



## GRAND DEBUT

Actor Parineeti Chopra will be joining Mithun Chakraborty and Karan Johar to judge TV reality show *Hunaarbaaz*

LEISURE P2



## DUBAI GOVT GOES PAPERLESS

Dubai has become the world's first govt to go 100 pc paperless, the Emirate's Crown Prince has announced

INTERNATIONAL P10



## ODISHA FACE JAMSHEDPUR

A high-flying Odisha FC look to continue their impressive run in the ISL when they take on Jamshedpur FC today

SPORTS P12

## PRIVILEGE MOTION AGAINST EX-CJI GOGOI



**New Delhi:** Two TMC MPs Monday submitted a notice to move privilege motion against former Chief Justice of India and Rajya Sabha member Ranjan Gogoi over his remarks about attending Parliament, sources said. The notice from Trinamool Congress (TMC) members Jawhar Sircar and Mausam Noor is yet to be admitted by the Rajya Sabha Secretariat. Besides them, several other MPs from various opposition parties are also expected to file notices of privilege motion against Gogoi's remarks about attending Parliament, they said. In an interview to a news channel, Gogoi reportedly said,



## UK SEES FIRST OMICRON DEATH

**London:** The UK has seen its first death from Omicron, even as the latest variant of the coronavirus is expected to comprise 50 per cent of the cases in London by Tuesday, Prime Minister Boris Johnson said Monday. "Sadly yes, Omicron is producing hospitalisations and sadly at least one patient has been confirmed to have died with Omicron. "So I think the idea that this is somehow a milder version of the virus, I think that's something we need to set on one side and just recognise the sheer pace at which it accelerates through the population. So the best thing we can do is all get our boosters," he said during his visit to vaccination clinic near Paddington, in west London, according to media reports. P10

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## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



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| MARKET WATCH |          |           |
|--------------|----------|-----------|
| INDEX        |          | VARIATION |
| SENSEX       | 58283.42 | ↓ 503.25  |
| NIFTY        | 17368.30 | ↓ 143     |
| DOLLAR       | 76.33    | ↑ ₹0.06   |
| EURO         | 85.51    | ↑ ₹0.02   |
| GOLD         | ₹48,240  | ↑ ₹76     |
| SILVER       | ₹61,595  | ↑ ₹444    |

| WEATHER  |                                   |        |
|----------|-----------------------------------|--------|
|          | BHUB                              | CTK    |
| TEMP MAX | 26.9°C                            | 27.2°C |
| TEMP MIN | 17.0°C                            | 16.5°C |
| Humidity | 80%                               | 83%    |
| Rainfall | Nil                               | Nil    |
|          | Forecast: Dry weather most likely |        |

# HARNAAZ SANDHU MISS UNIV 2021

AGENCIES

**Eilat (Israel), Dec 13:** Actor-model Harnaaz Sandhu made history Monday as she was crowned Miss Universe 2021 - beating contestants from 79 countries - 21 years after India last brought home the title. Only two Indians before Sandhu have won the title of Miss Universe - actors Sushmita Sen in 1994 and Lara Dutta in 2000.

The 70th edition of the event was held in Eilat, the resort town in Israel, where the 21-year-old bagged the coveted title. The town on the Red Sea has a small but vibrant Indian community and many were present at the ceremony.

Paraguay's Nadia Ferreira, 22, finished second, South Africa's Lalela Mswane, 24, came third at the 70th Miss Universe Competition. "I am immensely grateful to the Almighty, my parents, and the Miss India Organization for guiding and supporting me throughout. Loads of love to everyone who prayed and wished the crown for me," Sandhu said.

MORE P2

to cheer for Sandhu. The Chandigarh-based model, who is pursuing her master's degree in public administration, was crowned by her predecessor Andrea Meza of Mexico, who won the pageant in 2020. While



## TITLE COMES HOME AFTER 21 YEARS

# 2 cops killed in J&K attack on Army bus

**■ In a day marked by 20th anniv of Parl attack, an Army bus was targeted by militants in Srinagar that killed two cops. The toll may go up considering most of the injured are critical. Attack exposes chinks in security set-up**

AGENCIES

**Srinagar, Dec 13:** In a major attack on security forces, two Jammu and Kashmir Police personnel were killed and at least 12 others injured when terrorists fired on a police bus on outskirts of Srinagar city Monday evening, police said. Police sources said the incident was reported from the Pantha Chowk area, on the outskirts of Srinagar city.

"Two policemen were killed and 12 others injured in this attack. All the injured have been shifted to hospital. The area has been cordoned off," a source said, adding that the bus was carrying personnel of Jammu and Kashmir Armed Police's 9th Battalion.

This is a major terrorist attack on the security forces in recent days and it has taken place in an area where many camps of the security forces are situated.

At least 14 policemen sustained injuries in the attack. The injured were evacuated to various hospitals where two of them died. The deceased included an assistant sub-inspector of the armed police. No terrorist outfit has so far claimed responsibility for the firing on the police bus.

Meanwhile, two Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) militants, including a foreign ultra, were killed in a brief

## 20TH ANNIV OF PARL ATTACK

**NEW DELHI:** The members of the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha Monday paid tribute to the security personnel who laid down their lives while defending the Parliament complex from a terrorist attack on December 13, 2001. The members in both houses of Parliament stood in silence for a brief period as a mark of respect for the departed souls. This day in 2001, terrorists belonging to the Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Jaish-e-Mohammed attacked the Parliament complex and opened fire, killing nine people. All five terrorists involved in the attack were also killed. As soon as the Lok Sabha met for the day, Speaker Om Birla mentioned about the security personnel and a staff who were killed in the attack, and emphasised that the resolve to fight terrorism will be strengthened.

"chance" encounter in Rangreth area of the city Monday police said.

Giving details, a police spokesperson said based on a specific input regarding the movement of terrorists in the general area of Rangreth, surprise 'naka' checking points were established tactically by police in the area.

"During checking at one such naka manned by a small team of Srinagar Police, two suspected people, on noticing the police party, fired indiscriminately upon them.

However, the fire was effectively retaliated, leading to a brief encounter in which two terrorists were neutralised on (the) spot," he said. One of the ultras was Aadi Ahmad Wani, a resident of Daramdoora.



# Panchayat polls in Feb; dates by end of Dec

**■ The SEC has finished revising the electoral rolls and the final voter list is awaiting print**

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 13:** The State Election Commission (SEC) will shortly announce the dates for the three-tier panchayat polls in the state as the final voters' list is ready.

The tenure of the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) in the state will end in March, 2022 and elections to form fresh councils will be conducted before the end of the term. Sources said the dates are likely to be announced by the end of December and the polls may begin in February.

The State Election Commission had started the process of preparing the electoral rolls in November. Those who attained 18 as on November 1, 2021, have been included in the voters' list. Names of over 2.61 crore voters have been included in the list.

As 91,913 voter boxes are needed for the poll, the SEC has brought 10,000 boxes from Telangana, 7,000 from West Bengal and 16,000 from



# Jawad report in a week

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 13:** A report on the crops damaged by cyclone Jawad will be submitted to the Centre after its assessment to be completed within a week. This was discussed at the high-level meeting between state government officials and a central team here Monday.

Chief Secretary Suresh Chandra Mahapatra, Special Relief Commission Pardeep Kumar Jena along with senior officers interacted with the inter-ministerial central team after its two days visit

to the state.

Standing crop on more than 5.78 lakh hectares in 131 blocks of 12 districts were severely damaged. The districts included Ganjam, Bhadrak, Puri, Cuttack, Balasore, Kendrapara, Keonjhar, Khurda, Jagatsinghpur, Nayagarh, Jajpur and Mayurbhanj.

The six-member team led by Saurav Ray, joint secretary, ministry of home affairs, was divided into three sub-teams and had discussions with Special Relief Commissioner Jena. The teams visited Jawad-hit areas in Ganjam,

Puri, Jgatsinghpur, Cuttack, Jajpur and Kendrapara.

SRC Jena said that because of standing water in the agricultural fields, the farmers also could not sow seeds for the Rabi crop. "State's climatic condition is also not conducive for late Rabi crop as the temperature starts growing by mid February," he said.

Central team leader Ray said they saw heavy losses to farmers at the ground-level caused by the cyclonic rain. He opined that the farmers who suffered losses needed governmental assistance.

# CBSE to give full marks for 'misogynistic' question

**■ In a quick damage control move, the CBSE has announced awarding full marks to a question in Class X English paper allegedly promoting gender stereotyping and regressive notions against women among young kids**

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Dec 13:** The CBSE Monday dropped a comprehension passage and the accompanying questions from the Class-10 English exam paper and decided to award full marks for it to students, following an outrage over the board allegedly promoting "gender stereotyping" and supporting "regressive notions".

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) had referred the matter to subject experts Sunday and sought their feedback. In the Class-10 exam conducted Saturday, the question paper carried a comprehension passage with sentences such as "emancipation of women destroyed the

parents' authority over the children" and "it was only by accepting her husband's way that a mother could gain obedience over the younger ones", among others.

Excerpts from the passage have gone viral on social media platforms with users calling out the board for supporting "misogynistic" and "regressive opinions" and the hashtag "#CBSEinsultswomen" trending on Twitter.

"A passage in one set of the English language and literature paper of the CBSE Class-10 first-term examination held on December 11 is not in accordance with the guidelines of the board with regard to the setting of question papers.

"In this backdrop and on the basis of the feedback received from the stakeholders, the matter was referred to a committee of subject experts. According to the panel's recommendation, it has been decided to drop the passage and the accompanying questions," CBSE Examination Controller Sanyam Bhardwaj said.

## SC RESPITE FOR CBSE CLASS 12 STUDENTS

**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court Monday said the CBSE should consider the problem of those students who had appeared in the examinations this year for improving marks in Class 12 but obtained lower numbers, as it will affect the admissions secured by them for higher studies. The students who appeared in the improvement exams have taken admissions based on their original results and that should not be disturbed, the apex court observed. A bench of Justices A M Khanwilkar and C T Ravikumar was informed that the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has filed a counter affidavit stating that the previous result of the students, who failed subsequently in the improvement examinations, would be considered and they would have the opportunity to retain it.



"Full marks will be awarded for this passage to all the students concerned. To ensure uniformity and parity, full marks will also be awarded to students for passage number one for all sets of the question paper," he added.

Congress president Sonia Gandhi Monday condemned the "blatantly misogynist" and "nonsensical" questions in the Class-10 CBSE exam, saying those reflected "extremely poorly" on the standards of education and testing.

Raising the issue during the Zero Hour in the Lok Sabha, she demanded an immediate withdrawal of the said passage, an apology from the government and a review into this "grave lapse".

"The passage contains atrocious statements such as 'women gaining independence is the main reason for a wide variety of social and family problems' and 'wives stop obeying their husbands, that is the main reason children and servants are indisciplined'," she said, read-

ing out excerpts from the question paper. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi also took to Twitter to raise the issue.

"Most CBSE papers so far were too difficult and the comprehension passage in the English paper was downright disgusting. Typical RSS-BJP ploys to crush the morale and future of the youth. Kids, do your best. Hard work pays. Bigotry doesn't," he said.

The CBSE issued a statement Sunday, saying, "The passage in one set of the English paper of CBSE Class-10 first-term examination held on December 11 has received mixed reactions from a few parents and students stating that 'it seems to support regressive notions on family and allegedly promotes gender stereotyping'."

The CBSE Class-12 sociology exam held earlier this month asked students to name the political party under which the 'anti-Muslim violence in Gujarat in 2002' took place, a question the board later said was "inappropriate" and against its guidelines.



# leisure

## FORTUNE FORECAST

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**ARIES**  
Some decisions are hard to take, but a firm resolve will help you stay committed. Sentimentality may shake your purpose, but once decided, you must stick to it. Also, learn to take heartbreak in your stride, says Ganesha.

**TAURUS**  
Definitely not a day when you plan to get your feet dirty (maybe a pedicure, though). You might delay the start of a new project. Perhaps, a romantic escape with your sweetheart or a day in the spa grooming yourself with a lavish makeover will validate your lethargy today. Either way, it will be heavy on your pocket.

**GEMINI**  
You will try very hard to strike a balance between logic and emotions. Though you may succeed in doing so in front of the world, you may not be so discreet with your friends. You will have an excellent time with your sweetheart, but your physical appearance will be a cause of concern to you, says Ganesha.

**CANCER**  
A hectic day, combined with domestic pressure will make you exhausted. You feel a heavy burden on mind and heart. Don't be too emotional, says Ganesha. Take care not to pass domestic burdens on to your career or business, and thereby mar your capacity and efficiency.

**LEO**  
You will pay more attention to the younger members in the family. You will guide the children in improving their daily schedule. An occasion to celebrate will present itself. You will be desirous of participating in some competition or program, says Ganesha.

**VIRGO**  
A fear of the unknown will keep lurking in your mind today. The shadow will only grow larger as the day progresses. You may find yourself spending too much on your foreign friends. Ganesha advises you to be cautious in this regard today.

**LIBRA**  
Ganesha says your children will gain achievements that will have you feel proud of them. You will get monetary benefit either by increment in salary or by inheritance. You will be able to gain substantial gains by investing in real estate or buying insurance policies.

**SCORPIO**  
Ganesha asks you to practice caution today. There are strong possibilities that an evil eye may attack you in some or other way. So, keep a watchful eye. And remember, every day brings along an experience and a lesson with it. Learn and move on.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Your stars are aligned in a way that you may have to travel long distance, either for business or for leisure. Socially, you are active as you are likely to attend a function and take the centre stage. You may also participate in religious activities and give importance of rites and rituals, if need be, informs Ganesha.

**CAPRICORN**  
You have sacrificed a lot on enjoyment with friends and family, done some back-breaking work and kept your focus to reach where you are right now. Ganesha gives you a pat on your back for all the hard work you've put in. Now, it is time to watch the tree bear fruits. With some additional responsibilities, promotion in terms of salary or position is on the cards for you. You will get so tied up in your work that you'll crave to have free time.

**AQUARIUS**  
You blessed with a very high level of patience and practicality, and you can easily untangle any problem. But, it gives an excuse to the people around you to wash their hands of any responsibility. It may put you in a tight spot at times leaving you frustrated.

**PISCES**  
Looking at your planetary positions for today, there is a likelihood that you will suffer from reversals in fortunes financially. Hence be wary when it comes to financial dealings.



## BOND STAR NAOMIE HARRIS SHARES HER #METOO STORY

Oscar-nominated British actress Naomie Harris, who plays Eve Moneypenny in the James Bond franchise, recently revealed that a 'huge, huge star' groped her during an audition. Although she refused to name the perpetrator but was left aghast when nobody in the audition room said anything to the man, lamented Harris.

## MATTHEW McCONAUGHEY DIDN'T DREAM OF CAREER IN POLITICS

American Matthew McConaughey says has never dreamed of a career in politics but thinks he should be leading and serving people in the best way he can. The 52-year-old actor recently ruled himself out of the running for Governor of Texas.



# 'A billion dreams come true'

**Mumbai:** Congratulatory messages have been pouring in for Harnaaz Sandhu as she was crowned Miss Universe 2021. Harnaaz made history as she won the title 21 years after India brought home the crown.

The former Miss World **Priyanka Chopra** congratulated Harnaaz on her historic win and tweeted, "And the new Miss Universe is... Miss India Congratulations @HarnaazSandhu03... bringing the crown home after 21 years!"

"#yehbaat..Har Hindustani Ki Naz' Harnaaz Kaur Sandhu #MissUniverse2021 #INDI-AAAAA...Sooooo proud of you!!!! Congratulations @HarnaazSandhu03. Thank you for representing India so beautifully!! May you reign supreme!! #JaiHind," tweeted former Miss Universe **Sushmita Sen** expressing her joy.

"I'm overjoyed and thrilled at Harnaaz's win at Miss Universe! She was a strong contender throughout and was an exemplary representative for India on the world stage! After 21 long years it's a billion dreams come true!" said **Lara Dutta** who won the crown for the last time for India.

**Celina Jaitly**, the fourth runner-up of Miss Universe-2001 said, "I told my half Austrian 9yr old twins India won Ms Universe again & they said: "Wow mom India seems to

have special DNA that turns all girls into self-made princesses, I hope you passed some of it on to us, might be easier to turn into Batman." AGENCIES



Miss Universe 2021 Harnaaz Sandhu

## Who is Miss Universe 2021

India's Harnaaz Sandhu made history today as she was crowned Miss Universe 2021, 21 years after India won the title for the last time.

**Here are a few facts about the diva:** Twenty-one-year Harnaaz has brought home the Miss Universe crown, two decades after **Lara Dutta** bagged it in 2000. This was the 70th edition of the event held in Eilat, Israel.

Born and raised in Punjab, she attended Shivalik Public School and Post Graduate Government College for Girls, both in Chandigarh. She is currently pursuing her Masters' degree in Public Administration.

She began competing in beauty contest at the age of 17 and has won titles such as Miss Chandigarh 2017 and Miss Max Emerging Star India 2018.

In 2019, she won the title of Femina Miss India Punjab 2019 after which she competed in Femina Miss India. She was in the top 12 in Femina Miss India. AGENCIES

## Answers that helped her win crown

In a video going viral on Twitter, Harnaaz is seen saying 'Chak de phatte, India' moments after winning the title

In the closely contested beauty pageant, Harnaaz Sandhu's performance in the final question and answer round helped her edge the other contestants.

The Indian was asked what advice she would give to young women on how to deal with the pressure they face today.

The confident Sandhu responded, "The biggest pressure

of the youth of today facing is to believe in themselves, to know that you are unique and that's what makes you beautiful. Stop comparing yourselves with others and let's talk about more important things that are happening worldwide. Come out, speak for yourselves because you are the leader of your life, you are the voice of your own. I believed in myself and that's why I am standing here today."

The moment her name was declared as the winner, the diva broke down with tears of joy. In a video going viral on Twitter, Harnaaz is seen saying 'Chak de phatte, India' moments after winning the crown. AGENCIES



## Parineeti makes debut on TV with Hunarbaaz

**Mumbai:** Actress Parineeti Chopra has been roped in for the reality show *Hunarbaaz*. She will be joining Mithun Chakraborty and Karan Johar on the panel of judges.

She says this show will give her a chance to meet people from different parts of the country and it is surely going to be an exciting thing for her.

"I have always loved being on stage and interacting with a live audience and I was aware that reality television shows would give me the chance of meeting people from parts of India whom we don't get to interact with easily and hear their stories," adds the

Saina actress. For the actress, who has been part of Hindi film industry, making a television debut with Karan Johar and Mithun Chakraborty is truly a great experience. "It is an absolute honour for me to share this stage with Karan Johar and Mithun Da, who are both stalwarts in their field and are truly legends," Parineeti says.

*Hunarbaaz: Desh Ki Shaan* will air soon on Colors. IANS

**'I mostly get typecast, body-shamed on screen'**

**Mumbai:** Even though it was a show headlined by actress Sushmita Sen, the audience cannot forget the action-packed scenes between Sushmita and Dilnaz Irani who played the public prosecutor in *Aarya 2*.

Dilnaz says apart from Ram Madhani and few other filmmakers, she mostly gets typecast and body-shamed and that the amount of interesting work she gets to do in theatre she does not get on screen.

