



OPTIMISTIC OUTLOOK

Actor Vani Kapoor says if her latest movie *Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui* changes mindset of 10 people, the job is done

LEISURE P2



BLAST KILLS OVER 50

A truck carrying gasoline exploded in northern Haiti, killing more than 50 people and injuring dozens of others

INTERNATIONAL P10



ODISHA BOW OUT

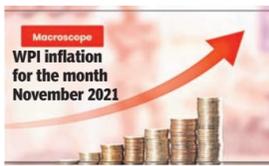
Subhanshu Senapati's knock not enough for Odisha to beat Himachal Pradesh as they bow out of Vijay Hazare Trophy

SPORTS P12



NETFLIX SLASHES SUBSCRIPTION FEES

New Delhi: Netflix said Tuesday it is slashing its monthly subscription rates by up to 60 per cent in India, as it looks to woo viewers amid growing competition in the over-the-top (OTT) media service space in the country. Users will now pay ₹149 a month from ₹199 earlier for Netflix's Mobile and ₹199 instead of ₹499 for its basic plan for the same period. The standard plan will be charged at ₹499 per month and for the premium subscription, users will have to pay ₹649 for a month. These plans were earlier charged at ₹649 and ₹799, respectively. "We are dropping our prices and it's across the board, across our plans. This will include all our services - local and global. The biggest drop of 60 per cent is in the basic plan because we want the audiences to watch Netflix on a bigger screen or on any device, so that has gone down from ₹499 to ₹199," Monika Shergill, Netflix VP for content (India), told PTI.



INFLATION SPIKES TO 14.23%

New Delhi: The wholesale price-based inflation surged to more than a decade high of 14.23 per cent in November, mainly due to hardening of prices of mineral oils, basic metals, crude petroleum and natural gas. WPI inflation has remained in double digits for eight consecutive months beginning April. Inflation in October this year was at 12.54 per cent, while in November 2020 it was at 2.29 per cent. "The high rate of inflation in November 2021, is primarily due to rise in prices of mineral oils, basic metals, crude petroleum & natural gas, chemicals and chemical products, food products etc as compared to the corresponding month of the previous year," sources said.

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Sonia holds Oppn meet without TMC

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 14: Congress president Sonia Gandhi Tuesday met a group of opposition leaders and held consultations with them to evolve a joint strategy in Parliament, sources said.

NCP supreme Sharad Pawar, J&K National Conference patron Farooq Abdullah, Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut and DMK leader T R Baalu were among the leaders who met Gandhi at her 10, Janpath residence.

Sources said more such meetings would be held in the next few days, in a bid to bring all opposition forces together. Significantly, Trinamool Congress (TMC) was not part of the opposition parties that took part in the meeting.

Opposition parties have been protesting the suspension of 12 Rajya Sabha MPs and are holding protests, seeking the revocation of their suspensions. Former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi and leader of opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge were also part of Tuesday's meeting. According



to sources, Sonia Gandhi had invited Uddhav Thackeray and DMK chief MK Stalin. Both deputed their leaders - Raut and Baalu - respectively.

Earlier in the day, opposition MPs in both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha held a protest march from the Gandhi statue in Parliament complex to Vijay Chowk with Rahul Gandhi alleging that the opposition is not being allowed to raise issues in Parliament, which is now merely a building and a museum.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Thank you very much for a majestic prayer house, sir! Now we can go there and ask for schools, hospitals, jobs...

MARKET WATCH	
INDEX	VARIATION
SENSEX	58117.09 ↓ 166.33
NIFTY	17324.90 ↓ 43.40
DOLLAR	76.37 ↑ ₹0.05
EURO	86.27 ↑ ₹0.37
GOLD	₹48,080 ↓ ₹223
SILVER	₹60,900 ↓ ₹682

WEATHER		
	BHUB	CTK
TEMP MAX	26.5°C	27.0°C
TEMP MIN	15.6°C	15.0°C
Humidity	80%	83%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Dry weather most likely	

Kheri violence was well planned: SIT



■ Giving fresh ammo to the Opposition camp, the Special Investigation Team probing the Lakhimpur Kheri violence has sought tighter sections against accused, claiming the incident was a well-planned move

AGENCIES

Lakhimpur Kheri, Dec 14: The Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the October 3 Lakhimpur Kheri violence, has filed an application before the Chief Judicial Magistrate to include new sections against the 13 accused to make their offence punishable under attempt to murder charges.

Meanwhile, a court here allowed the SIT to replace lesser charges in the case like causing death by negligence with attempt to murder.

Vidhyaram Diwakar, the SIT investigating officer, filed the application last week in the CJM's court for adding new sections in the warrant, replacing sections 279, 338 and 304A of the IPC.

In his application, the investigating officer pointed out that the incident was well-planned and a deliberate act, and not of negligence or callousness.

The investigating officer has requested to add Sections 307 (attempt to murder), 326 (voluntarily causing grievous hurt by dangerous weapons or means), 34 (acts done by several persons in furtherance of common intention) of the Indian Penal Code after replacing sections 279 (rash driving or riding on a public way), 338 (whoever causes grievous hurt to any person by doing any act so rashly or negligently) and 304A (Causing death by negligence) of the IPC.

On October 3, eight people, including four protesting farmers, died after being mowed down by a SUV belonging to Union Minister Ajay Mishra Teni's son Ashish

RAHUL DEMANDS MIN'S SCALP & PM'S APOLOGY



New Delhi: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi Tuesday demanded that Union minister Ajay Mishra be removed from his post over the Lakhimpur Kheri violence and said it is time for Prime Minister Narendra Modi to apologise once again. His remarks came after the Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the violence, which claimed eight lives including that of four farmers, urged the chief judicial magistrate to replace lesser charges in the case like causing death by negligence with attempt to murder, saying that it was a "pre-planned conspiracy causing death". "Modi ji, it is time to apologise again... But first remove the accused's father from the minister's post. The truth is before you!", Gandhi said on Twitter.

Mishra. A local journalist was also killed in the violence.

The SIT has so far arrested Ashish Mishra, Luvkush, Ashish Pandey, Shekhar Bharti, Ankit Das, Latif, Sishupal, Nandan Singh, Satyam Tripathi, Sumit Jaiswal, Dharmendra Banjara, Rinku Rana and Ullas Trivedi. They are lodged in the Lakhimpur Kheri district jail.

Meanwhile, the Lucknow bench of the Allahabad High Court has given two weeks' time to the state government to file a counter-affidavit on Ashish Mishra's bail application. During the hearing of the case, additional advocate general Vinod Shahi apprised the court about the ongoing investigation.

Boost to cybercrime control

■ State govt will set up 11 police stations to deal with cyber crimes & economic offences

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 14: With a view to controlling rising cyber crimes in the state, the government will set up 11 new police stations to deal with cyber crime and economic offence cases. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik made an announcement to this effect here Tuesday.

The new police stations will come up at Cuttack, Bhubaneswar, Keonjhar, Angul, Balasore, Mayurbhanj, Puri, Koraput, Bhawanipatna, Bolangir and Kandhamal.

Three such police stations are already operating in Sambalpur, Rourkela and Berhampur. These police stations will be merged with the new system, the CMO said. With the opening of new police stations, the total number of such police stations in the state will go up to 14.

A total of 154 posts have been created in the police department for appointment in these police stations. The approved posts include 14 inspectors, 28 sub-inspectors, 28 ASIs (communications), 28 constables (communications) and 56 constable posts.

In addition to the above man-



Ominous trend

■ A total of 154 posts have been created in the police department for appointment in these new police stations

■ Cybercrimes in state went up by 31 pc in 2020. 1,475 cases were registered in 2019 which went up to 1,931 in 2020

power, 90 experts, including finance and accounts analysts, IT experts, and cyber forensic experts will be appointed in these police stations.

The Chief Minister hoped that this step would help in curbing cybercrime and economic offences in the state and will strengthen de-

livery of speedy justice to people.

Cybercrime is a major concern around the world. Odisha is witnessing a number of cybercrimes. Cybercrime offences went up by 31 per cent in Odisha in 2020. Altogether 1,475 cases were registered in 2019, which went up to 1,931 cases in 2020.

Cybercrime is involved in bank transactions and complex digital transactions. Therefore, special knowledge and skills are required to properly investigate and control these crimes. This is why the state government took this decision to open 11 special police stations in different parts of the state, sources said.

Centre alone earned ₹8L crore from taxes on fuel in three fiscals

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 14: The Centre earned nearly ₹8.02 lakh crore from taxes on petrol and diesel during the last three fiscal years, of which more than ₹3.71 lakh crore was collected in FY21 alone, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman informed Parliament Tuesday.

The minister was responding to queries on the hike in excise duty on petrol and diesel during last three years and the details of the revenue earned through various taxes on these fuels.

The excise duty on petrol rose from ₹19.48 per litre as October 5, 2018 to ₹27.90 a litre as November 4, 2021. The duty on diesel rose from ₹15.33 a litre to ₹21.80 during the same period, Sitharaman said in a written reply in the Rajya Sabha.

Within this period, the excise on petrol fell from ₹19.48 per litre as of October 5, 2018 to ₹17.98 as of July 6, 2019, while excise on diesel reduced from ₹15.33 to ₹13.83 during the same reference period.

The excise duties on petrol and diesel were on a rising trajectory till February 2, 2021, to ₹32.98 and ₹31.83 respectively, before falling a tad and then declining further to ₹27.90 a litre (petrol) and ₹21.80 (diesel) as November 4, 2021.

AGAINST POLICE EXCESSES



Congress workers demonstrating before DCP office at Bhubaneswar as part of their statewide agitations Tuesday protesting police excesses against party workers at Congress Bhawan last week (REPORT P4)

Those fully-jabbed at increased risk of Omicron: Oxford

■ The researchers said people previously infected or having received double vaccines are more vulnerable to Omicron. However, this effectiveness improves by a third dose of vaccine

AGENCIES

London, Dec 14: Two doses of Pfizer and AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccines generate lower levels of antibodies against the Omicron variant of coronavirus, according to a study which suggests that those previously infected or vaccinated may be at an increased risk of infection.

Researchers from the University of Oxford in the UK analysed the

impact of the Omicron variant of concern on one of the immune responses generated by vaccination.

The yet-to-be peer-reviewed study, posted on the preprint repository MedRxiv Monday, used blood samples from individuals who had previously received two doses of the AstraZeneca or Pfizer vaccines, and a live virus isolate.

The researchers demonstrate substantial decrease in neutralising titres - a measure of the level of neutralising antibodies generated in responses to vaccination against, or infection from, COVID-19. The results indicate that the Omicron variant has the potential to drive a further wave of infections, including among those already vaccinated, the researchers said.



They, however, noted that there is currently no evidence of increased potential to cause severe disease, hospitalisations or deaths in vaccinated populations. These results align with recently published

data from UK Health Security Agency, showing reduced effectiveness of two doses of these vaccines against symptomatic disease due to the Omicron variant compared to Delta.

This effectiveness was, however, improved by a third dose of vaccine, the researchers said. "These data will help those developing vaccines, and vaccination strategies, to determine the routes to best protect their populations, and press home the message that those who are offered booster vaccination should take it," said Professor Gavin Scaletton, Head of the Oxford's Medical Sciences Division, and lead author of the paper.

"Whilst there is no evidence for increased risk of severe disease, or death, from the virus amongst vaccinated populations, we must remain cautious, as greater case numbers will still place a considerable burden on healthcare systems," Scaletton said.

Covid vax for kids in six months: SII

New Delhi: Serum Institute of India (SII) plans to launch a COVID-19 vaccine for children in the next six months, the company's CEO Adar Poonawalla said Tuesday. Participating in an industry conference, Poonawalla said the vaccine 'Covovax' is under trial and would offer protection to children all the way down to three years. Currently, Covishield and other COVID-19 vaccines are approved for people above the age of 18 years. "We have not seen a lot of severe disease in children. However, we will be launching a vaccine in six months for children," Poonawalla said.



KIM INSISTS NOTHING CAN REPAIR MARRIAGE TO KANYE

Kim Kardashian insisted in new court documents that "no counselling or reconciliation effort" will repair her marriage to Kanye West. She wrote: "Irreconcilable differences have existed and continue to exist between West and me. No counselling or reconciliation effort will be of any value at this time."

PARK SO-DAM DIAGNOSED WITH CANCER AGED 30

Actress Park So Dam - who is known for her role in the comedy thriller *Parasite* - discovered she had papillary thyroid cancer during a routine check up and underwent surgery to remove the cancerous mass from her neck.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
Positive thinking can change the world, and you could do with some today. No matter how tough the going gets, take it in your stride, says Ganesh. If you think you can do it, you will. You have the magic touch today to initiate a new business strategy.

TAURUS
You may find yourself compromising against your will today, predicts Ganesh. Stand strong despite things going awry instead of feeling disillusioned due to poor results. Ongoing negotiations might come to a logical end and a few important decisions are likely to be delayed due to lack of proper information.

GEMINI
You have been ignoring a few problems that have been plaguing your family members for quite some time now. It's time you looked into the matter, says Ganesh. Respective of how difficult the challenges are, today you will emerge victorious.

CANCER
Today, your ability to think clearly in the most adverse conditions will be your key weapon as you get cornered by unrelenting assaults of work and deadlines. The clarity will reflect in your work as you deal with inhuman work pressure. Your mind will save the day for you as well as your peers.

LEO
Your children's health may be a cause of concern today, says Ganesh. The best way to put your and your family's fears to rest would be by paying a quick visit to the doctor. As always, kids remain a surprise package of delights; the happiness of your children shall double your joy as a parent. But then, Ganesh reminds, only a healthy kid is a happy kid.

VIRGO
Foreign contacts will in all likelihood be a source of monetary profits. Ganesh says you will perform wonderfully in anything you might choose to undertake today. Even your ambition of setting up an offshore business enterprise will take root today.

LIBRA
Ganesh says that today will be a lucky day for you. You may receive some financial gain. There will be some good news about your children's progress. This is the right time to invest in business. For financial investors and share brokers this period is beneficial, so make the most of it.

SCORPIO
You may expect the day to be as dull and mundane as those boring repeat telecasts of sitcoms. But remember, it's not always going to be grey! The dance of planets will usher in new change for a better tomorrow. Keep hoping and who knows you may stumble upon something very interesting, says Ganesh.

SAGITTARIUS
The rewards of hard labour will be sweet, so start off by unwinding with some fun today. Ganesh sees quality time being spent with friends and family. All in all, a fun day.

CAPRICORN
Numerous projects and building work pressure can keep you busy, but get done with whatever you have on hand, for Ganesh says the day has a host of recreational activities lined up for you. This will also be the right time to reach out to more people, and devour whatever knowledge or information they have to offer. Moreover, you will experience complete personal freedom and will communicate freely with those around you.

AQUARIUS
Optimism rules today, and you are assured of your success. You are not usually affected by others' opinions, and that is how it should be. But you must keep in mind the inconvenience your decisions may cause people. Any stress or tension will vanish in the arms of your beloved, says Ganesh.

PISCES
The focus today will be on self-improvement. You may find yourself attending seminars or workshops. Self-employed people are likely to find lucrative deals landing in their laps in the afternoon. Quality time with your family in the evening will give you a sense of balance and of belonging, says Ganesh.

Vaani opens up on playing trans woman

THE ACTRESS SAYS IF HER MOVIE CHANGES MINDSET OF 10 PEOPLE IN A THEATRE, THE JOB IS DONE

Mumbai: For an industry that has thrived on candy-floss romances for decades, *Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui* comes as a breath of fresh air. It traces how Ayushmann Khurrana's boisterous body builder Manu is left unsettled by his ladylove Maanvi's past. Kapoor harboured no doubts about essaying the part, placing her faith in director Abhishek Kapoor. "I thought there might not be enough progressive people to support the film. But to my surprise, a lot of people have taken it in the right way. I knew I was in the right hands with Gattu (director). It could have been tricky. The film could go incredibly wrong if not handled well. It had to

have sensitivity and the right sensibility."

She is glad that the movie achieved what it set out to do — trigger a conversation and bat for the acceptance of people who have transitioned. "They have designed Maanvi in such a way to normalise the subject. There is nothing strange about her; she is like you and me. She is attractive like many trans women are. I have not walked a mile in their shoes, but I have tried to be

Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui

earnest, and did a lot of research. Even if the film changes the mindset of 10 people in the theatre, our job is done," said the War actress.

AGENCIES



'Cinema has no caste or religion, only talent'

Chennai: Stating that there was no religion or caste in cinema, iconic actor Kamal Haasan said that the only quality that one required to shine in the field of cinema were talent and interest.

Speaking at the audio launch event of *Sila Nerangalil Sila Manithargal*, which has been made by a bunch of youngsters who disclosed that the idea to make the film originated from a tea shop near their college where they used to discuss cinema, Kamal Haasan said, "If you can come till here from a tea shop, I believe you can go from here to your next destination."

Pointing to the unit of the film, comprising of youngsters who had made the film, Kamal said, "The reason why they are here is not only because of friendship but also because of their interest and also the talents that they have acquired. Without that, you cannot shine here."

"There is no caste or religion here and that is the truth. Some people might deny it, but I don't care about it," he said.



In conversation with Miss Universe 2021

'I would focus on menstrual hygiene'

Successful people often say that the first step toward achieving one's dreams is to have faith and walk confidently. Harnaaz Sandhu, who was crowned the 70th Miss Universe, is one of them, purposefully and confidently achieving her goal. In an exclusive interview right after she won, Sandhu spoke about her victory and plans ahead.

How does it feel on winning the crown for India after 21 years?

It's just overwhelming and unbelievable. Finally, India is able to wear the crown of Miss Universe after 21 years, and I think we have been waiting for this for so long; the feeling is just out of this world.

You were very confident that you would win and you did... What was the key to your success?

Representing your country is a huge thing. It's about the confidence, you need to have in yourself and the realisation from within that this is the purpose of your life. You have to want to make the most of the platform and the opportunity that is given to you.

It's going to be a busy year. How do you plan to use the platform to make a change?

I would love to focus on every possible issue that the organisation focuses on, along with my advocacy for women empowerment and menstrual hygiene.

Lara Dutta has welcomed you to the Miss Universe club. Anything you'd like to say on that?

I am actually out of words. One of the queens, who gave me confidence and courage to be one amongst them, is welcoming me to the group. Lara has really helped me a lot and made me realise that it's all about believing in myself.

Alia, Ibrahim, Ranveer recreate K3G iconic scene

The movie is considered a benchmark in the space of commercial films owing to its powerful star cast including Amitabh Bachchan, Shah Rukh Khan, Hrithik Roshan, Jaya Bachchan, Kajol, and Kareena Kapoor

Mumbai: As the cult classic *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham (K3G)* marked its 20th release anniversary December 14, Alia Bhatt, who is an ardent fan of none other than Kareena Kapoor, shared a fun video on social media. Monday, Alia shared a fun clip where she is seen recreating the iconic scene from the movie, along with Ibrahim Ali Khan and Ranveer Singh. Alia leaves no stone unturned to play 'Poo' from *K3G*, and the video has already garnered a lot of attention on her Instagram handle. Alia, who plays Poo,



Screengrabs from video posted by Alia in social media

Ibrahim is seen joining as one of the boys from the scene, where Kareena Kapoor Khan rejects to join her at the prom. Ranveer Singh's role of 'Laddoo' is winning the hearts too!

Earlier, *K3G* director Karan took to his Instagram handle and shared

a clip from the movie's popular song *Bole Chudiyen* that features all the six actors, Shah Rukh Khan, Kajol, Hrithik Roshan, Kareena Kapoor Khan, Jaya Bachchan and Amitabh Bachchan. It was KJo's second film as director and is considered a benchmark in the space of commercial films owing to its powerful star cast. The film emerged as a blockbuster and its music continues to be an integral part of wedding celebrations.

