking system. Parliament in August passed the

Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (Amendment) Bill, 2021, ensuring that account holders get up to ₹5 lakh within 90 days of the RBI imposing a moratorium on a bank

This was done keeping the 'Depositors First' spirit in mind, Modi said while announcing that over 1 lakh depositors have got about ₹1,300 crore of their money with stressed banks in the past few days with the enactment of the legislation. He assured that about 3 lakh

more such account holders will soon get their deposits with the banks that are under the RBI moratorium

The first tranche of interim payments has been released by the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation recently



₹5 Lakh deposit guarantee now mandatory for banks to return money within 3 months, says PM

Over 1 lakh depositors have got about ₹1.300 crore of their money with stressed banks

against claims received from depositors of 16 Urban Cooperative Banks which are under restrictions by the RBI. The second tranche would be released December 31, 2021. Stressing that the reform has ensured that depositors' money remains safe even when there is a bank failure in the future, Modi said this will help in boosting con-

fidence of depositors in the banking system. Modi, while addressing a function

Franklin Templeton unitholders to get 8th tranche of ₹985 crore

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

whose accounts are KYC compliant New Delhi, Dec 12: SBI Funds with all details available will com-Management (SBI MF) will dismence from November 22, he said. tribute from Monday the eighth unitholders will be paid by extintranche of ₹985 crore to unitholders of Franklin Templeton Mutual guishing proportionate units at Fund's six shuttered schemes. the net asset value dated December 14, this year, he added.

After the payout, the total disbursement will reach to ₹26,098.2 tronically to all eligible unitholdcrore, amounting to 103.5 per cent of assets under management (AUM) ers by SBI MF, which has been apas April 23, 2020, when the fund house announced to shut the schemes, a Franklin Templeton Supreme Court. MF spokesperson said Sunday A total of ₹25,114 crore has been distributed across 6 schemes under winding up. Under the first disbursement in February, investors received ₹9,122 crore, while ₹2,962 crore was paid to investors in April, ₹2,489 crore in May. ₹3.205 crore in June. ₹3.303 crore in July, ₹2,918 crore in September and ₹1,115 crore in November. "SBI Funds Management Pvt Ltd (SBI MF) would be distributing the next tranche of ₹983.81 crore to unitholders across all six schemes.' the spokesperson said.

amount deposited in the bank. only the amount up to ₹50.000 was guaranteed, and it was later raised to ₹1 lakh

on the theme 'Depositors First: Guaranteed Timebound Deposit

Insurance Payment up to ₹5 Lakh' here, said, the system of insurance for bank depositors came into being in the 60s in India. "Understanding the concern of

the poor, understanding the concern of the middle class, we increased this amount to ₹5 lakh...Earlier where there was no

time limit for refund, now our government has made it mandatory within 90 days i.e. 3 months. That is, even in the event of a bank sinking, the depositors will get their money back within 90 days," he said.

Banks play a major role in the prosperity of the country and for the prosperity of the banks, it is equally important for the depositors' money to be safe, the Prime Minister added.

"If we want to save the bank, then depositors have to be protected," he said.

Emphasising that depositors and their interests were kept high on the agenda of the Modi One

government, Finance was to restore the Minister Nirmala Sitharaman health of the banks

said, it has

been shown

in various

important

milestone in

the evolution

This is an

forms.

through the four 'R' principles where depositors interests have been kept in mind, taxpayers' interest has been kept

in mind and as a result the public sector banks' health has so improved that today they are able to raise money on their of protection own in the markets of depositors in

NIRMALA SITHARAMAN our country, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said.

The theme of today's event 'Depositors First' is a very important theme and in fact that is the guiding philosophy of the Reserve Bank of India for all its action and all its policies so far as banks are concerned, he said.

BIZ BUZZ

Urban Company logs 33% jump in valuation

New Delhi: Home services marketplace Urban Company has recorded a 33 per cent jump in valuation to \$2.8 billion in the employee stock sale programme concluded recently, the company said Sunday. The

company raised Series F funding of \$255 million in June, led by Prosus Ventures, Dragoneer and Wellington Management, with participation from Vy Capital, Tiger Global and Steadview, at a valuation of \$2.1 billion. Urban Company shared that it has concluded the sale of ESOPs (employee stock ownership plan), worth \$7.3 million (Rs 54.6 crore) that were allocated to 770 employees comprising shares of around 390 former employees.

