



PANAG'S ASPIRATIONS

Gul Panag has said that an actor needs to add layers to a character, otherwise it becomes stale and boring

LEISURE P2



NASA CREATES HISTORY

NASA's 'Parker Solar Probe' has become the first spacecraft to fly through the Sun's upper atmosphere, the Corona

INTERNATIONAL P10



INDIA ROUT B'DESH

India decimate Bangladesh 9-0 in their second match of the Asian Champions Trophy hockey tournament

SPORTS P12



'Rangabati' composer Gountia hospitalised

BURLA: Padma Shri Mitrabhanu Gountia was hospitalised after he complained of chest pain late Monday night. Gountia is renowned for composing the eponymous 'Rangabati' song in Sambalpur language in 1979. A retired teacher, he has been credited for penning over 1,000 folk songs. After he complained of chest pain, the family members of Gountia admitted him to Kuchinda Sub divisional hospital. Doctors there advised that he be shifted to a better facility after which he was taken to VIMSAR. Currently he is undergoing treatment there. Gountia was conferred the Padma Shri in 2020 by President Ram Nath Kovind.



Relief for Aryan in drugs case

Mumbai: The Bombay High Court exempted Wednesday Aryan Khan from his weekly appearance before the Narcotics Control Bureau's (NCB) office here in connection with the cruise drugs case. A single bench of Justice NW Sambre said the condition that he has to appear before the NCB office every Friday is modified. "The applicant (Aryan) shall attend the office of NCB as and when directed by the agency, provided a 72-hour notice is issued to the applicant," Justice Sambre said. The court also said that Aryan need not furnish his itinerary every time he travels out of Mumbai.

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Naveen seeks Niti Aayog support for infra boost

Odisha CM wants more backing from the Centre to tackle problems arising out of natural calamities that damage infrastructure

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 15: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik urged Wednesday the Centre for special intervention in filling the infrastructural gaps due to recurring natural calamities in Odisha during an interaction with a visiting delegation of the Niti Aayog led by its vice-chairman Dr Rajiv Kumar. Patnaik also said that Odisha has made substantial improvement in the last two decades in various sectors.

On its part, the Niti Aayog official congratulated the chief minister for the increase in Odisha's per capita income, improvement in agriculture and mining along with managing the fiscal deficit below five per cent. Kumar said Odisha's per capita income was higher than the national average.

Patnaik pointed out that though Odisha made substantial improvement in the last two decades in macro-economic and socio-economic indicators, the state is facing a huge infrastructural gap. "Focusing on the long term issues, the Chief Minister said that the state is burdened with infrastructural gaps and vulnerability to recurring natural calamities. This requires a special dispensation from the Centre to help Odisha to catch up with other frontline states," a statement issued by the CMO informed. Welcoming the delegation,



Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik during the meeting with Niti Aayog members in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday

Patnaik said, "We would like to take this opportunity to present various longstanding and emergent developmental issues requiring the support of NITI Aayog and Government of India."

The chief minister pointed out that Odisha's development strategies have been successful in combating Left Wing Extremism (LWE), and mobilisation and economic empowerment of nearly 70 lakh women through self-help groups.

"We are the third largest contributor to PDS rice pool of India. We have pioneered a conditional cash transfer system for pregnant women and lactating mothers," Patnaik told the delegation.

The chief minister said that his government would welcome more consultations and collaboration in the course of strategy and policy formulation across sectors. Besides, Odisha's health assurance scheme for cashless treatment in empanelled hospitals has helped people to reduce out-of-

pocket health expenditure.

While congratulating the chief minister, for success in various fields, Kumar advised the Odisha government to improve its mining production from one per cent to more than two per cent. Kumar also proposed the state government to set up an SDG (sustainable development goal) monitoring unit, besides suggesting switching to chemical-free agriculture. He said that the Niti Aayog is keen to partner Odisha for chalking out a development blueprint for the state.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting, Dr Kumar said, "We have discussed what more development work can be done in Aspirational districts, how more people can be lifted from the BPL and other developmental issues." He said the Niti Aayog will regularly follow it up.

As Odisha is rich in minerals, discussion was held on how investments and FDI can be attracted to the mining sector, added Dr Kumar.

CB to probe death of Das Burma aide

Palei left home to attend a feast on the night of December 10. His body with injury marks was found floating on the Nuanai river December 13

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 15: Odisha Director General of Police (DGP) Abhay said Wednesday that the Crime Branch will probe into the death of Chittaranjan Palei, a key aide of BJD leader and Deputy Chairman of the State Planning Board, Sanjay Das Burma. "DGP, Odisha has ordered that investigation of the Puri Sadar case No. 424 to be taken over by Crime Branch, immediately," the Odisha Police said in a statement. Additional DG, Crime Branch,

Sanjeeb Panda said later in the day that a four-member team headed by DSP SK Mishra will investigate the case. "DSP Sisir Kumar Mishra will be the investigating officer in the case and three officers – one inspector, one sub-inspector and an ASI will assist him in the probe," Panda said.