AGENCIES

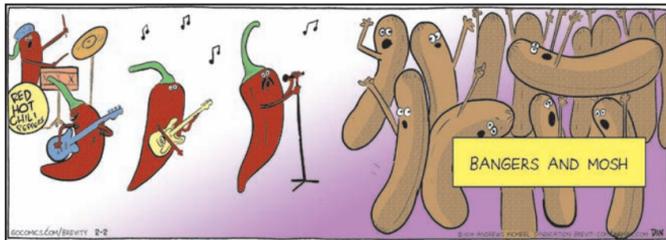
PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

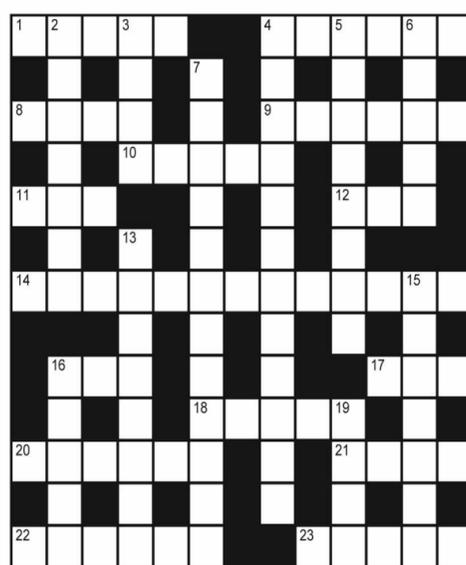


BREVITY



FUN post

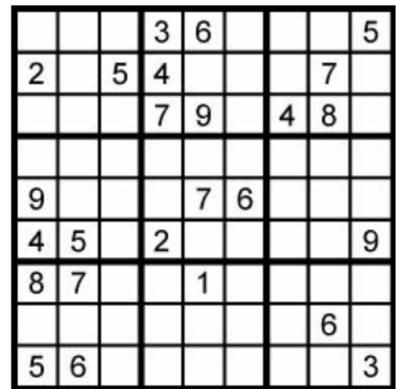
CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Crackers
 - 4 Tradition
 - 8 Dentist's order
 - 9 Uprights
 - 10 Digress
 - 11 Circle segment
 - 12 Negative joiner
 - 14 Mutinous
 - 16 Hilo garland
 - 17 Quandary
 - 18 Oomph
 - 20 Papeete locale
 - 21 Time to beware
 - 22 Verse form
 - 23 Large edible ray
 - Down**
 - 2 Headache helper
 - 3 Marshlands
 - 4 Computer commands (4-3-5)
 - 5 Moribund
 - 6 Bouquet
 - 7 Heart specialist
 - 13 Screen test
 - 15 Three-pronged spear
 - 16 Grassy plain
 - 19 Farm call

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD



SUDOKU

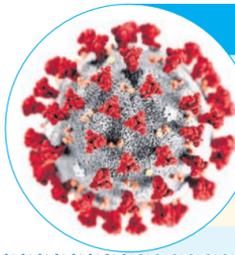


CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown



STREET PLAY
A street play underway at Chandni Square in Cuttack to create awareness on gender equality, Tuesday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	27,12,75,804	24,39,31,436	53,32,241
India	3,47,03,644	3,41,38,763	4,75,888
Odisha	10,51,927	10,41,728	8,437

Unvaccinated asked to take Covid jab

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 14: The state government Tuesday urged all adults who have not yet received even the first dose of Covid-19 vaccine to take the jab amid concerns of a possible spike in cases due to the Omicron variant.

Health Director Bijay Panigrahi said people should be alert as the new coronavirus strain is more transmissible, but less severe.

The Omicron variant, first identified in southern Africa, contains a large number of spike-protein mutations, suggesting re-infection risk and potential vaccine resistance.

Panigrahi said around 13 per cent or 40 lakh people had not been administered the first jab in the state. Odisha has not yet detected any infection caused by the Omicron variant.

"Request all those who haven't taken a single dose to come quickly



Around 13 per cent or 40 lakh people had not been administered the first jab in the state

Odisha has not yet detected any infection caused by the Omicron variant

On Tuesday, Odisha logged 175 more coronavirus cases, taking the tally to 10,51,927, while one more fatality pushed the death toll to 8,437

to the centres for their jabs," he told journalists.

He urged all frontline workers to take steps to ensure that the entire

eligible population in villages is inoculated with at least the first shot of Covid-19 vaccine.

More than 2.84 crore people have

received the first jab of coronavirus vaccine and over 1.78 crore people have been administered the second dose so far, the Health department said.

On Tuesday, Odisha logged 175 more coronavirus cases, taking the tally to 10,51,927, while one more fatality pushed the death toll to 8,437, a Health department bulletin stated.

Thirteen out of 30 districts in the state did not report any new cases in the last 24 hours and 30 children were among those infected, it said. Fifty-three other Covid-19 patients have died due to comorbidities so far, according to official data.

The state now has 1,901 active Covid-19 cases, while 10,41,536 people have recovered from the contagion, it said.

Khurda district reported the highest number of 82 cases, followed by 12 in Cuttack and Mayurbhanj district.

Naveen launches BSKY in Nayagarh, Jagatsinghpur

THE CHIEF MINISTER ALSO INAUGURATED AND LAID FOUNDATION STONES FOR PROJECTS OF ₹1,800 CRORE IN THE TWO DISTRICTS



Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik launches the distribution of BSKY smart cards in Nayagarh through videoconference in the presence of 5T Secretary VK Pandian, Tuesday

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 14: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Tuesday launched the distribution of smart health cards under Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana (BSKY) in Nayagarh and Jagatsinghpur districts through videoconferencing.

About 7.70 lakh people of Nayagarh district and 9 lakh people of Jagatsinghpur district will be benefited by the smart health card scheme. So far, 28 out of 30 districts have been covered under the programme.

"The smart health card can bring transformational change in the healthcare system of Odisha and this would really empower the poor," Patnaik said.

Launching various projects worth ₹1,000 crore for Nayagarh district, he said a mega drinking water project will be executed in the

The state government has rolled out BSKY smart health card scheme in 28 districts

district which will benefit about 8 lakh people of the district.

He inaugurated 151 projects worth ₹85.35 crore and laid foundation stone for 108 projects worth ₹909.18 crore for Nayagarh district. The projects spread over various sectors including roads, bridges, drainage, education, health, livelihood, irrigation, energy, women and child development

Hailing the Mission Shakti groups of Nayagarh for their performance, the CM said loans to the tune of ₹164 crore has been allocated to the SHGs in the district.

Similarly, Patnaik launched various developmental projects worth

₹800 crore in Jagatsinghpur district. "The state government is committed to providing safe drinking water to all families in Jagatsinghpur and Paradip towns," Patnaik said.

The Chief Minister also announced that a mega piped water project would be implemented in the district to facilitate piped water to rural areas.

He said that Jagatsinghpur district is one of the leading districts in the state and it is prosperous in agriculture and industry. Many government schemes are being implemented successfully in the district, he added.

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

Three varsities told to fill asst prof posts

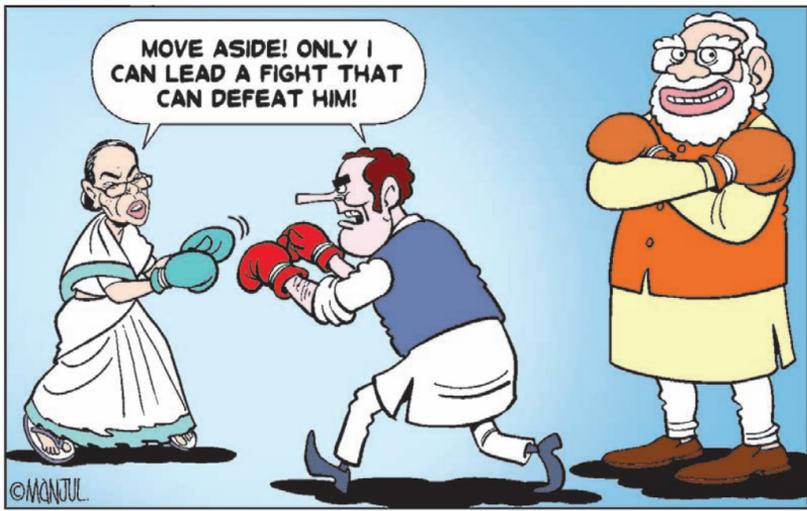
POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 14: The Higher Education department Tuesday directed three universities of the state to appoint assistant professors in the vacant posts immediately, as per the recommendation of Odisha Public Service Commission (OPSC).

Department secretary Saswat Mishra, in the letter to Utkal University, Rama Devi Women's University and Ravenshaw University, said that these universities had submitted their requisition to OPSC for recruitment to the vacant posts of assistant professors in their respective universities.

The HE department, for administrative convenience, communicated to OPSC about the recruitment. In response to that and after completion of recruitment process, the OPSC recommended nine names for appointment in three universities.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



Infra boost key to tackle Red menace: Sasmit

Red menace has come down in Odisha but there is a need to take up various developmental projects in the affected areas to eliminate the menace completely, said BJD MP Sasmit Patra

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Dec 14: Biju Janata Dal (BJD) MP Sasmit Patra Tuesday suggested the Centre to take steps for infrastructure development in western and southern Odisha to tackle the Red menace.

Speaking during the Zero Hour in Rajya Sabha, the BJD MP said that the Red menace has come down in Odisha but there is a need to take up various developmental projects in the affected areas to eliminate the menace completely.

He informed the House that Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, during a meeting with Union Home Minister Amit Shah in September, had suggested certain measures for tackling the Red menace. If accepted, these measures would help in reducing the LWE extremism further in Odisha.

"The four-laning of NH-326 from

Jeypore to Motu via Malkangiri will provide a parallel road for traffic from eastern India to south India, especially to Bangalore and Hyderabad and give impetus to economic activity-



ODISHA IN PARLIAMENT

The government should strive to ensure that more children from these areas secure admissions through NEET and IIT-JEE

SASMIT PATRA | BJD MP

ities in the region," Patra said. Patra asserted that mobile connectivity and banking facilities would be vital initiatives to eradicate LWE extremism.

Patra urged the Centre to provide mobile connectivity remote areas

Uninterrupted chopper service needed for rescue ops: Sahu

New Delhi: Citing the state's vulnerability to natural calamities, BJD MP Chandra Sekhar Sahu urged the Union government to deploy uninterrupted helicopter services in the state for evacuation of casualties in Left-wing extremism (LWE) affected areas.

The Berhampur MP said in the Lok Sabha during Zero Hour that due to LWE threats, uninterrupted helicopter service is a critical requirement for the security forces for evacuation of casualties, movement of troops and maintenance of forward posts among others.

Sahu also requested the Centre to waive the deployment charges of Central Armed Police Forces in the state with immediate effect. "As a result of activities of Left-

wing extremism, deployment of Central Armed Police Forces has to be made and the state government has to bear unforeseen expenditure. The Government of India claimed ₹4,561.23 crore towards deployment charges of CAPFs in the state up to 2020," Sahu said.

He informed the House that Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik made a request for deployment of two MI17 or equivalent helicopters and requested the Centre to waive the amount charged towards deployment of Central Forces in Odisha.

"Odisha is facing frequent natural calamities on which a lot of state's resources are utilised. I, therefore, request the Union Home Minister to consider the request regarding deployment of helicopters and waiving of deployment charges of CAPFs in Odisha with immediate effect," Sahu said.

The BJD MP also urged the Centre to give more impetus to education so that children in these areas secure admissions through NEET and IIT-JEE.

"The government should strive to ensure that more children from

BJD seeks 60% share of clean energy cess

New Delhi: Biju Janata Dal (BJD) MP Achyuta Samanta Tuesday urged the Union government to share 60 per cent of the clean energy cess collected from Odisha.

Speaking during the Zero Hour in Lok Sabha, the BJD MP urged the Union Coal and Mines Minister to consider sharing 60 per cent of the cess as demanded by the state government amounting to ₹30,000 crore. "Odisha produced 153.85 million tonnes of coal contributing about 25 per cent to the nation's total coal production in 2021. The Centre is collecting Clean Energy Cess of ₹400 per tonne which amounts to more than ₹50,000 crore," the Kandhamal MP said.

He added that sharing of the cess collected from the state can be utilised for the economic development of the coal mining areas and for the welfare of the affected people. "This will also accelerate the state's development in the aftermath of the Covid-19 situation," Samanta said.

these areas secure admissions through NEET and IIT-JEE. We can eliminate LWE extremism through economic prosperity," he said.

Mercury dips to 7.5 degree C in Daringbadi

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 14: Following cloudy weather, Odisha is reeling under cold wave conditions as the mercury remained below 15 degrees Celsius at many places in last 24 hours, an official said Tuesday.

As many as 12 places recorded below 15 degrees Celsius Monday night. While Daringbadi registered 7.5 degrees Celsius, becoming the coldest place in Odisha, the minimum temperature dipped to 14.6 degrees C at Chandbali, 14.5 degrees C at Baripada, 12.6 degrees C at Jharsuguda, 12 degrees C at Keonjhar, 14.2 degrees C at Hirakud, 13 degrees C at Bhawanipatna, 12.5 degrees C at Bolangir, 14 degrees C at Koraput, 12 degrees C at Phulbani, 11.8 degrees C at Titilagarh and 13.5 degrees C at Sonepur.

Cuttack, Angul, Talcher and Nayagarh remained at 15 degrees Celsius in the last 24 hours. The minimum temperature in Bhubaneswar stood at 15.6 degrees Celsius Monday night. According to the weatherman, the night temperature will continue to fall in days to come. Dry weather will prevail over many districts of the state in next five days.

ECO-RETREAT BEGINS TODAY



TOURISM BOOST: Preparations reach the final stage for the inauguration of Konark Eco-Retreat at Srimchandi in Puri Wednesday

Phones disconnect parents with kids: Study

At least 69 per cent of parents believe that they lose track of their children, surroundings when they are immersed in their smartphones and 74 per cent admit to getting irritated when their children ask them something, a report said Tuesday.

A new report titled 'Smartphones and Human Relationships' by the smartphone brand Vivo in association with Cybermedia Research (CMR) showcases the impact of smartphones on users and its effect on their relationships.

"The most difficult thing in any behaviour change that we need is to take that first step," addressing the excessive use of smartphones,



Yogendra Sriramula, DGM, Brand Strategy, Vivo India, told IANS.

"Our job here through this survey and the rest of the campaign is to bring that knowledge from the subconscious mind to the conscious mind," Sriramula added.

The report underlines that the average daily time spent on smart-

phones remains at alarming levels in the post-Covid era as there has been a 32 per cent increase in the time spent on smartphones from the pre-Covid period.

Interestingly, the report also highlighted that while the time that is spent with kids and family, in general, has gone up, the quality of time spent has deteriorated.

At least 80 per cent of smartphone users are on their phones even when they are spending time with their kids and 75 per cent admit to having been distracted by their smartphones and not being attentive to kids even while with them.

While 85 per cent of parents feel

that their children find it difficult to mix with other kids in a social setting and the overall outdoor experience to be daunting, 90 per cent of parents said that their children are sometimes found to be lacking in acceptable moral and social behaviour.

The overall dependency on phones has increased. People use their phones while eating food (70%), in the living room (72%) and even while sitting with family (75%), said the survey that covered 1,100 consumers, across age groups and demographics, in the top 8 Indian cities, including, New Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata. IANS

Dhenkanal College hostel in limbo; report sought

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 14: The Higher Education department Tuesday directed the principal of Dhenkanal Autonomous College to submit report on non-functioning of hostels of the autonomous college three years after its inauguration.

HE department's joint secretary Snigdha Champatiray said, "After getting reports in connection with non-functioning of the hostel in Dhenkanal Autonomous College, the department requests you to submit the detailed status report to the principal secretary of Higher Education department within three days."

As per report, the new Kapilash hostel which was inaugurated three years ago with an expenditure of around Rs 4.5 crore has remained non-functional and that more than 200 students are still living in the old hostel without basic facilities.

The 300-bed new hostel was inaugurated January 4, 2019 but till now it was not provided with water facility. The students, who are from far-off places, are living in the old hostel which lacks proper basic facilities. Many of the students are being forced to stay outside on rented accommodation.

KIIT BAGS 'THE AWARDS ASIA'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 14: Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT) Deemed to be University, Bhubaneswar has been awarded 'THE Awards Asia' Leadership and Management Team of the Year for its phenomenal pandemic response and relief work. The award was announced by the Times Higher Education (THE) Tuesday.

KIIT is the only university from India and also in Asia to bag this award in one of the categories, for the second year in a row. KIIT has been declared the winner in the category 'Leadership and Management Team of the Year', while it was declared winner in the category 'Workplace of the Year' last year.

KIIT got this recognition for its readiness to react to uncertainties, reach the unreached, and endeavor to serve society.

Rape slur on OSAP jawan

Cuttack: A woman from Rambha area of Ganjam district Tuesday staged a dharna in front of the Director General of Police (DGP) office here seeking action against an OSAP jawan who had allegedly raped her December 8. The woman claimed that Rambha police had accepted her complaint and detained the accused. But, the accused was let off later. The woman threatened to commit suicide if appropriate action is not taken against the accused.

WASSUP TODAY BHUBANESWAR

- Inauguration of Atal Tinkering Lab, Saraswati Sishu Vidya Mandir, Sector-IX, Markatnagar, 9:30am
Inauguration of 62nd Sisir Utsav by Sahitya Sansad, Kali Bhawan, Khannagar, 5pm

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

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AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an affidavit as sworn before Notary Public, Cuttack on 13.12.2021, I Jagannath Sahoo, S/o- Bira Kishore Sahoo, At-Junuspatna, Cuttack, do hereby declare that Jagannath Sahoo and Jagannath Sahu is one and the same person and I shall be known as Jagannath Sahoo for all purposes.



People under the aegis of Bhubaneswar makeshift shopkeepers' association stage a demonstration near BMC office in the Capital city demanding rehabilitation before eviction

Das Burma, Palai family meet SP, seek CB probe

POST NEWS NETWORK

Puri, Dec 14: State Planning Board deputy chairman Sanjay Das Burma and the family members of his personal assistant (PA) Chittaranjan Palai, who was found dead in a river Monday, approached the superintendent of police (SP) here Tuesday demanding a Crime Branch (CB) probe into Palai's mysterious death.

Sources said family members of Palai lodged a complaint with the Sadar police here Sunday alleging that he could not be reached since Saturday night. Palai had gone to have a party with a few of his friends Saturday evening, but did not return. The worried family suspected that Palai might have been kidnapped. Sadar police launched a search operation after Palai's motorcycle, footwear and chain were recovered near Gadamrugasira bridge in the district Sunday night.

Palai's body with multiple injuries was fished out from Bhargavi river near Gadamrugasira village Monday morning.

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

Within hours, the district police constituted a special investigation team (SIT), led by additional superintendent of police Purna Chandra Pradhan, to probe the case.

Palai's wife Priyanka, on the other hand, suspected Das Burma and Jaga, one of Palai's friends, involvement in her husband's murder.

Palai's family said they have full faith on Odisha Police and its investigation process. Moreover, they do not suspect involvement of Das Burma in the murder.

BJP demands resignation



The Odisha unit of BJP Tuesday demanded the resignation of State Planning Board Deputy Chairperson Sanjay Das Burma, a day after the body of Palai was found under mysterious circumstances.

BJP state vice-president and Brahmagiri MLA LB Mohapatra said Das Burma should step down from the post he is holding after the victim's family allegedly levelled charges against the planning board deputy chairperson.

"The Chief Minister should immediately expel Das Burma from the high office," Mohapatra, a political rival of the BJD leader told reporters.

Palai had missing Saturday and his body was fished out from the river Monday. The BJD leader's close aide Jaga was injured in a road accident.

The family members said both Jaga and Palai had gone to a feast on Saturday. While Jaga got injured and was found on the roadside after an accident, how come Palai's body was found in the river? asked Mohapatra.

Das Burma refused to comment on the allegations.

BJD wants more PMAY-G houses for Fani-hit, tribals

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 14: A delegation of Biju Janata Dal (BJD) MPs Tuesday met Union Rural Development Minister Giriraj Singh and demanded PMAY-G houses for the people affected by Cyclone Fani in 2019 and the tribal and poor residents of the state.