Asked why she is not as visible on screen as she is in the theatre scene in Mumbai, Dilnaz said: "I

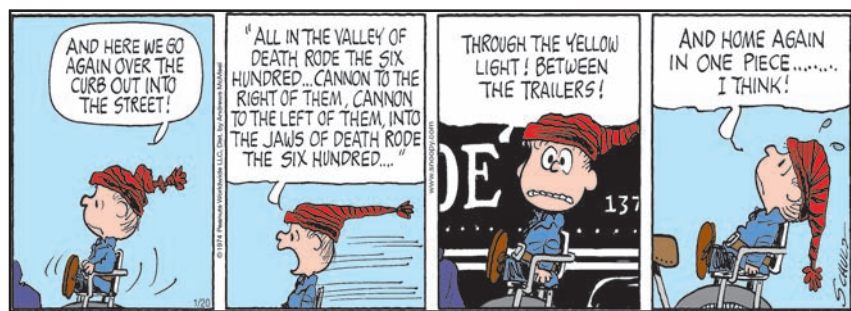
am actually not that choosy when it comes to shows or films but I am mostly typecast by casting directors. There are a few things also I have realised; that a

good filmmaker like Ram Madhani, Ashutosh Gawarikar or Hansal Mehta will never typecast you. But a lot happened when we go through casting directors. I am told many things about my look and also body-shamed." IANS



Theatre actor Dilnaz Irani

## PEANUTS



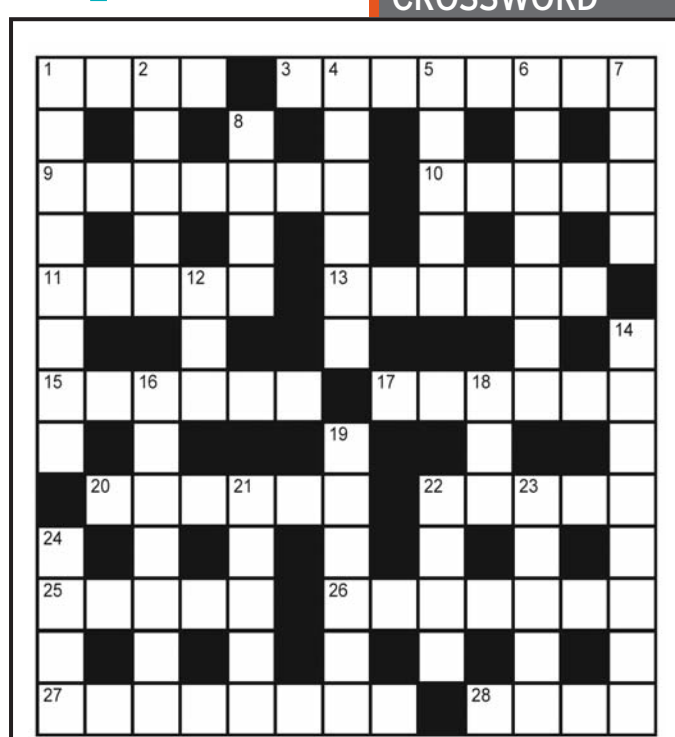
## CALVIN AND HOBBS



## BREVITY



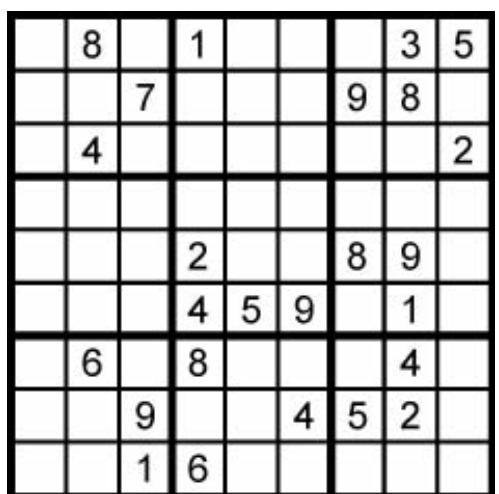
## FUN post CROSSWORD



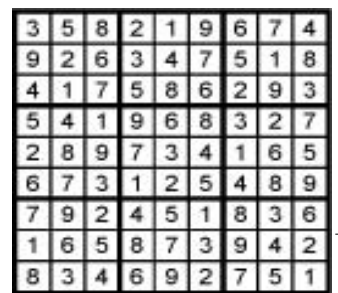
- Across**
- 1 Vats
  - 3 Acme
  - 9 Fishermen
  - 10 Hawaiian feasts
  - 11 Come to pass
  - 13 Snub, in a way
  - 15 Tight
  - 17 Right away (2,4)
  - 20 Acid neutralizer
  - 22 Fastener
  - 25 Happen
- Down**
- 26 Pokes fun at
  - 27 Type of pig or stove
  - 28 Night fliers
  - 1 Span
  - 2 Counterfeit
  - 4 Confined to a cell (2,4)
  - 5 Man-made fibre
  - 6 Mortification
  - 7 Leisure
  - 8 Yield
  - 12 Samovar
  - 14 Storms
  - 16 Unlawful
  - 18 Engine need
  - 19 Traffic stopper
  - 21 Correspond
  - 22 Cordon bleu
  - 23 Permit
  - 24 It's sold in bars

## SUDOKU

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



## SOLUTIONS



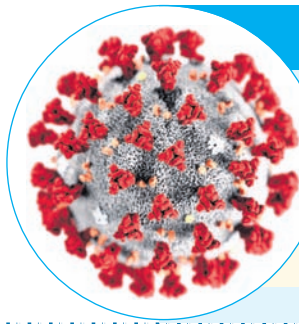
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW





**STIR FOR PAY HIKE**

Anganwadi workers stage a demonstration at Lower PMG in Bhubaneswar, Monday, to press for fulfilment of their demands including pay hike



**COVID-19 TRACKER**

|        | INFECTED     | RECOVERED    | DEAD      |
|--------|--------------|--------------|-----------|
| World  | 27,05,56,323 | 24,33,21,915 | 53,24,691 |
| India  | 3,46,97,860  | 3,41,30,768  | 4,75,636  |
| Odisha | 10,51,752    | 10,41,536    | 8,436     |

**Norms out for admissions to vacant PG seats**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 13:** The Higher Education department Monday released a new set of guidelines and dateline for admissions to vacant PG seats (Spot-II) selection for 2021-22 academic session.

The candidates, who have been selected earlier but did not take admission during the previous spot admission, are eligible to apply afresh. The candidates have to provide only one fresh option of universities/colleges for admissions.

**The availability of online CAF for vacant PG seats will begin December 15, 2021**

The availability of online common application form (CAF) for PG vacant seats will begin December 15, 2021. The last date for providing fresh option in CAF is December 19. The merit list will be published for the PG vacant seats December 22. After generating the intimation letter, candidates are required to report to the allotted institutions with relevant documents from December 23 to 24.

Once intimation letter is generated, earlier admissions in the previous institutes/courses will be automatically cancelled.

In case the candidates don't turn up for admissions within the stipulated time, universities and colleges can select new candidates from the waiting list and update the same in e-space.

**CM launches projects worth over ₹2,500cr in 2 dists**

The smart health card scheme has so far been rolled out in 26 of the 30 districts in the state

PNN/AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar/Cuttack, Dec 13:** Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Monday inaugurated and laid the foundation stone of projects worth Rs 2,500 crore while launching the distribution of smart health cards under Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana (BSKY) to beneficiaries in Cuttack and Khurda districts.

Patnaik launched the projects spread over various sectors including roads, bridges, drainage, education, health, livelihood, irrigation, energy, women and child development.

He inaugurated 40 projects worth Rs 93.28 crore and laid the foundation stones for 95 projects worth Rs 1,474.88 crore in Cuttack. Later, he visited Begunia in Khurda district, where he inaugurated 126 projects costing Rs 85.53 crore and laid the foundation stones for 406 projects worth Rs 902.44 crore.

While 18 lakh people in Cuttack will benefit from the smart health cards, about 14 lakh in Khurda district will get health coverage under this scheme, the Chief Minister said.

The facility has so far been implemented in 26 of the 30 districts of the state.

Addressing a function at Cuttack Balyatra Ground, Patnaik said the initiative would greatly benefit the poor and needy in the state.

He said 3.5 crore people belonging to 96 lakh families in the state would receive the benefits of the BSKY smart health card. "Now, people can get treatment without



Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik distributes BSKY smart health card to a beneficiary at Begunia in Khurda, Monday, as ST Secretary VK Pandian looks on. Begunia MLA Rajendra Kumar Sahoo is also seen



BSKY beneficiaries pose for a photo after getting smart health cards in Khurda, Monday

any hassle at 200 major hospitals in the country by holding a piece of paper," the Chief Minister further said. Stating that efforts are on to develop SCB Medical College and Hospital into an 'AIIMS Plus' institute, the Chief Minister expressed hope that the premier hospital will soon prove to be a milestone in the country's healthcare sector in the coming days.

He also announced that Biswanath Pandit Central Library, which was demolished at Khannagar in Cuttack during an eviction drive for construction of a bus terminal, would be relocated

■ While 18 lakh people in Cuttack will benefit from the smart health cards, about 14 lakh in Khurda district will get health coverage under the scheme

■ The Chief Minister expressed hope that the SCB Medical College and Hospital will soon prove to be a milestone in the country's healthcare sector in the coming days

near the Puri-Angul bus stand and built as a state-of-the-art library.

The library has been temporarily shifted to Odisha Administrative Tribunal (OAT) near Judicial Academy Elaborate security arrangement was made in Cuttack district keeping in view the possibility of opposition parties staging protests de-

manding the removal and arrest of Minister of State for Home, Dibya Shankar Mishra in connection with the Kalahandi woman teacher's kidnap-murder case.

A total of 15 platoons of police force led by Cuttack Deputy Commissioner (DCP) Prateek Singh were deployed. Ahead of Patnaik's

arrival in Cuttack, BJP Yuva Morcha members staged a demonstration in the Buxi Bazar area holding placards and waving black flags.

They also displayed banners reading "CM Go Back". The police detained around 20 protestors, including BJP's Cuttack Nagar president Lalatendu Badu and Minority Morcha president Sikandar Ali.

Congress MLA from Barabati-Cuttack, Mohammed Moqim, staged a dharna during the Chief Minister's visit. He sat on a dharna near the Mahatma Gandhi statue near Puri Ghat. "The Chief

Minister is travelling everywhere but he does not attend the Assembly to discuss matters of public interest," the Barabati legislator said.

Attending a programme at Begunia in Khurda district, the Chief Minister said Khurda is the land of the first freedom struggle. Saluting the brave peasant soldiers known as Paikas who fought for the Odia people, he said, "We will continue our fight for the rights of the Odia people."

Patnaik lauded women members of 'Mission Shakti' for their "excellent job in taking forward activities of women self-help groups".

**CONG DEMO**



Police personnel restrict agitating Congress workers from entering Puri SP's office, Monday, as the grand old party has been demanding justice in Kalahandi teacher Mamita Meher kidnap and murder case

**Das Burma's PA found dead in Bhargavi; family cries murder**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Puri, Dec 13:** State Planning Board deputy chairman Sanjay Das Burma's, personal assistant (PA), who was missing since December 11, was found dead under mysterious circumstances in Bhargavi river near Sadar Gadamrugasira under Sadar police limits here Monday, an official said.

Chittaranjan Palai was missing since Saturday and a search operation was underway after the motorcycle, footwear and chain belonging to him were recovered near Gadamrugasira bridge in the district Sunday night.

Chittaranjan's uncle Purnachandra Palai has lodged a

**Chittaranjan's uncle Purnachandra Palai has lodged a complaint with the police alleging that it was a pre-planned murder**

complaint with the police alleging that it was a pre-planned murder.

Meanwhile, a special investigation team (SIT), led by ASP Prafulla Chandra Pradhan, has been constituted to probe the incident. Sub Divisional Police Officer (SDPO) Kishore Chandra Mund said the kidnapping case has been upgraded a murder one. Sadar police have de-

tained a man in connection with the incident, said an official.

The body has been sent to Puri district headquarters hospital for post-mortem, added the official.

When contacted, Das Burma said it was a personal loss to him and he was deeply saddened over Palai's sudden death.

"I am deeply saddened to learn Chittaranjan's untimely demise. It is a personal loss to me. Guilty will definitely be punished," Das Burma added.

Puri MLA Jayant Sadangi (BJP), on the other hand, said an impartial inquiry into the incident is required. "However, I am not sure whether an impartial probe will be conducted," he said.

**CAG pulls up BDA for shoddy fund mgmt**

The decision to deposit ₹61.74 crore in escrow accounts was devoid of merit which deprived BDA of earning interest amounting to ₹1.04 crore between October 2017 and January 2018

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 13:** Citing inappropriate use of funds, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India has said that the Bhubaneswar Development Authority (BDA) has lost interests to the tune of Rs 2.56 crore on various development projects launched in the state capital.

As per the CAG report, the BDA in 2017 had availed Rs 41.16 crore from Odisha Urban Infrastructure Development Fund (OUIDF) for implementation of housing projects to rehabilitate slum dwellers and people belonging to EWS. As per Clause 7 (IV) of the sanction of loan, BDA was to open a project specific bank account with a nationalised bank wherein all the loan amounts and grants received from various sources would be deposited.

For repayment of loans, the BDA would open an escrow account not later than two years from receipt of loan. Revenue generated from the sale of housing units was supposed to be deposited in the escrow account.

However, the auditor, during scrutiny of BDA records during



August-September 2018, found that it had received Rs 61.74 crore of which OUIDF provided Rs 41.76 crore and Rs 20.58 crore came as its own share. The amount was kept in three different escrow accounts in September 2017 even though terms of sanction of loan did not require depositing the amount in an escrow account. Only revenue generated from sale of houses was to be deposited in escrow accounts.

"Since deposits in escrow account are non-interest bearing, the said amount deposited therein, did not fetch any interest. Realising this, BDA authorities transferred

**Since deposits in escrow account are non-interest bearing, the said amount deposited therein, did not fetch any interest**

(January 2018) the fund from the escrow accounts to saving accounts. Following this, the BDA managed to earn interest at the rate of 6.5 per cent on such deposits. Thus, the initial decision to deposit the amount in escrow

accounts was, therefore, devoid of merit which deprived BDA of earning interest amounting to Rs 1.04 crore between October 2017 and January 2018," the CAG said.

Similarly, on scrutiny of bank pass books (during August 10-October 12, 2018) maintained for Subudhipur Housing Project, the CAG noticed that balance in the saving bank account with Oriental Bank of Commerce was Rs 2.48 crore April 15, 2006. BDA withdrew the entire amount Rs 3.96 crore (including interest of Rs 1.48 crore) from the account and deposited it in a flexi fixed deposit account August 29, 2018 losing an opportunity of earning additional interest of Rs 1.52 crore.

"Since the amount was not required by BDA for 12 years, the amount could have been deposited in a fixed deposit account much earlier, where rate of interest is higher than the savings account. Considering the prevailing rate of interest at 7.10 per cent on fixed deposit up to three years offered by the bank, BDA could have earned interest amounting to Rs 3.00 crore," the CAG observed.

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# HC postpones Odisha film award ceremony amid row

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Cuttack, Dec 13:** The Orissa High Court Monday postponed the 31st Odisha State Film Awards ceremony scheduled to be held December 14 and directed re-evaluation of all entries selected for the programme.

The order came on a writ petition by director Bobby Islam who contended that his film was not in the final list of the 31st Odisha State Film Awards, despite being an original movie.

The petitioner alleged that two other films have been selected in several categories though they were ineligible for entry under the Orissa State Awards for Films Rules as they were not original.

During the hearing, Additional Government Advocate PC Panda informed the bench of Justice Arindam Sinha that applicants for the two films, 'Khusi' and 'Golmal Love', had "clearly mentioned" in



**The order came on a writ petition by director Bobby Islam who contended that his film was not in the final list of the 31st Odisha State Film Awards, despite being an original movie**

the entry forms that those were not dubbed versions, adaptations or remakes of other films.

Panda contended that 'Chhabirani', the petitioner's film, "contained im-

moral sexually explicit acts and had the potential of creating a furor, if granted the award".

It could have spoiled the social harmony of the society, he claimed. Besides, the second half of 'Chhabirani' was a "blatant copy" of a Bollywood movie, the government counsel submitted.

The kind of violence, rape and murder shown in the movie is in no way part of Odia tradition and culture that the petitioner claimed his film has depicted, he submitted.

Justice Sinha in his order said the ceremony, scheduled to be held Tuesday, would stand postponed.

The bench directed that the state, through its functionary, would re-evaluate all entries for awards, and the result would be made known to the petitioner and all stakeholders. The ceremony will be held post disposal of the writ petition, Sinha said.

The matter would again be heard January 7.

## FIGHTING FIRE



A fireman douses flame that engulfed a thatched house at a slum in Satyanagar area of Bhubaneswar, Monday

OP PHOTO

## ICSI, SOA ink pact for research & training

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 13:** The Institute of Company Secretaries of India (ICSI) has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Siksha 'O' Anusandhan (SOA), Deemed to be University, here to promote excellence in common areas of interest and imparting knowledge and skills required to operate in the area of academics, research and training.

The MoU was signed by Nagendra D Rao, President of ICSI, and Ashok Kumar Mahapatra, Vice-Chancellor of SOA, in the presence of several ICSI officials and SOA functionaries.

"This MoU will go a long way in facilitating cooperation between SOA and ICSI in the shape of joint collaborations, organization of seminars and webinars on subjects of topical interest and exchange of programmes to update knowledge," Rao said.

"Students and faculties of SOA can participate in these activities to update their knowledge and skills in various academic areas," he added.

Mahapatra stated that both parties would benefit from this and it would help the university in its holistic development.

As per the agreement, ICSI would facilitate the conduct of specialized training programmes in SOA for faculty members, research scholars and students of the university relating to areas of mutual interest.

The ICSI organised the second round of its Bi-Annual Convocation of the Eastern Region, for the FY 2021-22, at Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT), deemed to be University, Bhubaneswar.

# BJD calls for 'Indianisation' of judiciary

POST NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi, Dec 13:** Advocating for 'Indianisation' of the judiciary, the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) Monday suggested using regional languages at lower courts so that a common man can have access to justice and he is able to understand justice in layman terms.

BJD MP Sasmit Patra, while speaking on the High Court and Supreme Court Judges (Salaries and Conditions of Service) Amendment Bill, 2021 in the Rajya Sabha, said that there seems to be a colonial hangover that does not allow for providing and taking into account the social realities as they stand today.

"We still have a colonial hangover. The kinds of court procedures, the language and the words are so difficult at times that to understand justice from a common

layman's perspective is very difficult," Patra said.

The BJD while supporting the bill in the Upper House reminded the Union Law Minister about the long pending proposal of the state for setting up a permanent bench of Orissa High Court in western Odisha.

The BJD also proposed for setting up of National and State Judicial Infrastructure Authorities in the lines of NALSA and SLSAs. Sasmit Patra held it mandatory to create infrastructure that can take care of the judicial workload. The BJD MP said that in our country of 1.3 billion people, we have very limited access to information, very limited access to infrastructure and very limited access to the number of the Judges. "If we do not have appropriate infrastructure both at the National and the State levels, we will not be

**We still have a colonial hangover. The kinds of court procedures, the language and the words are so difficult at times that to understand justice from a common layman's perspective is very difficult**

SASMIT PATRA | BJD MP

doing justice to the true sense of what this was actually meant to be," he said.

The BJD MP applauded Union Law Minister Kiren Rijiju for flurry of appointments in the Supreme Court and High Courts. However, Patra cautioned the Centre over attacks on the judiciary. He highlighted that in the media as well as in the social media, there are sev-

eral attempts from various quarters to create an impression that the judiciary is not impartial.

"Our basic fundamentals of the Constitution stand on the basic premise that there is an independent judiciary. Therefore, these repeated attacks on the judiciary, either through media or social media, is unwarranted. We should be very careful and the Union Minister should also take care to see how we can further protect and see that such sullen attitude is not shown against the Indian judiciary," Sasmit Patra said.



ODISHA IN

PARLIAMENT

## Restore Ashrukhol wetland: BJD to Centre

**Biju Janata Dal (BJD) MP Bhartruhari Mahtab Monday urged the Union government to take steps for restoration and renovation of Ashrukhol-Jora wetland spread over Cuttack and Kendrapara districts.**

The senior BJD MP apprised the Lok Sabha during the Zero Hour that it is an an-

cient wetland and famous as one of the longest freshwater wetlands in the state.

"This natural wetland was the lifeline of the people living on both sides of this wetland, and was instrumental in providing livelihood to about more than a lakh people through fisheries and agriculture, besides meeting all the domestic requirements of water," Mahtab said.

He held several factors such as weed infestation and illegal conversion of land into agricultural fields responsible for the degradation of the wetland and added that the wetland is on the

verge of extinction.