CBM gas, \$3.5 for gas



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 12: India's top oil and gas producer ONGC is seeking a minimum price of \$3.5-4 for the natural gas it plans to produce from coal seams in Jharkhand and a field in Tripura.

Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) has issued separate tenders seeking buyers of 0.02 million standard cubic meters per day of coalbed methane (CBM) it plans to produce from the North Karanpura CBM block in Jharkhand and 0.1 mmscmd from Khubal field in Tripura.

For the CBM gas, it asked buyers to quote a percentage equal to or higher than 8 per cent of Dated Brent Price, according to the tender document.

Floor price shall be the higher of the \$4 per million British thermal unit or Domestic Gas Price notified by (government's) PPAC for the period, it said.

The PPAC notified price for the six months beginning October 1 for gas from fields given to ONGC and Oil India Ltd on a nomination basis is \$2.9 per mmBtu.

ONGC has been complaining that the government-notified gas price is way below cost and the company incurs a loss of production and sale of natural gas from most of its fields. It says its cost of production ranges from \$4.5 to \$9 per mmBtu for gas from different sources/fields.

For gas from Khubal field, it sought a mark-up over the domestic gas price plus \$0.5 per mmBtu. The floor or minimum price was set at \$3.5 per mmBtu, according to the

Earlier this year in April, **ONGC** had sought bids for the sale of an initial two mmscmd of gas from its KG basin fields

tender. Bids were sought at a minimum of 10.5 per cent of the threemonth average Brent crude oil price. At Brent crude oil price of \$70, the minimum price came to \$7.35 per mmBtu.

The tender was however scrapped as consumer consumers went to court against the bidding process

In the latest tender, ONGC has mentioned a 3 to 5-year sale tenure for CBM gas, with supplies commencing with immediate effect.

ONGC owns 55 per cent in the North Karanpura CBM block in the Ranchi district of Jharkhand. Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) holds 20 per cent and Prabha Energy Pvt Ltd the remaining 25 per cent.

For Khubal field, the gas supplies are to begin from April 2024 and bids have been sought for 3 to 5 years tenure.

While ONGC is seeking a price benchmarked to Brent crude oil. RIL-BP sold about 13 mmscmd of new gas from KG-D6 at a price linked to Platts JKM (Japan Korea marker) - the liquefied natural gas (LNG) benchmark price assessment for spot physical cargoes.

That tender of RIL-BP mandated the lowest bid at JKM minus USD 0.3 per mmBtu. The highest acceptable bid was JKM plus USD___ 2.01 per mmBtu.



pointed as the liquidator for the Call for excise duty hike on tobacco products schemes under winding up by the In case the unitholders' bank ac-

investors (FPIs) were net sellers in the Indian markets to the tune of ₹8,879 crore so far in December. As per depositories' data, they took out ₹7,462 crore from equities, ₹1,272 crore from the debt segment and ₹145 crore from hybrid instruments during December 1-10. This took the total net outflow to ₹8,879 crore during the period. In November, FPIs were net sellers to the tune of ₹2,521 crore in Indian markets.

BoM lowers home loan rate to 6.40%

Mumbai: State-owned Bank of Maharashtra (BoM) Sunday announced a cut in interest rate on home loans to an alltime low of 6.40 per cent, from the existing 6.80 per cent under the 'Retail Bonanza-Festive Dhamaka' offer. Besides, the bank has also lowered interest rate on car loans to 6.80 per cent. from 7.05 per cent in line with market competition. The new rates would be effective from December 13. BoM said in a statement.

Gold ETFs attract ₹683cr in Nov

New Delhi: Gold exchange traded funds (ETFs) continue to attract investor attention and have garnered net assets worth ₹683 crore in November, as correction in the prices of the yellow metal and Omicron worries pushed investors towards safe haven assets. This was higher than the net inflow of ₹303 crore in October and ₹446 crore seen in September. Prior to this, the segment saw a net inflow of ₹24 crore in the previous month, data with the Association of Mutual Funds in India (Amfi) showed

count is not eligible for an electronic payment, a cheque or demand draft will be issued and sent to their reg-

istered address by SBI ME In March, the Supreme Court accepted the standard operating procedure (SOP) finalised by SBI MF to monetise assets and distribute the proceeds to unitholders of the six debt schemes of Franklin Templeton Mutual Fund.