The MPs' delegation meeting with the Union minister at the national capital came barely two days after Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik wrote a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi in this regard.

The Union Rural Development Minister has assured that he would again meet the BJD MPs in the next few days along with his officers and more deeply discuss it and find solutions, a statement issued by the BJD said.

In a memorandum to the Union minister, the BJD MPs noted that the Chief Minister had already requested the Prime Minister to include the identified left-out eligible households under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana Gramin (PMAY-G) in respect of districts not affected by cyclone Fani.

Patnaik also requested the PM to advise the Ministry of Rural Development to open the window of Aawaas + Mobile App for the entire state (Odisha) for a period of one month in order to migrate the data of eligible households from state developed RH (rural housing) portal to Aawaas+ for PMAY(G) programme.

The BJD MPs pointed out that Odisha has conducted identification through state developed RH Portal and found 5.09 lakh eligible families in 16 districts not affected by cyclone Fani, also urgently require



The BJD MPs' meeting with the Union minister at the national capital came barely two days after Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik wrote a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi in this regard

housing units. These households are predominantly tribal's in the tribal areas and KBK (Koraput-Bolangir-Kalahandi) districts of Western and Southern Odisha. The data of these families need to be migrated to the PWL of PMA Y(G), they said.

Stating that the Fifth Schedule of the Indian Constitution provides for special protection to these areas as they are tribal-dominated and facilitating their speedy development, the BJD MPs wrote in the memorandum that the KBK region in Odisha also suffered in the process.

"We, strongly feel that the people of western Odisha, scheduled areas and KBK regions should be provided priority focus and houses should be provided to them at the earliest," the BJD MPs said.

They also added that 1.84 lakh families who had lost their

Cong gheraoes SP offices against police 'brutalities'

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 14: Congress activists staged demonstrations in front of offices of superintendents of police across Odisha Tuesday to protest against security personnel barging into the party's state headquarters during an agitation of the National Students' Union of India (NSUI) last week.

They demanded immediate action against the erring police personnel and a judicial inquiry into the alleged police excesses on the activists of the party's student wing December 10.

The NSUI was agitating demanding removal of Minister of State for Home DS Mishra from the council of ministers and his arrest in connection with Kalaanadi teacher's kidnap and murder. Mishra was charged by opposition

parties with shielding the prime accused in the case.

Senior party leaders also joined students and women activists of the party at Tuesday's demonstrations. "We'll further intensify the agitation if action is not taken against the erring police personnel," Congress MLA Suresh Routray said.

Many NSUI activists suffered injuries on heads, legs and arms because of the "police brutality" December 10, the party alleged.

The police accused the NSUI workers of hurling stones at the police during the agitation Friday. The Congress, however, claimed that eggs were hurled at police personnel and that was not an offence.

Meanwhile, in a memorandum to Governor Ganeshi Lal, the Congress demanded an SIT probe into the woman teacher's murder and immediate sacking of DS Mishra.

IISER breakthrough in devpt of silver nanoparticles

A team of researchers from the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER) Bhopal has developed a safe and easy procedure to produce silver nanoparticles or silver nanomaterials (SNPs) that can be used as antimicrobial agents.

Antibiotic resistance is a serious condition in which bacteria and other microbes that invade the human body become resistant to the antibiotics/antimicrobials that are meant to kill them.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has declared bacterial antibiotic resistance as one of the worst crises to human health today, notwithstanding Covid-19. This problem is also serious in India, known as the antimicrobial resistance capital of the world, due to rampant and indiscriminate use of antibiotics in humans, livestock, and agriculture.

"Silver, the common ornamental metal, when present as nano-sized particles - one hundred thousand times smaller than the width of a single human hair - have good antimicrobial properties," said Saptarshi Mukherjee, Professor, Department of Chemistry, IISER Bhopal, in a statement.

Medical practitioners have used silver in various forms to prevent infections and promote healing from ancient times. "Generally, silver nanomaterials are produced using toxic precursors that often generate harmful by-products inside the system," said the lead researcher.

But in the new study, published in the journal of the American Chemical Society - ACS Applied Materials and Interfaces, the IISER team used the amino acid Tyrosine to produce nanomaterials of silver that had excellent antimicrobial properties. Tyrosine is present in many food items, including meat, dairy, nuts, and beans.

The researchers treated silver nitrate, the main component of the 'election ink' used to stain nails after voting in India, with tyrosine in the presence of caustic soda.

Tyrosine functioned as a reducing agent and capping agent to produce silver nanomaterials. On examining the product under high-resolution microscopes (TEM and SEM), they found two forms of silver nanostructures - nanoclusters and nanoparticles. The nanoparticles were found to kill microbes such as S. cerevisiae (associated with pneumonia, peritonitis, UTI etc.), C. albicans (oral and genital infections), E. coli (stomach infection), and B. cereus (stomach infection), in about four hours.

The research group has also elucidated the mechanism by which the nanoparticles kill microbes. They found that the nanoparticles generate "singlet oxygen species" that elevates the cellular stress and consequently breaks open/disrupt the cell membrane of the microbes and cause leakage of proteins from the cells, thereby killing them.

While the nanoparticles produced by the above process had microbicidal action, the smaller-sized nanoclusters are luminescent and can be used as bioimaging probes. IANS

Ensure no load shedding during peak hour: CS

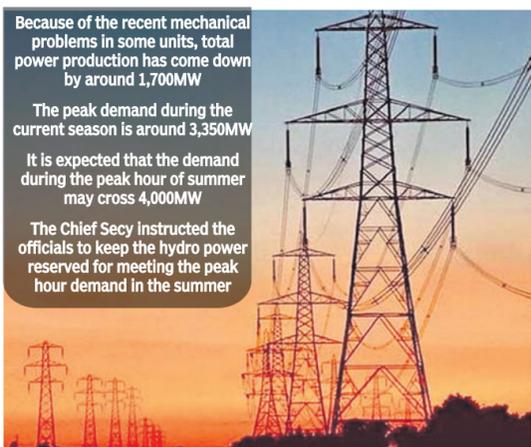
Chief Secretary Suresh Chandra Mahapatra asks power generating companies to maximise production

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 14: In view of poor water level in some reservoirs of Odisha, Chief Secretary SC Mahapatra Tuesday asked the officials concerned to ensure that no load shedding occurs during peak hour.

Mahapatra reviewed the power supply situation in the state with Energy secretary NB Dhal and other senior officials. Low water storage in Indravati, Balimela and Upper Kolab water reservoirs has become a matter of concern, sources said.

The Chief Secretary took stock of the power availability and the peak hour demand in the state.



Because of the recent mechanical problems in some units, total power production has come down by around 1,700MW

The peak demand during the current season is around 3,350MW

It is expected that the demand during the peak hour of summer may cross 4,000MW

The Chief Secy instructed the officials to keep the hydro power reserved for meeting the peak hour demand in the summer

He also directed the power generating companies to maximise output through proper maintenance and upkeep of their production units. The Energy department and the GRIDCO were

asked to keep constant vigil over proper maintenance and functioning of all the units.

Moreover, Mahapatra directed the officials to maximise power generation from solar and ther-

mal sources so that the average demand during the daytime can be met from these sources. He instructed the officials to keep the hydro power reserved for meeting the peak hour demand in the summer.

The state has the total power availability of 7,651MW, including 1,295MW from renewable sources, said GRIDCO Managing Director Trilochan Panda.

"Because of the recent mechanical troubles in some units, the total power production has come down by around 1,700MW. The peak demand during the current season is around 3,350MW," he said.

It is expected that the demand during the peak hour of summer may cross 4,000MW. Keeping this in view, the Chief Secretary asked the power generating companies to maximize their production.

The hydro power would be managed rationally to meet the peak hour demand till onset of the next monsoon, added Panda.

CP WARNS OF ACTION AGAINST FIREWORKS DURING WEDDINGS

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 14: Taking cognizance of complaints regarding use of fireworks and loud DJ music during marriage processions, Commissionerate Police Tuesday decided to initiate appropriate legal action against the violators.

Bhubaneswar DCP Umashankar Dash said that clear instructions have already been issued to all police stations across the City to initiate action against the violators. This apart, the Commissionerate Police has also urged citizens to inform and register complaints regarding violations on the helpline number 0674-2540294.

The citizens can also report or lodge their grievances by calling 112 or their local police station phone numbers whenever they come across any violation after 10pm when the night curfew restrictions are in force.

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SHORT TAKES

Woman scribe held for 'extortion'

Nabarangpur: A woman journalist from Raigarh block of Nabarangpur district has been held on the charges of allegedly blackmailing a local contractor for extortion and making casteist slurs, Tuesday. The accused was identified as Mamuni Chakraborty, Raigarh police said. Police said, Mamuni allegedly demanded ₹10,000 from the contractor, Jagannath Nayak of Raigarh, in exchange of not publishing a report against him. She called Jagannath for the money December 10. His wife Sumitra picked up the phone as he had gone out leaving his phone at home. Mamuni also made casteist remarks against her husband. Angered, Sumitra Nayak lodged a complaint at the police station leading to her arrest.

'Rangabati' lyricist Gountia hospitalised

Sambalpur: Mitrabhanu Gountia, the popular lyricist who penned the iconic Sambalpur song 'Rangabati', was admitted to VIMSAR at Burla in Sambalpur, Tuesday evening. Gountia suffered a heart attack. He was initially rushed to the district headquarters hospital at Sambalpur. Later, Gountia was shifted to VIMSAR after his health condition deteriorated. A team of doctors is looking after his health. Gountia was awarded Padma Shri by President Ramnath Kovind in 2021.

Concern over rising industrial pollution

If climate experts are to be believed, frequent cyclones, extreme drought conditions, rise of sea level and prolonged heatwave conditions are likely to be the threats in future



POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, Dec 14: Despite the growing concern over climate change, air and water pollution is reportedly spiraling in major towns and industrial areas in the state.

The state government has taken up a host of measures to tackle the pollution-related issues, to alleviate green house effects and carbon footprints, as Odisha has faced frequent disasters owing to climate change, a report said.

If climate experts are to be believed, frequent cyclones, extreme drought conditions, rise of sea level and prolonged heatwave conditions are likely to be the new threats for people in future.

Minister of Forest, Environment and Climate Change Bikram Keshari Aruk had hinted about such threats while replying to a query of MLA Mohan Charan Majhi in the Assembly recently.

The minister also put forth a report detailing various programmes being executed by the Odisha State Pollution Control Board (OSPCB) to tackle pollution and other issues.

Scores of industrial units have mushroomed up in various districts of the state with intention of pushing the development agenda and creating wider scope of employment.

On the one hand, the Forest department has emphasised on protection and regeneration of green cover and the environment, on the other hand, the government is encouraging private players to set up industries at the cost of forests and environment.

In many cases, it is seen that the administration, the SPCB and other agencies fail to act against industries that are throwing all norms to the winds.

A report of the National Green

Tribunal (NGT) says seven towns of Odisha are among the 106 cities in the country that have been placed in the list of highly polluted cities.

The highly polluted towns in the state include Kalinganagar Industrial area in Jajpur, Paradip, Talcher, Angul and Sambalpur.

In 2020, Greenpeace had conducted a survey on polluted cities in 100 countries. In the survey list of highly polluted cities, Paradip was placed at 79th position; Kalinganagar at 84th; Rourkela at 85th; Cuttack at 88th and Talcher at 93rd.

The air pollution report of the OSPCB (from August to October) stated that presence of particulate matter in the air of Kalinganagar, Talcher, Rajgangpur and Rourkela is much higher than the permissible limits. However, sulphide oxide (SO₂), nitro oxide (NO₂) and fine particulate (PM-2) are within their permissible limits in the atmosphere in these areas.

To make use of industrial waste, the OSPCB has set up fly ash resource centres with a capacity of 35.5 MTPA in 2020-21. Besides plantation in the industrial and mining areas, the OSPCB has planned to set up IREMP in Angul-Talcher, Sambalpur-Jharsuguda and Paradip. The report stated that ₹10 lakh has been utilised for various measures to contain green house effects and carbon blue prints.

WATER SPORTS



Participants at an inter-college swimming competition organised by Maa Jhadeswari College on behalf of Sambalpur University at Biju Patnaik swimming pool in Sonepur, Tuesday

OP PHOTO

654 teacher posts vacant in 208 schools

POST NEWS NETWORK

KEONJHAR DIST

Keonjhar, Dec 14: Secondary education in Keonjhar district is in pathetic shape with 654 posts of teachers lying vacant in 208 government schools in the district. This is despite the fact that over 100 government high schools have been transformed and equipped with better infrastructure and facilities under the 5T Initiative in the district.

As a result, classroom teaching has been badly affected in these schools due to lack of adequate number of teachers. This has given rise to serious concerns among the students at a time when the annual HSC examination is just months away.

Classroom teaching has fallen flat in Nayagarh Nodal High School under Jhumpura block as the

school does not have even a single teacher. Surprisingly, primary school teachers are teaching the high school students here.

Recently, the state government announced 15 per cent reservation for students of government high schools in engineering and medical courses. However, guardians now question why they should send their children to these schools where several posts of teachers are lying vacant.

In some cases, it has been found that Sanskrit teachers are teaching science to the students, while physical education teachers teach history, geography, mathematics and Hindi. In Mochibandhi Government High School, the sports teacher was found teaching history and geography to the students.

According to reports, as many 654 posts of teachers, including 49 posts of headmaster, 73 posts of science (PCM), 75 posts of science (CBZ), 151 posts of art teachers, 17 posts of IACT teachers, 17 posts of trained CT teachers, 78 posts of Sanskrit teachers, 114 posts of Hindi teachers and 80 posts of PETs are lying vacant in various schools in the district. The high schools in the district currently have only 1,094 teachers against 1,748 sanctioned posts.

Similarly, 103 posts of clerk are lying vacant against 202 sanctioned posts. The district has only 99 clerks working in these high schools. Over 245 posts of peon are lying vacant in the schools against the 461 sanctioned posts. Against the 197 sanctioned posts of night watchman and sanitary workers, 89 are lying vacant.

Authenticity of IIT report questioned

AN RTI ACTIVIST IS MULLING LEGAL ACTION AGAINST PROF SASHIDHAR OF IIT-HYDERABAD AND STATE WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kendrapara, Dec 14: A fresh controversy has erupted over the contentious mega drinking water project on Kharasrota river at Barunadiha under Rajkanika tehsil in Kendrapara district after an RTI query pointed to the severe irregularities in the report submitted by Professor Sashidhar of IIT-Hyderabad on the project.

The state government is executing the project on the basis of a social and environmental impact assessment report submitted by Prof Sashidhar of IIT-Hyderabad.

An RTI activist Pratap Chandra Mohanty of Talasanga village has questioned the authenticity of the report submitted by Prof Sashidhar of the civil engineering department in response to an RTI query filed by Odisha Suchana Aain Adhikar Abhiyan (OSA), November 11.

Mohanty has questioned the grounds on which the state government accepted the report submitted by Prof Sashidhar, who is from civil engineering department, and spent large



KHARASROTA ROW

FILE PHOTO

funds on the project.

According to Mohanty, he is mulling legal action against Prof Sashidhar and the state Water Resources department, which recommended the project.

In his reply, Sayeed Sabir Ali, the deputy registrar-cum-public information officer of IIT-Hyderabad has not clearly mentioned about the post held by Prof Sashidhar in the IIT.

However, Prof Sashidhar's report is available with the state government and carries the seal of the head of the department, civil engineering. Prof Sashidhar is not qualified enough to make an environmental impact assess-

ment of the project, Mohanty alleged.

Earlier, Prof Sashidhar had clarified that he neither visited the site personally nor has he sent anyone to prepare the report. He said that the report was prepared on the basis of information available in the Internet.

The state government is implementing the mega drinking water project under Basudha Yojana to supply piped drinking water to four blocks and three notified area councils (NACs) in Bhadrak district. The water will be lifted from Kharasrota river at Barunadiha under Rajkanika block. Its intake well is under construction at Barunadiha.

POST NEWS NETWORK

₹97.52L boost to Bhitarkanika eco tourism

Rajnagar, Dec 14: The sea beach and eco tourism in Bhitarkanika area under Rajnagar block in Kendrapara are all set to get a boost. A sum of ₹97.52 lakh will be utilised for the development of rest rooms in Bhitarkanika and renovation of Gupti ghat and Khola ghat and the jetty at Habalikhati.

A decision to this effect was taken at the meeting of Bhitarkanika Eco Development

and Eco Tourism Society (Beach) held at the office of the Rajnagar DFO. The meeting focused on various projects to attract tourists from abroad.

The society also discussed ensuring financial help through EPF to staff engaged for the beach maintenance.

A representative of private boat owners operating their

vessels to ferry tourists to Gupti, Dangnamala and Khola area took part in the meeting. He said that the tourists who would come to Bhitarkanika eco retreat should be allowed to be ferried through Gupti ghat to Bhitarkanika park, so that boat owners can also gain financially and make up for their losses they have incurred dur-

ing the pandemic-induced lockdown. They had remained idle for several months.

RCCF Manoj Kumar Mohapatra accepted the suggestion and said that he would talk to the DFO on how private boat operators and staff can be engaged to help the tourists during the upcoming eco retreat festival here.