"Due to various factors of environmental degradation like siltation, complete stoppage of inflow of flood water due to closure of inlets, highly eutrophic conditions, weed infestation, and illegal conversion of land into agriculture fields, this wetland has since been degraded gradually in size, threatening the entire ecosystem," Mahtab said.

The BJD MP pointed out that the utility potential of the wetland has been adversely affected and disappeared now.

Mahtab said that he has written to the Union Environment, Forests and Climate Change minister on the issue.

"I would urge this government to provide adequate funding for renovation and restoration of this memorable wetland called Ashrukhol. As there is a programme of Wetland Development Authority which comes under the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, I would urge upon this government to take necessary steps. The Odisha government has already sent the proposal to the Union government, and I would urge the government to take the decisions expeditiously," the Cuttack MP said.

# Revamp rural banking infra: Sarmistha

**Highlighting the difficulties faced by people due to inadequate banking infrastructure in rural areas, Biju Janata Dal (BJD) MP Sarmistha Sethi sought instructions to commercial banks to open brick-and-mortar branches and ATMs to enable people to access banking services.**

While speaking during the Zero Hour in the Lok Sabha, the BJD MP opined that financial inclusion is one of the most important areas that

**The Jajpur MP requested the Centre to instruct banks to allow Women SHGs to act as banking correspondents**

need coordination between the Centre and the states. She said more than 70 per cent of all gram panchayats in the state do not have a brick-and-mortar bank branch.

"Despite serious efforts on the part of the Odisha government to improve the lives of people of the state through initiatives like Mission Shakti, inadequate banking infrastructure, particularly in the rural areas has become a major constraint. Moreover, business correspondents are not effective in remote villages. Commercial banks are not delivering adequate credit to the agriculture and allied sector as well as the Self-Help Groups in the

state," the Jajpur MP said.

Sethi requested the Union government to instruct all the banks to allow Women Self-Help Groups to act as banking correspondents, at least, in the unbanked areas.

"The Centre may issue necessary instruction to all the commercial banks to open more and more brick-and-mortar branches and ATMs in the unbanked areas to enable people to access banking services in those localities," she said.

## 'Mission Shakti Living Lab' project launched

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 13:** The Odisha government and the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) signed an agreement Monday to announce the launch of Mission Shakti Living Lab to empower women economically and drive gender equality.

The Mission Shakti Living Lab will address barriers that limit the access of women to autonomy and financial freedom with the use of digital technologies and e-commerce, an official release said.

The agreement was signed by Mission Shakti commissioner Sujata Karthikeyan and UNCDF executive secretary Preeti Sinha. Karthikeyan said the partnership with the UNCDF's Centre for Financial Health was crucial to accelerate access to digital services that can increase the income and financial well-being of women.

Mission Shakti was launched in 2001 to bolster the holistic development of women. There are 6.02 lakh self-help groups (SHGs), comprising 70 lakh members across rural and urban areas of the state under the initiative, the release said.

## IRCTC unveils spl tour packages to north, west

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 13:** Indian Railways Catering & Tourism Corporation (IRCTC), Bhubaneswar Monday announced special tour packages on Pilgrim Special Tourist Train named 'Vibrant Gujarat', to western India in January, 2022 and 'Bharat Darshan' tourist train to northern India in March, 2022.

As per official information, the special train to Gujarat will have boarding points at Berhampur, Khurda Road, Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Talcher Road, Angul, Sambalpur and Jharsuguda, while the special train for north India will have boarding points at Berhampur, Khurda Road, Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Jajpur-Keonjhar Road, Bhadrak and Balasore.

The packages are all inclusive of accommodation, road transport, sightseeing, vegetarian meals (breakfast, lunch & dinner), IRCTC tour escorts and travel insurance charges. On the 'Vibrant Gujarat' train tour, the tourists can visit

Jyotirling in Somnath Dwarakadhish Temple, Jyotirling at Nageswar, Krishna temple at Bet Dwaraka, Akshardham Temple and Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad and the Statue of Unity - the world's tallest statue.

While on 'Bharat Darshan' train tour; tourists can visit Mata Vaishno Devi at Katra, Taj Mahal & Fort at Agra, Krishna Janmabhoomi at Mathura, Golden Temple and Wagah Border in Amritsar and Mansa Devi Temple & Gaanga Aarti in Haridwar.

Passengers of this region may avail the above Tourist Packages to visit religious places and tourist destinations from the boarding points from the above stations from Odisha towards Gujarat and North India with a minimum price.

Apart from this, IRCTC Regional Office at Bhubaneswar is also offering the most affordable domestic air packages to various parts of India and abroad. These packages will be available on group departures and customised basis on requirement.

## CHRISTMAS AHEAD



A vendor puts Santa hats up for sale in Nayapalli area of Bhubaneswar, Monday, ahead of Christmas

OP PHOTO

## WASSUP TODAY

### BHUBANESWAR

- Protest by Congress, near DCP office, 10:30am
- Agitation by Bhubaneswar makeshift vendor association, near BMC office, 10:30am

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SHORT TAKES

**Tara Tarini temple reopens**

**Berhampur:** Hundreds of devotees thronged the much-revered Tara Tarini temple in Ganjam district Monday when it reopened for public after nearly nine months. The temple, located on top of a hillock on the banks of the Rushikulya river, was opened a day after Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik visited it. On the first day, devotees thronged the place of worship since morning to catch a glimpse of goddesses Tara and Tarini and seek their blessings, said Bapuji Rana, one of the priests. "We hope the number increases in the days to come," he said. The shrine, one of the four Adi Shakti Pithas of the country, was closed for public entry along with other places of worship in mid-April, shortly after the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic struck. Later in the year, the administration allowed re-opening of other religious places, but people were barred from visiting the Tara Tarini shrine owing to the work that was underway in the temple complex.

**India launches Supersonic Missile Assisted Torpedo System**



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Balasure, Dec 13:** India Monday successfully launched Supersonic Missile Assisted Torpedo System (SMAT) from Abdul Kalam Island, formerly known as Wheeler Island, off the Odisha coast, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) said. During the mission, the full range capability of the missile was successfully demonstrated. The

system has been designed to enhance anti-submarine warfare capability far beyond the conventional range of the torpedo, the DRDO said.

"This was a textbook launch, where the entire trajectory was monitored by the electro optic telemetry system, various range radars, including the down range instrumentation and down range ships. The missile carried a torpedo, parachute delivery system and release mechanisms," said the DRDO statement. The system is launched from a ground mobile launcher and it can cover a range of distances, the DRDO said.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh congratulated the teams involved in the successful test of the supersonic missile assisted torpedo system. The development of the system is a perfect example of building futuristic defence systems in the country, he said. A number of DRDO laboratories developed various technologies for this advanced missile system.



Girl students of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Higher Secondary School in Sambalpur practising martial arts at a training camp, Monday

OP PHOTO

**Centre's proposal to hike GST on handloom raw materials flayed**

Reports said that the Centre is mulling to hike the GST on raw materials for handloom like cotton and colours from 5 per cent to 12 per cent from January 2022

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Rasulpur, Dec 13:** The Centre's proposal to hike GST on handloom raw materials from 5 to 12 per cent has sparked sharp resentment among the weavers in Jajpur district. The concerned weavers have warned of an agitation against the move by the Union government.

The move has robbed the people in Gopalpur weaver village under this block of their sleep. They are struggling to stay afloat in this business after being battered by Covid-induced lockdown and natural calamities.

Reports said that the Centre has proposed to hike the GST on handloom raw materials like cotton and colours from 5 per cent to 12 per cent from January 2022. Members of hundreds of weaver families here have demanded revoking of the decision, which they claim will seriously affect their livelihood.

The weavers claimed that the if the Union government does not re-think on its decision it will lead to steep rise in the price of handloom clothes in the market and result in decline in demand for their products. They claimed that consequently most weavers will be forced to shun their family business and leave for other states to work as migrant labourers.

According to reports, over 5,000 weavers from 1,000 families in Gopalpur village under Prathamakhandi panchayat of the block are into weaving of handloom clothes, which is their family business.

Weaving handloom clothes is the main source of their livelihood. Over 17 societies are functioning in the village for smooth management of the weaving business and sale of the products.

However, the weavers faced a serious setback when lockdown and shutdown were imposed due to spread of Covid-19 in the country.



FILE PHOTO

While their business was returning to normal, the Centre's recent decision has once again dashed their hopes. They alleged that no taxes were ever levied on handloom textiles. Mahatma Gandhi promoted handloom textiles as a cottage industry which is still tax-free.

They claimed that both the Centre and state are promoting small, medium and cottage industries. The Centre had earlier imposed GST on handloom textiles and now the move to hike it further is quite unfortunate. Earlier, the government had imposed two per cent VAT on handloom textiles.

Later, the Centre imposed 18 per cent GST on handloom textiles which sparked resentment among the weavers in the state. As a result, the Centre conceded the demands of the weavers and reduced the GST to five per cent.

They were trying to save their traditional occupation but the advent of Covid-19 from March 2019 and a major flood in August 2020 shook them to the hilt. The slump in sale of their handloom products due to Covid-

induced lockdowns and shutdowns is yet to see any improvement.

They had drawn the state government's attention to their various problems, while the latter has launched Mukhyamantri Bunakar Kalyan Yojana for their benefit. The recent move by the Centre has come as bolt from the blue when they were trying to get back on feet against the adversities heaped on them.

Weaver leader Ramesh Das termed the move as unfortunate when they have been demanding for consideration of five per cent GST on cotton and colours during Covid-19. Entrepreneur Ashok Kumar Guin demanded that the Centre reconsider its decision.

Woman weaver Shakuntala Chand said that the GST hike will affect the income of women weavers and warned of an agitation if the decision is not withdrawn.

Shyambhakta Mishra, managing director of state-owned Boyanika, said that a proposal will be prepared for the benefit of the weaver community and sent to the government for its approval.

**New twist in Sumit, Tapaswini case**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Berhampur, Dec 13:** The marital dispute between Tapaswini Dash and Dr Sumit Sahu has taken a new turn after the former moved the SDJM court again alleging contempt of court against her husband.

Tapaswini alleged that Sumit disobeyed the court order and left her without any information December 10.

As a result, their 'marriage', which was moving towards an amicable settlement after the court's order, has taken a new turn, Tapaswini's lawyer Pradeep Kumar Behera said, Monday.

Tapaswini once again moved the Berhampur SDJM Court Monday as Dr Sumit, who, she claims to be her husband, has allegedly fled from the rented house defying the SDJM's order three days back.

Sources said that abiding by the court order, Sumit and Tapaswini were living altogether in the guest house of Aska Sugar Mill. Meanwhile, Sumit left the guest house to join his duty at the hospital where he worked, Friday. However, he did not return home and has remained untraced since then.

Sumit's whereabouts are not known to Tapaswini, as she failed to contact him over phone. Following this, Tapaswini moved the SDJM Court once again alleging contempt of court.

**SATKOSIA TIGER CORRIDOR**

**Inclusion of Nandinia, Kandhara reserve forests awaits govt nod**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Dhenkanal, Dec 13:** To ensure the safety of the big cats and growth in their population, the Forest department has proposed that the state government include Nandinia and Kandhara forests in the Satkosia tiger corridor in Dhenkanal district. The authorities are awaiting the approval of the government in this regard.

Notably, Satkosia was notified as a tiger reserve in 2007. In 2006, the tiger reserve had 14 big cats.

"After the approval, the Satkosia tiger corridor will be implemented. Inclusion of the two reserve forests of Dhenkanal will ensure a larger area for the big cats to roam freely and avail enough food for their proliferation," said Divisional Forest Officer Dr Prakashchand Gogineni. Meanwhile, the Forest de-

partment has initiated the groundwork for counting the big cats in the district. Training programmes for officials to be deployed for the purpose has started at Angul.

In the first phase, two officials each from the eight ranges of the district have received training. In the next phase, the trained officials will impart training to other officials in their respective ranges.

According to the Forest department, the tiger counting process will be carried out with the help of trap cameras installed in various reserve forests and pugmarks found around water bodies. It was learnt that about seven leopards are residing in various reserve forests of the district. Their pictures were captured by cameras.

However, the upcoming census is expected to detect the exact number of big cats in the district.

**Ganjam first in country to provide 100 days work**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Chhatrapur, Dec 13:** Ganjam district has achieved a milestone by successful implementation of Centre-sponsored rural job scheme, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), a report said.

**MGNREGS**

The district is the first among all districts in the country in creating 100 days of work for the beneficiaries under the scheme.

According to reports, over 70,165 beneficiaries in the district have been provided with 100 days work under the Central scheme by December 11 this year. The matter came to the fore after Ganjam Collector Vijaya Amruta Kulange tweeted congratulating the DRDA team and 22 BDOs for the achievement. The Collector said that the district has been able to create maximum man-days under the scheme and in providing work to the rural population.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had directed the Collector to provide work to people during the Covid-19 pandemic.

**50-bed portable hospital at MKCG**

**Berhampur:** A 50-bed portable hospital unit will soon come up at the MKCG Medical College and Hospital in the Silk City for the treatment of Covid-19 patients, a report said. The matter came to the fore following the construction of the unit behind the cancer ward of the hospital. The hospital unit has been built by AI foundation and Mastercard and donated to MKCG Medical College and Hospital for treatment of Covid-19 patients, Collector Vijaya Amruta Kulange said in a tweet. The hospital is equipped with all modern facilities for the treatment and care of Covid-19 patients and very soon it will become operational, MKCG superintendent Professor Dr Santosh Kumar said while talking to the media.

**Two held for baby theft**

**Kamakhyanager:** Kamakhyanager police arrested two persons, including a woman, on charges of stealing a nine-month-old boy from his parents at Jiridimali slum under the police limits in Dhenkanal district, Monday. The accused were identified as Nalini Lohar alias Buchu and Mirza Moiduddin Baig, both residents of Mundideuli area. Nalini allegedly stole the infant by sneaking into his parents' house Sunday afternoon when the child's mother Sabitri Pradhan was away for work. Later, Sabitri visited the Kamakhyanager police station with her neighbours and lodged a complaint. When the police interrogated Nalini, she admitted to have sold the child to Mirza for monetary gains. Police later arrested Mirza while he was trying to return the child to Nalini.

**Jute items providing livelihood to many women in Balasure**

Women are taking time out from their domestic schedule and engaging themselves in this work and earning around ₹2,000 to ₹6,000 per month

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Balasure, Dec 13:** Production of jute-based products has helped over 100 members of women self-help groups in this district earn their livelihood.

According to reports, the state government is providing various assistances to women self-help groups under Mission Shakti to establish small units and produce jute-based products for a livelihood. This initiative has prompted around 30 members of seven self-help groups in Madalpada village to form a manufacturing cluster and adopt jute as their source of livelihood.

The members of this cluster, known as 'Ishwar Utpadak Goshthi', are into this business since 2019 after undergoing training in making jute products. They are now making attractive and beautiful articles for home use like door-mats, dining table mats, various types of toys, wall-hangings, bags and pen stands and earning handsomely by



selling them at exhibitions and trade fairs conducted by the Odisha Rural Development and Marketing Society (ORMAS), Mission Shakti and at important festivals.

The price of these products ranges from ₹10 to ₹400. Women are taking time out of their domestic schedule and engaging themselves in this work and earning around ₹2,000 to ₹6,000 per month. The state-owned agency ORMAS with funds provided by the state government from CPIV fund helping these women to sharpen their skills and become expert artisans.

Funds worth ₹12.5 lakh from

MGNREGS have also been sanctioned to ORMAS to construct a workshop for the women artisans, the society president Jayanti Behera and secretary Kumudini Pakal said.

Jeetendra Kumar Biswal, CEO of ORMAS in Balasure district, said that stress is being laid on making bags, office stationery and home decoration items from jute after the state government imposed restrictions on use of polythene. The jute products are put on display in various fairs and extensive publicity is being done to promote the products among the people in the state and outside.

**OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL OF INDIA**  
9, DEEN DAYAL UPADHYAYA MARG, NEW DELHI-110002

**Empanelment of Chartered Accountant firms/LLPs for the year 2022-2023**

Online Applications are invited from Chartered Accountant firms/LLPs who desire to be empanelled with the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India for the year 2022-2023 for considering for appointment as auditors of Companies as per Sections 139(5) and 139(7) of the Companies Act 2013 and of Statutory Corporations/Autonomous Bodies as per the provisions of their respective Acts. Online application form along with detailed instructions in this regard will be available on the website [www.cag.gov.in](http://www.cag.gov.in) from 1 January 2022 to 15 February 2022. The applicant firms/LLPs will have to fill/update the data showing the status of their firm as on 1 January 2022. After filling/updating the data, the firms/LLPs will be required to generate online acknowledgement letter for the year. If the firms/LLPs fail to generate online acknowledgement letter, their application would not be considered for empanelment. The firms/LLPs will be required to submit a print out of the acknowledgement letter generated online and also hard copies of the documents in support of their online application to this office by 28 February 2022.

Sd./  
davp 51101/11/0007/2122 Sr. Administrative Officer/CA-V

**EAST COAST RAILWAY**  
Tender No. 37-KUR-TRD-OT-2021-22, Date: 07.12.2021

Name of Work: PROVISION OF AUXILIARY TRANSFORMERS AND BONDING WORK IN CONNECTION WITH ELECTRONIC INTERLOCKING AT PARADEEP IN DEPOSIT TERMS.

Approximate Value: ₹16,38,513.86  
Tender Closing date & time: 30.12.2021 upto 1300 hrs.

Complete information including e-Tender documents of the above e-Tenders is available in website <http://www.irps.gov.in>  
Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored.

Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (TRD) PR-625/M/21-22 Khurda Road

**EAST COAST RAILWAY**  
File No. DRM/Engg/KUR/21-22/E-Tender/81, Dt. 08.12.2021

1. Tender No. e-tender-North-KUR-220-2021, Date: 07.12.2021

Description: MISCELLANEOUS P.WAY REPAIR TO TRACK INCLUDING OVERHAULING, SHALLOW SCREENING, BOXING, DRESSING, LIFTING, PACKING, WELDING, DESTRESSING ETC UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF ASSISTANT DIVISIONAL ENGINEER/KENDUJHARGARH.

Approx cost of the work: ₹322.04 lakhs

2. Tender No. e-tender-HQ-KUR-224-2021, Date: 08.12.2021

Description: PROPOSED LAYING OF WATER SUPPLY PIPE LINE FOR RECEIVING OF POTABLE PHD WATER FOR KHURDA ROAD RAILWAY SETTLEMENT UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF SENIOR DIVISIONAL ENGINEER/HQ/KHURDA ROAD.

Approx cost of the work: ₹84.69 lakhs

Completion Period: 08 (Eight) Months (for sl. no. 1) & 04 (Four) Months (for sl. no. 2)

Date & time of Tender Closing: 29.12.2021, 1500 hrs (For both tender)

No manual offers sent by Post/Courier/Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-Tenders, even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.

Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-Tenders is available in website <http://www.irps.gov.in>

Note: The prospective tenders are advised to revisit the website 10 (ten) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes/ corrigendum issued for this tender.