The payment to all investors

The amount to be distributed to

The payment will be made elec-

The fund house shut its six debt mutual fund schemes April 23, 2020, citing redemption pressures and lack of liquidity in the bond market



India has the second largest number (268mln) of tobacco users in the world and of these 13 lakh die everv vear from tobacco-related diseases

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 12: Public health groups, along with economists and doctors, have urged the government to increase excise duty on all tobacco products in the Union Budget of 2022-23 to generate additional revenue.

In their appeals to the Finance Ministry, they have sought an increase in excise duty on cigarettes, bidis and smokeless tobacco.

According to them, increasing excise on all tobacco products can be a very effective policy measure to address the immediate need to raise revenue by the central gov-



ernment. It will be a winning proposition for generating revenue and reducing tobacco use and related diseases as well as Covid related comorbidities, they added

"The tax revenue from tobacco could significantly contribute to the increased need for resources during the pandemic, including vaccinations and augmenting the health infrastructure," Bhavna Mukhopadhyay, Chief Executive, Voluntary Health Association of India, said in a statement.

"Increasing excise duty on all tobacco products will fetch substantial revenue for central government

Capital infusion for PSBs in next Budget unlikely

he government is unlikely to announce capital infusion for public sector banks (PSBs) in the upcoming Budget, as their financial health has improved on the back of reduction in bad loans, sources said. To augment their resources, banks would be encouraged to raise funds from the market and also by selling their noncore assets, they added. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is expected to present the fourth budget of the Modi 2.0 government February 1. During the current financial year, the government has earmarked ₹20.000 crore for the recapitalisation of PSBs. It is to be noted that the net profit of PSBs surged to ₹14,012 crore in the first quarter, which further rose to ₹17,132 crore in the second quarter ended September 2021.

and make tobacco products less affordable, especially for youngsters. This will provide a solid foundation for reducing tobacco usage among vulnerable populations and have long-lasting impact on the lives of the country's 268 million tobacco users, deter children and youth from initiating tobacco use,' Mukhopadhyay said. She requested the finance min-

ister to augment revenue and reduce

health harms, which would be ap-

The Ministry of Finance, in

preciated by citizens.

its reply to a question in the ongoing Winter Session of Parliament, specified that the central excise and cess (NCCD) collected on tobacco products during 2018-19 was ₹1,234 crore, in 2019-20. it was ₹1.610 crore and in 2020-21, it was ₹4,962 crore.

The taxes collected from tobacco, similar to taxes collected from other sources, together form part of the overall Gross Tax Revenues (GTR) of Government of India and are used to fund all its schemes and programmes, it said.

IPO market braces for Omicron, US rate hike fallout OMINOUS OMICRON

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 12: While the Paytm listing debacle dampened sentiment, the IPO market is now turning its worries to the Omicron variant and possible interest rate hikes by the US Federal Reserve. Sandip Ginodia, CEO, Altius

Investech, said there is no deferment of issues till now, except lower listing in few of them. "Sentiment is slightly subdued

but greedy promoters are still making hay while the sun shines,' Ginodia said.

Pranav Haldea, Managing Director, Prime Database, said 7-8 IPOs have already been announced for December.

Haldea said while one or two issues including Paytm did not get a good listing, it is also not realistic to expect each IPO to deliver a bumper return.

Haldea said IPOs which have come after Paytm have got good subscriptions and also strong listing.

According to Haldea, the bigger threat for IPO market is the newly detected Omicron variant and the possibility of the US Federal Reserve hiking interest rate. "These will impact the secondary market which in turn will lead to a slowdown in the primary market as well," he said.

'The second half of December is the holiday season. In January, depending on the impact of Omicron, the picture for the quarter will become clear. IPO market always gets affected when the secondary market is volatile,' Haldea said



INDIAN TECH COMPANIES HAVE RAISED A RECORD \$5BLN THROUGH LISTINGS THIS YEAR, ACCORDING TO DEALOGIC, ABOUT 10 TIMES LAST YEAR'S TOTAL

In a recent article, Financial Times reported that the Paytm listing debacle has sparked concern from investors and entrepreneurs, fearful that it could derail a string of expected Indian flotations that were supposed to cement the county's status as a leading des-

 According to Prime Database, nine issues have announced opening dates in December to raise ₹7562 crore

- These include Tega Industries, Anand Rathi Wealth, Rategain Travel Technologies, Shriram Properties, CE Infosystems, Metro Brands, Medplus Health Services, Data Patterns and HP Adhesives
- MobiKwikhas delayed its IPO originally scheduled for November, saying this week that it will list at the right time

tination for tech start-ups after the US and China.