EAST COAST RAILWAY
Tender Notice No. 31/ET/SP/ENGG/2021-22
Date: 10.12.2021
(1) e-Tender No. 20-eT-DENS-SBP-21
Name of the work: MISCELLANEOUS REPAIRS WORKS OF STATION BUILDINGS, CIRCULATING AREA, PLATFORM SURFACE, WAITING HALLS, PLATFORM SHEDS, DRAINS, SEPTIC TANKS REPLACEMENT OF PVC DOORS, STEEL DOORS AND WINDOWS, REPAIRS TO PIPE LINES, REPLACEMENT OF DAMAGED SYNTEX TANK, PATHWAYS AND PLINTH PROTECTION, WALL PLASTER AND FLOORING ETC. OF STAFF QUARTERS AND SERVICE BUILDINGS FROM SAINTLA TO RUPRA ROAD STATIONS UNDER ASSISTANT DIVISIONAL ENGINEER/TITLAGARH OF SAMBALPUR DIVISION.
Approx cost of the work: ₹99.99,789.83
(2) e-Tender No. 21-eT-DENS-SBP-21
Name of the work: MISCELLANEOUS REPAIRS TO STAFF QUARTERS SUCH AS FLOORING, PIPE LINE REPAIRS, PLASTER, OVERHEAD TANK CLEANING AND REPLACEMENT, SANITARY FITTINGS, DUSTBIN PROVISION TO COLONIES, FENCING TO STAFF QUARTERS, JUNGLE CLEANING AT COLONIES ETC. UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF ASSISTANT DIVISIONAL ENGINEER/MUNIGUDA OF SAMBALPUR DIVISION.
Approx cost of the work: ₹75,00,879.68
Completion Period of the work: 06 (Six) Months (for both tenders).
Date & time of tender closing: 05.01.2022 at 12:00 hours (for both tenders).
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>
The tenderers/bidders must have Class-III Digital Signature Certificate and must be registered or IREPS portal. Only registered tenderer/bidder can participate in e-tendering. All relevant papers must have to be uploaded at the time of participating in e-tendering as per instruction.
Note: The prospective tenderers are advised to visit the website five days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes/corrigendum issued for this tender.
Divisional Railway Manager (Engg.) Sambalpur
PR-634/M/21-22

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER R.W. DIVISION, ANANDAPUR, SALAPADA, KEONJHAR
e-Procurement Notice for Road Works Identification No. Online - 13/EERW/AND/2020-21
No. O-1326 E-mail Address: eevw_anandapur@yahoo.co.in
No. 8670 // Dt. 13.12.2021
1. Name of the work : S/R Periodical Maintenance of Road for the year 2021-22
2. Total No. of works : 01 (One) No. (Percentage rate tender)
3. Estimated Cost : Approx. Estimate Cost 8.92 lakhs
4. Class of Contractor : Class 'C' & 'D' Class
5. Other Details :
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 tender Engineer, R.W. Division, Anandapur Date & Place of receipt of bid cost & bid security
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Superintending Engineer, R.W. Division, Anandapur Online 13/ EERW/AND/ 2020-21 15.12.2021 at 10.00 A.M. 21.12.2021 upto 5.00 P.M. 20.12.2021 upto 5.00 P.M. 23.12.2021 at 11.00 A.M. The bidder shall transfer online the cost of bid and EMD in column No. 4 & 6 in Annexure-I, respectively through a process as mention in DTGN.
Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersorissa.gov.in & www.tenders.ori.nic.in
OIPR-25055/11/0014/2122 Z1- Superintending Engineer, R.W. Division, Anandapur

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (AGRI.), KEONJHAR DIVISION, KEONJHAR
Phone No. 06766-255378, Email Id: eeagri.kjr@gmail.com
No. L-110 INVITATIONS FOR BIDS THROUGH e-Procurement
No. 1358/Agri. Date: 08.12.2021
Bid Identification No. e-Procurement Notice No. E.E (A) - KEONJHAR Division - 02/2021-22
1. The Executive Engineer (Agri.), Keonjhar Division, Keonjhar, Odisha on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites Percentage Rate Bids in Single Cover System for the works as detailed in table below.
Sl. No. Name of the Work Approximate Estimated Cost put to Tender (Excluding G.S.T.) (Rs.) Cost of Bid Documents (in Rs.) Class of Contractor Period of Completion
1 2 3 4 5 6
1 ERM of FIAC, Anandpur, Dist. Keonjhar 12,26,245.00 6000 D & C 90 days
2 ERM of FIAC, Champua, Dist. Keonjhar 11,34,459.00 6000 D & C 90 days
3 ERM of FIAC, Ghatagaon, Dist. Keonjhar 6,53,730.00 4000 D & C 90 days
4 ERM of FIAC, Patna, Dist. Keonjhar 7,58,866.00 4000 D & C 90 days
5 ERM of FIAC, Saharpada, Dist. Keonjhar 8,38,193.00 4000 D & C 90 days
6 ERM of FIAC, Ghasipura, Dist. Keonjhar 6,96,739.00 4000 D & C 90 days
7 ERM of FIAC, Telkoi, Dist. Keonjhar 6,96,248.00 4000 D & C 90 days
8 ERM of FIAC, Banspal, Dist. Keonjhar 6,55,633.00 4000 D & C 90 days
9 ERM of ADDO Office, Anandpur, Dist. Keonjhar 7,06,344.00 4000 D & C 90 days
The bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. The website for "ONLINE BIDDING" is <http://tendersorissa.gov.in>. Bid documents will be available in above website from Dt.17.12.2021 at 11.00 A.M. upto 5.00 P.M. of Dt.29.12.2021 for "ONLINE BIDDING".
Date of Original bid documents submission Dt.18.12.2021 at 11.00 A.M. to Dt.30.12.2021 upto 4.00 P.M. Bids shall be opened at 11.00 A.M. & onwards on Dt.31.12.2021.
The bidder must possess matching class compatible Digital Signature Certificate (DSC).
Further details and other terms and conditions can be seen from DTGN in the e-Procurement website www.tendersorissa.gov.in.
N.B.: Subsequent corrigendum/addendum if required shall be available in the website as indicated above.
OIPR-01460/11/0001/2122 Sd/- Executive Engineer (Agri.), Keonjhar Division, Keonjhar

Sholampur Buddha Vihar cries for attention, tourist tag

A look into the pages of history tells us that Sholampur was the capital of ancient Bhoumakar dynasty during the eighth and ninth centuries

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhandaripokhari, Dec 14: The historical Buddha Vihar housing rare artifacts of the Buddhist period at Sholampur in this block of Bhadrak district is lying in a neglected state and is yet to get a tourist tag, a report said.

Located in the north of Baitarani river, this place has a rich history. A look into the pages of history tells us that Sholampur was the capital of ancient Bhoumakar dynasty during the eighth and ninth centuries. The then royal Subhakardev-1 had built a large Buddha Vihar for the stay of Buddhist disciples here in 790 AD.

In 1100 AD, the then royal Karnakeshri

of Soma dynasty had built a 16-storied palace for his queen Karapurshree. The royals of ancient Kalinga Jajati Keshari, Kapilendra Dev and Mukunda Dev had also built forts in the area.

According to the Bhavisyat Malika of Sishu Ananta Das, the place has a temple of Goddess Santheswari, who is worshipped as Gada Chandī (fort deity) of ancient Biraja Mandal.

Legend tells us that during the Vana Parva of Mahabharata, the five Pandavs and their queen Draupadi also stayed in this place, which is now known as Panchu Pandav ground.

Rare and ancient idols of Buddhist deities like Tara, Dhyani, Buddha, Jambala, Abolokiteswar, Ugratara, Manjushree, Ashta Mahascharya, Barahi and Buddhist stupas of various sizes and shapes can be found lying on the premises of Raghunath and Santheswari temples in the area.

Idols were stolen from this temple twice, while idols of various deities have been also recovered thrice from this place. Intac member and researcher

Biswambhar Rout who is working for the development of the Buddha Vihar and its establishment as an ancient tourist site had thrice recovered over 50 artifacts, including rare and broken idols of Lord Buddha and Arghya Stupas from the Baitarani riverbed of Sholampur, Mudhapada and Maninathpur.

Recently several Buddhist artifacts including potteries were recovered from Baitarani riverbed at Maninathpur (Chabisikuda) area. The recovered articles include eight Arghya Stupas and over 50 clay pots.

The artifacts after recovery were handed over to authorities of Buddha Vihar museum at Sholampur. The eight Arghya Stupas made up of Khondalite stone (a typical foliated metamorphic rock) and more than 50 clay pots were recovered.

Archaeologist Sunil Kumar Patnaik and researcher Ekadasi Padhi said that the Arghya Stupas and clay potteries date back to the eighth and ninth centuries.

Out of the four Votive Stupas, three have the idols of Buddhist deities Goddess Tara and another is of Maitreya. The other four are common Arghya Stupas.

From the archaeological point of view, the artifacts belong to the Buddhist Tantric Mahayana period.

It is believed that the Buddhist monks were using the recovered potteries, archaeologist Patnaik said.

In 2012, with the help of then Tourism Minister and Bhandaripokhari MLA Prafulla Samal the state Tourism department took possession of the area and established a small museum and a compound wall around the temple.



Bank of India
Zonal Office : Star House, 1/1D, Jayadev Vihar, Nayapalli, Bhubaneswar-751015
POSSESSION NOTICE
[Rule-8(1)] of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules-2002
Whereas, the undersigned being the **Authorised Officer of the Bank of India, Hanspal Branch** under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a Demand Notice calling upon the Borrower/Guarantor in the loan account given below to repay the amount mentioned in the Notice plus interest & expenses thereon within **60 days** from the date of receipt of the said Notice. The Borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrower/Guarantor and the public in general that the undersigned has taken **possession** of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules. The Borrower/Guarantor in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the **Bank of India, Hanspal Branch** for an amount mentioned below with interest & expenses thereon. **The Borrower's attention is invited to provisions of Sub-Section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available to redeem the secured assets.**

HANSPAL BRANCH/ Name & Address of Borrower/Guarantor	Liabilities due as per Notice	Date of Demand Notice/ Date of Possession	Description of the Immovable Property
Borrower: Mr. Arun Kumar Lenka, S/o: Harihar Lenka, At: Uttampur, P.O.: Balkuda, P.S.: Cuttack Sadar, PIN-753014 / Guarantor: Mrs. Pritibala Chaudhury, C/o: Mr. Arun Kumar Lenka, At- C-1/1, Kathajodi Enclave, Sector-9, CDA, Cuttack, Odisha	₹41,79,338.51 interest & expenses thereon	06.10.2021 to 10.12.2021	All that part and parcel of the land and building situated over Sabik Khata No.: 115, Sabik Plot No.: 1225, Hal Khata No.: 247/595, Hal Plot No.: 1225/1906, under Mouza: Uttampur, P.S.: Cuttack Sadar, Thana No.: 37, DSRO: Cuttack, Tahasil: Cuttack Sadar, Dist.: Cuttack, standing in the name of Mr. Arun Kumar Lenka , Bounded by North: Plotting Road, South: Road, East: Sub Plot No.: 6, West: Sub Plot No.: 8

Place: Bhubaneswar, Date: 15.12.2021 **Authorised Officer, Bank of India**

FOCUS SOCIETY

POLARISED VIEWS ON RACE



Decades after the civil rights movement, America still has not closed the massive gap in socioeconomic outcomes between white and Black households. One of the biggest reasons, it seems, is that Americans' polarised views on the issue are extraordinarily resistant to change, even in the face of new information

ceptions of current racism and discrimination, and negatively correlated with the belief that Black Americans are worse off than white Americans because of a lack of individual effort.

Finally, we examined how providing information on racial inequities might affect respondents' views. When given information about the Black-white earnings gap or the differences in social mobility for Black and white children, respondents tend to adjust their perceptions, but not their policy views. But after hearing an explanation of some of the long-standing and deep-rooted causes — such as the redlining of neighbourhoods by mortgage lenders and the resulting residential segregation — respondents tend to offer more support for race-targeted and redistributive policies.

Nonetheless, beliefs about the causes of racial inequities are quite entrenched. While white Democrats tend to become more supportive of policies aimed at closing racial gaps once they are aware of the conditions confronting Black Americans, exposing Republicans to the same facts does not generate more support. In fact, some even respond to such information by deepening their opposition to interventionist policies. This contrary effect appears to be partly driven by the assumption that the information provided was itself biased in a partisan (left-wing) direction.

Americans' views on racial inequities depend on many factors, including knowledge, news sources, and long-standing narratives. While many people are at least somewhat aware of inequalities that correlate with race, they disagree deeply on the causes, how to address the problem, and whether policymakers should even try. Information on the magnitude and severity of racial gaps does not change the narrative that respondents have in mind, often by the time they have reached adolescence. Explanations of the causes of racial gaps can be more effective. But the beliefs that are most polarised and most predictive of policy views are also the hardest ones to change.

The writer is Professor of Economics at Harvard University.
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Debates about race have frequently dominated news coverage in (and about) the United States, often following acts of racial violence or legal proceedings against their perpetrators. But while Americans' attention to issues of race continues to ebb and flow with the news, there seems to be little agreement among citizens and policymakers on what, if anything, to do about them.

One stark and long-standing racial disparity is visible in the differences in socioeconomic outcomes for Black and white Americans. Six decades after the civil rights movement, median Black household income in the US is still only 60 per cent of median white household income, and the share of Black Americans living below the poverty line is more than twice that of white Americans. Average life expectancy in the US is 4.5 years shorter for Black men than for white men, and three years shorter for Black women relative to white women. While home ownership among African Americans rose between 1940 and 1970, it is still barely half the level of white home ownership today. And many of these racial gaps are likely to have widened during the COVID-19 pandemic.

These disparities raise urgent political questions. What share of the US public recognises the chasm, in terms of opportunities and outcomes, that exists between Black and white Americans? Might people agree that an active policy response is needed, but disagree on whether the response should focus on income-targeted redistribution or race-targeted interventions?

Two colleagues and I from the Social Economics Lab at Harvard recently analysed survey responses from a large sample of Black and white Americans to determine what they know about racial inequities, what they believe causes them, and what (if anything) should be done about them. Not surprisingly, we found significant racial and partisan gaps in perceptions about the conditions facing, and the opportunities available to, African Americans.

But the biggest disagreements by far concern the causes of racial inequity and how to remedy them. These divisions are not mainly by race: it is not just about white and Black US respondents hav-

ing different views. Considering only the average perceptions and attitudes among white respondents misses the importance of political leanings.

For example, along many dimensions, white Democrats were more aligned with Black Democrats than with white Republicans. Black and white Democrats are much more likely to attribute persistent racial gaps to systemic causes such as the legacy of slavery, long-standing discrimination, and racism. Likewise, both groups support more income-targeted redistribution and race-targeted policies. By contrast, white Republicans tend to support less intervention, because they view racial inequities primarily as the result of individual actions and decisions.

Moreover, we found that racial and partisan gaps are already prevalent among teenagers aged 13 to 17, whose views substantially align with their parents' political affiliations — though they are sometimes even more polarised. For example, teenagers in Republican families are even more opposed to many race-targeted policies than their parents are. This suggests that, by the time they reach adolescence, American children have absorbed their parents' partisan beliefs.

But there are apparent differences by race, too. Most notably, Black and white adolescents are deeply divided over support for reparations. White teenagers oppose preferential college admis-

sions more than white adults do, perhaps because they believe that such policies affect them directly.

Previous studies have revealed that racial segregation and neighbourhood characteristics (such as high poverty rates and significant racial bias) negatively affect African Americans' social and economic prospects. In our study, we used granular data at the ZIP-code level to map perceptions, views, and attitudes to specific local characteristics. We found that white adult respondents from areas with more Black residents and with larger racial gaps are more likely to attribute racial disparities to adverse circumstances, slavery, racism, and discrimination; likewise, they are also more likely to support interventionist policies.

What, then, lies at the core of divergent attitudes toward redistributive policies? Is it beliefs about how large these inequities are, views about how much they matter, or perceptions of their ultimate causes?

To find out, we broke down the underlying factors that shape policy views. We found that it is not the perceived magnitudes of racial gaps, but rather their perceived causes, that have the highest predictive power. Support for race-targeted policies correlates with the belief that past and current racism and persistent discrimination are to blame. Support for income-based redistribution also is positively correlated with per-



Stefanie Stantcheva

THE BELIEFS THAT ARE MOST POLARISED AND MOST PREDICTIVE OF POLICY VIEWS ARE ALSO THE HARDEST ONES TO CHANGE

Tower of Babel

Delight is the secret. Learn of pure delight and thou shalt learn of God.

SRI AUROBINDO



The much publicised Democracy Summit organised by the USA in which leaders of over 100 countries, including India, participated last week appears to have turned out to be an inane exercise so far as democracy is concerned. It seems the aim was to bring together leaders of countries the USA considers friendly, no matter whether some of them make a mockery of democratic values in their own countries, so as to put up a show of unity against China and Russia which were not invited to the summit. It may be noted here that the history of the US has been full of instances where despotic rulers across the world have been assisted or propped by America. However, this is not an appropriate time in human history to revisit the sordid past of American misdeeds. The presence of Rodrigo Duterte of the Philippines and Jair Bolsonaro of Brazil, who are known for their anti-democratic actions in their respective countries, puts a question mark on the sincerity of the endeavour. Pakistan decided to skip the meeting presumably following pressure from China and in a way helped US President Joe Biden dodge criticism by his adversaries that Pakistan controlled by its military hardly qualifies to the description of a democratic state.

According to the US State Department, the goal of the summit was to provide a platform for leaders to announce both individual and collective commitments, reforms, and initiatives to defend democracy and human rights at home and abroad. The virtual summit, as the US calculated, would solicit bold, practicable ideas on the themes of fight against authoritarianism and corruption and promotion of human rights. But there is no explanation as to why some countries that can hardly be considered democratic were invited. According to a survey, over 30 per cent of the 110 invited countries are classified as 'partly free.' Three of them - Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Iraq - are described as 'not free.' The exclusion of countries such as Bangladesh and Sri Lanka raises serious doubts on the criteria applied for countries to be considered democratic. What brings more into question is that if the 'quality of democracy' and the respect for human rights were the criteria, which country is qualified to make that value judgement. The summit has been derided by Russia and China. In a joint rebuff, the Russian and Chinese Ambassadors to the US claimed their own states are democratic in practice, and criticised America's role in effecting regime change and 'democratic transformations' in Iraq, Libya and Afghanistan. The timing of the summit itself - a brainwave of President Biden to showcase his democratic credentials as a counterfoil to his predecessor Donald Trump's bullying tactic - was flawed. For, this year newest democratic entrants, Afghanistan and Myanmar, have switched over to autocratic regimes that rule by the power of the bullets rather than ballots. These developments put into serious doubt the efficacy of the international order in enforcing democracy through external interventions.

As such, the summit would have done well if it could in the first place formulate a globally accepted definition of democracy and a shared understanding of the challenges. It was not enough for the Biden administration to spell out specific targets on helping free media, ensuring free and fair elections and the participation of women, while identifying authoritarianism, corruption and human rights violations as key challenges.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi underscored the importance of the principles of 'inclusion, transparency, human dignity, responsive grievance redressal and decentralisation of power' in Indian democracy. But, the Modi government has invited widespread international criticism for going just in the opposite direction. The repression of the farmers' agitation against now repealed farm laws, incarceration of civil rights activists under various draconian laws levelling trumped-up charges and attacks on minorities during the BJP rule since 2014 have besmirched India's reputation as a democratic country.

The summit did not take note of Myanmar military junta's continued killings of its people in fresh attacks. In one incident last week in a village - Don Taw - 11 people, including children, had reportedly been rounded up by the armed forces and shot dead. Their bodies were then set on fire. The gruesome killings triggered widespread outrage on social media. In the state-controlled media, however, the military denied the report and accused UN officials and others of interfering in Myanmar's domestic affairs and relying on 'distorted news.' The villagers were learnt to be part of a resistance group fighting the junta.

The summit could have also taken up specific instances of attacks on democracy across the world to establish its credentials. By not doing so, it has only lent credence to the trenchant criticism by China that the main motive of the whole exercise was to revive 'Cold War' tension and isolate China.

Be that as it may, it is time the world comes to terms with reality. Today's global situation clearly shows no one nation is capable of being the policeman for the entire world. Apart from dire economic distress of the past few years, the pandemic has made even the richest and the strongest to take a step or two backwards. In this perspective, it is now the responsibility of logical and democratic forces in every country to shed fear and participate openly in the formation of free and just systems.

WISDOM CORNER

- Whenever you find yourself on the side of the majority, it is time to pause and reflect. **MARK TWAIN**
- One is never afraid of the unknown; one is afraid of the known coming to an end. **JIDDU KRISHNAMURTI**
- The mind is like an iceberg, it floats with one-seventh of its bulk above water. **SIGMUND FREUD**

WORDSWORTH

Proteome

This is a blend of protein and genome. In the same way that the genome is the collective name for all the genetic material in the cell of a living organism, the proteome is the term for the complete set of the proteins produced from the instructions coded in that genetic material (expressed from it, in the jargon). Recent advances in automatic methods of assay are making it possible to list all the expressed proteins and so determine which ones are present in healthy tissue and which are characteristic of disease. It is expected that this will lead to new methods of diagnosis, and to the discovery of mechanisms by which diseases spread within the body. For example, a team at Oxford Glycosciences in the UK has found 47 proteins in synovial fluid which are unique to persons suffering from rheumatoid arthritis and this has led to the discovery of a previously unknown enzyme responsible for breaking down membranes in joints. The term is said to have been invented by Marc Wilkins and Keith Williams at the Macquarie University Center for Analytical Biotechnology in Australia.

LOL

Knitting & driving

A policeman spots a woman driving and knitting at the same time. Driving up beside her, he shouts out the window... "Pull over!"



"No," she shouts back, "a pair of socks!"

IN JEST THIS

Being unique is what makes you beautiful

Before she was crowned Miss Universe 2021, India's Harnaaz Sandhu had to be judged in a few categories, including two interview rounds. In the final round, host Steve Harvey asked her, "What advice would you give to young women watching on how to deal with the pressures they face today?"

Sandhu gave a poised and confident answer: "I think the biggest pressure the youth today is 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's happening worldwide."

"Stop comparing yourself to others" is good advice, even when it's given at the Miss Universe pageant, also known as the "Compare Yourself to Others from Around the World" contest.

"Stop comparing yourself to others" fits perfectly with her advice to "know that you are unique and that's what makes

you beautiful."

Many people do not recognise their uniqueness and even when they do, they do not value it. That's why they spend inordinate amounts of money trying to look like other people. They go to a beauty salon with a photo of their favourite actress and say, "Please make my hair look like Deepika's." If they have even more money, they go to a plastic surgeon and say, "Please make my face look like Deepika's." If they're married, they take their husband to a personal fitness trainer and say, "Please make my husband look like Deepika's."