Divisional Railway Manager (Engg.) PR-621/M/21-22 Khurda Road

**CUTTACK MUNICIPAL CORPORATION**  
No.C-1575

**"e" PROCUREMENT NOTICE**  
Tender ID : 2021\_ORULB\_73366

**Tender Call Notice No. 6704 (PW) Date. 13.12.2021**

Name of Works: Civil Work. No. of Works : 6 Nos.  
Bid Value: Rs.2.07 Lakhs to Rs. 18.78 Lakhs  
Period of Completion : One Calendar Month to Three Calendar Months. Date and Time Schedule:

| Start                        | End                       | Opening                      |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| 11.00 A.M. on dt. 15.12.2021 | 5.00 PM on dt. 27.12.2021 | 11.00 A.M. on dt. 30.12.2021 |

Tender Details: Can be seen from the procurement portal: [www.tendersorissa.gov.in](http://www.tendersorissa.gov.in)

Executive Engineer, City Div.-II, CMC  
OIPR-13191/11/0002/2122

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA** No. O-1300  
**OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, RURAL WORKS DIVISION-II, BHADRAK**  
ee\_rwbkd2@yahoo.co.in

**"e" Procurement Notice for Road Works**  
Identification Online Tender 12/RWD/BDK-II/2021-22 Dtd.09.12.2021

1. Name of the Work:- Road Works as per Annexure. 2. Total Number of Works:- 42 Nos. 3. Approximate Estimated Cost:- 0.63 to 29.20 lakhs. 4. Class of Contractor:- As Per Annexure. 5. Period of Completion:- As Per Annexure. 6. Other details:- The details are as follows:-

| Procurement Officer                                | Bid Identification No. | Availability of Tender Online for bidding From To | Last Date & Time of seeking tender clarification | Date & Time of opening of Bid (Single Cover) |
|--|------------------------|---|--|--|
| 1  | 2                      | 3   | 4  | 5  |
| Superintending Engineer, R.W. Division-II, Bhadrak | 12                     | 15.12.2021 at 3.00 P.M. upto 4.00 P.M.            | 20.12.2021 upto 3.00 P.M.                        | 21.12.2021 at 11.00 A.M.                     |

7. Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal "<https://www.tendersorissa.gov.in>".  
8. Any other changes/Corrigendum may be seen only in website [www.tendersorissa.gov.in](http://www.tendersorissa.gov.in)

OIPR-25090/11/0021/2122 Sd./- Superintending Engineer, R.W. Division-II, Bhadrak



FOCUS WORLD INEQUALITY REPORT

LIFTING THE LID



The reality captured by the World Inequality Report 2022 reflects human choices, which means that it can be changed by making other choices. That is why the report is not just a valuable compendium of useful data and analysis but also a guide to action

The World Inequality Report 2022, produced by the Paris-based World Inequality Lab, is a remarkable document for many reasons - starting with its demonstration of the immense power of patient collective research.

The report provides the latest estimates, based on careful aggregation of national data from a multitude of sources, of income and wealth inequality at the national, regional, and global level. It gives long-run time-series data for these indicators, allowing us to consider recent patterns in a broader historical context. And it expands on different dimensions of inequality in revealing new ways.

Any research enterprise as ambitious as this one will inevitably elicit quibbles about the datasets used, the assumptions required to generate particular series, and the ways in which some data gaps have been filled. My own minor criticism relates to the World Inequality Lab's use of purchasing power parity (PPP) exchange rates to determine and compare national incomes across countries.

As I have argued elsewhere, while PPP exchange rates appear to control for cross-country differences in price levels and living standards, they are ridden with conceptual, methodological, and empirical problems. For starters, PPP exchange rates assume that the structure of each country's economy is similar to that of the benchmark country (the US) and changes in the same way over time. When applied to developing economies, this assumption is especially weak.

Moreover, the convoluted weighting procedure for goods can result in the inclusion of unrepresentative, high-priced products that are rarely consumed in some countries. For example, Angus Deaton has noted how packaged cornflakes may be available in poor countries but are bought by only a relatively small minority of rich people. Expenditure weights from national accounts do not reflect the consumption patterns of people who are poor by global standards.

There is a further, and possibly even more troubling, conceptual issue. High-PPP countries - that is, those where the actual pur-

chasing power of the local currency is deemed to be much higher than its nominal value - are typically low-income economies with low average wages. PPP is high precisely because a significant section of the workforce receives very low remuneration, which means that goods and services are available more cheaply than in countries where the majority of workers receive higher wages. The widespread incidence of unpaid labour in many poor households in low-income countries further amplifies the effect. So, it is clear that the local currency's greater purchasing power reflects conditions of indigence and low or no remuneration for what could even be the majority of workers.

PPP-modified GDP data may therefore miss the point. By regarding greater purchasing power of a given monetary income as an advantage, rather than a reflection of the greater absolute poverty of the majority of an economy's workers, PPP estimates effectively overstate poorer countries' incomes compared to those of rich economies. For all these reasons, relying on PPP exchange rates in cross-country income comparisons - including for poverty and inequality measures - is extremely problematic. There is a

strong case for sticking to market exchange rates in measuring cross-country inequality, which would likely reveal much greater disparities than those evident in the World Inequality Report.

This objection notwithstanding, the report adds much to our understanding of inequality, especially through two new measures. The first is the female share of labour income, which is a useful indicator of gender inequality. Globally this share has remained largely unchanged over the past three decades, at one-third, and has been as low as 10-15% in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and below 20% in Asia excluding China. This indicator captures not just labour-market imbalances, but also, implicitly, the greater proportion of unpaid work performed by women within households and communities, which reduces their access to paid work and affects their remuneration in paid employment.

The second innovative measure examines inequality in carbon-dioxide emissions by assessing contributions by income category across countries. The important finding here is that, while inequalities in emissions across regions are high and persistent, such disparities exist not only between rich and poor coun-

tries, but within them. There are high emitters among the rich in low- and middle-income countries, and relatively low emitters among the poor in high-income countries.

For example, the richest 10% of people in the MENA region emit 33.6 tonnes of CO2 per person per year, compared to less than 10 tonnes among the bottom half of the income distribution in North America. (The bottom 50% in Sub-Saharan Africa emit one-twentieth of the North American amount, or 0.5 tonnes per capita per year.)

Globally, the richest 10% of the population is responsible for more than half of all CO2 emissions. This point is especially important because, as the report notes, environmental policies like carbon taxes hit the poor the hardest, but this group is rarely if ever compensated for such measures. The new indicator enables a much richer consideration of what socially just climate policies should look like, both within and across countries.

Predictably, the report is strong on appropriate redistributive policies, especially the potential for increased taxation of wealth and corporate profits. There is also scope for looking more closely at 'predistribution', or the range of regulatory regimes and legal codes that have enabled today's excessive concentration of wealth and income in the first place.

The primary cause of 'predistributive' inequality is, in a word, privatisation: of finance, the natural commons, the knowledge commons (through intellectual-property rights), and public services and amenities. One could add to that states' tendency - glaringly obvious since the 2008 global financial crisis - to protect large-scale private capital, while allowing it to wreak havoc on ordinary citizens.

The reality captured by the World Inequality Report reflects human choices, which means that it can be changed by making other choices. That is why the report is much more than a valuable compendium of useful data and analysis. It is a guide to action.

The writer is Professor of Economics at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

PROJECT SYNDICATE

Jayati Ghosh

RELYING ON PPP EXCHANGE RATES IN CROSS-COUNTRY INCOME COMPARISONS - INCLUDING FOR POVERTY AND INEQUALITY MEASURES - IS EXTREMELY PROBLEMATIC



Most By Need

Let all circumstances, all happenings in life be occasions, constantly renewed for learning more and ever more.

THE MOTHER



The attack on four Christians by members of a right wing group in Karnataka December 12 took place a day before the Karnataka Assembly begins the winter session when an anti-conversion Bill is likely to be tabled. The supposed 'crime' of the four was to hold discussions on a drive to distribute religious books. According to police, the victims had come to a rented accommodation in Srinivasapura in Kolar district. Their attackers had first questioned them, snatched their books and set them on fire and then attacked them. This is the latest in a series of attacks on Christians in the state.

After the incident, Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai said, "A majority of people want to ban religious conversion. There is no problem if people follow the customs of their respective religions. However, there should be no scope for misusing someone's poverty to lure them into changing their faith." What Bommai has said regarding luring of the economically weaker sections of society to change faiths is not completely off-mark. Similar incidents of conversion have been observed in Orissa over a long period of time. It could be due to this reason that Orissa was one of the early states to enact an anti-conversion law.

However, since the Karnataka government announced it would bring the anti-conversion legislation in this winter session of the Assembly, attacks on Christians are on the rise. The day before the attack on the four Christians, a man armed with a machete in Belagavi, where the Assembly session is held, supposedly barged into a church and chased the priest in charge. The police registered a case and provided security to the church. The attacker is still at large.

Karnataka has seen an increase in attacks against Christians in October and November after the state government proposed the anti-conversion law in the state. A fact-finding report by several civil society organisations reveals 27 such attacks took place during the first 272 days of this year, while five incidents took place between October and mid-November alone. Uttar Pradesh reported the most such cases (66), followed by Chhattisgarh (47), and Karnataka (32).

The disclosures made in the report by United Christian Forum (UCF), Association for Protection of Civil Rights (APCR), and United Against Hate, paint a grim picture of the communal discord and disaffection that have been plaguing India lately. While Karnataka may rank third among states with the most number of attacks on the community and their places of worship, the reasons for such acts need to be scrutinised thoroughly. Calls registered in the UCF helpline recorded 305 cases across the country in the year till September 2021. The desperate calls were for mob attacks numbering 288, damage to 28 places of worship and injuries during attacks to 1,331 women, 588 tribals, and 513 Dalits. The role of the police, according to the report, casts doubts about the neutrality of the force.

It is well known that social and economic disparities are exploited to a great extent in process of conversion. Wherever there is mass conversion, a common factor has been economic stress experienced by the converted. Although these are truths that cannot be ignored, yet violence can never be condoned. The best way out is not by enacting laws but by making efforts to reach government's welfare measures to those that are genuinely needy. Not everyone wishes to change religions.

Few are by choice. Most are by need.

WISDOM CORNER

Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony. MAHATMA GANDHI

There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children. NELSON MANDELA

The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants. THOMAS JEFFERSON

WORDSWORTH

Pronoia

Pronoia is the suspicion that the universe is a conspiracy on your behalf, the opposite of the popular sense of paranoia. It seems to have been invented by the sociologist Fred Goldner in an article in Social Problems in 1982, in which he defined it as "the delusion that others think well of one", the unreasonable belief that your superiors think you are indispensable, that your colleagues adore you, and that you are doing brilliantly in your work. He was warning against the dangers of the rose-tinted view, in which an over-positive view of oneself and the world around one can lead to fatal mistakes. It was later taken up by the short-lived group called the Zippies (the Zen Inspired Pronoia Pagans) invented by a London club promoter named Fraser Clark. The word has a small continuing niche, though its adjective pronoid is less common. Looking at these kids, it doesn't require my usual pronoia to think that I'm glimpsing the future of this place (Wired, Jan. 1999). She introduced the CEOs to the flip side of paranoia: "pronoia" - the idea that everyone is not out to get you, but that they are out to love you, or at least to appreciate you, if you reciprocate. According to the new Darwinism, only the pronoid survive - in fact, only the pronoid endure and flourish (Fast Company, Nov. 1999).

Prosumer

This word is becoming fairly common but can be confusing, as it has two meanings. It was coined in 1980 by the futurist Alvin Toffler - in his book The Third Wave - as a blend of producer and consumer. He used it to describe a possible future type of consumer who would become involved in the design and manufacture of products, so they could be made to individual specification. He argued that we would then no longer be a passive market upon which industry dumped consumer goods but a part of the creative process. Derrick de Kerckhove has called this mass customisation, in which everybody is in effect a member of a niche market, something Internet e-commerce is encouraging through cutting out the middleman between maker and buyer. This sense of prosumer has been taken up by some marketing people, but remains limited in its application. The second usage describes a purchaser of technical equipment who wants to obtain goods of a better quality than consumer items, but can't afford professional items (older terms for goods of this intermediate quality are semi-professional and industrial quality). Here, the word is a blend of professional and consumer. Prosumers of this sort are famed for their enthusiasm for new products and their tolerance of flaws and, from the marketing point of view, have much in common with early adopters. This usage is common among those selling video equipment, digital cameras, and similar goods (and the examples below illustrate this sense). Some manufacturers treat the SOHO (Small Office, Home Office) market as being much the same thing. DVDwiz represents the first truly professional-quality DVD authoring software available to the prosumer and consumer markets, offering the unique creativity level and compatibility so far only available to professionals (Business Wire, Sep. 1999).

LOL

Dealing with a juggler

A juggler, driving to his next performance, was stopped by the police. "What are those knives doing in your car?" asked the officer. "I juggle them in my act." "Oh yeah?" says the cop. "Let's see



you do it." The juggler starts tossing and juggling the knives. A guy driving by sees this and says, "Wow, I am glad I quit drinking. Look at the test they're making you do now!"

SPECTRUM GOVERNANCE

The Summit for Democracy



Asad Mirza

THE SUMMIT REFLECTS A VIEW THAT ASSEMBLING A GLOBAL COALITION OF DEMOCRACIES CAN COUNTER CHINA'S RISE AND CONTINUED RUSSIAN AGGRESSION

A US-sponsored two-day virtual democracy summit wrapped up last week. It was promised by President Joe Biden during his election campaign last year, as he wanted to show that the US has departed from the 'America First' philosophy of his predecessor Donald Trump and instead will focus on an event that was more about starting a global conversation about how best to halt backsliding than producing immediate results or expanding democracy's reach.

Biden and fellow leaders announced initiatives to stem autocracies from misusing Big Tech to stifle dissent, enhancing election integrity, bolstering independent media and other modest efforts that the President said would "seed fertile ground for democracies to bloom around the world."

But he also acknowledged that the path ahead was difficult for democracies amid a rise in authoritarianism around the globe. "We know how hard the work is that's going to be ahead of us, but we also know that we are up to the challenge," Biden said in remarks to close the virtual meeting. However, Biden has been criticised over the guest list of the sum-

mit as well as that the summit was targeted at China and Russia and not other autocratic governments and it also missed out on inviting the middle-eastern leaders.

Both China and Russia fiercely criticised the summit, with their ambassadors writing a joint essay ahead of the gathering. They wrote the Biden administration's decision to hold the summit reflected a "Cold-War mentality" that may stoke up ideological confrontation and cause rift globally. Several countries identified due to concerns raised by civil society groups and the US State Department for their serious anti-democratic trends or human rights concerns - including India, Iraq, Pakistan, Poland, Ukraine and the Philippines - were invited. Critics say that the tactic for smaller countries with highly questionable democratic credentials to get Washington's invite for the summit was to obediently follow the US lead on important international issues.

Jen Psaki, the White House Press Secretary, described the invitations as not intended as a 'stamp of approval' but the administration's desire to seek a diverse range of voices and faces and representatives at the discussion. As per the pro-

tagonists of The Summit for Democracy, it had a larger geopolitical ambition. It reflects a prominent view within the Biden administration that assembling a global coalition of democracies can counter China's rise and continued Russian aggression.

Biden has repeatedly made a case that the like-minded allies and the US need to show the world that democracies are a far better vehicle for societies than autocracies. It is a central tenet of Biden's foreign policy outlook. But his first year in office has been a period that he says has been marked by a 'backward slide' for democracy around the globe.

However, the choice of panelists to reflect US' views also courted controversy. Brad Smith, president of Microsoft, spoke on how to use "technology for democracy". John Brothers, president of the billionaire investment giant T Rowe Price, which holds a massive portion of Venezuelan debt, moderated a discussion on 'responsible investment'. Kent Walker, president of Global Affairs for Google, which has publicly admitted to censoring the World Socialist Web Site, spoke of how private enterprises can aid

'democracy'. Critics assert that the people who could be described as holding a completely contrary position on these issues were invited to speak on how to tackle them, which seems quite farcical.

Biden said it was also a moment for the US to look inward about shoring up its own democratic institutions. But this does not match with what is really happening in the US, movements like Black Lives Matter raised the issue of racial and colour discrimination, on which the Summit was completely silent.

The overall conclusion seems to be that the Summit for Democracy would have been more effective had it remained focused on strengthening and defending democracy rather than highlighting contradictions between democracies and authoritarian rules. As some critics pointed out, behind the pretences of defending democracy against meddling autocrats remains Washington's drive to maintain its global economic hegemony. It also underlined the continuous efforts by Biden to leave a political legacy.

The writer is a political commentator based in New Delhi.

Glaring inequality

Sir, Over 71 per cent students from Class I to X in Odisha do not have smartphones. School and Mass Education Minister Samir Ranjan Dash informed the state Assembly in a written reply to a question by MLA Kusum Tete. The minister said the state government had conducted a survey on the availability of smartphones among the students in September 2020 under the Siksha Sanjog programme. As per the survey, only 28.87 per cent of the total students studying in Classes I to X in Odisha have been able to attend online classes since the COVID-19 pandemic as they have smartphones. The worst sufferers are students in Kandhamal district where only 13.38 per cent have smartphones, the lowest in the state. The other districts with low rate of access to smartphones for students are Rayagada (14.34 per cent), Deogarh (14.87 per cent), Gajapati (15.34 per cent), Malkangiri (16.22 per cent), Koraput (17.87 per cent), Nabarangpur (18.03 per cent) and Boudh (18.61 per cent). Khurda district, which includes state capital Bhubaneswar, recorded the highest percentage (45.80 per cent) of students having access to smartphones. Among other districts, 43.18 per cent students in Jharsuguda, 42.27 per cent in Kendrapara, 41.22 per cent in Bargarh, 38.95 per cent in Jagatsinghpur, 37.60 per cent in Cuttack, 35.83 per cent in Puri and 33.24 per cent in Nayagarh have access to smartphones. Hitesh Kumar Parida, PANIKOILI

Conserve energy

Sir, The National Energy Conservation Day is being celebrated every year December 14 since 1991. The Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), under the Ministry of Power spearheads the celebrations every year. The main agenda behind celebrating this day is to make people aware of global warming by saving energy resources. With a constantly growing population of the world, the demand for energy is also increasing. It is necessary to pay special attention to energy conservation for our future generations. The meaning of energy conservation is to avoid unwanted use of energy. To make this plan effective every citizen should adopt the habit of energy conservation in his/her routine activities. It's our responsibility to conserve energy for our future generations. On this day let us take a pledge to adopt energy conservation in our everyday lives and spread awareness in society for a healthy environment. With the combined efforts of all the citizens we can definitely achieve this goal. Somya Agrawal, UJJAIN

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

OrissaPOST

B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010



# national

## of the day quote

@narendramodiji, you are in UP today. Will you demand accountability from the UP government over the plight of gaushalas?

PRIYANKA GANDHI VADRA | CONGRESS LEADER

Around 40 per cent commercial pilot licenses issued by Indian aviation regulator DGCA were to cadets trained in foreign flying schools

V K SINGH | MINISTER OF STATE FOR CIVIL AVIATION

The less the government interferes in the startup ecosystem, the more potential the latter will have to become successful

PIYUSH GOYAL | UNION MINISTER

## SHORT TAKES

### Acid attack

**North Lakhimpur (Assam):** A woman and her mother in Assam's Lakhimpur district sustained burn injuries after her husband allegedly threw acid on them, the police said Monday. According to Lakhimpur Superintendent of Police Bedanta Madhab Rajkhowa, the incident took place Sunday night at the woman's maternal house in a village in North Lakhimpur police station area.

### Five injured

**Mumbai:** Five persons were injured, one of them critically, after a lift carrying them collapsed at a Slum Rehabilitation Authority (SRA) building located in suburban Andheri Monday, a Fire Brigade official said. The lift of the ground plus 16-storey 'Mahakali Darshan' building no. 1 collapsed in the afternoon, he said, adding that it was classified as the "level one" incident. All the injured persons were rushed to a private hospital.

### Man arrested

**Rewa:** A man allegedly raped a four-year-old girl residing in his neighbourhood in Madhya Pradesh's Rewa district, police said Monday. The incident took place Sunday evening following which the 22-year-old accused was arrested, they said. The accused lured the girl to his place on some pretext while she was playing outside her house and allegedly raped her. The girl later came out of his house crying and writhing in pain, police inspector Dilip Dahliya said.

### PSO goes missing

**Srinagar:** A Personal Security Officer (PSO) of a BJP worker went missing Monday along with two rifles from Kupwara district of Jammu and Kashmir, officials here said. Saqib Tantray, a resident of Bhopora in Kupwara, was posted as a PSO to BJP worker Abdul Rashid Zargar, who is staying at Old MLA hostel in Kupwara, they said. During investigation, it came to light that two rifles were also missing from Zargar's residence, they said. A close associate, also neighbor, of Saqib Tantray, identified as Arif Ahmad Mir, has also been missing since morning, they added.

### Soldier ends life

**Srinagar:** An army soldier allegedly died by suicide in Kupwara district of Jammu and Kashmir on Monday, officials said. Havildar S S Arjun allegedly shot himself with his service rifle in the early hours at Drangyari in Chowkibal area, they said. The jawan succumbed to injuries later, they said.