"The debacle has put the spotlight on Paytm, its shareholders

bookrunners on the IPO including Goldman Sachs, Morgan Stanley and Citigroup," Financial Times reported. 'The worry for all of us is does

SoftBank and Alibaba, and

this impact the broader India tech sentiment One bad deal and one instance of bad judgment can upset the apple cart, said the head of equity capital markets for India at one western bank," as per the report.

Ashneer Grover, the co-founder of fintech BharatPe, said Paytm 🛁 had spoiled the Indian market.

Sandeep Murthy, a partner at investment group Lightbox in Mumbai, said there may be some period of cooling off in fintech listings until early next year but -(argued that it was natural, Financial Times reported.















OrissaPOST MONDAY | DECEMBER 13 | 2021 | BHUBANESWAR

DHAWAN'S POOR RUN OF SCORES IN VIJAY HAZARE TROPHY A WORRY FOR NATIONAL SELECTORS Gaikwad, Iyer certainties for SA tour

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 12: Shikhar Dhawan's poor run of form in the Vijay Hazare Trophy would keep the selectors worried but voung Turks Ruturai Gaikwad and Venkatesh Iyer seem to have all but booked their tickets for the upcoming away three-match ODI series against South Africa in January. The BCCI is yet to announce the squad. though Rohit Sharma has been made the captain in the white ball format.

Gaikwad has hit three centuries on the trot in the domestic tournament while Venkatesh have two in his kitty. Venkatesh has also taken some important wickets, making it amply clear that he is ready to push back Hardik Pandya for the time being as team's premier all-rounder. The BCCI has also asked Venkatesh to bat lower down the order as a finisher, as at the top of the order Rohit and KL Rahul have cemented their positions.

Venkatesh has taken the role like a fish takes to water as he batted at No.4 against This is the right time Kerala to score 112 to get Venkatesh off 84 balls. In the battle ready for next game, batting pigger events. He has at No.5, he scored 71 shown that he has the off 49 deliveries and ability to adapt and followed it up with a knock of 151 off 113 balls that BCCI SOURCES had 10 sixes. by opener.

"Venkatesh is surely going to South Africa. He is bowling nine or 10 overs in every game. With Hardik still recuperating, it is the best time to give Venkatesh a chance and get him battle ready for the bigger events ahead," a BCCI source privy to selection committee discussions said Sunday. "As of now, if he doesn't get injured, Venkatesh is a certainty for the South Africa one dayers," the source added.

Maharashtra captain Gaikwad has carried his IPL Orange Cap form into the Hazare Trophy. So there is every possibility of him being on the plane as the stand-

On the other hand, Dhawan's struggles have been pronounced with scores of 0, 12, 14 and 18. He hasn't ever looked in touch in any of the games.

"Technically, last time India played a 50-over series, Dhawan was leading India and also had a match-winning knock in Sri Lanka. He has the ability to score runs just when he his has backs to the wall. So while Gaikwad should be there in the squad, I think selectors might give one last chance to Dhawan and give him a game or two," the source said.

still room for improvement in this

area. The second half was a little bit

better but at the end we were lucky

Rangnick's side sit in fifth place in

the Premier League, level on points

with fourth-placed West Ham, as the

German aims to haul his club back

into the Champions League places.

players after boss Dean Smith

hinted at coronavirus concerns in

the squad Friday, but they still

matched United stride for stride.

While United had the star power and

greater resources, there was noth-

ing to separate two misfiring teams

In fact before Man United, they

had more chances to score. Teemu

Pukki missed from close and Lukas

Rupp was guilty of shooting over

when he was unmarked.

in the first half.

Norwich were without several

to have a clean sheet," he added.