It's easy to value your uniqueness when you're a stunning beauty like Harnaaz Sandhu. It's much harder to value your uniqueness when you frighten yourself every time you look in the mirror.

It's easy to value your uniqueness when you have a brilliant mind like Google CEO Sundar Pichai. It's much harder to value your uniqueness when you can't answer any questions

without Google.

It's easy to value your uniqueness when you can throw a javelin 88 metres like Neeraj Chopra. It's much harder to value your uniqueness when you can't even throw your unemployed cousin out of your apartment.

If you make a list of all the things that make you unique, there are probably some things that are harder to value than others. The mole on your forehead may seem somewhat unique, but it's hard to take pride in that. Having an unusually large mole, however, might get you in the Guinness World Records. And if not a world record, you'll surely be able to land regular roles in the Hindi film industry as a villain.

But even if you have a few negative traits, you can probably find at least one or two positive ones that you can truly take pride in. Perhaps you're a superb speaker or a terrific cook or even the best dancer in your neighbourhood. Perhaps you have a mustache that amazes everyone—and not just because

you're a woman.

If we look deep enough, all of us can find aspects about ourselves that are unique (or at least rare), aspects that, as Sandhu says, make us beautiful. The problem is that we often undervalue our best traits, partly because we do what Sandhu says we shouldn't: we compare ourselves to others.

We might have a unique style of writing, but instead of developing that style, making the most of it, we try to write like Salman Rushdie. But no one buys our books, no one puts a fatwa on us.

We might have a unique style of comedy, but instead of developing that style, making the most of it, we try to emulate the style of Vir Das. But no one comes to our stand-up comedy shows, no one calls us a traitor to our motherland.

We might have a unique style of batting, but instead of developing that style, making the most of it, we try to bat like Virat Kohli. But no one selects us for the national cricket team, no one blames us for not winning the World Cup.

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

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

A damp squib

Sir, This is in reference to the article "The Summit for Democracy," Orissa Post, December 14. With over 100 countries in participation, American President Joe Biden's Summit for Democracy was expected to underline the idea that democracy is the right form of government and it needs to be protected against threats and challenges. But, the initiative has been criticised on many grounds. It has been seen as an attempt to highlight the US' leadership in the 'free world' and not an affirmation of the value of democracy. The invitees' list itself raised questions. Countries like Pakistan, the Philippines and Poland, whose democratic credentials are questionable, were invited for the summit, probably because they have a role in the US foreign policy scheme. Better functioning democracies like Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Bhutan were excluded. Pakistan, however, declined the invitation, probably because of pressure from China, which was not invited. It was because the summit was seen primarily as a US foreign policy event and not an occasion for genuine commitment to the values of democracy that it became a damp squib. However, no country accepts any democracy deficit and none look at their own flaws. Some claim to be democracies simply because they hold periodic elections, but elections by themselves do not make a democracy. Some of the essential features of democracy are individual liberties, civil and human rights, rule of law, secularism, independence of institutions, accountability of governments, non-discrimination and respect for persons and parties in the Opposition. Democracy becomes real only when there is an attempt to practise these ideas.

N Sathasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

Soft Hindutva

Sir, India's grand old party has made it clear in the 'Mehangai Hatao Rally' in Jaipur that it is still the best alternative for people in their resistance against inequality and injustice. The opulent speech of Rahul Gandhi in drawing lines between Hindu and Hindutvavadi (the power hungry ones who will desperately cling to position) needs more context in defining the party's ideological stand. The party's soft outlook on the Hindu majoritarianism in the recent past that includes Rahul Gandhi's claim of being a Brahmin needs to be disbanded. Such subservience needs to be put down and the party must float ideological values that could incorporate people from every section so that it could become the best alternative for a united India.

Debadurllav Harichand, BHUBANESWAR

national

of the day quote

The youths today are distancing themselves from agriculture. We should not forget that the agriculture has a major share in the GDP growth

The Delhi government has decided to test 95 million gallons of wastewater per day from Haryana which falls into the Yamuna in the capital

Had a warm interaction with the Bangladeshi MuktiJoddhas and the Indian war veterans who fought against injustice in the 1971 war. The Indian Armed Forces worked together with the courageous MuktiJoddhas in their valiant struggle

SHORT TAKES

₹1 cr compensation for Kuldeep's family

Jaipur: Financial assistance worth Rs one crore will be given to the family of Squadron Leader Kuldeep Singh from Rajasthan, who was martyred in the helicopter crash in Tamil Nadu December 8 along with Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat, his wife and 10 other armed forces personnel.

16 child labourers rescued, three held

Hyderabad: As many as 16 children from West Bengal, who were allegedly trafficked and engaged for labour work at a company near here, were Tuesday rescued and three persons arrested, police said. On receipt of credible information that children between the age of 13 to 16 years were detained and exploited for labour work in a packaging material firm in Nacharam, police teams raided the company and rescued 16 minor boys, a release from Rachakonda Police Commissionerate said.

NIA arrests Afghan national

New Delhi: The NIA has arrested an Afghan national in connection with the seizure of 2,988 kilogram of heroin at Mundra port in Gujarat, an official said Tuesday. Sobhan Aryanfar, 28, lived in Delhi's Neb Sarai area, he said. The National Investigation Agency (NIA) had registered a case under sections of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

Oppn slams govt in LS on rising fuel prices, AI 'sellout'

New Delhi, Dec 14: Opposition members in Lok Sabha accused the Modi government of doing little for people-centric schemes and to reduce fuel prices, and charged it with selling the family silver. The opposition charge was rejected by the BJP and its allies who asserted that the Modi government has done more for the people than past dispensations, particularly at the time of the worst pandemic of the century. Initiating a discussion on Supplementary Demands for Grants (Second Batch) 2021-22, Shashi Tharoor (Congress) said the Covid-19 pandemic combined with the government's "short-sighted" policy decisions ushered in a period of "uncertainty" for the economic revival of India. "Our nation's economy continues to battle the significant forces of disruption that were set in motion by the Covid-19 pandemic and

Parl passes Bills extending tenures of CBI, ED chiefs



AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 14: Parliament has passed the bills extending the tenures of Directors of the Central Bureau of Investigation and the Enforcement Directorate to five years, with the Rajya Sabha passing the measures by voice vote Tuesday amid a walkout by the Opposition. The Central Vigilance Commission (Amendment) Bill, 2021 and The Delhi Special Police Establishment (Amendment) Bill, 2021 - both of which were passed by the Lok Sabha December 9 - seek to amend the existing laws to give one year extension of the heads of both agencies, up to five years.

Soon after Minister of State for Personnel and Training Dr Jitendra Singh moved the motion, Leader of Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge sought to bring up the issue of suspension of 12 members, but the Deputy Chairman refused to allow this and in protest, opposition members walked out of the House. During the debate after the op-

position had walked out, Janata Dal-United Member Ram Nath Thakur, supporting the bill, also cited an example of a murder investigation pending for 46 years in Bihar to urge that there should also be a fixed tenure within which the investigation be completed.

G.K. Vasan of the Tamil Maanila Congress, Birendra Prasad Vaishya of the AGP, Brijlal of the BJP, Pili Subhash Chandra Bose of the YSRCP also spoke in support of the Bills. BJP member Suresh Prabhu stressed the importance of institutions and people who run those institutions. "The laws are made by the Parliament, but implementation is by the institutions and persons running that institution, need to be right. There needs to be a methodology," he also spoke about money laundering and the role of the ED.

BJP's Sushil Kumar Modi elaborated on various steps taken by the government to rid the menace of corruption and how direct transfer benefits have ensured money directly into the real beneficiaries due to measures taken for transparency

PROTEST TURNS UGLY



Members of Indian Youth Congress being detained by police during their protest against the central government over inflation across the country in New Delhi

He also emphasised that the extension will be given only when all three members - the Prime Minister, the Chief Justice of India, and Leader of Opposition/ of the largest party in the Lok Sabha - give their consent.

Participating in a discussion on the bill, BJP member GVL Narasimha Rao said the bills to extend the tenures of CBI and ED directors ensure that both institutions will work more efficiently.

"Properties worth Rs 89,547 crore were attached under PMLA cases and (attachment of properties worth) Rs 50,945 crore has already been confirmed by the adjudicating authorities," he said. Narasimha cited several observations of the Supreme Court in various cases, including the appointment of Central Vigilance Commissioner P J Thomas, to attack the opposition parties.

Republican Party of India leader and Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment Ramdas Athawale spoke in favour of the bill. "Corruption should end. Black money should end and more money should come into the national treasury," Athawale said.

Sushil Kumar Modi of the BJP said the government has taken a number of initiatives over the past few years in its relentless fight against corruption.

The government has brought in a law to stop black money from being routed through Mauritius, Cyprus and Singapore. It has also brought the fugitive economic offenders law to empower law enforcement agencies to confiscate the assets of economic absconders," he said.

Birds being shot using air guns: Govt

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 14: Birds are being shot using air guns in different parts of the country, the government said in Parliament while terming it a "serious" issue and that appropriate action is taken by states against it.

Responding to a query raised by Mathura MP Hema Malini whether birds are being shot in the country using air guns, Minister of State for Environment Ashwini

Eight more test +ve in Maha, four in Delhi

SURGE IN OMICRON CASES



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi/Mumbai, Dec 14: Delhi has reported four more cases of Omicron while eight more persons have tested positive for the Covid-19 variant in Maharashtra Tuesday, taking the tally in the country to 61.

Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain said all the six people who have so far tested positive for the Omicron variant in the national capital had a history of travelling abroad. "So far, six people have been found Omicron-positive in the capital. One of them has been discharged. All of them had travelled to foreign countries and were transferred to the Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Narayan (LNJP) hospital from the (Indira Gandhi International) airport," Jain told reporters.

The condition of the remaining five Omicron-positive patients is stable, he said. So far, Maharashtra has reported the highest number of cases at 28, followed by Rajasthan at 17. Omicron cases have also been reported in Karnataka (3), Gujarat

(4), Kerala (1) and Andhra Pradesh (1) and Union Territories of Delhi (6) and Chandigarh (1).

Eight new patients were found to be infected with Omicron in Maharashtra, the state health department said citing a report released on Tuesday by the Pune-based National Institute of Virology. Seven of them were from Mumbai and one from its satellite township of Vasai-Virar, the department said, adding none of the eight had an international travel history. **OUR VACCINES MAY BECOME INEFFECTIVE IN EMERGING SITUATIONS: PAUL**

Amid concerns over Omicron, India's Covid Task Force chief VK Paul Tuesday said there is a potential scenario that "our vaccines may become ineffective in emerging situations" and emphasised the need to be ready to modify the vaccines as per requirement. He also hoped that Covid in India is possibly moving in the direction of endemicity, where there is a low or moderate level of transmission going on.

Women in law face bias: CJI

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 14: Chief Justice of India NV Ramana Tuesday rued the fact women in the legal profession face bias, both from their colleagues or litigants, and this affects not just advocates, but also those on the bench.

In his address at the felicitation of Supreme Court judge Justice Hima Kohli by Women in Law and Litigation (WILL), he said: "There are various barriers that women face in the legal profession that merit consideration the continued prevalence of certain attitudes about the role of women in society. This issue is a problem a woman faces regardless of the type of em-

ployment. Another issue is the bias that women face, whether from their colleagues or litigants. This bias affects not just women advocates, but also those on the bench."

He added that this creates "a completely unwelcome atmosphere" within courtrooms for women and it is the duty of all lawyers and judges to ensure that a friendly environment is created in courtrooms.

On the aspect of women representation in the judiciary, the CJI said: "The demand for higher representation beyond 50 per cent on the Bench in view of the backlog of under representation of women is taken note of. I promise to take up your demand with my Brothers in the collegium."

to sensitise people for protection of birds," he said. On being asked if the government was working on any scheme for running a campaign to get air guns surrendered in the whole country, Choubey said the ministry provides financial assistance to the states/Union Territories under Centrally Sponsored Scheme 'Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitat', which also includes activities for awareness generation among public for protection of wildlife, including birds.

Maha stunned by grisly 'beheadings' of two women

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Raigad (Maharashtra), Dec 14: Two gruesome cases of 'beheading' of recently-married young women, including one who was pregnant and another allegedly a victim of dowry, in just a week have rocked the state, officials said here.

The latest incident occurred in the tiny hill-station of Matheran in Raigad Sunday, preceded by the 'honour-killing' of a pregnant woman in Aurangabad the previous Sunday.

We have arrested the accused, an IT engineer from Panvel, who allegedly killed his wife, dismembered her head, carried it around 200 metres away from the homestay and flung it into a 200-foot-deep ravine at an isolated spot in the hill-station, Matheran Police Station Assistant Police Inspector Sanjay Bangar told IANS.

Early Sunday the accused -- Ramsilochal Pal, 30, hacked off the head of his wife, Poonam Pal, 27, left her naked body in the bathroom of the homestay and decamped from there under cover of darkness. According to Bangar, with the dowry angle surfacing alongside infidelity, Pal's family would also be made part of the investigations.

Investigators said the cold-blooded murder was apparently pre-planned as the accused had visited Matheran a few days earlier and conducted a reconnaissance of various spots. This is the second such incident, coming a week after the murder and beheading of a 19-year-old pregnant woman, Kishori alias Kirti Thore, with a sickle in Goygaon, Aurangabad, by her mother Shobha S Mote and younger brother Sanket S Mote.

After committing the heinous, premeditated deed of 'honour-killing', the mother-son later clicked selfies with Kirti's severed body, placed her head outside her home before surrendering to the Vijapur Police.

J&K TERROR ATTACK: DEATH TOLL RISES TO 3

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, Dec 14: The death toll in Monday's terrorist attack on a police bus in Jammu and Kashmir rose to three Tuesday with a constable succumbing to his injuries, while the union territory's police chief vowed that perpetrators would be brought to justice very soon.

Constable Rameez Ahmad of the ninth battalion of the Jammu and Kashmir Armed Police died at the Army's 92 Base Hospital Tuesday morning, officials said.

The Kashmir Tigers, a little-known outfit which is believed to be a front of the Jaish-e-Mohammad terrorist group, has claimed responsibility for the firing on the police bus that took place on the 20th anniversary of the attack on the Parliament Building. Assistant Sub Inspector Ghulam Hassan and Constable Shafeeq Ali were killed in the attack Monday, while 12 others, including Rameez, suffered injuries. On Tuesday, Jammu and Kashmir Police chief Dilbag Singh ordered a series of measures to be adopted while making the deployment of personnel, their travel as well as in other situations.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, DRAINAGE DIVISION, BHADRAK
"e" PROCUREMENT NOTICE No. 04/2021-22
Bid Identification No. DDBDK-05/2021-22

No. A-735: Bid documents consisting of work, estimated amount put to tender, cost of tender paper, EMD, time of completion, class of contractor, the set of terms & conditions of contract and other necessary documents can be seen in e-procurement portal <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>.

1 Name of the work	: Drainage works under D.I.P. 2022-23
2 No. of work	: 1 No. individual work
3 Estimated cost for put to tender	: Rs. 37,39,989.00 (excluding G.S.T.)
4 Period of Completion	: 4 (Four) Calendar Months
5 Date & time of availability of bid document in the portal	: From Dt. 16. 12.2021 at 10.00 hours to Dt. 23. 12.2021 at 17.00 hours
6 Date of receipt of bids in the portal	: From Dt. 16. 12.2021 at 10.00 hours to Dt. 23. 12.2021 at 17.00 hours
7 Date of opening of Bids	: From Dt. 24. 12.2021 at 11.30 hours to Dt. 29. 12.2021 at 11.30 hours in the O/o. Superintending Engineer, Drainage Division, Bhadrak
8 Date of Lottery (if required)	: Not applicable
9 Procurement Officer/Name & address of the Officer Inviting Bids	: Superintending Engineer, Drainage Division, Bhadrak

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>. Any addendum/corrigendum/cancellation of tender can also be seen in said website.

OIPR-32057/11/0004/2122
Sd./ Superintending Engineer
Drainage Division, Bhadrak

BJP MLAs' SUSPENSION

SC issues notice to Maha Assembly

THE MLAs HAVE TERMED THEIR SUSPENSION AS POLITICALLY MOTIVATED TO WHITTLE DOWN THE NUMBER OF THE OPPOSITION PARTY

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 14: The Supreme Court Tuesday issued notice to the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly through its secretary on a petition filed by 12 BJP MLAs challenging their suspension for a year from the Assembly in July for misbehaving with the presiding officer in chair both inside and outside the Assembly.

A bench headed by Justice AM Khanwilkar said the notice or the pendency of these court proceedings will not come in the way of the suspended MLAs move to urge the House to consider reducing the tenure of their suspension.

The 12 suspended members are -- Sanjay Kute, Ashish Shelar, Abhimanyu Pawar, Girish Mahajan, Atul Bhatkalkar, Parag Alavani, Harish Pimpale, Yogesh Sagar, Jay Kumar Rawat, Narayan kuche, Ram Satpute, and Bunty



Bhangdia. The MLAs have termed their suspension as politically motivated to whittle down the number of the opposition party.

In the Supreme Court, senior advocates Harish Salve, Mukul Rohatgi, Neeraj Kishan Kaul, and Siddharth Bhatnagar appeared for the petitioners assisted by advocates Siddharth Dharmadhikari

and Abhikalp Pratap Singh.

"The impugned resolution has been passed in abject violation of Article 14 of the Constitution of India in as much as no opportunity of hearing or at least furnishing their written explanation was given to the petitioners. Further, a perusal of the impugned resolution shows that there has

been utter non-application of mind in as much there was no material available for identifying the 12 MLAs from a large crowd of people", said the plea, filed through Singh.

The plea urged the top court to pass a direction to quash the resolution for the suspension of the MLAs. The top court has sched-

uled the matter for further hearing January 11. The plea contended that the resolution does not show as to what the material was relied on while identifying 12 MLAs from a huge crowd of people while bringing the action of suspension. "The impugned resolution alludes to unruly behaviour on the floor of the House and outside the Chamber of the Speaker. The video footage of the alleged incident, which is in public domain shows a large crowd of people and there is absolutely no way of identifying the 12 MLAs who have been suspended," added the plea.

The chaos had begun when Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) Minister Chhagan Bhujbal had stood up to introduce a resolution in the Assembly seeking the release of empirical data on the OBCs by the Centre for providing political reservation in the local bodies in the state.

TN to crackdown on bonded child labour



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, Dec 14: The Tamil Nadu government will crackdown on bonded child labour which according to reports from organisations functioning in the field, is rampant in the delta districts of the state.

Sources in the Chief Minister's office told IANS that MK Stalin has directly intervened in the matter and that the state Social Welfare Department has been assigned to conduct a detailed study on the issue. The state government faced backlash after four children, who were bonded labourers at a goat farm in Ramanathapuram, were rescued.

The children, Vetrivel (nine), Velayuthan (eight), Sakthivel (seven) and Sundar (six) were bought by the farm's owner Govindarajan from their poverty-ridden parents for Rs 62,000.

When the children were rescued by a multitask department force in Thanjavur, they were not able to properly communicate as they were living with a herd of 500 goats and without proper food.

According to activist Pathimraj, Govindarajan had convinced the parents and bought the elder children for Rs 50,000 and the younger ones at Rs 12,000. The farm owner later sold the younger siblings to some other person.

Pathimraj told mediapersons that this was only the tip of the iceberg and buying and selling of children have been taking place in several delta districts of the state.

The activist said that his NGO, 'Shed India' had rescued more than 40 children from people who had bought them for bonded labour.

The parents of the four children, Sundararaj and Bapathi, told

mediapersons that they were farm labourers and after the Covid-19 pandemic, were in abject poverty. They had given the children to Govindarajan as labourers and the money they took was the advance of the children's salary.

Despite strict laws in the country against child labour, all the children were under 10 years and subjected to inhumane life for the past two years.

Speaking to mediapersons in Thanjavur, Vetrivel said, "We were given only kanji (porridge) and that too one time a day and we dreamt of eating rice and curry. He used to thrash us when goats were found missing and had to run around to retrieve the goats that had wandered off. We used to walk for 10 km daily from one point to another for grazing the goats."