## Andhra steps up vigil after first Omicron case

AGENCIES

**Amaravati, Dec 13:** Andhra Pradesh, which reported its first Omicron case on Sunday, has stepped up vigil with Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy Monday directing the Health Department to take all necessary steps required to prevent spread of the new variant of Covid-19.

At a meeting with top officials, the Chief Minister reviewed the prevailing Covid situation and progress of vaccination. The state Sunday reported the first case of Omicron. A 34-year-old man, who returned to Vijayanagaram district from Ireland late last month, tested positive for the new variant.

A total of 15 foreign returnees tested positive for Covid-19. Of them, genome sequencing reports of 10 people have been received. While nine tested negative for the new variant, the result of remaining five is awaited.



THE OFFICIALS SAID OXYGEN GENERATION PLANTS WILL BE SET UP IN 100-BED PRIVATE HOSPITALS ACROSS THE STATE

The officials informed the Chief Minister that RT-PCR tests are being conducted at the airports in the wake of the Omicron variant. They said a gene sequencing lab will be set up in a week.

The officials also informed Jagan Mohan Reddy that the 32nd Fever Survey is being conducted across the state. The state currently has 1,912 active Covid-19 cases. The recovery rate stands at

99.21 percent while the positivity rate is 0.52 percent. The officials said oxygen generation plants will be set up in 100-bed private hospitals across the state. They said 23,457 oxygen concentrators, 27,311 D type cylinders are available in the state and added that 144 PSA plants will be available in government hospitals by the end of December.

The recent killing of civilians in firing by security forces in Nagaland should be an eye-opener to repeal the controversial security law from the northeast

IROM SHARMILA | RIGHTS ACTIVIST

## COLDER NIGHTS IN J&K, LADAKH

Icy winds blowing from snow-clad mountains added to the freezing temperatures in Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh Monday as nights became colder in the two UTs



## RS returns bill that brings clarity on enhanced pension

The bill seeks to bring an explanatory clarification about the age of eligibility for enhanced pension for retired judges



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 13:** The Rajya Sabha Monday returned to the Lok Sabha a bill that seeks to bring clarity on the age of retired judges to determine when they will get enhanced pension.

The Lok Sabha passed the High Court and Supreme Court Judges (Salaries and Conditions of Service) Amendment Bill, 2021 on December 8.

The Rajya Sabha returned the bill to the Lok Sabha after a discussion Monday since it is a money bill. The bill seeks to bring an explanatory clarification about the age of eligibility for enhanced pension for retired judges.

Replying on the bill, Union Minister for Law and Justice Kiren Rijiju assured the House that there is no politics and everyone stands together when it comes to ensuring justice. "There should be no gap between the common man and the justice system. I am thankful to all of you for supporting the bill without bringing any politics into it," he said.

According to the bill, in 2009, two laws were amended to provide that every retired judge or after his or her death, the family, as the case may be, will be entitled to an additional quantum of pension or family pension.

Accordingly the additional quan-

tum of pension to the retired judges of the high courts and the Supreme Court is being sanctioned on completing the age of 80 years, 85 years, 90 years, 95 years and 100 years, as the case may be.

However, in a writ petition filed by a retired high court judge, the Gauhati High Court had held that the benefit of the additional quantum of pension according to the High Court Judges Act would be available to a retired judge from the first day of his 80th year.

Subsequently, the High Court of Madhya Pradesh also directed respondent Union of India to construe the word "from" as it appears on the slab as the first day of entering the minimum age of the slab -- 80, 85, 90, 95 and 100 years -- along with other consequential benefits to the petitioners, the Statement of Objects and Reasons of the bill read.

The legislative intent behind the insertion of section 17B and section 16B respectively in the two Acts was to provide the benefit of additional quantum of pension to a retired judge from the first day of the month in which he completes the age specified in the first column of the scale and not from the first day of his entering the age specified therein as interpreted by the high courts, it said.

## SEEKING BLESSINGS



Farmers arrive to offer prayers at Golden Temple after returning from Delhi

PTI PHOTO

## Armed forces face shortage of 9,362 officers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 13:** The three services are facing a shortage of 9,362 officers and around 1.13 lakh soldiers, airmen and sailors, according to details provided by the government Monday.

In response to a question in Rajya Sabha, minister of state for defence Ajay Bhatt said that the Army has a shortage of 7,476 officers and 97,177 soldiers including Junior Commissioned Officers. According to details provided by Bhatt, the Navy has a shortage of 1,265 officers and 11,166 sailors.

In the Indian Air Force, the number of posts of officers lying vacant is 621 while it is 4,850 for airmen. "It is the endeavour of the government to fill up the vacancies in the armed forces in a systematic and time-bound manner, which is a continuous process," the minister said.

Bhatt said, at present, 53,569 officers and 11,35,799 soldiers are serving the Indian Army. The number of officers serving in the Navy is 11,100 while the strength of sailors is 63,515, he said. In the Indian Air Force, the number of officers is 12,048 and while that of airmen is 1,38,792.

## An attempt to put pressure, says Raut

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 13:** A day after the Delhi Police registered a case against him for using objectionable language, Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut Monday said the move was an "attempt to pressurise" him as the word in question only meant "stupid".

Referring to the FIR, he said in a tweet the word means "stupid" according to Hindi dictionaries.

"In spite of this, if a case is registered then it is nothing but an attempt to pressurise me. Some BJP leaders have used more objectionable words against women leaders, haven't heard of such FIR against them," he added.

Raut, a Rajya Sabha member, took exception to the case filed against him by the Delhi Police and sought to draw parallels with the Sushant Singh Rajput case.

"This is similar to the SSR case where Patna Police registered a

Raut was booked in Delhi after a BJP leader alleged that he had used abusive language against BJP members in a TV interview

## Special status demand sets off war of words



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Patna, Dec 13:** The fresh demand for special status to Bihar has brought the differences within the ruling NDA to the fore in the state.

Two days after Deputy Chief Minister Renu Devi termed the Bihar government's demand for special status as "meaningless", Chief Minister Nitish Kumar Monday said she has no detailed information on the issue.

Seeking to play down the differences within the DA, Kumar said, "I

will explain everything to her (Renu Devi) when she meets me. She does not have the detailed information about the issue. The demand for the special status to Bihar is totally justified, the state deserves it".

He said the special status, which entitles a state of a number of central privileges, is very essential for Bihar. "So if someone in the state opposes the special status demand, it is possible that the person does not understand the issue," he said in reply to queries by scribes who sought his views on Renu Devi's comment.

Kumar, also senior JD(U) leader, said according to the Niti Aayog Bihar is a backward state. But despite the government's efforts the growth rate is not enough. "Therefore we are demanding special category status ... What is wrong in it?"

At the same, he said Niti Aayog has used old parameters to evaluate Bihar and its evaluation process is not justified as the state is gradually developing in every sector each year.

## Are you ashamed of PM, HC asks petitioner

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kochi, Dec 13:** Examining the maintainability of a plea seeking removal of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's photograph from the COVID-19 vaccination certificate, the Kerala High Court Monday asked the petitioner whether he was ashamed of the PM.

Justice P V Kunhikrishnan said the Prime Minister was elected to power by the people of the country and therefore, what was wrong with having his photograph on the vaccination certificate.

When the petitioner's counsel told the court that in other countries there was no such practice, the



judge orally remarked, "They may not be proud of their PMs, we are proud of our PM."

"Why are you (petitioner) ashamed of the Prime Minister? He came to power through the mandate of the people... We may have different political views, but he is still our PM,"

the court further said.

The counsel for the petitioner -- Peter Myaliparampil -- said that the certificate was a "private space" with personal details on record and therefore, it was inappropriate to intrude into the privacy of an individual. He contended that adding the PM's photo to the certificate was an intrusion into an individual's private space.

To this the court, said that the more than 100 crore people of the country do not appear to have a problem with having the PM's photo on the vaccine certificate, "why do you?"

The court said it will examine whether the plea has any merits

and if not, it will dispose of the matter. During the more than an hour long hearing, advocate Ajit Joy, appearing for the petitioner, said that whether to be proud of one's PM was a personal choice.

Joy also told the court that it was not a matter of political differences, as the Supreme Court has laid down guidelines for advertisements and campaigns using public money. He said having the photo on the certificates would also influence minds of voters and this issue was raised during the recent state assembly elections. The central government opposed the plea saying it was publicity interest litigation.

**OFFICE OF THE PANCHAYAT SAMITI LAXMIPUR, DIST.- KORAPUT**  
**Letter No.2717/2021 Dated. 08.12.2021**  
**TENDER CALL NOTICE**  
 No.i-260:- Sealed tenders are invited from Registered Contractor from state PWD/M.I./ Irrigation/Rural works for execution of Roads & Bridges, Buildings etc. The detail information of which are made available in Koraput Dist. Website i.e., <http://www.koraput.nic.in> & in DRDA Website <http://www.drdakoraput.org>  
 The date and time of sale of Tender paper is from **13.12.2021 to 30.12.2021 up to 4.00 PM** and receipt of Sealed tender is from **13.12.2021 to 30.12.2021 up to 5.30 PM** on working days.  
 Tender will be opened on **31.12.2021 (Friday) at 11.00 AM** onwards in the SHG Conference Hall of Block Office, Laxmipur.  
**Sd./- Block Development Officer, Laxmipur**  
 OIPR-19158/11/0004/2122

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA OFFICE OF THE DIVISIONAL FOREST OFFICER GHUMSUR NORTH DIVISION**  
 Bhejiput, Bhanjanagar, Ganjam, Odisha, Pin-761126  
 Tele/Fax-06821-241008, E-mail: [dfoghumsurnorth@gmail.com](mailto:dfoghumsurnorth@gmail.com)  
**Letter No.7256/Dtd 10.12.2021**  
 No.MM-289 **INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)**  
**E-Procurement Bid Identification No.GH(N)-BNJ-F.E & C.C.-03/2021-22**  
 1. Name of work :- Construction of Tree Top House  
 2. No. of works :- 01 No.  
 3. No. of covers :- Single Cover  
 4. Estimated Cost :- Rs.13,37,475/- Lakhs  
 5. Period of Completion :- As per the timeline mentioned in the DTCN.  
 6. Date & Time of availability of bid documents in portal :- From 10.00 A.M. of dated 13.12.2021 to 05.00 P.M. of dated 21.12.2021  
 7. Last date/time for receipt of bids in the portal :- Upto 5.00 PM of 21.12.2021  
 8. Date of opening of bid documents :- At 11.30 A.M. of 22.12.2021  
 9. Class of Contractor :- "D" & "C" Class Contractor  
 10. Name and address of Officer inviting Bid :- Divisional Forest Officer, Ghumsur North Forest Division, Bhejiput, Bhanjanagar  
 Further, details can be seen from the e-Procurement portal [www.tenderodisha.gov.in](http://www.tenderodisha.gov.in). The Addendum / Corrigendum if any will be hosted in the website only.  
**Sd./- Divisional Forest Officer, Ghumsur North Forest Division**  
 OIPR-08033/11/0007/2122



# When Aurangzeb attacks, Shivaji rises: Modi

PRIME MINISTER INAUGURATES THE NEW COMPLEX OF THE KASHI VISHWANATH DHAM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Varanasi, Dec 13: Lauding the resilience of India's civilisational heritage here, Prime Minister Narendra Modi Monday said tyrants like Aurangzeb tried to destroy Kashi but were consigned to the 'black pages' of history while the ancient city is now writing a new chapter of its glory.

In a speech after inaugurating the Kashi Vishwanath Dham, which has renovated and expanded the temple's premises, Modi said India is now stepping out of the 'inferiority' complex brought on it by centuries of slavery.

He asserted that the new Kashi corridor will give a decisive direction to the country and lead it to a bright future.

Arriving in the holy city, also his parliamentary constituency, Modi paid obeisance at the Kaal Bhairav Temple and then took a dip in the Ganga, from where he collected holy water for worship at the Kashi Vishwanath Temple.

A new history is being created, he said in the speech that mentioned Mughal emperor Aurangzeb, Muslim invader Salar Masud and British governor-general Warren Hastings. Sultanates rose and fell but Banaras remained, he said.

"Tyrants attacked this city, tried to destroy it. History is witness to Aurangzeb's atrocities, his terror. He tried to change civilisation with the sword. He tried to crush culture with fanaticism."

"But the soil of this country is different from the rest of the world. Here if an Aurangzeb comes, a Shivaji also rises," Modi said. The PM raised the chant of 'Har Har Mahadev', associated with Lord Shiva, several times.

"If a Salar Masud marches on, warriors like Raja Suheldev make him realise the power of our unity,"



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with the workers of the Kashi Vishwanath Dham redevelopment project during the inauguration of the Dham in Varanasi, Monday.

PTI PHOTO



**Tyrants attacked this city (Varanasi), tried to destroy it. History is witness to Aurangzeb's atrocities, his terror. He tried to change civilisation with the sword. He tried to crush culture with fanaticism. But the soil of this country is different from the rest of the world. Here if an Aurangzeb comes, a Shivaji also rises**

NARENDRA MODI | P.M.

he said. People of Varanasi forced Hastings to escape on an elephant's back, he added.

"See how the times change. Today, those synonymous with terror have been consigned to the black pages of history while my Kashi marches ahead and is writing a new chapter of its glory," the prime minister said. Whenever the city has taken a turn, the country's fate has also changed, he added.

Many historians believe that Aurangzeb had ordered pulling down the temple to build a mosque. Modi also lauded Rani Ahilyabai for rebuilding the temple and Sikh king Ranjit Singh for gold-plating its domes.

He said the new complex of the Kashi Vishwanath Dham is not just a grand building, but a symbol of the 'Sanatan culture' of India, its spiritual soul antiquity and traditions. Modi expressed his gratitude to workers involved in the construction project, saying they

did not let even the Covid pandemic stop them. In an attraction, he showered a group of them with flower petals and later had lunch with them.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, BJP president J P Nadda and hundreds of seers and saints from across the country attended the ceremony.

The visit triggered a loaded remark by Akhilesh Yadav, whose Samajwadi Party is the main opposition to the ruling BJP in Uttar Pradesh, where Assembly elections are due in less than three months. "Why only a month," he said when told by reporters in Etawah that Modi planned month-long celebrations in Varanasi.

"He should stay for two months, three months. That is a good place to stay. When the end is near, people stay in Banaras," he said.

## COVID VICTIMS

# Delhi: One-time financial aid of ₹50,000 given to 21,235 families

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 13: The Delhi government has provided a one-time financial assistance of ₹50,000 to 21,235 families that lost their near ones to COVID-19, Social Welfare Minister Rajendra Pal Gautam said Monday.

Separately, 9,484 of the 12,668 applications received have been approved for a monthly pension of ₹2,500, he said at a press conference here.

## SUCCOR AMID PANDEMIC

The city government has approved 9,484 of the 12,668 applications received for the monthly pension of ₹2,500 under the 'Mukhyamantri COVID-19 Pariwar Aarthik Sahayata Yojana

Around 2,500 families did not avail the scheme due to various reasons, while around 1,500 will receive the aid soon. In most cases, the refusals came from financially well-off families

The health department has contacted all the households that have lost at least a member to COVID

Under the 'Mukhyamantri COVID-19 Pariwar Aarthik Sahayata Yojana', the Delhi government has been providing a one-time financial assistance of ₹50,000 to the families of all the coronavirus victims in the city and a monthly assistance of ₹2,500 to households that have lost the sole breadwinner and to children or



phaned due to the pandemic. "A total of 25,100 applications have been received for a one-time financial aid of ₹50,000. So far, 21,235 families have been given the assistance," Gautam said.

Around 2,500 families did not avail the scheme due to various reasons, while around 1,500 will receive the aid soon, he added.

In most cases, the refusals came from financially well-off families, Gautam said.

He said the city government has approved 9,484 of the 12,668 applications received for the monthly pension of ₹2,500.

Of the applicants, 7,955 have already started receiving the pension, he said, adding that 1,120 applications are under verification in the revenue department.

Gautam underlined that the government has been disbursing pensions as soon as the verification process is complete and the pendency is negligible.

The health department has contacted all the households that have lost at least a member to Covid. So far, the Delhi government has disbursed a total compensation amount of ₹4.06 crore under the scheme, the minister said. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government, in a statement, said the compensation disbursement process has been streamlined and simplified.

"We have made every effort to make the documentation burden as light as possible for the applicants. SDM offices and their teams have been directed to carry out door-to-door verification as well," it added.

# Ban on construction, entry of trucks continues in Delhi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 13: Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai Monday said the ban on construction and the entry of trucks, barring CNG, e-trucks and those engaged in essential services, will continue till further orders in view of a forecast about further deterioration of air quality in the national capital.

The government will review the construction ban December 16, Rai told reporters after a meeting with officials of departments concerned.

The minister said the education department has sent a proposal to the environment department, seeking immediate reopening of schools and coaching centres for students in Class 6 and above, and in colleges.

For children of Class 5 and below, the education department has suggested reopening schools from December 20, he said.

The proposal will be sent to the



Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM), which has been mandated by the Supreme Court to take a call on the reopening of schools and colleges, Rai said. He said many agencies have made verbal requests to lift the ban on construction and demolition activities. "We have directed them to write an application to us and the CAQM. We will hold a review meeting in this

regard December 16," Rai said.

The minister said Delhi's air quality index remained between 250 and 325 from December 1 to December 12. But experts have forecast a slight deterioration of air quality in the next three days, he said.

The water sprinkling drive to control dust pollution will continue and necessary directions have been issued to the fire department, civic bodies and other departments, Rai said.

Under the anti-dust campaign, 6,953 sites have been inspected and fines of ₹1.65 crore have been imposed for violations at 597 sites.

Under the anti-burning campaign, 16,580 sites have been inspected and a cumulative fine of ₹46 lakh has been imposed for violations at 2,490 sites, Rai said.

The environment department has received 6,975 pollution-related complaints on the Green Delhi application since October, of which 81 per cent have been resolved.

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, Dec 13: Ahead of the 2022 Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls, red caps have gained centre stage and are roiling the political waters in the state.

Though symbols have their own importance, political parties indulge in attacking each other on their flags, banners, posters.

The controversy over red caps started from the Uttar Pradesh Assembly when Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's address was disrupted by Samajwadi Party (SP) lawmakers who were donning red caps. Taking a jibe at them, Adityanath had said: "Someone is wearing a red cap or a green cap. Don't know whether this has become a tradition. Don't know whether these people wear a cap even at home?"

Adityanath also narrated an incident, saying that a two-and-a-half-year-old child saw a protester wearing a cap and identified him as a goon, post which the SP lawmakers created an uproar.

During a rally in Gorakhpur,



Prime Minister Narendra Modi hit out at the SP, saying that "laal topi wale" (those wearing red caps) were like a "red alert" for the state.

If political analysts are to be believed, these statements have been made deliberately so that the Opposition attacks them and both can trade barbs. In response to the ruling party's jibe, SP chief Akhilesh Yadav, along with his colleagues, went to the Assembly wearing red caps. Akhilesh also replaced his Facebook and Twitter profile pictures with one in which

he is wearing a red cap.

Following Akhilesh, his party leaders and supporters have also started replacing their pictures with ones showing them in red caps. Now, whenever Akhilesh leaves for a programme or rally, he wears a cap. Earlier, Akhilesh did not wear caps, but when his father and SP founder Mulayam Singh Yadav asked him to do so, he started to don it regularly.

In the ongoing tussle between the SP and the BJP, the AAP has also jumped in. Rajya Sabha MP and

AAP's UP in-charge Sanjay Singh shared the Prime Minister's photo on Twitter in which the latter can be seen wearing a black cap, saying people wearing a black cap have a black heart and mind (their mind and heart are not good).

Senior political analyst Ratanmani Lal said that in the present era, leaders of a political party cannot be identified only by symbols. The BJP is associated with the saffron colour but all do not wear it, the BSP (blue) but Mayawati never wears blue, the SP (green), Congress (white) and the SP also with a cap.

The SP chief has made it an identity mark of the party due to which even without taking its name, it can be attacked. The BJP has tried to send across a message to the electorate of Uttar Pradesh that they have to be wary of the SP, but the latter will benefit indirectly.