SCEB's winless streak continues



SC East Bengal players celebrate after taking the lead against KBFC in their ISL encounter played Sunday

AGENCIES

Vasco, Dec 12: SC East Bengal's (SCEB) search for the first win in the ongoing ISL continued Sunday as they were held to a 1-1 draw by Kerala Blasters FV (KBFC) at the Tilak Maidan here. This was the third consecutive draw between these two teams in the ISL and extended SCEB's winless streak to

six games. Tomislav Mrcela (37th) opened his account in the ISL by giving East Bengal the lead with a powerful header. However, just before the interval, Alvaro Vazquez (44th) restored parity for KBFC with a powerful shot.

Alvaro Vazquez looked to have put KBFC in the lead early on in the game, but the referee reversed his decision and disallowed the goal as he blew his whistle before the striker had put the ball past SCEB goalkeeper Shankar Roy. Within minutes after that incident, Prabhsukhan Gill made a crucial save, keeping Antonio Perosevic at bay.

There was a dearth of scoring opportunities in the first half until Mrcela found the back of the net with his head. The centre-back got on the end of a long throw from Raju Gaikwad and headed the ball past the keeper from close range. KBFC then lost their defender Enes Sipovic to an injury

PHOTO COURTESY: ISI TWITTER

as he left the pitch and was replaced by Abdul Hakku.

With a couple of minutes to go for the end of the first half, Vazquez's right-footed shot from outside the box took a wicked deflection from Mrcela and went inside the back of the net, pulling the game back to equal terms. Thongkosiem Haokip and Amarjit Singh Kiyam received a yellow card each in the first half for poor challenges

The second half got off to a cagey start with both teams cancelling each other out and struggling for momentum in the final third. Vazquez attempted a long-range shot late into the second half which was parried away by SCEB goalkeeper. It was the last contribution from the Spaniard as Ivan Vukomanovic sent Jorge Diaz in his place from the bench.

Overall it was a game on which nothing much can be written about. Both sides did not show the inclination to go for the winning goal with play mostly confined to the midfield. At times, it was aimless football wi8th mis-

passes galore. SC East Bengal will face Khalid Jamil's NorthEast United in their next fixture Friday while Kerala Blasters FC have a tough encounter Sunday with reigning champions Mumbai City.

Odisha suffer 1st defeat

NEWS IN BRIEF

Real Kashmir in IFA Shield final

Kalyani (West Bengal): Defending champions Real Kashmir FC beat Gokulam Kerala FC 2-1 to enter the final of the IFA Shield football tournament here Sunday. They will face Sreenidi Deccan FC who beat Railway FC by an identical margin in the final to be played Wednesday. Mason Lee Robertson scored the opening goal in the 23rd minute for Real Kashmir, while Thoi Singh doubled the lead (31st) from a corner. The Kerala outfit pulled one goal back through Robin Singh in added on time in the first half. In the second half both sides had a number of chances but failed to convert.

Santana no more

Madrid: The tennis world paid rich tributes to one of Spain's greatest sporting heroes. Manolo Santana, who passed away Saturday in Marbella. He was 83. He had won the French Open twice (1961, 1964), US Open (1965) and Wimbledon (1966). Santana also won the men's singles in the 1968 Olympic Games, but didn't get

LIVERPOOL REMAIN IN HUNT FOR TOP SPOT WITH NARROW WIN OVER ASTON VILLA RONALDO LIFTS MAN UNITED

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, Dec 12: Both Cristiano Ronaldo and Mo Salah scored from the penalty spot to ensure three points for Manchester United and Liverpool in matches of the Premier League played late Saturday evening. Ronaldo helped the Manchester side to a 1-0 win over Norwich City while Salah's goal ensured that Stevan Gerrard's return to Anfield with Aston Villa was not a 'memorable' one.

Ronaldo won and converted the second half spot-kick that gave Ralf Rangnick a second successive Premier League victory since he replaced the sacked Ole Gunnar Solskjaer. However, United found it difficult to impose themselves for long periods and it took several fine saves from David de Gea to keep them on level terms before Ronaldo's 13th goal since rejoining the club from Juventus in August had the supporters smiling.

"It was a very intense game, very physical," Rangnick said after the match. "We need to be able to compete on that kind of level. There's



Cristiano Ronaldo wheels away in celebration after scoring against Norwich City

Good display by Emphatic victory for Hockey Odisha for Hockey Odisha

Verstappen pips Lewis

a medal as tennis was a demonstration sport at the time. Rafael Nadal tweeted. "You will always be one of a kind and special. As I have said many times in the past: a thousand thanks for what you did for our country and for opening the way for others and being an inspiration."