It was Vetrivel and Velayuthan who had escaped from the clutches of the farm owner and revealed the matter to the public and Pathimraj.

Pathimraj's NGO immediately took up the matter and apprised the Thanjavur District Child Welfare Committee of it.

The children are now under the care of Child Welfare Committee and are trying to get back their communicating skills.

Pathimraj said that the Thanjavur district authorities have promised stringent action against Govindarajan.

The Chief Minister, according to information from the CMO, has directed the Thanjavur, Ramanathapuram and other delta district administrations to carry out immediate raids in such animal rearing farms, charcoal units, brick units and other areas where the possibilities of bonded labour exist.

Nagpur woman cooks up fake rape story to marry lover, sends cops into tizzy

Over 1,000 security personnel, including Nagpur Commissioner and other senior officials, investigated the case Monday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Nagpur, Dec 14: A 19-year-old woman allegedly lodged a fake police complaint of gang rape in a bid to marry her boyfriend, keeping the Nagpur police on their toes for the entire day, officials said Tuesday.

Over 1,000 security personnel, including Nagpur Commissioner of Police Amitesh Kumar and other senior officials, investigated the case here in Maharashtra Monday after the woman lodged the complaint at Kalamna police station around 11 am, they said.

After going through the footage of more than 250 CCTVs across the city, the investigators arrived at the conclusion that she had cooked up the gang rape story. The woman later told the police that she did it to marry her boyfriend,



a senior police official said, but did not divulge on what were her exact plans.

Earlier, the woman in her police complaint alleged that she was raped by two persons at an isolated area near Chikhali area.

She claimed that the two persons came in a white coloured van and asked her about the road to Butibori when she was going to attend a music class in Ramdaspath area in the morning.

The men then forcibly took her into the van and covered her face with a cloth. The abductors took her to an isolated place and allegedly raped her, the official said quoting her complaint. Sensing the gravity of the matter, the city police immediately launched a probe into it.

The Kalamna police registered an offence against unidentified persons under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code.

Commissioner of Police Amitesh Kumar, Additional CP Sunil Phulari and other senior officials rushed to the Sitabuldi police station for the probe into the case.

Kumar ordered formation of 40 special teams, comprising more than 1,000 police personnel, to check the footage of CCTVs, vans in the city and to question friends of the woman, while she was sent to Mayo Hospital for a medical examination, the official said.

He said after more than six hours of hectic efforts and questioning of over 50 people, the police concluded that the woman had concocted the gang rape story.

After getting the facts in hand, the police questioned the woman and asked her if she had cooked up the story. The woman told the police that she did it to marry her boyfriend, he said.

CHRISTMAS CRAZE



A boy looks at decorative items at a market, ahead of Christmas, in Mumbai, Tuesday

PTI PHOTO

BJP dares MVA to hold polls for Assembly Speaker's post

In a jolt to the ruling MVA alliance, the BJP won four of the six seats in the state Legislative Council

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Pune, Dec 14: On a day it won the elections held for two MLC seats in Maharashtra, the state BJP Tuesday dared the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) to hold the election for the post of Assembly Speaker through secret ballot and indicated that BJP will win it.

The BJP retained the Nagpur seat and wrested the Akola-Buldhana-Washim seat from the Sena, results for which were de-

clared Tuesday.

Out of the total six seats of the Maharashtra Legislative Council from five local constituencies which were up for grabs, the Shiv Sena (Sunil Shinde) and the BJP (Rajhans Singh) bagged one seat each unopposed in the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC).

In the Kolhapur and Nandurbar-Dhule MLC polls also, the Congress and the BJP respectively secured one seat each unopposed.

In Nagpur, BJP candidate and for-

mer state energy minister Chandrashekhra Bawankule defeated Mangesh Deshmukh, the independent candidate supported by the MVA.

Shiv Sena's three-time MLC Gopikishan Bajoria was defeated by BJP's Vasant Khandelwal in Akola-Washim-Buldhana.

Speaking to reporters in Pune, Maharashtra BJP president Chandrakant Patil Tuesday said, "Congress played childish games during the election of the Nagpur MLC seat by poaching BJP's corporator Ravindra Bhojar and offering him a ticket."

Bhojar withdrew on the eve of

I challenge the MVA to hold the election for the post of Legislative Assembly Speaker through secret ballot instead of by raising hands. And you will come to know who becomes the Speaker

CHANDRAKANT PATIL | MAHA BJP PRESIDENT

the polls. Patil said a conflict between Congress state unit president Nana Patole and minister Sunil Kedar, also from Congress, came to the fore during the elections.

"I challenge the MVA to hold the election for the post of leg-

islative assembly speaker through secret ballot instead of by raising hands. And you will come to know who becomes the Speaker," he said.

The winter session of the Maharashtra legislature is scheduled to be held in Mumbai from December 22 to 28.

The post of the Assembly speaker has been lying vacant after Nana Patole resigned to head the Maharashtra Congress.

Patil said the common people are facing hardships under the tenure of the MVA government and they have made up their mind to vote out the ruling dispensation.

Baby monkey rescued from begging racket at Marina beach

REGULAR BEACHGOERS SUSPECTED THAT AN ORGANISED RACKET WAS USING CHILDREN AND MONKEYS FOR BEGGING

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, Dec 14: Officials of the forest department of Tamil Nadu has rescued a baby monkey from the clutches of a begging racket at the famous Marina beach in Chennai. Two kids who were using the monkey to beg gave a slip to the team of wildlife officials and the police.

The rescued baby monkey belongs to the species Bonnet macaques (Macaca radiata) and is covered under Schedule II (Part I) of the wildlife protection Act of 1972.

Forest officials said that people who are found in possession of these monkeys are liable to be punished for a period of 3 years in prison and a penalty of Rs 25,000 for first-time offenders and for regular offenders, imprisonment can go up to 7 years with penalty.

There were complaints from regular beachgoers that children and monkeys were being used



The police are looking the other way as there seems to be a nexus between the police and the begging mafia. Kids are mostly from north Indian states and as we had warned earlier, the pandemic has increased the flow of children to south Indian states or rather illegal migration of children, and unless a properly organised crackdown is implemented, this will continue

JOSSEY JOSE | CHILD RIGHTS ACTIVIST

for begging and that there seems to be an organised racket behind this.

Sundararajan, a software engineer who regularly spends his evenings at Marina beach after it was opened, told IANS, "Children come here seeking alms and they catch hold of our legs and do not go away unless we pay them. This seems to be not natural and the police patrol team intervenes only if we lodge a complaint. Children are seen with baby monkeys that do not even look up due to poor feeding."

Forest officials said that the baby monkeys are caught using

traps from the forest areas of Tamil Nadu including Nilgiris and brought to Chennai for begging.

A senior police officer with the Marina beach police station told IANS, "We detained a few children a few days back but they were pleading and crying. There has to be a proper investigation to get to the bottom of this racket and unless it is done, things will continue like this."

However, child rights activists said that police and the begging mafia are hands in glove and there seems to be a cut for the local police to continue their begging unhindered.

Madras HC quashes FIR against YouTuber Maridhas

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, Dec 14: The Madurai bench of the Madras High Court Tuesday quashed the FIR against YouTuber Maridhas.

The Madurai police had registered an FIR against the YouTuber following a tweet of his which said "whether Tamil Nadu was turning into another Kashmir".

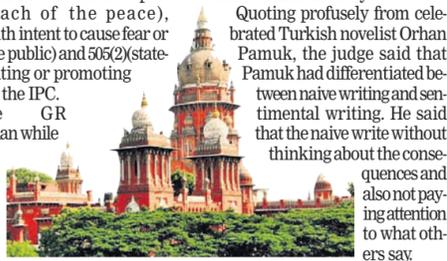
The FIR was registered against Maridhas under Sections 124 (A) (sedition), 153 (promoting enmity between different groups), 504 (intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of the peace), 505(1)(b)(with intent to cause fear or alarm to the public) and 505(2)(statements creating or promoting enmity) of the IPC.

Justice GR Swaminathan while accepting the plea by Maridhas quashed the FIR and observed,

"In the age of social media, a YouTuber or any person commenting on questions of public importance would also be entitled to the very same right accorded to media and journalists under Article 19(1)(a)-Right to Freedom of Speech and Expression of the constitution."

The judge also said that the controversial YouTuber had taken down the tweet within a few hours after posting it. The Court observed, "He would have withdrawn the tweet within hours of it being published after having realised that his reaction was unnecessary."

Quoting profusely from celebrated Turkish novelist Orhan Pamuk, the judge said that Pamuk had differentiated between naive writing and sentimental writing. He said that the naive write without thinking about the consequences and also not paying attention to what others say.



national

of the day quote

Greetings on Gita Jayanti. A practical guide for several dimensions of life, it is gladdening to see the teachings of the Gita reverberate globally

NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER

During my rule, we were feeling so comfortable with respect to the security situation that we had removed bunkers from many places. But, the reality today is that, not only have the bunkers been put up in those areas, but there are additional bunkers now

OMAR ABDULLAH | NATIONAL CONFERENCE VICE PRESIDENT

Over 55 per cent of India's adult population has received both the doses of Covid-19 vaccine

MANSUKH MANDAVIYA | UNION HEALTH MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Waseem Rizvi quits Shia board

Lucknow: Jitendra Narain Singh Tyagi nee Waseem Rizvi Tuesday resigned from the membership of the Shia Waqf Board. He handed over his resignation to the chairman of the Shia Waqf Board, Ali Zaidi, before the meeting of the Board. Waseem Rizvi had converted to Hinduism last week and had taken on the name of Jitendra Narain Singh Tyagi. He claimed that 'fatwas' were being issued almost every week for his beheading and he felt unsafe as a Muslim.

3 get 5yr-RI in Vyapam scam

New Delhi: A Special CBI court in Madhya Pradesh Tuesday awarded five years rigorous imprisonment to three persons in connection with Vyapam Scam related to admission in MBBS course. The court awarded sentences to Saurav Kumar Singh, Umesh Shrivastava and Pravin Singh Rathore and slapped a fine of Rs 8,000 on each of them. The case was against four accused but the fourth accused has been missing since the beginning of the case.

5 hit by live wire, 2 killed

Shahjahanpur: Five members of a family were hit by a live wire and two of them, a mother and her 17-year-old son, died while trying to save their cow which came in contact with faulty power lines in Shahjahanpur district of Uttar Pradesh. The incident took place in Diwali village Monday. The bodies have been sent for autopsy. The cow also died in the tragic incident.

Ch'garh: Naxals kill villager

Raipur: A group of armed Naxals allegedly killed a villager and injured another person in Chhattisgarh's insurgency-hit Sukma district, police said Tuesday. The incident took place Monday night in Kongdem village under Errabore police station limits, located about 400 km from the state capital Raipur. Sukma Superintendent of Police Sunil Sharma said.

Girl raped by father

Fatehpur (UP): A nine-year-old girl was allegedly raped by her father in a drunken state in a village under Khaga Kotwali police station area here, police said. The nine-year-old girl was allegedly raped by her father who was sleeping alongside her Sunday night, Deputy Superintendent of Police (CO) Khaga, Gayadutt Mishra said.



Normalisation of international flight services will depend on the Omicron scenario and authorities concerned will watch the situation as it unfolds

JYOTIRADITYA SCINDIA | UNION CIVIL AVIATION MINISTER

STRICT RULES

Under the anti-open burning of garbage campaign, the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPPC) visited 16,580 sites, of which 2,490 have been issued notices along with the imposition of a total fine of Rs 46.96 lakhs, according to the Delhi government



India stuck with Covid vaccines it can't export

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 14: India is struggling to export its surplus of Covid-19 vaccines as logistical hurdles delay their use in many countries despite low levels of inoculation, vaccine producer the Serum Institute of India (SII) and a government official said Tuesday.

The SII, the world's biggest vaccine maker that produces the AstraZeneca (AZN.L), Novavax (NVAX.O) and Sputnik Covid-19 shots, has already announced plans to temporarily halve output of the AstraZeneca drug until more orders came, including possibly through boosters.

"All over the world, there is enough supply but it is getting the jabs in arms, which will take some time," SII Chief Executive Adar Poonawalla told a virtual conference organised by the Confederation of India Industry. "Certain countries have only vaccinated to the tune of 10 or 15% of the population, they really need to go to 60-70%. Demand is very much there, but it's going to be spread out now that the supply has superseded the monthly demand."

Top Indian health official Vinod Kumar Paul told the same event that current global Covid-19 vaccine production was enough to



reach the nearly 3.6 billion who have yet to receive a shot.

"India is in a position to offer vaccines, but is there traction (for it)?" he asked. "The debate should be how do we accelerate the delivery, raise the capacity of absorption in many countries, particularly in the African continent."

Africa's disease control body said late last month many of its nations were struggling with vaccine logistics, as inflows increased suddenly after months of delays.

Some 8% of Africa's total population of about 1.3 billion is fully immunised. India, with the same population, has fully vaccinated 37% of them with the goal to ad-

minister two doses in all of its 939 million adults by next month.

India's vaccine demand was only about 252 million doses in the past month, against a domestic production capacity of more than 345 million a month of its three main approved shots alone.

The SII's monthly output of the AstraZeneca vaccine, which it brands Covishield, has nearly quadrupled since April to 250 million doses. The shot dominates India's immunisation programme but the company has no further orders from the government.

The COVAX platform that distributes vaccines mainly to low-income countries has sought only

Around 2,400 vox doses with expiry date in Dec: Govt

As December 9, there are 2,410 Covid-19 vaccine doses having an expiry date in December this year, the Rajya Sabha was informed Tuesday. Data on expiry of Covid-19 vaccines at private hospitals is not maintained, Minister of State for Health Bharati Pravin Pawar said in a written reply. Centrally, however, the Government of India closely monitors Covid-19 vaccine stocks in states and Union Territories so as to ensure their optimal utilization, she said.

about 40 million doses of Covishield from the SII between November and December after New Delhi lifted a ban on exports.

COVAX, which has an option to buy up to 550 million Covishield doses, is no longer as reliant on the SII as it was before India abruptly stopped vaccine exports in April to inoculate its own as infections surged. Many vaccines have been approved since then.

"It is critical that if India is to remain the pharmacy to the world that it continues to supply even during difficult times," Seth Berkeley, CEO of COVAX backer Gavi, told the industry event.

SC allows double lane for Chardham highway project

The strategic 900-km Chardham project worth ₹12,000 crore aims to provide all-weather connectivity to four holy towns -- Yamunotri, Gangotri, Kedarnath and Badrinath



The all-weather Char Dham road plan. (screengrab from Youtube video)

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 14: The Supreme Court Tuesday allowed double lane widening for the strategic Chardham highway project in Uttarakhand, saying the recent past has thrown serious challenges to national security.

The court in the exercise of judicial review cannot second guess the infrastructural needs of the armed forces, the bench headed by Justice D Y Chandrachud said while also setting up an oversight committee headed by former Justice A K Sikri to report to it directly on the project.

In its judgment, the bench, also comprising Justices Surya Kant and Vikram Nath, clarified that the oversight committee will not undertake a fresh environment assessment.

The committee will receive all support from the ministries of Defence and Road Transport, the Uttarakhand Government and all district magistrates.

The top court said that there are no malafides in the application filed by the Defence ministry. The allegation that its application seeks to relitigate matters or to subvert previous orders of this court

are unfounded.

As a specialised body of the government, the Defence ministry is entitled to decide operational requirements of the armed forces, including infrastructural support needed for facilitating movement of troops, it said.

"The bonafides of MoD are also evident from the fact that the issue of security concerns was raised during the discussion of HPC and finds mention in HPC report. This MoD has maintained the need for double lane roads for border security concerns."

"The appellants have referred to a statement made by Chief of Army Staff in 2019 in a media interview regarding the adequacy of infrastructure for troop movement. We do not find it necessary to place reliance on statements made to the media given the consistent stand of MOD. The security concerns as assessed by MoD may change overtime. The recent past has thrown serious challenges to national security," the bench said.

The apex court said the armed forces cannot be held down to a statement made during a media interview in 2019 as if it was a decree written in stone.

No grace marks in Class XII accountancy paper: CBSE

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 14: The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) Tuesday warned students against a fake audio circulating on social media claiming that due to an error in Class XII accountancy paper grace marks will be given to students.

"It has been brought to the notice of the board that fake reports allegedly quoting an audio message in the name of Controller of Examination, CBSE are being circulated claiming that due to an error in Class XII accountancy term-1 paper held December 13 'up to 06 grace marks will be given,'" the board said in an official statement. "The contents in news reports published are totally baseless and false. None of the reporters has spoken to the Controller of Examination, CBSE in this regard and the board has not taken any such decision. CBSE, therefore, warns the public not to fall prey to such unverified news in their own interest," it added. In the purported audio message, the controller was saying, "Don't worry students, if you attempt 28 to 31 questions correctly, you will score around 38 marks".

The development came a day after CBSE decided to award full marks to all students for accompanying questions of a comprehension passage which was dropped following outrage over the board allegedly supporting gender stereotyping and regressive norms. The board also announced setting up of an expert committee to strengthen and review its question paper setting process to avoid such occurrences in the future.

PLAYFUL MOOD



Youngsters enjoying cricket in the backdrop of Taj Mahal in Agra

PTI PHOTO

Guj admits more Covid deaths than official tally

REUTERS

Ahmedabad, Dec 14: India's western state of Gujarat has acknowledged more Covid-19 deaths than its official tally, according to a court document filed Monday, lending weight to fears that the country's actual toll was much higher than reported.

Reuters and other media have reported, based on figures collected from crematoriums and cemeteries, that during India's record second wave of cases between April and June, states including Gujarat undercounted deaths as many people died at home due to a severe shortage of hospital beds and oxygen. Gujarat, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's home state, told the Supreme Court it had received 22,557 applications as of Thursday from families of the dead seeking



THE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT LENDS WEIGHT TO FEARS THAT THE COUNTRY'S ACTUAL TOLL IS MUCH HIGHER THAN REPORTED

THE MAIN OPPOSITION CONGRESS PARTY SAID THAT IT BELIEVED THE ACTUAL DEATH TOLL TO BE STILL HIGHER

compensation and 16,175 had been approved, according to an affidavit seen by Reuters. Its reported death count is 10,099, according to the

state's latest health bulletin. A Gujarat official with direct knowledge of the matter said applications had now swelled to more than

40,000 and nearly half had been approved. All of them would get 50,000 rupees (\$659) each.

India has reported a total of 475,636 Covid-19 deaths, including many revised figures from states that have come under pressure from courts to accurately represent the scale of the disaster.

The main opposition Congress party said it believed the actual death toll to be still higher.

"We have been saying from the beginning that the Gujarat government has been underreporting Covid-19 cases and deaths," said Manish Doshi, chief spokesperson of Gujarat Congress, adding its surveys had shown at least 55,000 deaths. Gujarat Revenue Minister Rajendra Trivedi, whose department is paying the compensation, did not respond to requests for comment.

Top Pak LeT terrorist killed in encounter

Jammu: A top Pakistani terrorist belonging to the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) was killed in an encounter with security forces in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district Tuesday, officials said. A search is underway to track down another terrorist, who was his accomplice, in the area, they said. The Army and police launched an operation after receiving specific intelligence inputs about the presence of armed terrorists in Behramgala area, a defence spokesperson said. In the early hours of Tuesday, a terrorist attempted to escape while firing at the security personnel, he said, adding that the troops retaliated, resulting in the encounter in which the terrorist was killed. One AK-47 rifle, four magazines, one grenade, pouches and some Indian currency were recovered from the slain terrorist, who was identified as Abu Zarara, hailing from Pakistan, the spokesperson said.

FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS GUARANTEED TO ALL

Provide ration, voter ID, Aadhaar to sex workers: SC

Earlier, the apex court, September 29, 2020, had directed all the states to provide dry rations to sex workers, who were identified by NACO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 14: Observing that fundamental rights are guaranteed to every citizen irrespective of vocation, the Supreme Court Tuesday directed the Centre, all the states and union territories to commence the process of issuing voter, Aadhaar and ration cards to sex workers and keep providing dry ration to them.

apex court, hearing a plea that has raised the problems faced by sex workers due to the COVID-19

pandemic, has been passing orders for their welfare and on September 29 last year, it had asked the Centre and others to provide dry ration to them without insisting on their identity proof.