The team will proceed to Puri and begin the investigation immediately. The team will collect all the documents from the local police about the investigation so far," Panda added.

Notably, the body of Palei, a native of Sanabandhakera village in Brahmagiri tehsil of Puri district, was recovered under mysterious circumstances from the Nuanai river in Puri district December 13. On the basis of the complaint of the family members of the deceased, Sadar



Chittaranjan Palei and Sanjay Das Burma

police registered a murder case and launched an investigation.

Palei's family members have alleged involvement of Das Burma in the former's death. Incidentally, Das Burma along with Palei's father, uncle, brother and sister

met Puri SP Kanwar Vishal Singh demanding stringent action against those involved in the death of Palei. The deceased's family members have also alleged that Palei was murdered over an issue related to repayment of borrowed money.

Das Burma also held separate discussions with the Puri SP and urged for proper investigation into the case. However, Palei's wife has alleged the involvement of Das Burma in the suspected murder.

However, as per the kin of Chittaranjan, his friend Jagannath Sarangi alias Jaga had borrowed ₹3,00,000 from him but was refusing to repay the amount. He alleged that Jaga had killed Palei as he was pressurising the latter to repay the amount. He said that the alleged murder took place during the feast.

SPLASH OF COLOURS



A student of BK College of Art and Crafts gives finishing touches to a wall painting near AG Square as part of a beautification drive in the Odisha capital, Wednesday

Lone survivor of IAF chopper crash dies

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 15: Group Captain (GC) Varun Singh, a decorated air warrior who was seriously injured December 8 in the chopper crash in Tamil Nadu, died Wednesday at a military hospital in Bangalore, the IAF said. It said the "braveheart" Group Captain succumbed to his injuries this (Wednesday) morning.

"IAF is deeply saddened to inform the passing away of braveheart Group Captain Varun Singh, who succumbed this morning to the injuries sustained in the helicopter accident December '21. IAF offers sincere condolences and stands firmly with the bereaved family," the IAF said on Twitter.

Varun was the lone survivor of the crash in which Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Bipin Rawat, his wife Madhulika and 11 Armed Forces personnel were killed.

Varun was conferred with the Shaurya Chakra in August for averting a possible mid-air accident after his Tejas light combat aircraft was hit by a major technical snag last year.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed anguish at the passing away of Group Captain Varun Singh. "Group Captain Varun Singh served the nation with pride, valour and utmost professionalism. I am extremely anguished by his passing away," Modi tweeted. Condolences to his family and friends. Om Shanti," the prime minister added.

The IAF said that Group Captain Varun's mortal remains will be flown Thursday to Bhopal where he will be cremated with full military honours.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



He's been working 18 hours a day to deal with 15th century issues. Once he reaches 21st century, he'll address your problems

Bansal appointed new Odisha DGP

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 15: Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has appointed IPS Sunil Kumar Bansal as the new Director General of Police (DGP) of the state. The 1987-batch IPS officer is currently on central deputation and serving as Special Director, Intelligence Bureau (IB). Bansal will take charge as the DGP from January 1, 2022. He will replace incumbent DGP Abhay who is set to retire December 31, this year.



"On recommendation of the Union Public Service Commission and in the interest of public service, Shri Sunil Kumar Bansal, IPS (RR-1987) at present under Central Deputation as Special Director, IB Hqrs., New Delhi is appointed as Director General of Police (HoPF), Odisha in the Apex Scale of Pay (Level 17) in the Pay Matrix for a period of two years with effect from the date of joining in the post," a notification of Odisha Government's Home Department said Wednesday.

7 INVESTMENT PROPOSALS APPROVED

Once the new projects start running, they will provide employment to over 6,000 people and will contribute to the economic development of Odisha

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 15: The Odisha government Wednesday approved seven investment proposals worth ₹511.19 crore which would create employment opportunity for 6,402 persons. The State Level Single Window Clearance Authority (SLSWCA) led by Chief Secretary Suresh

Chandra Mahapatra has accorded in principle approval to the seven projects, officials said.

Industries Secretary Hemant Kumar Sharma said that the projects were employment intensive in sectors like textile, apparel, paper products, renewable energy, tourism, downstream steel manufacturing and iron ore beneficiation.