Mixed fortunes

Huelva (Spain): Shuttler Kidambi Srikanth beat Pablo Abian of Spain to begin his **BWF World Championships** campaign on a winning note here Sunday. The 12th seeded Indian beat the local challenger 21-12, 21-16 in 36 minutes in the first round of the men's singles event. The Indian men's doubles pair of Manu Attri and B Sumeeth Reddy however, lost 16-21, 15-21 to Joel Elpe and Rasmus Kjaer of Denmark in the opening round. The match lasted 32 minutes. Reigning world champion PV Sindhu has got a bye in the first round. She will meet Martina Repiska of Slovakia, Monday.

Gold for Arvind

Ban Chang (Thailand): Senior rower Arvind Singh bagged a gold medal in the lightweight men's single sculls event while his compatriots won three silver medals as India signed off from the Asian Rowing Championships on a high note here Sunday. Arvind leapfrogged his opponents with a timing of 7:55.942s. Arvind, who finished 11th at the Tokyo Olympics along with Arjun Lal Jat in the men's lightweight double sculls, beat his rivals from Uzbekistan, China, Vietnam, Indonesia and Thailand. The silver medals came in the men's lightweight double sculls, men's quadruple sculls and in men's coxless four events. AGENCIES Debasish, Aditya

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 12: Odisha lad and a student of the Gurukul Tennis Academy here Aditya Mohapatra finished runner-up in the AITArun under-18 tennis tournament which concluded Sunday at Raipur in Chhattisgarh. In the final Aditya lost to Atharva Balani of Chhattisgarh, 6-3, 2-6, 1-6. After winning the first set quite comfortably, Aditya seemed to have run out of steam in the second and third sets



Debasish Sahoo

top player in India. Earlier Saturday, another Odisha allowing his rival to win the title. player Debasish Sahoo emerged Aditya's performance is all the champion in the under-16 category more creditable as he comes from of the National Series tennis tournament which ended in Jhajjar, a family with poor financial con-Haryana. A student of Farhan Ali ditions. He has played four tournaments this year. He lost in the Tennis Academy in the city, quarterfinals of the under-18 cham-Debasish defeated India No. 4 Vansh pionships at Agartala and Nandal 6-0, 6-4. Such was Debasish's Bangalore, reached the semifinals control that Nandal failed to win in Jamshedpur and now has a runa single game in the first set. In the ner-up finish in his kitty. Aditya's second set also, Debasish broke coach Santosh Malik said Sunday his opponent's service early on that if Aditya get's proper backing and never allowed Nandal any he has the prowess to become a chance to come back in the match.

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Pune, Dec 12: Hockey Odisha, Uttar Pradesh Hockey, Hockey Jharkhand, Telangana Hockey, Hockey Bihar, and Hockey Maharashtra registered emphatic victories in matches of the 11th Hockey India Senior Men's National Championships here Sunday.

In the day's opener, Odisha took on Hockey Gujarat in a Pool F encounter. After a feisty and goalless first quarter, Odisha took control of the game, notching up a comfortable 8-0 victory. The goals for Odisha were scored by Sushil Dhanwar (17th, 26th, 36th), Prakash Barla (34th, 57th), Patras Tirkey (39th, 52th) and Mangra Bhengra (48th).

In another match played on the day, Raushan Kumar struck five goals as Hockey Bengal overwhelmed Goans Hockey 8-0. The other goals were scored by Abhishek Pratap Singh (10th, 22th) and Santosh Baxla (19th).

UP Hockey beat Kerala Hockey 9-0 in the Pool G opener while Hockey Jharkhand thrashed Assam Hockey 11-0 in a Pool G match.

1ST DUTCHMAN TO EMERGE F1 WORLD CHAMPION

AGENCIES

Abu Dhabi, Dec 12: Max Verstappen ripped a record eighth title away from Lewis Hamilton with a pass on the final lap of the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix here Sunday to close one of the most thrilling Formula One (F1) seasons in years as the first Dutch world champion.

Hamilton was cruising past Michael Schumacher's record of seven titles Sunday in a race he controlled until Nicholas Latifi crashed with five laps remaining. F1 sent out the safety car for a cleanup and resumed the race with one lap remaining.