A bench comprising justices L Nageswara Rao, BR Gavai and B V Nagarathna ruled that the directions of the apex court on providing ration cards to the sex workers were passed in 2011 but they are yet to be implemented.

"The state governments and UTs were directed to issue ration

cards and identity cards to sex workers almost a decade back and there is no reason as to why such directions are not implemented till now," the bench said.

"The fundamental rights are guaranteed to every citizen of the country irrespective of his/her vocation. There is a bounden duty on the government to provide basic amenities to the citizens of the country. The central government, state governments and other authorities are directed to commence the process of issuance of ration cards, voter ID cards and Aadhaar cards immediately," the bench ordered.

The bench directed that authorities can take assistance National AIDS Control



Representational image

Organisation (NACO) and state AIDS control societies who, in turn, will prepare a list of sex workers after verifying the information provided to them by the community-based organisations. "The status report related

to issuance of ration cards, voter ID cards and Aadhaar cards to the sex workers be filed in a period of four weeks from today and in the meanwhile, state governments and UTs are directed to continue distribution of dry ration to sex

workers without insisting on ration cards and other proofs of identity as mentioned in earlier orders."

it said. The bench, which said that the copy of the order be sent to state and district legal services authorities for necessary action, also asked the government to keep the names and identity of sex worker confidential while preparing the various ID cards.

The apex court was hearing a plea filed by NGO Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee, which has highlighted the destitution faced by sex workers on account of COVID-19, and sought relief measures for over nine lakh female and transgender sex workers across India.

international

of the day quote

The terrorist and militant groups carried out a reign of terror in the country from 2001 to 2006. They unleashed arson terrorism in the country to thwart the national election of January 5, 2014, and they are still hatching conspiracies

Military groups are holding some drivers of 18 commandeered aid trucks in the Amhara region of northern Ethiopia

While the country has not detected any community transmission of the Omicron variant yet, it is only a matter of time before this happens

SHORT TAKES

4 kids die

Istanbul: Four foreign children were killed and two people wounded when a fire broke out in the wee hours of Tuesday at an apartment building in Turkey's biggest city Istanbul, the Governor's office announced.

Five dead

Dhaka: At least five people were killed Tuesday after a fire ripped through a factory in Bangladesh's Bogura district, some 197 km northwest of Dhaka.

Toll rises to 10

Rio De Janeiro: Rescue teams have raised the death toll from heavy rains and flooding in the Brazilian state of Bahia to 10.

Nine killed

Dar Es Salaam: At least nine people died on the spot and three were seriously injured after a van ferrying newspapers hit a tree in Tanzania's southern highlands region of Iringa.

Abduction foiled

Wajir (Kenya): Kenyan police has foiled an attempt by suspected al-Shabab militants to abduct faithful at a mosque in Kanton, Wajir County, in the northeastern border region.



Turkey and Armenia will appoint special representatives to discuss steps to normalise their ties

PFIZER JABS PROTECT 70% AGAINST HOSPITALISATION

A two-dose Pfizer/BioNTech vaccination provides just 33 per cent protection against infection by the Omicron variant of the coronavirus, but 70 per cent protection against hospitalisation, according to a large-scale analysis in South Africa released Tuesday



Blinken vows more US military might in Indo-Pacific

Jakarta, Dec 14: The United States will expand its military and economic relationships with partners in Asia to push back against China's increasing assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Tuesday.

Blinken said the Biden administration is committed to maintaining peace and prosperity in the region and will do that by boosting U.S. alliances, forging new relationships and ensuring that the US military maintains "its competitive edge."



BLINKEN INSISTED THAT THE US IS NOT TRYING TO FORCE COUNTRIES TO CHOOSE BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND CHINA, OR SEEKING CONFLICT WITH CHINA

BLINKEN SAID THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION IS COMMITTED TO MAINTAINING PEACE AND PROSPERITY IN THE REGION AND WILL DO THAT BY BOOSTING U.S. ALLIANCES, FORGING NEW RELATIONSHIPS AND ENSURING THAT THE US MILITARY MAINTAINS "ITS COMPETITIVE EDGE"

that will see Australia produce nuclear-powered submarines. Blinken insisted that the US is not trying to force countries to choose between the United States and China, or seeking conflict with China. But he laid out a litany of complaints about "Beijing's aggressive actions" from "Northeast Asia to Southeast Asia and from the Mekong River to the Pacific Islands."

strengths so we can keep the peace, as we have done in the region for decades," he said. He did not elaborate further but the administration made waves earlier this year by agreeing to a pact

Over 50 killed in Haiti explosion

Port-Au-Prince (Haiti), Dec 14: A truck carrying gasoline exploded in northern Haiti, killing more than 50 people and injuring dozens of others, officials said Tuesday.



The blast occurred late Monday in the city of Cap-Haitien, Prime Minister Ariel Henry said, adding that he was devastated. "Three days of national mourning will be decreed throughout the territory, in memory of the victims of this tragedy that the entire Haitian nation is grieving," he tweeted.

Henry said his administration was deploying field hospitals to the area to help those affected. Dozens of bodies lay on the street hours after the explosion as a small crowd stood around them. No further details were immediately available. Police didn't immediately return calls requesting information. Patrick Almonor, deputy mayor of Cap-Haitien, told The Associated Press that at least 53 deaths and more than 100 injured have been reported following the explosion that burned around 20 homes near the site.

whelmed," a person identified as Dr. Calhil Turenne told Le Nouvelliste newspaper. Dave Larose, a civil engineer who works in Cap-Haitien, told The Associated Press that he was driving when he saw ambulances and a crowd of people gathered along a road around 1 a.m. He said he observed how some people were using buckets to scoop up gasoline from the truck and the street to take back to their house. The explosion occurred as Haiti struggles with a severe shortage of fuel and spiraling gas prices. "It's terrible what our country has to go through" Larose said. Former Prime Minister Claude Joseph also mourned the victims, tweeting, "I share the pain and sorrow of all the people."

Indonesia lifts tsunami alert

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Jakarta, Dec 14: Indonesia lifted a tsunami alert Tuesday following a magnitude 7.3 undersea earthquake that struck off Flores Island, triggering panic in a region prone to fatal quakes but apparently causing no major damage or casualties.

According to the US Geological Survey, the quake hit at a depth of 18.5 kilometers (11.5 miles) under the sea, and was located 112 kilometers (74 miles) north of the town of Maumere, the second-largest on the island in East Nusa Tenggara province with a population of 85,000. After an initial tsunami alert, the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center in Hawaii and later Indonesia's meteorological agency lifted the warning hours after the quake. National Disaster Mitigation Agency spokesman Abdul Muhari said residents in East Flores district felt the earthquake strongly. Footage showed people running away from buildings that shook from the impact.

One person was reported injured in East Nusa Tenggara province. The shocks were also felt in Makassar city and Selayar Islands district in South Sulawesi province, across the Flores Sea.

The disaster mitigation agency reported a school was damaged in the Selayar Islands. Muhari said that based on sea level observations, minor tsunamis of 7 centimeters (2.8 inches) were detected in Marapokot and Reo areas.

WINGED GUESTS



Migratory birds are seen at the Hailiu reservoir in Tumd Left Banner in Hohhot, north China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region

DUTERTE QUILTS FROM SENATE RACE

Accompanied by his executive secretary and security escorts, Duterte went to the Commission on Elections in Manila and withdrew as a senatorial candidate

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Manila, Dec 14: Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte Tuesday withdrew his senatorial candidacy in next year's elections in his latest change of mind over what he plans to do after his turbulent term ends, when critics say he would likely face an array of lawsuits for an anti-drugs crackdown that has left thousands of mostly petty suspects killed.

year-old Duterte went to the Commission on Elections in Manila and withdrew as a senatorial candidate. His former aide, Sen. Bong Go, separately appeared at the elections commission earlier Tuesday to withdraw his presidential candidacy, which he said his family opposed. Duterte did not give any reason for the move but his spokesman, Karlo Nograles, said it would allow the president to better focus on managing the pandemic in the country and ensuring that the May elec-



tions would be peaceful and orderly. Known for his extra tough approach to criminality, Duterte

launched a police-enforced campaign against illegal drugs when he took office in June 2016. The crackdown has left more than 6,000 mostly petty suspects dead based on police figures. Manila-based analyst Richard Heydarian, however, said Duterte's latest move showed how the president, who faces potential criminal suits after his presidency for his deadly anti-drugs campaign, seemed to have lost his political footing after his plan to ensure a friendly succession next year caved in.

Tornado-slammed parts of Kentucky face long recovery

IN KENTUCKY, GOV. ANDY BESHEAR SAID THE TOLL COULD GROW AS AUTHORITIES CONTINUED TO WORK AROUND DEBRIS THAT SLOWED RECOVERY EFFORTS

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Mayfield (US), Dec 14: Workers, volunteers and members of the National Guard were spreading across tornado-damaged areas of Kentucky to assist with recovery tasks ranging from replacing thousands of damaged utility poles to delivering bottles of drinking water. The tornado outbreak Friday that killed at least 88 people in five states — 74 of them in Kentucky — cut a path of damage that stretched from Arkansas, where a nursing home was destroyed, to Illinois, where an Amazon distribution center was heavily damaged. In Kentucky, Gov. Andy Beshear said the toll could grow as authorities continued to work around debris that slowed recovery efforts. Nearly 450 National Guard members have been mobilized in the

state, and 95 of them are doing fatality searches. "With this amount of damage and rubble, it may be a week or even more before we have a final count on the number of lost lives," the governor said. Kentucky authorities said the sheer level of destruction was hindering their ability to tally the damage. As searches continued for those still missing, efforts also turned to repairing the power grid, sheltering those whose homes were destroyed and delivering supplies. A fund set up by the state has collected USD 6 million in donations, according to the governor. Kentucky First Lady Brittainy Beshear has launched a Christmas toy drive for children affected by the storm. She is asking for unwrapped toys, books, and gift cards of USD 25 that will be distributed to families



in need. Across the state, about 26,000 homes and businesses were without electricity, according to power-outage.us, including nearly all of those in Mayfield. More than 10,000 homes and businesses had no water as of Monday, and another 17,000 are under boil-water advisories, Kentucky Emergency Management Director Michael Dossett told reporters. State and

local officials said it could take years for some of the hardest-hit areas to fully recover. "This again is not going to be a week or a month operation, folks. This will go on for years to come. This is a massive event," Dossett said. Five twisters hit Kentucky in all, including one with an extraordinarily long path of about 200 miles (320 kilometers), authorities said. In addition to the deaths in Kentucky, the tornadoes also killed at least six people in Illinois, where the Amazon distribution center in Edwardsville was hit; four in Tennessee; two in Arkansas, where the nursing home was destroyed and the governor said workers shielded residents with their own bodies; and two in Missouri. The federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration an-

nounced Monday that it has opened an investigation into the collapse of the Amazon warehouse in Illinois. Mayfield, home to 10,000, suffered some of the worst damage. Debris from destroyed buildings and shredded trees covered the ground in the city. Twisted sheet metal, downed power lines and wrecked vehicles lined the streets. Windows were blown out and roofs torn off the buildings that were still standing. Not far from Mayfield, a church serving as a shelter in Wingo said it expected to host more than 100 people Monday night. Glynda Glover, 82, said she had no idea how long she would stay at the Wingo shelter. Her apartment is uninhabitable since the wind blew out the windows and covered her bed in glass and asphalt.

business

of the day quote

We are very happy to have received the EIR from the US FDA with Voluntary Action Indicated classification for our Goa plant. This is a significant milestone as we build back our reputation of being best-in-class in quality and compliance

VINITA GUPTA | LUPIN CEO

India is shaping up for a decade of growth. I would like to invite the world to work with India in a spirit of partnership

PIYUSH GOYAL | COMMERCE & INDUSTRY MINISTER

There is no official estimation regarding the amount of black money in foreign accounts during the last five years. However, the government has taken various steps against the black money abroad which have led to positive results

PANKAJ CHAUDHARY | MINISTER OF STATE FOR FINANCE

SHORT TAKES

AWS launches tech learning initiatives

New Delhi: Amazon Web Services (AWS) announced two new initiatives designed to make machine learning more accessible for anyone interested in learning and experimenting with the technology. The AWS AI & ML Scholarship is a new education and scholarship programme aimed at preparing underrepresented and underserved students globally for careers in machine learning. The programme uses AWS Deep Racer and the new AWS Deep Racer Student League to teach students foundational machine learning concepts by giving them hands-on experience training machine learning models for autonomous race cars, while providing educational content centered on machine learning fundamentals.

Libcoin tokens to be launched

New Delhi: A group of experienced business professionals have come together to launch Libcoin (LIB), a governance and reward crypto token. The Libcoin initiative combines financial engineering borne of the digital economy with heightened excitement over infrastructure development through greater 'greening' technologies. The green LIB tokens will be accessed through Ethereum blockchain technology, expected to convert to Ethereum 2.0 in 2022. An initial exchange offering (IEO) will comprise 15% of the total token supply to investors through dozens of crypto currency exchanges and launch pads.

ABFRL to take over Reebok India ops

Mumbai: Aditya Birla group will take over the operations of global sportswear brand Reebok in India under a long term licensing agreement with Authentic Brand Group. The strategic deal will grant Aditya Birla Fashion and Retail Ltd (ABFRL) exclusive rights to distribute and sell Reebok products through wholesale, e-commerce and Reebok branded retail stores in India and other Asian countries, a statement said Tuesday. Authentic Brand Group, a brand development, marketing and entertainment company, is the global franchisee of Reebok. Shares of Aditya Birla Fashion & Retail Tuesday jumped over 6 per cent. The stock settled at ₹283.50, a jump of 6.56 per cent on the BSE. On the NSE, it gained 6.46 per cent to settle at ₹283.35.



We can leave a beautiful planet and bring about many smiles for the future generation

AKIO TOYODA | PRESIDENT, TOYOTA MOTOR CORP.

Nov WPI inflation hits a record of 14.23% y-o-y

WPI inflation has remained in double digits for eight consecutive months beginning April

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 14: The wholesale price-based inflation surged to more than a decade high of 14.23 per cent in November, mainly due to hardening of prices of mineral oils, basic metals, crude petroleum and natural gas.

WPI inflation has remained in double digits for eight consecutive months beginning April.

Inflation in October this year was at 12.54 per cent, while in November 2020 it was at 2.29 per cent. The 12-year high inflation print in November is due to low base effect and spike in the fuel index.

"The high rate of inflation in November 2021, is primarily due to rise in prices of mineral oils, basic metals, crude petroleum & natural gas, chemicals and chemical products, food products etc as compared to the corresponding month of the previous year," the Commerce and Industry Ministry said in a statement Tuesday.

Inflation in fuel and power basket was higher at 39.81 per cent in November, as against 37.18 per cent in October. The food index more than doubled to 6.70 per cent as compared to 3.06 per cent in the previous month.

Crude petroleum inflation was at 91.74 per cent during the month under review, as against 80.57 per cent in October. However, manufactured items saw moderation at 11.92 per cent, from



12.04 per cent in October.

According to a senior Commerce and Industry ministry official, fuel and power have been the biggest contributors of higher inflation rate as it is almost 40 per cent higher than November 2020.

The international commodity prices and fuel prices have also been very high.

Countries which traditionally have reported low inflation rates like the US have also now reported record inflation levels due to these global effects, the official said, adding, countries like Italy, Spain, Germany and even Singapore are having around 20 per cent inflation.

Primary articles and manufacturing products were barely touch-

ing double digits in spite of low base effects showing the efforts of Indian manufacturers, producers and industry, the official added.

Terming the spike in the WPI inflation to a high of 14.2 per cent as a shock, ICRA Chief Economist Aditi Nayar said most non-core categories have exhibited an inflation rate much steeper than expected. The unseasonal surge in vegetable prices, as well as a rise in the inflation for egg, meat and fish, and condiments and spices underpinned the turnaround in the primary food inflation to a 13-month high of 4.9 per cent in November 2021, from a disinflation of 1.7 per cent in the previous month, she said.

ADB scales down growth estimate to 9.7 pc in FY22

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 14: The Asian Development Bank for the second time in three months has scaled down India's growth estimate for the fiscal year ending March 2022 due to supply chain issue of industries.

The Manila-based multilateral development bank pegged India's growth estimate at 9.7 per cent for the current fiscal year in its latest supplement. The ADB had projected a growth rate of 10 per cent for FY22 in its September supplement.

In a supplement to the Asian Development Outlook (ADO) 2021, it said South Asia is forecast to grow at 8.6 per cent in 2021, compared with the September's forecast of 8.8 per cent.

"India, South Asia's largest economy, is now expected to grow 9.7 per cent in fiscal year (FY) 2021, which ends 31 March 2022. The reduction of 0.3 percentage points comes amid supply chain issues that are affecting industry. India's outlook for FY2022 is maintained at 7.5 per cent, as domestic demand is expected to normalize," as per the ADB supplement.



In September, it had revised down India's economic growth forecast for the current fiscal to 10 per cent, from 11 per cent predicted earlier, citing the adverse impact of the second wave of the pandemic.

Sensex slips for third day on inflation, Omicron woes



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



Mumbai, Dec 14: The BSE Sensex continued its downward trajectory for the third consecutive session Tuesday as spiking inflation and global concerns over the Omicron variant sapped risk appetite.

A weakening rupee and unabated foreign fund outflows added to the gloom, traders said.

The 30-share benchmark declined 166.33 points or 0.29 per cent to end at 58,117.09. Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty fell 43.35 points or 0.25 per cent to 17,324.90.

IITC was the top loser on the Sensex chart, shedding 2.73 per cent, followed by Bajaj Finance, Kotak Bank, Bharti Airtel, Reliance Industries and Bajaj Finserv.

On the other hand, PowerGrid, Dr Reddy's, Nestle India, Axis Bank, ICICI Bank and IndusInd Bank were among the winners, climbing as much as 3.84 per cent.

"Due to elevated levels of inflation and weak Asian markets, the

domestic indices extended losses ahead of the US Fed policy announcement," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

"Offsetting a favourable base effect and cut in levies on fuel, India's CPI inflation rose to 4.91 per cent YoY in November as higher input costs forced producers to hike prices. Moreover, India's wholesale inflation soared to a 12-year high of 14.23 per cent YoY underpinned by mineral oil, base metals, crude petroleum and natural gas," he noted.

Ajit Mishra, VP - Research, Religare Broking, said participants are maintaining a cautious stance ahead of the US Fed meeting outcome scheduled Wednesday.

"We reiterate our view to limit leveraged positions and maintain positions on both sides," he added.

Sector-wise, BSE telecom, auto, energy and FMCG indices slipped up to 1.37 per cent, while power, utilities, oil and gas and health-care ended with gains.

EPFO invested ₹2,500 crore in Reliance Capital's bonds

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 14: The Employees Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) had asked the government to initiate insolvency and bankruptcy proceedings against Reliance Capital as it has invested ₹2,500 crore in the company's bond programmes, the Finance Ministry said in Parliament Tuesday.

The Ministry of Labour and Employment has apprised that Employees Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) has invested ₹2,500 crore in Reliance Capital Ltd (RCL), for which RCL has defaulted in payment of interest from October 2019, Minister of State for Finance Bhagwat Karad said in a written reply to the Rajya Sabha.

He was replying to a query asked by Member of Parliament from RJD, Manoj Kumar Jha, whether it was a fact that Reliance Capital had defaulted on payment of principal and interest obligations on bonds held by EPFO.

The total interest default on the non-convertible debentures (NCDs) (secured) is ₹534.64 crore as of November 30, 2021, Karad said.

Ministry of Labour and Employment has informed that as the maturity date of these in-

vestment has not become due till date, there is no default on principal as on date, he said.

"The matter for initiation of action under the provisions of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 (IBC), against Reliance Capital Ltd was taken up by EPFO," Karad added.