The BJP pointed it out to attack the SP but it worked as a blessing in disguise for the latter as with more people wearing red caps, they will be recognised better.

# After tunnel, hanging house found in Delhi Assembly complex

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 13: Months after a tunnel connecting Delhi Assembly (Old Secretariat) to the historic Red Fort was found, a hanging house was discovered inside the Vidhan Sabha premises Monday.

Delhi Assembly Speaker Ram Niwas Goel told the press that the hanging house was found after a hollow wall was demolished.

An inspection will be carried out and the archaeological department will be informed about the same, he added. The tunnel was found in the month of September. Goel had told the media then that the British must have used it to transport con-

victs on death row. Therefore, he said, discovery of the hanging house was highly probable.

However, no official statement has been issued by the archaeological department over the same. The tunnel was also destroyed due to sewer work and Delhi metro construction. This British era iconic building was established in 1912 - a year after the national capital came to Delhi. It was designed by E Montague Thomas to hold the Imperial Legislative Council and subsequently the Central Legislative Assembly (after 1919), till the newly constructed Parliament House of India in New Delhi was inaugurated January 18, 1927.



# 50-yr wait for Rampur heirs ends

Property worth over ₹2,650 crore of the erstwhile Nawab of Rampur, Raza Ali Khan, will be divided among his 16 legal heirs according to Shariat rules

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Rampur, Dec 13: Sixteen heirs of the erstwhile Nawab of Rampur will finally get their share of the royal property after a five-decade battle in court.

Property worth over ₹2,650 crore of the erstwhile Nawab of Rampur, Raza Ali Khan, will be divided among his 16 legal heirs according to Shariat rules.

The court of Rampur district judge has now given the verdict on the 'partition scheme', following the Supreme Court's order of July 31, 2019.

Advocate Mukesh Saxena, counsel for one of the heirs, Kazim Ali Khan, said "The file has been sent to the apex court for the final decree."

Nawab Raza Ali Khan, who let Rampur join India in 1949, was survived by three wives, three sons and six daughters after his death in 1966.

The government recognised the eldest of his three sons, Murtaza Ali Khan, as the sole inheritor according to the customary law.

This was challenged in court by



his siblings in 1972 and thus began a long battle in the family.

The heirs include late Murtaza's daughter Nikhat Bi, son Murad Mian and late Zulfikar Ali Khan Bahadur's wife Begum Noor Bano (a former MP), her son Naved Mian and others.

The share of Syeda Mehrunnisa Begum, descendant of the late Nawab and wife of Pakistan Air Marshal Abdul Rahim, will be handed over to the custodian of enemy property, which is the Indian government, as she is now a Pakistani national.

It may be recalled that in February 2020, the strongroom of the family at Khasbagh palace was opened as part of the exercise to evaluate the royal treasures. When

the locks of an armoury in the palace, spread over 450 acres, was broken, the evaluation team found guns with intricate designs, gem studded swords and handcrafted knives. A garage had vintage cars imported from the US and Europe that included a Plymouth (1957), Dodge convertible (1954), Austin convertible (1956), Buick (1939) and Willys Jeep (1956).

The immovable properties to be divided among 16 claimants include the 200-acre Benazir Bagh palace, Sarhari Kunda palace, Shahbad Bagh palace and a private railway station.

District government counsel Arun Prakash Saxena said, "As per the partition plan, all 16 legal heirs will get a share. Two of the legal heirs have died during the long court battle, and their heirs would be entitled to get their share."

The Muslim law recognises two types of heirs, sharers and residuaries. Sharers are those who are entitled to a certain share in the property, and residuaries would take their share in the property that is left after the sharers have taken their parts.

# All industrial units in Delhi have switched to clean fuels: Report

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 13: Complying with the Commission for Air Quality Management's (CAQM) direction, all 1,636 industrial units that were re-inspected twice in the month of October and November were found to have converted to clean fuels.

The Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) carried out the re-inspection of 1,636 industries to check the use of fuel or Piped Natural Gas (PNG) and found out that all operating units are complying or using the latter as fuel, the Delhi government said in a report.

The CAQM December 2 directed that industrial operations and processes in the National Capital Region (NCR), not running on PNG or cleaner fuels, shall be allowed to operate only up to eight hours a day from Monday to Friday and shall not be allowed to operate on Saturdays and Sundays.

As per the report, a total of 2,447 industrial sites have been inspected from November 17 to 25. Of these, five were found defaulting which were shutdown and a fine of ₹20 lakh was imposed on them.

The inspection figure rose by 23



per cent in December as the DPCC teams visited 3,002 sites from November 26 to December 6. Five industries found defaulting were shut down and a fine of ₹8.5 lakh was imposed.

The CAQM in its October report had stated that all the identified industries in the national capital have switched to cleaner fuels. However, the neighbouring states are yet to follow suit. Use of non-cleaner fuels in the industries of either the capital or its adjoining regions affects the air quality adversely. As per the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) report, industries contributed 9.9-13.7 per cent to air pollution in the national capital between October 24 and November 8 this year.

Delhi's AQI improved slightly and settled in the 'poor' category at 256 Monday morning.



# national

## of the day quote

Before the current government came to power in 2014, the defence sector lagged behind in India and it led to a dependency on imports for military equipment, affecting strategic autonomy

**RAJNATH SINGH** | DEFENCE MINISTER

We should support the party which is contesting the election with all its might in Uttar Pradesh. It is our view that there should be no division of votes (among non-BJP parties) in Uttar Pradesh

**NAWAB MALIK** | MAHARASHTRA MINISTER

The promise of ₹5,000 is a false one, made to bag votes in Goa. The TMC will never be able to fulfil it. The party will meet the same fate it did in Tripura. Also, where is this money coming from? Strangely, there was no word about generating employment opportunities or addressing livelihood issues of people

**DILIP GHOSH** | BJP LEADER

## SHORT TAKES

### 2 militants killed

**Srinagar:** Two terrorists were killed in an encounter with the security forces at Rangreth area in Central Kashmir's Srinagar district Monday, officials said. "Two unidentified terrorists killed. Search going on," police said. The gunfight took place after a joint team of the police and the security forces cordoned off the area and launched a search operation on the basis of specific information about the presence of terrorists.

### Teen arrested

**Hyderabad:** Police in Telangana's Nizamabad district have arrested a 19-year-old teenager for a triple murder that took place last week. Gandham Srikanth alias Ranampalli Mallanna, who was recently released from jail, allegedly murdered three men who were asleep at a workshop in Dichpally on the intervening night of December 7 and 8. Nizamabad Police Commissioner Kartikeya said after murdering the trio with a hammer, Srikanth fled with their mobile phones and money.

### Narrow escape

**Patna:** At least 12 people, including the bride and groom, narrowly escaped a fire that broke out during a wedding ceremony in Patna, a fire department official said. The incident took place on Sunday night inside the Maharaja Garden located in Bailey Road. The fire broke out due to bursting of crackers inside the facility, which is mainly made of wood, the official said.

### 4 killed, 10 hurt

**Bangalore:** Four people died on the spot and 10 others suffered severe injuries in a serial accident that took place on National Highway - 4 near Alur Cross in Chitradurga district Monday. According to police, an onion laden truck, en route to Bangalore, turned turtle after one of its tyres burst. As a result, the car coming from behind rammed into it. In an attempt to avoid collision, two other trucks overturned. As a result, the traffic on the national highway halted for hours.

### Two elephants die

**Guwahati:** Two wild elephants have died of suspected poisoning in Assam's Karbi Anglong district, officials said Monday. A forest department spokesman said that carcasses of a pregnant elephant and a male calf were found at Borbhetagaon in Karbi Anglong district bordering Kaziranga National Park late on Sunday evening.



Economy and ecology, humanity and technology have to walk hand in hand to build a better future

**SARBANANDA SONOWAL** | UNION MINISTER

## RAHUL TO JOIN PADYATRA

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi will participate in a 'padyatra' in his former parliamentary constituency of Amethi December 18 as part of the party's ongoing nationwide 'Jan Jagran Abhiyan'



# Rehabilitate children in street situations: SC



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 13:** The Supreme Court Monday said the process of identifying "children in street situations", adversely hit by COVID-19 pandemic, is at a "very slow pace" and directed the states and union territories (UTs) to take immediate steps to identify such children and rehabilitate them without waiting for its directions.

A bench comprising justices L Nageswara Rao and B R Gavai, hearing a sup motu case about the children who are adversely affected by the pandemic by losing either one or both the parents, said that there might be "lakhs of children in street situations" in the country. The top court took note of the affidavit of the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), which had conducted meetings with the state and UTs, on the issue such as identification and rehabilitation of such children. "The data provided by the state governments in respect of the

scheme of rehabilitation for such children has been placed on record. Looking at the number of the 'children in street situations' who have been identified, it appears that the process of identification is at slow pace," the bench noted in its order.

It said when the matter was brought to the notice on November 15 by NGO "Save the Children" which had reported that there were two lakh such children in ten districts of Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, West Bengal and Delhi.

"There might be lakhs of children in street situation in the remaining parts of the country who need to be rescued and rehabilitated," it said.

"The state governments/UTs are directed to take immediate action for identifying children in street situation without any delay. The required information shall be uploaded on the web portal of the NCPCR (Baal Swaraj). The concerned authorities of the state government/UTs need not wait for any further direction from NCPCR

or from this court..." it ordered. The top court said the process of collecting the information with regard to social background of the children, identification of benefits under the individual care plan and the inquires have to be conducted by the Child Welfare Committees under the Juvenile Justice (care and protection) Act. It also directed the NCPCR to file a status report based on the information to be received from states and UTs and upload them on its portal within a period of four weeks from today.

"In the meanwhile, District Magistrates shall upload relevant information, not restricted to stage one (identification), but also the information relating to the other stages (welfare). The state government and UTs shall file status reports about steps taken for identifying and rehabilitating the children in street situation in period of three weeks from today," it said. The bench then fixed the case for further hearing of the in January and ordered that the copies of the status reports be given to amicus curiae and the counsel for NCPCR.

Earlier, the bench had directed all the District Magistrates states and UTs to take steps for care and protection of children in street situations prepared by the NCPCR in 2020. It was also brought to the court's notice that there are about 70,000 children in the streets of Delhi alone. Additional Solicitor General KM Nataraj, appearing for NCPCR, had submitted that in his estimate, the number of such children might be 15-20 lakh across the entire country.

# Goa polls: Mamata gives new slogan



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Panaji, Dec 13:** Giving a new poll slogan of 'Khel Zatlo' in Goa, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Monday said an anti-BJP alliance has already taken shape in the coastal state under the banner of her party TMC and now it is for the Congress to decide whether it wants to join the grouping ahead of elections to take on the saffron outfit.

Addressing a public meeting at Benaulim in South Goa, Banerjee said the Trinamool Congress (TMC) will not allow the ruling BJP to win the elections in Goa, due in early 2022, this time. At a separate event, Banerjee, who is on a two-day visit to the state, said there will be "Khel Zatlo" in Goa ('Zatlo' is a Konkani term to mean 'will happen').

She had earlier raised the 'Khela Hobe' (game is on) slogan during the West Bengal Assembly poll campaign earlier this year. At the public meeting, she said the Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party

(MGP) has already joined her anti-BJP alliance and now the NCP's lone MLA in the state, Churchill Alemao, has merged the party's state legislative unit with the Trinamool Congress (TMC).

"If the Congress thinks they want to defeat the BJP, we have no objection. We already have the MGP on board. If you want to join, join us. We have already formed the alliance," the Bengal CM said after inducting Alemao into her party. Earlier in the day, Alemao merged the NCP's Goa legislature unit with the TMC, giving a boost to the Kolkata-headquartered party ahead of the assembly polls in the tiny sea-side state.

Talking about the anti-BJP alliance, Banerjee, who is also the chairperson of the TMC, claimed her party has already become an alternative to the saffron outfit in the state. "The MGP has joined the alliance, the NCP has merged its legislature unit (with TMC). If anyone wants not to divide votes, come and join us," she in a message directed at the Congress.

# Digvijaya invites Kamra, BJP MLA says won't allow

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhopal, Dec 13:** Senior Congress leader Digvijaya Singh Monday invited stand-up comedians Kunal Kamra and Munawar Faruqui to hold a programme at Bhopal in the BJP-ruled Madhya Pradesh after they were recently denied permission for shows in Bangalore. Hitting out at Singh, BJP MLA from Bhopal Huzur Assembly constituency, Rameshwar Sharma, said he will not allow shows of anyone who has disrespected Hindu deities not only in Bhopal but also in the rest of Madhya Pradesh.

"Digvijaya Singh is wishing to invite Pakistan's terrorists to his home for a biryani party. This doesn't mean that we all will accept it," the MLA said.

Faruqui was last month denied a nod to hold a show in the Karnataka capital amid protests by some right-wing outfits. A few days later, Kamra, a vocal critic of the government, said his stand-up shows, scheduled to be held in Bangalore, were cancelled after the organisers received threats.

Earlier this year, Faruqui had spent a month in jail at Indore after a BJP MLA's son lodged an FIR in January accusing the comedian of hurting religious sentiments through his show.

"I will organise a show for you Kunal and Munawar in Bhopal. All responsibility will be mine. The only condition is that the subject of comedy will be Digvijaya Singh. Sanghis (RSS cadre) should not object to this!! Don't be afraid!! Give the date and time as per your convenience. All your conditions are accepted," Digvijaya Singh tweeted Monday.

# New threat: Ozone spike raises concern

The eight-hour average was 160 mg/cubic metre in the Victoria Memorial area Sunday, as per the West Bengal Pollution Control Board

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kolkata, Dec 13:** The ozone count in central Kolkata was 60 per cent more than the safe levels, raising concerns about public health and the threat it poses to the iconic Victoria Memorial.

The eight-hour average was 160 mg/cubic metre in the Victoria Memorial area on Sunday, as per the West Bengal Pollution Control Board (WBPCB). The eight-hour average of ozone should not exceed 100 mg/cubic metre, as per the World Health Organisation.

The high ozone level was a result of typical wintry conditions and accumulated vehicular emission particles in the lower atmosphere, a WBPCB official said. Once the foggy conditions improve, the ozone count will go down, he said.

Environmentalist Somendranath Ghosh said proper monitoring is needed to find the reasons behind

the spike in ozone levels in the eco-sensitive zone of the city, often referred to as the 'Lungs of Kolkata' because of the acres of grassland. It is alarming the ozone count even eclipsed the PM 2.5 level of 144 on Sunday noon, he said.

"So many old diesel vehicles are plying. Due to this pollution, the white marbles of Victoria Memorial may turn yellow and the plasters will go off in many chamber walls in the future," he cautioned.

Ground-level ozone is a colourless and highly irritating gas that forms just above the earth's surface, Ghosh said. It is a secondary pollutant as it is produced when two primary pollutants - nitrogen oxides (NOx) and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) - react in sunlight and stagnant air, he said. Ozone can cause the muscles in the airways to constrict, trapping air in the alveoli, leading to wheezing and shortness of breath.



## NEW EXPERIENCE



Students of different schools visit an arms exhibition at Rifle Factory Ishapore (RFI), in North 24 Parganas district, West Bengal

PFI PHOTO

# Secretly recording wife's phone call infringement of privacy: HC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chandigarh, Dec 13:** Recording of wife's telephonic conversation without her knowledge is infringement of her privacy, the Punjab and Haryana High Court has observed.

The court of Justice Lisa Gill passed the order last month on a plea filed by a woman who challenged a 2020 order of the

Bathinda family court. The Bathinda family court had allowed the woman's estranged husband to prove a CD pertaining to recorded conversations between him and his wife subject to the condition of its correctness.

"Recording of telephonic conversation of the wife without her knowledge is a clear cut infringement of her privacy," observed the high court. "Furthermore, it cannot

be said or ascertained as to the circumstances in which the conversations were held or the manner in which response elicited by a person, who was recording the conversations, because it is evident that these conversations would necessarily have been recorded surreptitiously by one of the parties," it further observed.

The husband had submitted a petition in 2017 seeking a divorce

from the woman. Their marriage was solemnised in 2009 and the couple had a daughter together. During cross-examination, an application was moved by the husband in July, 2019, seeking permission to submit his supplementary affidavit by way of examination-in-chief along with the CD and transcripts of conversations recorded in memory card or chip of the mobile phone.

# Now, file corruption complaints online with Lokpal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 13:** An online system that enables people to file corruption complaints with the Lokpal was inaugurated here on Monday by the anti-graft ombudsman Chief Justice Pinaki Chandra Ghose.

At present, complaints sent by post, e-mail or hand-delivered are entertained by the Lokpal of India, a statement issued by the personal ministry said.

Justice Ghose inaugurated the digital platform -- LokpalOnline -- for the management of the complaints. It can be accessed by the citizens of the country and complaints can be filed from anywhere, anytime at lokpalonline.Gov.In.

Speaking on the occasion, Justice Ghose said LokpalOnline is an end-to-end digital solution for the management of complaints against public servants filed under the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013. He said LokpalOnline is a web-based facility, which will quicken the disposal of complaints in an accountable, transparent and efficient manner with benefits to all the stakeholders.

It facilitates the handling of complaints during their complete life cycle, right from filing to the final disposal, and this will bring more transparency and efficiency in the complaint-handling mechanism, Justice Ghose said.

Justice Abhilasha Kumari, Judicial Member, Lokpal, said the



Pinaki Chandra Ghose

main aim of the Lokpal is to free the country from the malady of corruption and build a strong and

corruption-free India.

She said in March 2019, Justice Ghose was appointed as the country's first Lokpal and "as a body, it is still growing and progressing", the statement said. Justice Kumari said steps would be taken to raise awareness about the online Lokpal complaint portal even in rural areas.

The portal provides a dashboard to every complainant, enabling him to view the status of his complaints during their life cycle. "The complainants will also receive e-mail alerts at different stages of the complaints, along with the copy of the order passed by the Lokpal or any of its benches," the statement said.

Highlighting important features of the digital platform, it said it makes it convenient for the com-

plainants to file complaints online from anywhere, anytime and the "identity of the complainant is kept confidential".

"Information to the complainant about action on complaint at every stage through e-mails and SMS, facility to complainant to ascertain status of complaint at any time and reminders to inquiry agencies through e-mails and SMS" are some other features of the online platform, the statement said.

The CVC, the CBI and other inquiry agencies can upload their reports directly on the LokpalOnline platform and analytical reports can be generated according to the requirements, it added.

The Lokpal was established under the Lokpal and Lokayuktas

Act, 2013 to inquire and investigate into allegations of corruption against public functionaries. The Lokpal received 30 complaints against senior central government officials between April and July, according to latest official data.

As many as 110 complaints were received by the Lokpal in 2020-21, a decline of over 92 per cent from the 1,427 complaints received in 2019-20. On March 23, 2019, President Ram Nath Kovind administered the oath of office to Justice Ghose as the chairperson of the Lokpal.

The eight members of the Lokpal -- four judicial and four non-judicial -- were administered the oath of office by Justice Ghose on March 27, 2019. At present, the Lokpal has two vacancies of judicial members.



# international



We are on deter mode to dissuade Russia. In any case, we will send a clear signal that any aggression against Ukraine will have a high cost for Russia  
JOSEP BORRELL | FOREIGN POLICY CHIEF, EU

## 'QUEEN OF ASIA'

The world's largest natural corundum blue sapphire, weighing around 310 kg and named the "Queen of Asia", was unveiled Sunday. The National Gem and Jewellery Authority, the state-run institute, certified the immensely valuable gem stone and plans are underway to sell it at an international market



## of the day quote

The two heads of state will give full review of China-Russia relations and cooperation in various fields this year  
WANG WENBIN | FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESPERSON, CHINA

I encourage the Review Conference to agree on an ambitious plan for the future to establish restrictions on the use of certain types of autonomous weapons  
ANTONIO GUTERRES | SECRETARY-GENERAL, UN

This is an area where Australia and Korea are already working very closely together to build those reliable, trusted supply chains in these critical minerals and rare earths that we know will power the new energy economy and the global economy into the future  
SCOTT MORRISON | PM, AUSTRALIA

# UK reports world's first Omicron death

AGENCIES

London, Dec 13: At least one person has died in the United Kingdom after contracting the Omicron variant of the coronavirus, Prime Minister Boris Johnson said Monday, warning that the variant now accounted for 40% of infections in the British capital.