Hamilton and Verstappen started side-by-side for one final trip around Yas Marina Circuit and the British driver surged to the lead. Verstappen stalked him through the first four turns then made his pass in turn five and pulled away in his Red Bull.

"Oh my God!" Verstappen screamed over his radio. "You are the world champion! The world champion!" screamed back Red

Max Verstappen

Bull boss Christian Horner. "Let's do this for another 10 or 15 years!' Verstappen replied.

Multiple rival drivers headed to the grid to congratulate Verstappen as Hamilton sat motionless inside his Mercedes. The defeat ended his reign of four consecutive titles and denied Hamilton a chance to pass Schumacher as best alltime in F1.

"Congratulations to Max and to his team, I think he did an amazing job this year," Hamilton said to close what had become a bitter rivalry this season between Mercedes and Red Bull.

Odisha won the toss and put the

Abhishek Raut (2/55). In reply, Odisha were never in the

Rohit comes clean on pressures of captaincy

AGENCIES

NEW WHITE BALL FORMAT SKIPPER DOES NOT WANT TO THINK OF 'TALKS THAT HAPPEN OUTSIDE'

New Delhi, Dec 12: Rohit Sharma has recently been appointed captain in both formats of white ball cricket - the T20 internationals and ODIs. His elevation as ODI skipper means that Virat Kohli will only lead India in red ball cricket that is Tests.

Recently BCCI has released a video interview of Rohit on its Twitter account. In the video, Rohit who has also replaced the out-ofform Ajinkya Rahane as Test vicecaptain has said he is not bothered by 'talks that happen outside' and is focussed on his job.

"When you are playing cricket



for India, there will always be high pressure. There will be a lot of talks where negative and positives will emerge. However, the most

I don't focus on what people are saying because that is not in my control. I focus on the job in hand so that we play as a team and win matches

ROHIT SHARMA

can't control that," Rohit is heard saying in the video.

"I have said million times about this and I will keep saying that. That is the message I want to convey to the team as well. Even the team understand that when we are playing a high-profile tournament, there will be a lot of talks," he added.

Rohit asserted that it is important to focus on the game. "It's just important for us to focus on what we have in hand, which is to go and win games, play the way you are known to play. I think those talks that happen outside are immaterial. For us, it's important what we think of each other and that is more important," Rohit said. "What I think of x, y, z is im-

portant as you want to create a strong bond between the players and that is what will help us in achieving the goal we want. Rahul (Dravid) bhai is obviously going to help us in doing that so we look forward to his guidance," Rohit added.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 12: Odisha suffered their first defeat Sunday in the ongoing Vijay Hazare Trophy (50 overs) as they went down to Jammu and Kashmir (J &K) by 95 runs in a game played in Thane.

opposition only to see J&K post a fighting total of 278 for the loss of nine wickets in their 50 overs. Henan Nazir (79,94b) was the star of the show as he held the J&K innings together. He was well-supported by Shubham Khajuria (38) and Parvez Rasool (30). Four bowlers picked up two wickets each for Odisha. They were Biplab Samantray (2/15), Shantanu Mishra (2/29), Debabrata Pradhan (2/55) and

hunt as they lost wickets at regular intervals. A number of batters got starts including Raut (40), Govind Poddar (37), Mishra (28) and Samantray (23). Both Poddar and Mishra however, were guilty of taking up too many deliveries which created pressure on the rest of the team. In their efforts to up the ante, many of the Odisha batters threw away their wickets. Ultimately Odisha were bowled out for 183 in 45 overs.

The star bowler for J&K was Abid Mushtaq (10-1-38-5). He singlehandedly broke the backbone of Odisha batting. He was well-supported by Mujtaba Yousuf (2/34). Odisha will play their last group

encounter against Himachal Pradesh December 14.

The loss Sunday will certainly hamper Odisha's chances in qualifying for the knockout stage of the tournament. Not only they have to win against Himachal Pradesh, they will also have to depend on the results of the other games in the group.

Brief scores: J&K 278 for 9 (Henan Nazir 94, Biplab samntray 2/15)-(beat Odisha 183 (Abhishek Raut 40, Abid Mushtaq 5/38) by 95 runs.

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important thing for me as a crick-

eter and not as a captain is to focus

on my job. I don't focus on what peo-

ple are talking about because I