Citing action taken by the RBI, the minister informed the house that the apex bank superseded the board of directors of the company on November 29, 2011.

It (RBI) has filed an application on December 2, 2021 for initiation of corporate insolvency resolution process (CIRP) against Reliance Capital at the Mumbai branch of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT).

"As per the section 12 (3) of IBC, CIRP needs to be mandatorily completed within a period of three hundred and thirty days from the insolvency commencement date," the minister said further.

Earlier this month, the company asked its creditors to submit their claims with proof by December 20 following initiation of corporate insolvency process against it.

Last month, the Reserve Bank had superseded Reliance Capital's board, citing defaults and governance issues.

BIZ BUZZ

BMW iX all-electric SUV launched at ₹1.16cr

New Delhi: The first-ever BMW iX all-electric SUV has been launched in India for a price of around ₹1.16 Crore, (ex-showroom, India), Monday. The iX is BMW's first electric vehicle in the country that comes via the CBU (completely built unit) route and has been launched in xDrive 40 guise. Built on an evolved electric-only architecture, the iX sits at the top of BMW's range serving as the firm's 'technology flagship'. Deliveries will start by beginning of April 2022.

The first-ever BMW iX is available in exciting metallic paintworks Mineral White, Phytonic Blue, Black Sapphire and Sophisto Grey. Fifth generation BMW eDrive technology features a highly integrated drive unit within a single housing that is powered by two electric motors, single-speed transmission and power electronics.



Kia Carens official sketches revealed

New Delhi: Kia India has teased sketches of Kia Carens, the company's highly-anticipated model due for its world premiere December 16, 2021. The Kia Carens hosts the company's unique and powerful design language, personifying youthfulness in its character. The exterior boasts high-tech styling details, including Kia's unique Tiger Face design at the front, strikingly highlighted intake grille, LED headlamps, and daytime running lights (DRLs), which all together give a strong and impressive look. The SUV-like side profile takes a muscular stance and further underlines the strong yet refined style of the vehicle.

EV charging station in City

Bhubaneswar: In line with its commitment to encourage EV adoption in India, MG Motor India and Tata Power have deployed a 25 kW superfast public EV charging station in Bhubaneswar. The deployment underlines MG Motor's mission to enhance the national charging ecosystem with 25kW, 30 kW, 50 kW and 60 kW DC superfast charging stations. Till now, the carmaker has installed 44 superfast charging stations across 41 cities in India, the highest by any auto OEM. Compatible with all CCS fast-charging standard vehicles, the Bhubaneswar charging station will offer a seamless charging experience to people. MG ZS EV - India's first pure electric internet SUV - can be charged from 0 to 80% in 80 minutes with the superfast charging station.



5 Indian brands in top 100 global powers of luxury goods list

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 14: Five Indian brands are in the top 100 global powers of luxury goods list with Tata group firm Titan moving up three places to rank 22nd and being among the 20 fastest-growing luxury goods companies, according to a Deloitte report.

Four other homegrown brands, Kalyan Jewellers, Joyalukkas, PC Jewellers, and Tribhovandas Bhimji Zaveri Ltd, have been ranked 37th, 46th, 57th, and 92nd, respectively, in the Deloitte Global 2021 edition of Global Powers of Luxury Goods.

In India, the trend remained consistent similar to previous years with the gems and jewellery category dominating the latest edition featuring the five brands, Deloitte said in a statement. Tribhovandas Bhimji Zaveri Ltd is a first-time entrant to the list of the top 100 luxury goods companies that generated USD 252 billion in revenues globally, it added.

The top 10 luxury brands list mainly featured leading players from the EMEA region. These players are LVMH Moët Hennessy-Louis Vuitton SE, Kering SA, Capri Holdings, Compagnie Financière Richemont, L'Oréal Luxe, Chanel Limited, Essilor Luxottica, and Hermes International spread across the luxury genre, Deloitte said.

GAIL looks to bring India's first electrolyser

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 14: State-owned GAIL India Ltd plans to import India's first and the largest to date electrolyser for producing green hydrogen within a year and may look to hire another ship to ferry LNG from the US, officials said Tuesday.

GAIL chairman and managing director Manoj Jain said his company had launched a global tender to procure a 10-megawatt electrolyser capable of producing 4.5 tonnes per day of hydrogen.

Delivery of the electrolyser may happen in 12 to 14 months.

"Not just imports, we are also looking at domestic manufacturing of electrolyser. Our tender gives preference to domestic manufacturers," he said.

The company will install the electrolyser at one of its gas processing plants in the country. While the firm was initially look-



ing at using natural gas as feedstock for producing what is known as blue hydrogen, it may look at using renewable energy to split water to produce oxygen and green

hydrogen. While molecularly blue or green hydrogen is similar, the former has a carbon dioxide by-product and the latter is emission-free fuel.

Jain said the hydrogen so produced can be sold to users such as fertiliser plants or mixed in CNG for sale to automobiles, helping cut emissions.

The largest electrolyser currently announced in India is a 5-MW unit being installed by India's largest power utility NTPC at Vindhyachal in Uttar Pradesh.

NTPC intends to power the electrolyser using a coal-fired superthermal power station, in concert with carbon capture. Renewable electricity may potentially be used in the future, which would make it emissions-free, but no date has been set for when that could occur.

Separately, GAIL Director (Finance) R K Jain said the company may look to hire a second LNG ship to ferry fuel from the US. The company in February this year hired from Japanese shipping major Mitsui O.S.K. Lines a 180,000 cubic meters vessel for

five years and named it GAIL Bhuwan. This vessel was used to transport LNG from the US to Dabhol in Maharashtra earlier this month. GAIL has

contracts for procuring LNG volumes from the USA under two long-term Sales and Purchase Agreements signed with US energy majors.

"We may look at hiring another vessel if there is demand," Jain said. India is putting increased focus on hydrogen as an alternative fuel source to lower its carbon emissions, while also meeting its growing energy needs.

Reliance Industries as well as Adani Group have announced ambitious green hydrogen plans. Billionaire Mukesh Ambani in September said Reliance was aim-

ing to bring down the cost of producing green hydrogen to below USD 2 per kilogram, while it has set a stretch goal of bringing that cost down to under \$1 per kilogram within 10

years as it targets 100 GW of renewable generation capacity by 2030.

Green hydrogen currently costs USD 6 per kg. Adani Group chairman Gautam Adani

too has unveiled a plan to invest USD 20 billion over the next decade in renewable energy generation and component manufacturing.

In addition to setting a goal to become "the producer of the least expensive green electron anywhere in the world," Adani has said his company will become one of the largest green hydrogen producers in the world.

Not just imports, we are also looking at domestic manufacturing of electrolyser. Our tender gives preference to domestic manufacturers

MANOJ JAIN | GAIL CMD



Harmanpreet Singh (No.13) is congratulated by his teammates, including the other scorer Lalit Upadhyay (No.14), after giving India 2-0 lead against Korea, Tuesday

INDIA HELD TO DRAW

Misfiring Men in Blue squander two-goal advantage to begin their Asian Champions Trophy hockey campaign with a 2-2 stalemate with Korea

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dhaka, Dec 14: Defending champions and Olympic bronze-medallists India were held to a 2-2 draw by a fighting Korea in their opening match of the Hero Asian Champions Trophy men's hockey tournament here on Tuesday.

Playing their first tournament after the historic Tokyo Olympics campaign, India started brightly and scored in the fourth minute through Lalit Upadhyay before vice-captain Harmanpreet Singh converted a penalty corner in the 18th minute to double their lead.

Trailing 0-2, Korea fought back after the change of ends and scored through Jonghyun Jang in the 41st minute and Sunghyun Kim in the 46th minute to stun the favourites and draw level.

Korea grew in confidence as the match progressed and pressed the Indian defence hard. The Manpreet Singh-led side also had numerous chances, including penalty corners, but failed to utilise the opportunities as the match ended in a stalemate.

Jaehyeon Kim in front of the Korea goal was the difference between the two sides as he produced numerous brilliant saves to help

his side steal a point from the game.

The last encounter between the two sides ended in a 1-1 draw in the last edition of the tournament. India will next play hosts Bangladesh Wednesday.

It did not take long for India to surge ahead through Lalit, who elegantly controlled the ball just outside the circle and dodged past three Korean defenders to slot it into the net past Kim.

While the Indians played their natural game of attacking hockey from the onset, the Koreans preferred to sit back and defend deep and rely mostly on counter-attacks.

India continued their dominance in the second quarter and secured back-to-back penalty corners.

While the first effort from Varun Kumar was brilliantly saved by Korean goalkeeper Kim, Harmanpreet beautifully converted the next attempt to double India's lead in the 18th minute.

Down by two goals, the Koreans tried to force their way back into the game in the remaining minutes of the second quarter but India defended doggedly.

But the picture was completely different after cross-over as Korea looked more purposeful in their attacks and

secured three consecutive penalty corners in the 41st minute and Jang was bang on target with the last try.

Minutes later, Gursahibjit Singh's shot from top of the circle was wide off the target. The Koreans continued to put pressure on the Indian defence in search of the equaliser and they succeeded in their efforts when Sunghyun Kim tapped in a drive at the near post from a drive from the left flank.

A shocked India had their chances in the form of three more penalty corners but they failed to cash in on the opportunities to split point with Korea.

SJFI HONOUR FOR PRAMOD BHAGAT



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 14: Ace Odisha para-shuttler Pramod Bhagat will share the SJFI Men's Para Athlete of the Year honour with para-javelin thrower Sumit Antil. It was decided Tuesday at the Sports Journalists' Federation of India's (SJFI) Annual General Meeting (AGM) in Guwahati.

The national body will also confer the prestigious 'SJFI Medal' to legendary cricketer Sunil Gavaskar.

Neeraj Chopra, who won India's lone gold medal at the Tokyo Olympics, was adjudged the 'Sportsman of the Year' while weightlifter Mirabai Chanu, who won a silver at the quadrennial extravaganza, was voted as the 'Sportswoman of the Year', according to a media statement.

The Indian men's team that won the hockey bronze in Tokyo – their first hockey medal in 40 years – were declared the 'Team of the Year'.

Pramod bagged a gold medal in the SL3 class of men's singles event at Tokyo 2020. It was a historic feat considering badminton was making its debut at the Paralympics.

The 23-year-old Antil, on the other hand, did a Neeraj Chopra at the Para Games. The lad from Sonapat, same as Neeraj, claimed gold in javelin throw F46 event, shattering the world record in the process with a 68.55m throw.

Shooter Avani Lekhtra will receive the Para-athlete of the Year (woman) award. The 19-year-old from Jaipur, Rajasthan, won country's first yellow metal in shooting at the Tokyo Paralympics in the women's 10m air rifle standing SH1 event. She also equalled the world record scoring 249.6 points in the final. She, later, clinched a bronze in the 50m Rifle 3 Positions SH1 event. The AGM also elected A Vinod (Kerala) as the new SJFI President, Prashant Keni (Mumbai) as the Secretary and Vidut Kalita (Assam) as the Treasurer.

LIST OF OTHER EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS:
Vice Presidents: Devendra Pandey (Mumbai), Vikas Pandey (Indore), Sambit Mohapatra (Odisha) and Saraju Chakraborty (Tripura); Joint Secretary: Amitabha Das Sharma (Kolkata); EC Members: Amol Karhadkar (Mumbai), C Santhosh Kumar (Tamil Nadu), Suprabhat Debnath (Tripura), Partha Chakraborty (Assam), Sushin Ghosh (Assam), Nilesh Deshpande (Nagpur), Tushar Trivedi (Gujarat).

LAKSHYA, SRIKANTH TOO SEAL VICTORIES AT BADMINTON WORLDS

Sindhu begins title defense with win

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Huelva (Spain), Dec 14: Defending champion PV Sindhu breezed past Slovakia's Martina Repiska 21-7, 21-9 to make a re-sounding start in the BWF World Championship here Tuesday.

The fast-rising Lakshya Sen prevailed over 15th seeded Japanese Kenta Nishimoto 22-20, 15-21, 21-18 to progress to the pre-quarterfinals along with Kidambi Srikanth rallied to defeat Chinese Li Shi Feng 15-21, 21-18, 21-17. The 12th seeded Indian's match lasted one hour and nine minutes.

In the men's doubles, Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty beat Chinese Taipei's Lee Jhe-Huei and Yang Po-Hsuan 27-25, 21-17 in 43 minutes.

World No.7 Sindhu took just 24 minutes to beat the unseeded at opponent court No.3 of Palacio de los Deportes Carolina Marin Stadium here.

Seeded sixth in the tournament which she won in 2019 – when it was last held – the two-time Olympic-medallist began on a



rousing note and raced to a 4-1 lead with her fine play.

Repiska tried to make a comeback with two points, but the fancied Indian did not let her go ahead, leading 11-4 at the mid-break.

She continued her dominance and kept accumulating points to widen the lead, eventually pocketing the first game in only 10 minutes.

The script remained the same in the second game as well, with Sindhu maintaining her firm grip over the proceedings to race to a 6-0 lead in just two minutes. At midpoint, Sindhu was leading 11-1 and she completed the formality with a dominant performance.

Sen was made to toil hard for his victory by the Japanese as he took one hour and 22 minutes to emerge winner.

However, the mixed doubles pairing of Saurabh Sharma and Anoushka Parikh suffered a straight game defeat to Malaysians Tan Kian Meng and Lai Pei Jing, going down 21-8, 21-18.

Stewart hat-trick paves JFC's Odisha demolition

AGENCIES

Goa, Dec 14: Greg Stewart sharpened his pedigree as one of the best players in the league this season with a spectacular first-half hat-trick as Jamshedpur FC (JFC) rode his heroics to breeze past Odisha FC and climb to second in the points table, in the Indian Super League at the Tilak Maidan Stadium Tuesday.

Stewart scored three very different yet stunning goals in the fourth, 21st and 35th minutes to crown Peter Hartley's effort in the third minute as the 'away' side made Odisha look ordinary despite this being their best start to the season.

The result means Jamshedpur leapfrogged from fifth to second in the points table with 11 points from six games. Odisha are in fourth position having nine points from five games.

Odisha were rocked inside the first four minutes. Hartley got The Men of Steel going with the first goal, turning in a delightful Stewart corner into the right bottom corner, out-jumping Vinit Rai after winning the flag-kick himself.

A minute later, Stewart made it

2-0 pouncing on a mistake from the Odisha defence and outfoxing Paul Ramfanzuava to then shimmy his way past another defender and let loose a right-footed effort that cannoned past Kamaljit Singh and into the top right corner.

The 31-year old Stewart, who won the Scottish Premiership with Rangers before his move to Jamshedpur, unleashed a stunning free-kick from 30 yards that curled in a left-footer from around the wall to bend in past a diving Kamaljit.

Stewart was in the form of his life, netting his hat-trick in the 35th minute after he strode past a few defenders and fired past the keeper at the far post.

The only downside in a perfect half for Owen Coyle's men was the injury to Alexandre Lima who beat a charging defender to shoot straight at the keeper but injured himself in the process.

The second half could not match up to the sizzling first period as Odisha players tried to create chances and open their goal account and narrow down the margin. Unfortunately, they failed to even find a consolation goal.

Covid trouble for Premier League

ASSOCIATED PRESS

London, Dec 14: The English Premier League reported its highest weekly coronavirus infections as Manchester United's meeting with Brentford became the second match in three days to be postponed due to outbreaks.

There were 42 cases of COVID-19 in the week to Sunday after 3,805 players and club staff were tested, a jump on the 12 cases in the previous seven days of testing.

Some United players and staff returned positive tests following the 1-0 win over Norwich on Saturday evening. The Premier League board accepted United's request to postpone Tuesday's scheduled match at Brentford in London less than 24 hours before kickoff.

"The decision was taken following guidance from medical advisers due to the exceptional circumstances of an ongoing COVID-19 outbreak within Manchester United's squad," the Premier League said in a statement late Monday.

"First team operations at the club's Carrington Training Complex were closed down today to help control the outbreak and minimize



Manchester United's match at Brentford has been postponed

risk of further infection among players and staff. The league wishes a quick recovery to those players and staff with COVID-19."

The first game to be called off this season due to coronavirus cases was Tottenham's trip to Brighton last Sunday due to at least eight players at the north London club contracting COVID-19. Norwich and Aston Villa have also reported coronavirus cases at their clubs.

DHAWAN, DAGAR FORCE JAFFER'S MEN OUT OF VIJAY HAZARE TROPHY

Himachal dash Odisha dreams

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 14: Skipper Rishi Dhawan (91 n o, 58b, 10x4, 3x6; 3/51) led from front to help Himachal Pradesh register a 63-run win over Odisha in their Elite Group A match of the Vijay Hazare Trophy men's one-day cricket tournament in Mumbai, Tuesday. Dhawan was ably supported by Mayank Dagar (6/59), as Odisha bowed out of the competition due to their poor net run-rate.

It was a competition with mixed results for Odisha, who are coached by former India opener Wasim Jaffer. They were leading the group with three successive wins over powerhouses like Andhra, Gujarat and Vidarbha. However, the defeat against Jammu & Kashmir followed by another loss against Himachal, ended their run in the 50-over competition.

Himachal finished the group on top with a net run-rate of +0.551, followed by Vidarbha (+0.210), Andhra (+0.042) and Odisha (-0.200). All of them have 12 points each in their kitty from a possible 20. However, the net run-rate made the difference as Himachal sealed a direct qualification for the quarterfinals, while second-placed Vidarbha will play Tripura for a place in the last eight stage.

Himachal skipper Dhawan won the toss and elected to bat first at the Cricket Club of India ground in Mumbai. The decision proved to be quite decisive, considering the nature of the pitch.

Openers, Shubham Arora (69, 88b, 9x4) and Prashant Chopra (64, 73b, 7x4, 1x6) provided Himachal with a splendid start, forging a 140-run stand with both of them scoring a half century each. However, a mini collapse saw Himachal go down to 154/3 from 140 for no loss.

Bikash Rout (2/51) broke the opening stand getting rid of Arora in the 26th over, before dismissing

ing Chopra in his next over. Then Jayanta Behera (2/46) disturbed the timbers of Amit Kumar to put Himachal in a spot of bother.

However, Nikhil Gangta (81, 57b, 11x4, 2x6), who came into bat at No.3, regained the momentum with the help of his skipper. Gangta dominated the 111-run partnership with a counter-attacking half century, while Dhawan played second fiddle.

Once Behera dismissed Gangta in the 43rd over, it was all Dhawan show as he moved to top gear and helped his side post 360/5 in their 50 overs. It was poor outings for Odisha's new ball bowlers as Debabrata Pradhan returned wicketless conceding 83 runs in his 10 overs, while Sunil Roul conceded a whopping 96 runs in his 10 overs and got the wicket of Sumit Verma as consolation.

Looking at how the pitch is responding, Odisha openers too provided a flying start, adding 101 inside 14 overs. Anurag Sarangi (66, 47b, 10x4, 1x6) was played the role of an aggressor, while Sandeep Pattnaik (61, 74b, 5x4, 2x6) played second fiddle to the former.

Dagar broke the stand, dismissing Sarangi. Then Sandeep maintained the flow of runs having his skipper Subhanshu Senapati (82, 76b, 4x4, 2x6) at the other end. The duo put together 58 runs before Pattnaik got out.

After that, Odisha kept losing wickets at regular intervals and Senapati ran out of partners, before getting out as the final Odisha wicket. Rajesh Dhuper (34, 24b, 3x4, 2x6) too chipped in with a valuable knock. Odisha were bowled out for 297 in 45.1 overs.

BRIEF SCORES: Himachal Pradesh 360/5 (Rishi Dhawan 91 n o, Nikhil Gangta 81, Shubham Arora 69, Prashant Chopra 64; Jayanta Yadav 2/46, Bikash Rout 2/51) beat Odisha 297 (Subhanshu Senapati 82, Anurag Sarangi 66, Sandeep Pattnaik 61, Rajesh Dhuper 34; Mayank Dagar 6/59, Rishi Dhawan 3/51) by 63 runs.



Odisha skipper Subhanshu Senapati's superb knock went in vain as they lost to Himachal Pradesh