Since the first Omicron cases were detected Nov 27 in the United Kingdom, Johnson has imposed tougher restrictions and Sunday he urged people to get booster shots to prevent the health service from being overwhelmed.

Visiting a vaccination centre in London, Johnson congratulated those getting shots and handed out stickers before telling reporters that a patient had died from Omicron which he said would overcome those inoculated with two shots.

"Sadly at least one patient has now been confirmed to have died with Omicron," Johnson said.

"So I think the idea that this is somehow a milder version of the virus - I think that's something we need to set on one side - and just recognise the sheer pace at which it accelerates through the population."

Johnson said there was a spike in Omicron cases in London, with Health Secretary Sajid Javid saying the variant was spreading at a "phenomenal rate".



200,000 Omicron infections per day in UK: Health Minister

More than 146,000 people have died from Covid in the UK

Get a booster as two vaccines not enough, Britain says

Omicron will be dominant variant in London in 48 hours

When it comes to our fight against the pandemic there are no guarantees. We are once again in a race between the vaccine and the virus

SAJID JAVID | UK HEALTH SECRETARY

Johnson, who is grappling with a rebellion in his party over measures to curb Omicron and an outcry over parties at his Downing Street office during last year's lockdowns, said people should rush to get booster vaccines to protect "our freedoms and our way of life".

## VACCINE QUEUES

Javid said although just 10 people were hospitalised with the Omicron variant, its swift spread meant that unless the government acted the health service could be

overwhelmed. At St Thomas' Hospital Vaccination Centre in central London, a queue of hundreds of people snaked back onto Westminster Bridge.

"The COVID vaccine booking service is currently facing extremely high demand so is operating a queuing system," the National Health Service said on Twitter. "For all others experiencing waits, we would advise trying again later today or tomorrow."

## SHORT TAKES

### Danish, UK boats collide; 2 missing

Stockholm: A Danish cargo vessel capsized off Sweden early Monday after colliding with a British cargo ship in overnight fog, with two crew members missing in the Baltic Sea's freezing waters. The 55-metre Karin Hog barge and 90-metre Scot Carrier were sailing in the same direction when they hit each other in the dark at 3.30 am (0230 GMT) in Swedish territorial waters, maritime agencies in Denmark and Sweden said. A search-and-rescue operation involving at least nine boats and a helicopter near the site off the Danish island of Bornholm was called off by late morning as the overturned Karin Hog was towed away in waters full of wreckage.

### SL President suspends Parl

Colombo: In an unusual move, Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has prorogued Parliament for one week and left for Singapore on an unscheduled visit. There was no immediate comment from the government on Rajapaksa's decision to suspend Parliament for a week. Parliament, which ended its sessions Friday, was originally set to convene January 11. It will now convene January 18. President Rajapaksa, through an extraordinary gazette notification dated December 12, suspended the assembly. Two key issues billed for discussions during Monday's Cabinet meeting would not be taken up, said energy minister Udaya Gammanpila.

### Afghan launches polio vaccination

Kabul: The Public Health Ministry under the Taliban-led government in Afghanistan Monday announced that it has launched a campaign to administer polio vaccination doses to more than 9.9 million of children under the age of five. The campaign is the last polio vaccination drive in 2021. It will continue in two weeks. This week it will cover 21 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces.

### Two lions trigger panic at airport

Singapore: Two lions were shot with a tranquilliser gun and sedated Sunday at Singapore's Changi Airport after they got out of their freight container, triggering a mild scare in the vicinity, a media report said here. The lions, currently recovering from sedation under the care of the Mandai Wildlife Group here, were being transported in the container to an overseas facility, The Straits Times reported.

# Musk named Time's 'Person of the Year'



For creating solutions to an existential crisis, for embodying the possibilities and the perils of the age of tech titans, for driving society's most daring and disruptive transformations, Elon Musk is TIME's 2021 Person of the Year  
EDWARD FELSENTHAL | TIME'S EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

AGENCIES

Washington, Dec 13: Tesla Chief Executive Officer Elon Musk was named Time magazine's Person of the Year for 2021, a year that saw his electric car company become the most valuable carmaker in the world and his rocket company soar to the edge of space with an all-civilian crew.

Musk is also the founder and CEO of SpaceX, and leads brain-chip startup Neuralink and infrastructure firm The Boring Company. Tesla's market value soared to more than \$1 trillion this year, making it more valuable than Ford Motor and General Motors combined.

Tesla produces hundreds of thousands of cars every year and has managed to avert supply chain issues better than many of its rivals, while pushing many young consumers to switch to electric cars and legacy automakers to shift focus to EV vehicles.

"Even Elon Musk's spacefaring adventures are a direct line from the very first Person of the Year, Charles Lindbergh, whom the editors marked in 1927 to commem-

orate his historic first solo transatlantic airplane flight over the Atlantic, the magazine's editor-in-chief, Edward Felsenthal, said.

From hosting Saturday Night Live to dropping tweets on cryptocurrencies and meme stocks that have triggered massive movements in their value, Musk has dominated the headlines and amassed over 66 million followers on Twitter.

Some of his tweets have also attracted regulatory scrutiny in the past. According to the magazine, "The Person of the Year" signifies somebody "who affected the news or our lives the most, for better, or worse." Time magazine named the teenage pop singer Olivia Rodrigo as its "Entertainer of the Year", American gymnast Simone Biles "Athlete of the Year" and vaccine scientists were named "Heroes of the Year".

Last year, US President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris were jointly given the Person of the Year title. Time began this tradition in 1927. Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg and Amazon founder Jeff Bezos have also received the title in the past.

# 'Dubai world's first govt to become 100% paperless'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dubai, Dec 13: Dubai has become the world's first government to turn 100 per cent paperless, the Emirate's Crown Prince, Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, has announced, pointing at savings of 1.3 billion Dirham (USD 350 million) and 14-million-man hours.

All internal, external transactions and procedures in the Government of Dubai are now 100 per cent digital and managed from a comprehensive digital government services platform.

"The achievement of this target marks the beginning of a new stage in Dubai's journey to digitalise life in all its aspects - a journey rooted in innovation, creativity, and a focus on the future,"

said Sheikh Hamdan in a statement Saturday.

"This accomplishment also reinforces Dubai's status as a world-leading digital capital and its status as a role model in designing government operations and services that enhance customer happiness," he said.

The US, UK, Europe and Canada have expressed plans to digitise government operation on a larger scale, which encompass government procedures and citizen identifications. However, sceptics have argued its vulnerability to cyber attacks.

The Dubai Crown Prince said the government plans to implement advanced strategies to create and enhance digital life in Dubai over the next five decades.

"The new phase of Dubai's dig-

## DAMAGE & DEBRIS



A general view of damage and debris after a devastating outbreak of tornadoes ripped through several US states, in Mayfield, Kentucky

# Russia says it may be forced to deploy nukes in Europe

AGENCIES

Moscow, Dec 13: Russia said Monday it may be forced to deploy intermediate-range nuclear missiles in Europe in response to what it sees as NATO's plans to do the same.

Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov told Russia's RIA news agency in an interview that Moscow would have to take the step if NATO refused to engage with it on preventing such an escalation.

His comments further raised the stakes in an East-West standoff in which Russia is demanding security guarantees from the West while the United States and its allies are warning Moscow to pull back from what they see as a pos-

## EAST-WEST STANDOFF



Comments raise stakes in East-West standoff

Minister says Russia has complete lack of trust in NATO

Russia working on proposals after Putin-Biden call

sible invasion of Ukraine - something Ryabkov again denied was Russia's intent.

Intermediate-range nuclear forces (INF) in Europe were banned under a 1987 treaty agreed between Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and US President Ronald Reagan

in what was hailed at the time as a major easing of Cold War tensions. Washington quit the pact in 2019 after complaining for years of alleged Russian violations.

Ryabkov said there were indirect indications that NATO was moving closer to re-deploying INF, includ-



ital journey will enable and empower future governments to meet the expectations of the residents of a thriving smart city and provide them with renewed opportunities for prosperity, sustainable devel-

opment, and happiness," he said. The Dubai Paperless Strategy was implemented in five consecutive phases, each of which enlisted a different group of the Dubai Government's entities.

The achievement of this target marks the beginning of a new stage in Dubai's journey to digitalise life in all its aspects - a journey rooted in innovation, creativity, and a focus on the future  
SHEIKH HAMDAN | CROWN PRINCE, UAE

By the end of the fifth phase, the strategy was fully implemented across all 45 government entities in the emirate.

These entities provide more than 1,800 digital services and over 10,500 key transactions.

Collaboration and integration among participating entities enabled the automation of processes and services provided to customers,

# TIANANMEN VIGIL HK tycoon given 13 months prison



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Hong Kong, Dec 13: A Hong Kong court Monday sentenced activist and business tycoon Jimmy Lai to 13 months in jail for urging participation in last year's banned Tiananmen vigil, amid a crackdown by Chinese authorities that has rolled back the semi-autonomous city's civil liberties.

The District Court convicted seven others on similar charges and handed out sentences of up to 14 months. Hong Kong's government has banned the candlelight vigil for the past two years on pandemic control grounds, although it is widely believed the ban is intended to be permanent as authorities look to squelch the city's pro-democracy movement.

Lai, the founder of the now-shuttered pro-democracy newspaper Apple Daily, has already been jailed for taking part in pro-democracy protests for which he will serve a total of 20 months. In the latest case, he was convicted Thursday of inciting others to take part in the unauthorised assembly to memorialise those killed in the army's bloody crackdown on student-led pro-democracy protests that centered on Beijing's Tiananmen Square in 1989.

Two other defendants convicted along with Lai, lawyer Chow Hang-tung and former reporter Gwyneth Ho, were sentenced to 12 and six months respectively for participating in the vigil. Chow was also sentenced for inciting others to join.

The trio had previously pleaded not guilty to the charges.

Others sentenced Monday included Lee Cheuk-yan, the former chairman of the now-defunct Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China. Lee received 14 months for organising last year's unauthorised assembly, during which thousands of people gathered to light candles and sing songs in Hong Kong's Victoria Park despite police warnings that they may be breaking the law.

The remainder were given sentences ranging from four months, two weeks, to nine months.

ing its restoration last month of the 56th Artillery Command which operated nuclear-capable Pershing missiles during the Cold War.

## 'COMPLETE LACK OF TRUST'

NATO says there will be no new US missiles in Europe and it is ready to deter new Russian missiles with a measured response that would only involve conventional weapons. But Ryabkov said Russia had a complete lack of trust in NATO.

"They don't permit themselves to do anything that could somehow increase our security - they believe they can act as they need, to their advantage, and we simply have to swallow all this and deal with it. This is not going to continue."



## of the day quote

Investors have tremendous opportunities in India because it is a strong democratic country, ease of doing business is a big facilitator, and the pace of development has increased

**MANSUKH MANDAVIYA** | MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE

The Prime Minister has announced this. It has to be taken on a mission mode and the zero budget natural farming also. Very soon in near future, it (the committee) will be set up

**SANJAY AGRAWAL** | AGRICULTURE SECRETARY

EVs are a huge focus area for us and we have invested in this area for over a decade. TVS is committed to developing exciting and aspirational products and we have always believed that EV development has to be ground-up for us to make that quantum leap into the global EV revolution," TVS Motor Company

**SUDARSHAN VENU** | JOINT MANAGING DIRECTOR

## SHORT TAKES

### US cos register record buybacks

**New Delhi:** Companies listed on the S&P 500 bought back a record-setting \$234.5 billion in shares in the third quarter of 2021, surpassing the previous record of \$223 billion in the fourth quarter of 2018, according to preliminary data from S&P Dow Jones Indices, The Hill reported. Amid the Covid-19 pandemic and efforts to conserve cash, buybacks fell to around \$89 billion in the second quarter of 2020.

### Offline payments up 200%: PhonePe

**New Delhi:** Digital payments major PhonePe on Monday said offline merchant transactions on its platform have shown 200 per cent growth since last year and it processed over a billion P2M (peer to merchant) transactions in the month of November. The company also said it has digitised 25 million small merchants and kirana stores in the country.

### Oben EV raises \$1.5m from WFC

**New Delhi:** Electric two-wheeler startup Oben EV on Monday said it has raised USD 1.5 million (over ₹10 crore) in a seed round from We Founder Circle (WFC) and others as it plans to launch its first product in the next six months. The seed round investment saw participation from notable investors at We Founder Circle -- a global network of entrepreneurs and strategic investors who invest in early-stage companies. These include Life Element Co-founder Rakesh Somani, serial investor Gaurav Juneja, Rajesh Motors Managing Director Siddharth Shah besides other prominent angels such as Sumeet Pathak and Dr Milan Modi among others, the company said in a statement.

### Myntra's EORS-15 to attract 700k buyers

**New Delhi:** The 15th edition of Myntra's biannual EORS, the nation's mega fashion carnival, will be held from December 18-23 and will offer shoppers the biggest EORS collection ever of 1 million styles, from over 5000 brands, at great value. With over 20% higher traffic over the previous winter edition, Myntra expects about 700k new customers during the course of the event, with ~45% of the overall traffic coming from tier 2 and 3 cities and towns. About 25000 kirana partners, including franchisees, will cater to 80% of all deliveries this EORS.



**If we meet in a decade, India's influence and part in the global economy will definitely grow. Despite the problems India faced during the Covid-19 pandemic, it is the fastest-growing among the large economies in the world**

**BORGE BRENDE** | WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM

## GROFERS REBRANDS ITSELF AS BLINKIT

Online grocery delivery platform Grofers Monday said it is rebranding itself as 'Blinkit' to reflect its pivot to quick commerce. The Zomato and SoftBank-backed company had started its quick commerce service with a 10-minute delivery promise a few months ago



# Nov retail inflation climbs to 4.91% YoY

India's economy expanded 8.4% in the September quarter from a year earlier, the fastest pace among major economies, but economists say the pandemic situation is a wild card

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 13:** India's retail inflation accelerated in November, led by a rise in food prices, but remained within the medium-term target of the central bank, strengthening views that the bank could keep interest rates on hold at its next meeting in February.

Consumer prices rose 4.91% in November from the same month last year, speeding up from October's 4.48% but lower than the consensus Reuters poll forecast of 5.10%, Ministry of Statistics data showed Monday.

The Reserve Bank of India left interest rates on hold last week, saying growth was a priority as it warned of risks from inflation and the new Omicron variant on the economic recovery.

The central bank expects retail inflation at 5.1% for October-December period and 5.7% for January-March quarter in the current financial year.

Food prices, which contribute to nearly half of the consumer price index (CPI) rose 1.87% year-on-year in November, compared with 0.85% a month before. Prices of edible oil rose nearly 30% from a year ago period while vegetable prices fell by 13.6%.



Inflation has been within the RBI's 2-6% target range in recent months, and a cut in fuel tax last month by the federal government and softening of global crude oil prices have dampened inflationary pressures.

Economists, have, however warned of risks of uptick in headline inflation over the coming months as companies pass on rising input costs to consumers amid economic recovery.

"CPI inflation is set to rise further over the coming months and the risks are stacked to the upside," said Shilan Shah, India economist at Capital Economics.

However, any rise in inflation is unlikely to trigger monetary tightening by the central bank, he said.

- Consumer prices increase 4.91% YoY in November vs Oct's 4.48%
- Consumer food inflation up 1.87% YoY in Nov vs 0.85% in Oct
- Core inflation estimated at 6.08%-6.2% YoY in Nov vs Oct's 6%-6.1%
- Retail fuel prices rose 13.35% in Nov YoY compared to 14.35% in Oct

Retail fuel prices rose 13.35% in November year-on-year compared to 14.35% in the previous month, the data showed.

Annual core inflation, excluding volatile food and energy prices, was estimated at between 6.08% and 6.2% in November, according to three economists, compared with 6% to 6.1% in the previous month.

## 'Sumeru Innovation X' programme announced

AGENCIES

**Mumbai, Dec 13:** Sumeru Venture, a \$1 billion fund, through its subsidiary Sumeru Innovation, announced in India, Sumeru Innovation X - a programme designed and developed by Sutardja Center for Entrepreneurship & Technology (SCET) at the University of California at Berkeley and Sumeru, through a national exclusive partnership with Indo IPS EduTech Private Limited (IIEduTech).

Sumeru Innovation X program would be exclusively offered pan India through a group of experienced founders of IIEduTech - a renowned business strategist and investor - Bharat Kotecha, veteran educationalist - Achal Choudhary & capital market analyst and investor - Arvind Singh Choudhary with a combined experience of over 100 man-years, which would be helpful to the learners in their entrepreneurship and innovation journey during and after the programme, said a company official.

Saumen Chakraborty, Managing Director of Sumeru Ventures, said, "The Sumeru Innovation X programme brings in the best of the supportive global ecosystem of innovative minds, learning tools and methodologies and make it accessible to the next generation of entrepreneurial talent pool in India. The programme aims to combine innovation, entrepreneurship and mindfulness to create the next generation of entrepreneurs in India Designed for the World."

## UFBU CALLS FOR STRIKE

# Banks lost ₹2.85L cr due to loan default of 13 cos

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Hyderabad, Dec 13:** Public sector banks have lost nearly ₹2.85 lakh crore on account of loan dues of 13 corporates even as the banks are used to bail out ailing financial institutions such as Yes Bank and IL&FS, United Forum of Bank Unions (UFBU) alleged Monday.

In press release, UFBU's Convener B Rambabu said the organisation calls for a two-day all India bank strike December 16 and 17 protesting against Banking Laws (Amendment) Bill 2021 and opposing the centre's alleged move to privatise PSBs.

**The UFBU is of the view that privatisation of public sector banks will jeopardise the interests of the common people and backward regions of the country**

**B RAMBABU** | CONVENER, UFBU

According to the statistics given by the UFBU, the 13 corporates' outstanding dues were at ₹4,86,800 crore and it was resolved at ₹1,61,820 crore resulting in a loss of ₹2,84,980 crore.

"It is also a matter of reality that time and again public sector banks have been used to bail out ailing private sector banks such as



Global Trust Bank, United Western Bank, Bank of Karad, etc. In the recent past, it was Yes Bank, which was bailed out by public sector SBI. Private sector's largest NBFC, IL&FS, was bailed out again by public sector SBI and LIC," he said. He said the PSBs participate in majority of the government programmes and schemes such as Jan Dhan, MUDRA for unemployed youth, Swadhan for street vendors, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana and Pradhan Mantri Jivan Jyoti Yojana, among others.

"In the event of the government moving forward with the Bill in the Parliament to privatise the banks, bank employees and officers are prepared to go to any extent including indefinite strike against privatisation of banks, as it is detrimental to the interests of the nation and its people," the UFBU said.

The organisation said though the operating profits of the PSBs are in health condition the only issue being confronted with the banks was that of huge Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) in which the major share was that of big corporate.

# Coal Secy lays stone of ₹280cr FMC proj



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 13:** Anil Kumar Jain, Secretary to the Government of India, Ministry of Coal laid the foundation stone of a 20 million tonne per year (MTPY) capacity First Mile Connectivity (FMC) Project/Rapid Loading System here at Mahanadi Coalfields Limited (MCL).

Jain, accompanied by M Nagaraju, Additional Secretary to the Government of India, Ministry of Coal, PK Sinha, Chairman-cum-Managing Director, MCL, Binay Dayal, Director (Technical), Coal India Limited, was on a two-day official visit to Odisha.

The Secretary laid the foundation stone of ₹280 crore FMC project, having coal despatch capacity of 20

MTPY, at Ananta under Jagannath area of the company.

OP Singh, Director (Technical), KR Vasudevan, Director (Finance) and Keshav Rao, Director (Personnel) were among senior officers of MCL present on the occasion.

"The company is aggressively implementing first-mile connectivity projects with a capital outlay of ₹3,600 crore by 2024 for the rapid movement of coal to the consumers," MCL official statement said.

Pioneer in implementing environment-friendly technology in coal mining, MCL is operating a fleet of 66 surface miners for blast-less mining. In another first, the company has successfully deployed vertical rippers for blast-less removal of overburden (OB) at Hingula and Kaniha opencast projects.

# No proposal to transfer ONGC's assets to OIL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 13:** There is no proposal at present to transfer India's biggest oil and gas producer ONGC's assets to smaller state-owned firm Oil India Ltd (OIL), Parliament was informed Monday.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had earlier this year written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi requesting him to consider transferring all assets of Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) in the northeastern region to Oil India Ltd.

"At present, there is no proposal to transfer ONGC's assets to OIL,"



Minister of State for Petroleum and Natural Gas Rameswar Teli said in a written reply to a question in the Rajya Sabha.

Sarma's letter to the PM followed the oil ministry's directive to ONGC to consider selling stakes in producing oil fields and hive off drilling and other services into a separate firm to raise production. He had in his June 5 letter stated

that both ONGC and OIL are national oil companies and hold acreage given to them on a nomination basis by the government and so, there should be "no issues in transfer of assets" from one to other.

ONGC produces 1.1 million tonne of crude oil annually from the Assam fields employing over 4,000 personnel. In contrast, OIL used 6,500-odd employees to produce 3.6 million tonne of crude oil and is projecting annual growth of 3-5 per cent.

OIL's cost of production in the North-East is under \$7.5 per barrel, while that of ONGC is higher than that.

## IPO WATCH

### MapmyIndia IPO subscribed 154 times

**New Delhi:** The initial public offer of CE Info Systems Ltd, the parent of digital mapping company MapmyIndia, garnered strong investor response and was subscribed a whopping 154.71 times on the last day of subscription on Monday. The IPO received bids for over 108.98 crore shares against over 70.44 lakh shares on offer, as per an update on the NSE. The non-institutional investors category was subscribed 424.69 times, while Qualified Institutional Buyers (QIBs) portion received 196.36 times subscription and Retail Individual Investors (RIIs) 15.20 times. The company mopped up ₹312 crore from anchor investors on Wednesday.

### MedPlus IPO subscribed 70% on Day 1

**New Delhi:** The initial public offer of pharmacy retail chain MedPlus Health Services Limited was subscribed 70 per cent on the first day of subscription on Monday. The ₹1,398.3-crore IPO received bids for 87,62,598 shares against 1,25,75,154 shares on offer, according to NSE data. The initial public offer (IPO) has a fresh issue of up to ₹600 crore and an offer for sale of up to ₹798.30 crore. The company on Friday said it has mobilised ₹418 crore from anchor investors.

### Tega shares zoom 60% in debut trade

**New Delhi:** Shares of Tega Industries Ltd, manufacturer of consumables for the mining industry, on Monday listed with a huge premium and settled over 60 per cent higher against its issue price of ₹453. It debuted at ₹753, reflecting a premium of 66.22 per cent from the issue price on BSE. It further zoomed 69.33 per cent to ₹767.10 during the day. The stock settled with a gain of 60.15 per cent at ₹725.50. On NSE, it listed at ₹760, a gain of 67.77 per cent. The stock closed at ₹718, jumping 58.49 per cent.

# Vedanta withdraws cases on tax dispute against govt

VEDANTA HAD CHALLENGED THE DEMAND FOR TAXES AT TWO FORUMS -- THE INCOME TAX APPELLATE TRIBUNAL AND DELHI HIGH COURT WHILE ITS PARENT VEDANTA RESOURCES CHALLENGED THE MOVE BEFORE A SINGAPORE ARBITRATION TRIBUNAL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 13:** Billionaire Anil Agarwal's mining group Vedanta Monday said it has withdrawn cases in the Delhi High Court as well as before an international arbitration tribunal to settle a ₹20,495 crore retrospective tax dispute with the government.

Post slapping of a ₹10,247 crore tax demand on UK's Cairn Energy Plc for alleged capital gains made on a 2016 internal reorganisation prior to the listing of its India business, the Income Tax Department had sought ₹20,495 crore in taxes (including penalty) from Cairn India for failing to deduct tax on capital gains made by its British parent.

Cairn India was in 2011 bought by Agarwal's group and subsequently, the firm was merged with

Vedanta Ltd. In a statement, Vedanta said it has used the recently enacted law that scraps all demands levied using a 2012 retrospective tax legislation, to settle the dispute.

As conditions for the same, it has withdrawn all legal challenges against the government and given an undertaking to forego all future rights pertaining to the tax demand.

Cairn Energy, which has maintained that no tax as per the prevalent regime was due on the 2006 reorganisation and won an international arbitration against the 2015 order seeking back taxes, is parallelly settling its dispute with the government. It is withdrawing cases to get a ₹7,900 crore of refund of taxes collected from it using the retrospective tax law.



While the Delhi High Court was continuing to hear the matter, the arbitration tribunal had completed the hearing and was due to pass an order anytime now.

"In view of the recent amendments to the Indian Income Tax Act, 1961 vide the Taxation Laws (Amendment) Act, 2021, which nullifies the retrospective tax im-

posed by Finance Act, 2012, Vedanta Ltd, and all its related group entities have taken steps to settle disputes arising from Order dated March 11, 2015, passed by the Deputy Commissioner of Income-tax, International Taxation, Circle - Gurgaon," the firm said in a statement.

As required by the new law, Vedanta Ltd, along with its related group entities, filed the required statutory forms and undertakings in the prescribed Form 1, seeking to settle the disputes.

The forms and undertakings have been accepted by the jurisdictional Commissioner, and accordingly, a certificate to this effect, as prescribed in Form No 2 has been issued.

"Pursuant to the declarations in the aforesaid forms and under-

takings, Vedanta Ltd has withdrawn the income tax appeal pending before the Delhi bench of the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal and also withdrawn writ petition filed before the Delhi High Court," the statement said.

The firm's parent Vedanta Resources Ltd has also filed the application seeking withdrawal of the claim and termination of the arbitral proceedings pending before the Permanent Court for Arbitration in the International Court of Justice it said.

"Vedanta Ltd and its related group entities also declare that no further proceedings or claims shall be initiated in any court or tribunal whether in India or outside India, pursuant to fulfillment of conditions (withdrawal of the tax demand)," the firm said.



BENZEMA, ASENSIO STRIKES HELP LOS BLANCOS EXTEND THEIR LEAD AT THE TOP OF LA LIGA, WHILE THE ROJIBLANCOS HIT WITH A MAJOR BLOW IN THEIR TITLE DEFENSE AFTER THEIR LOSS IN MADRID DERBY

# Real dent Atletico hopes

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Barcelona, Dec 13:** Karim Benzema and Marco Asensio inflicted the latest blow on Atletico Madrid's title defense after leading Real Madrid to a 2-0 win Sunday to keep their team comfortably at the top of the Spanish league.

Vinicius Júnior again proved to be the difference for Madrid, setting up Benzema and Asensio in each half of the Spanish capital derby.

Diego Simeone's Atlético entered the Santiago Bernabéu needing a win to rekindle their hopes of getting back in the title race, seven months after it beat out Madrid and Barcelona in a thrilling finish to the 2020-21 season.

But the commanding win by Carlo Ancelotti's side opened a 13-point gap for Madrid over fourth-place Atlético, who have a game in hand. There is still more than half the season left, but the chances of Simeone's team repeating as champion are fading fast.

The leading threats to Madrid are now the pair of rivals from Seville. Sevilla, who also have played one less game than Real, are second at eight points back, followed by Real Betis nine points adrift of Madrid.

Barcelona, the team that traditionally shares the majority of La Liga titles with Madrid, suffered another setback in its post-Messi era.

A 2-2 draw at Osasuna left it in eighth place, some 18 points behind Madrid. Barcelona has long known that a fourth-place finish to secure a berth in the Champions League is its realistic goal this season. Benzema put Madrid on its way to a 10th straight victory overall in the 16th minute after Luka Modric intercepted a pass by Koke Resurrección to start a counterattack.

Vinicius set up Benzema by stretching Atlético's defense with a run down the right before finding his unmarked striker with a cross. Benzema did the rest with a superb sweep of his right leg to drive the ball under Jan Oblak for his league-leading 13th goal.

Another counterattack driven by Vinicius settled the contest when the Brazilian found Asensio



**FINISH OF HIGHEST QUALITY:** Karim Benzema volleys home Real Madrid's first goal against Atletico Madrid at the Santiago Bernabeu, Sunday

all alone to rifle the ball just inside the post in the 57th.

## ANOTHER LETDOWN

Goals from Barcelona's latest teenage talents weren't enough to save Xavi Hernández's side from another letdown.

Barcelona were leading Osasuna 2-1 after 19-year-olds Nico González and Abde Ezzalzouli scored their

first goals since joining the team from the club's youth squads this season.

But substitute Chimy Ávila pulled Osasuna level with four minutes to go with a long-range strike that went in after touching Samuel Umtiti.

Nico and Abde form part of a group of players under 20 years old, along with 17-year-old Gavi and

the injured Pedri and Ansu Fati, which is providing the only bright side to a dismal campaign for Barcelona.

The draw at Osasuna came after back-to-back defeats for Barcelona, which has only won once on the road in the league and will miss the Champions League knockout rounds for the first time in 17 years.

# 'CENTURION' MBAPPE SECURES PSG VICTORY

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Paris, Dec 13:** Kylian Mbappé scored his 100th goal for Paris Saint-Germain, netting a brace as the French league leader beat Monaco 2-0 Sunday.

The France star, who scored twice midweek in the Champions League in a 4-1 win against Club Brugge, gave PSG the lead from the penalty spot and doubled his tally just before halftime from Lionel Messi's assist.

At the age of 22 years and 357 days, Mbappé is the youngest player to score 100 goals for a single team in the French top flight, according to Opta's analysis of statistics since 1950. The comfortable win increased PSG's lead over second-place Marseille to 13 points.

PSG had only a couple of chances in the first half and converted both as Mbappé showed no mercy for the club he helped to the French league title in 2017.

The hosts were awarded a penalty after Djibril Sidibe fouled Angel Di Maria. Mbappé took the penalty and beat Monaco goalkeeper Alexander Nübel to break the deadlock in the 11th minute.



Messi initiated the counterattack that led to PSG's second goal. The seven-time Ballon d'Or winner intercepted a pass, ran past defenders before setting up Mbappé, who curled a shot into the back of the net.

## DIENG SCREAMER

Senegal striker Bamba Dieng scored with a stunning acrobatic volley as Marseille won 2-0 at Strasbourg to move up to second. Jorge Sampaoli's team broke the deadlock near the hour-mark when Dieng connected with a cross from Luis Henrique and unleashed his

right-footed bicycle kick. Marseille, which boast the league's best defense, produced a ninth clean sheet this season. Only Liverpool has done better in the five top European leagues.

Defender Duje Caleta-Car sealed Marseille's win in the 81st, heading home a corner kick from Dimitri Payet at the near post. The result lifted Marseille one point above third-place Rennes.

Goalkeeper Anthony Lopes kept his team afloat with a pair of decisive saves as Lyon secured a 0-0 draw at defending champion Lille.

# Rohit ruled out of SA Tests

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 13:** India's Test vice-captain Rohit Sharma was Monday ruled out of the entire three-match Test series against South Africa as his old left-hamstring injury resurfaced during the team's net session in Mumbai where he also took a hit on his hand. India A captain Priyank Panchal will be Rohit's replacement opener in the Test series.

The BCCI has not announced a stand-in vice-captain but it is expected that KL Rahul is the front-runner for being Virat Kohli's deputy during the Tests.

Other contenders could be Rishabh Pant and Ravichandran Ashwin, considering that Ajinkya Rahane has been removed from the role with his place in the eleven not being assured.

If sources are to be believed, Ashwin, who will be the lone spinner in all Tests, is also in the fray to be the vice-captain. A section in the BCCI believes that he needs to be accorded respect for his stupendous international career.

The Tests will wind up January 15, followed by three ODIs, sched-



PRIYANK PANCHAL



ROHIT SHARMA

uled to begin January 19 in Paarl.

The 34-year-old Rohit also sustained a hit on his hands at the Mumbai nets while taking throw-downs from Raghavendra (Raghu). As of now, the extent of Rohit's injury is not very clear. It is not known whether it's a strain, which is a less serious injury, or a tear, which will have to be graded.

The BCCI is yet to share the details of his scan report which

will ascertain the degree of the injury. It is learnt that Panchal reported at the team hotel this evening.

Panchal is no greenhorn as he has 100 first-class matches under his belt with 7,011 runs, including 24 hundreds. He has been a part of a very successful Gujarat team that won the Ranji Trophy under Parthiv Patel and has been an India A captain.

# India begin campaign in ACT against S Korea



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Dhaka, Dec 13:** Olympic bronze medallist Indian men's hockey team will start its new cycle with a bunch of youngsters aiming to prove their mettle when it begins its Asian Champions Trophy campaign against Korea here Tuesday.

India have won this prestigious event thrice since its inception in 2011 and have won the previous two editions held in 2016 in Kuantan, Malaysia and 2018 in Muscat, Oman.

India will play their opening match against Korea December 14, followed by their match against hosts Bangladesh on the next day (December 15).

Their third match will be against arch rivals Pakistan December 17 and December 19, they take on Asian Games Champions Japan. The semi-finals and final will be held December 21 and 22 respectively.

Skipper Manpreet Singh emphasised on getting off to a good start. "Korea is a good team and are very capable of slowing down our attack. In this same venue during the Asia Cup in 2017, we had drawn (1-1) against them in the league stage. Hence, it's important we don't get complacent against them and ensure our basics are right when we play them," he said.

Speaking about the importance of the tournament, Manpreet said,

"The tournament is quite an important one for us as it is our first tournament after the Tokyo Olympics. The new cycle has started for us. If we start well, then our confidence levels will go high," he said.

Several youngsters have been given a chance in the India squad for the tournament, and Manpreet went on to explain why doing well for them here will be crucial.

"Youngsters have been given a chance to be a part of the squad because some of them were unable to get a chance over the past two years as the focus was on the core team preparing for the Olympics. The youngsters have been working hard for quite a while, and hence, they have been given a chance to prove themselves," he added.

Speaking on the team's fitness levels before the start of the tournament, the Indian skipper said: "We are in pretty good shape. We focused a lot on our fitness at the recent camp in Bhubaneswar."

"We are looking forward to see how the other Asian teams have shaped up over these past two years. The tournament will be a good test for our squad," he signed off.

In the previous edition of this event held in Muscat, India had jointly lifted the title along with Pakistan as the final was called off due to incessant rains.

# ISL: Jamshedpur challenge awaits Odisha FC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Vasco, Dec 13:** Two in-form teams in Odisha FC and Jamshedpur FC will look to outdo one another in what could be a battle of attrition in the Indian Super League (ISL) here Tuesday.

Odisha have got off to a flying start this season, winning three of their four games so far. They are placed second, three points adrift of table leaders Mumbai City FC.

The Kiko Ramirez-coached side beat NorthEast United FC in their last outing, a game where they showed their defensive solidity as well, besides possessing a collection of good attackers.

The likes of Hector Rodas, Victor Mongil, Javi Hernandez, Aridai Suarez, and Jonathas have underlined Odisha's excellent foreign recruitment this time as they have

all fired so far in their respective departments.

The club had signed six new players from abroad ahead of the season, refreshing its whole foreign contingent and the move has worked well for the team. Nine of the 11 league goals scored by the club have come from new foreign signings.

"Our players have to be committed to the task and have to concentrate for the entire duration of the match as it is going to be a tough one," Odisha boss Kiko Ramirez said.

Aridai Cabrera was in some discomfort towards the end of the game against the Highlanders (NorthEast United FC) and had to go off the pitch.

"We don't think that we will have any trouble in seeing Aridai (Cabrera) on the pitch. But, we will have to wait until the last moment



A couple of Odisha FC players go through their training drills ahead of their match against Jamshedpur FC, Tuesday

like every week. The other thing is that during the training sessions, we recovered almost all the players," the 51-year-old Spaniard mentioned.

Javi, who has already made an impact in the first few games for the Bhubaneswar-based side, is also looking forward to continuing his good run in the tournament. "I think it's going to be a tough game because like the coach said before they put a lot of intensity during the games. They have started their season really well and it's going to be a difficult game for sure," said Javi, when asked about the upcoming match.

Jamshedpur lost to Mumbai City 2-4 in a thrilling game but showed grit of the highest order as they came back from 0-3 down inside 24 minutes to make it 2-3 in the second half. The 'Men of Steel' sit fourth on the table with eight points from five matches.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### AIBA becomes IBA

**New Delhi:** Promising a "new era" and "new ways of working", the International Boxing Association began the process of revamping itself in a virtual Extraordinary Congress which approved crucial constitutional amendments suggested by an independent group besides announcing a recertification programme for its under-fire referees and judges. Boxing has managed to stay on board for the 2024 Paris Olympics but has been dropped from the provisional roster for the 2028 Games. Its future depends on the roadmap of good governance that the International Olympic Committee (IOC) wants the body to implement. The International Boxing Association will now be called IBA in its abbreviated form instead of AIBA. The Congressional approval of constitutional reforms came after IBA unanimously approved the recommendations made in a report by independent Governance Reform Group (GRG), led by Professor Ulrich Haas.

### PSG draw Real Madrid in CL

**Nyon:** Cristiano Ronaldo will not face-off against archrival Lionel Messi, at least not in the Round of 16 stage of the Champions League after a hurriedly conducted redraw pitted their teams against different opponents. The UEFA Monday cancelled the draw, made earlier in the day, over mistakes committed by the officials, the redraw pitting Messi's PSG against

Spanish giants Real Madrid and Ronaldo's Manchester United facing Atletico Madrid. As per the earlier draw, United were to play PSG. But the officials who were conducting the draw committed some mistakes and failed to include names of some clubs while picking opponents for Atletico Madrid and Villarreal. The draw was redone. In other matches, Bayern Munich, who were earlier drawn to play Atletico, will meet Salzburg while Benfica will take on Ajax; Manchester City will meet Sporting Lisbon; defending champions Chelsea will take Lille; Juventus meet Villarreal while Inter will meet Liverpool.

### India shuttlers lose in doubles

**Huelva (Spain):** Two Indian pairs suffered straight game defeats to make first round exits from the BWF World Badminton Championship here Monday. The Indian duo of Venkat Gaurav Prasad and Juhi Dewangan suffered a crushing 8-21, 4-21 loss to Denmark's Mathias Thyrry and Mai Surrow, the mixed doubles first round match lasting barely 21 minutes in all. Then, in a men's doubles match, India's Arun George and Sanyam Shukla lost to the Chinese duo of Ou Xuan Yi and Zhang Nan 15-21, 14-21. Sunday, Kidambi Srikanth defeated Pablo Abian of Spain 21-12, 21-16 to begin his campaign on a winning note. 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.

### Ajay qualifies for 2022 CWG

**Tashkent:** Ajay Singh clinched India's third gold of the Commonwealth Weightlifting Championships here by winning the men's 81kg category. Singh lifted a total of 322kg and also set a national record in snatch (147kg) Sunday night. He became the third Indian weightlifter to directly qualify for next year's Commonwealth Games in Birmingham. Jeremy Lalrinnunga (67kg) and Achinta Sheuli (73kg) have already qualified for the 2022 CWG after winning gold in their respective competitions. The gold winners in all weight categories from this championship directly qualify for the 2022 Birmingham CWG while the rest can make it to the Games through the rankings. Popy Hazarika had also won a silver, in the women's 59kg, with a total lift of 189kg (84+105).

### Laxman takes charge at NCA

**Bangalore:** Former India batting stalwart VVS Laxman Monday started his tenure as the director of cricket at the National Cricket Academy (NCA) here. Last month, the 47-year-old Laxman had accepted the BCCI's offer to take up the job, after his predecessor Rahul Dravid had relinquished the position to become the senior India team's head coach. "First day in office at the NCA! An exciting new challenge in store, look forward to the future and to working with the future of Indian cricket," Laxman tweeted, alongside two pictures inside the NCA.