The government has approved the proposal of Ambattur Fashions to set up an apparel manufacturing unit at Chandaka in Khurda district at an investment of ₹51 crore, which will generate employment for over 4,700 persons, informed

Sharma. Similarly Wild Lotus Fashions will set up a garment manufacturing unit in Khurda investing ₹52.62 crore which will give jobs to 560 persons.

Similarly, the proposal to set up a new Kraft paper unit in Balasore district (₹120 crore) providing employment to 750 persons was approved. A pipe manufacturing unit in Sambalpur (₹ 51.99 crore) with employment for 60 persons and a four-star hotel in Khurda (₹63.30 crore, 85 jobs) also got the nod.

IOCL's proposal to set up a 10 MW Solar Power Plant in Boudh district at an investment of ₹52.28

crore and employment generation for 65 persons was approved. The pitch by PTCL Infrastructure Limited to expand its iron ore beneficiation plant from 1.5 MTPA to 2.5 MTPA at Barbil at an investment of ₹120 crore was approved.

Mahapatra directed IPICOL to have oversight on the construction and commissioning of the projects approved earlier. Concerned departments were asked to extend proactive facilitation for expeditious construction of the industries. Mahapatra also directed that the industries should employ persons 'skilled in Odisha'.

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VALUE	VARIATION
SENSEX	57788.03	↓ 329.06
NIFTY	17221.40	↓ 103.50
DOLLAR	76.64	↑ ₹0.48
EURO	86.41	↑ ₹0.14
GOLD	₹48,121	↑ ₹49
SILVER	₹60,406	↓ ₹412

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
MAX	26.0°C	26.4°C
MIN	14.5°C	14.5°C
Humidity	68%	85%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	dry weather most likely	

Kohli's confessions stump BCCI

Indian Test skipper takes on the powerful BCCI contradicting statements given by Sourav Ganguly and other board officials

AGENCIES

Mumbai, Dec 15: Former white ball captain Virat Kohli has blown the lid off the brewing controversy between him and the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) and has left the board red-faced. In fact, Kohli has contradicted most of the statements made by the BCCI and its chief Sourav Ganguly since he was relieved of ODI captaincy.

Kohli has also rubbished 'rumours' which surfaced Monday that he would opt out of the ODI series against South Africa beginning January 19 next year. He also informed that his removal from ODI captaincy happened 90 minutes before the Test team's selection for the South Africa tour.

At the pre-departure press meet before the South Africa tour, the Indian skipper said that he would put his full support behind new white-ball skipper Rohit Sharma and head coach Rahul Dravid's 'vision'. Kohli also said he understands that not winning an ICC white ball trophy led to his removal.

"Whatever was said about the communication that happened was



inaccurate," Kohli said with obvious reference to Ganguly's statement about the board requesting him

not to quit as split captaincy might not work in the white-ball format. "The chief selector discussed

the Test team to which we both agreed. Before ending the call, I was told that the five selectors have decided that I will not be the ODI captain to which I replied 'okay fine'," the 33-year-old informed as he recalled the sequence of events.

Kohli also asserted that he will play in the upcoming ODI series in South Africa, putting to rest speculations about his availability and his equation with Rohit.

"I was and I am available for selection all the time. I never communicated with BCCI asking for rest to celebrate my daughter's birthday. I am available for the ODI series in South Africa, and was always available," Kohli said in a virtual interview with reporters.

leisure



BROOKE SHIELDS USED TO BE SCARED OF PHYSICAL INTIMACY

Brooke Shields was terrified of making love when she was young but her relationship with it has evolved over the years. The 56-year-old model said she found intimate relations scary in her 20s, admitting that the idea of sex left her feeling she would be committing an offence to humanity.

AFFLECK HINTS AT SHIFT IN CAREER APPROACH

Ben Affleck has admitted that he is unlikely to focus on major blockbusters as streaming services become increasingly important in the film industry. The 49-year-old actor has hinted that he will gravitate towards smaller projects and films on streaming services.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
Be careful, you may break a few hearts today! Otherwise, your love life is steady and you may now feel ready to commit to your beloved. If married, your relationship takes on a deeper hue and a strong binding attachment.

TAURUS
There are chances that you may put in hard work and yet the returns may not be as you expected, predicts Ganesh. You are likely to be unenthusiastic about travelling in the afternoon. An evening of relaxation and intimate discussions may be on the cards today, says Ganesh.

GEMINI
You have a penchant for organising family functions and social programmes. Today, you are likely to organise one more. You plan to renovate your house in the afternoon. By evening, you will be back to your socialising self and may hang out at a popular local joint with a childhood friend.

CANCER
Today, you will long to be with your loved ones, says Ganesh. You will probably plan to refurbish and refresh your residence. You may get a little stingy when it comes to making payments. You will spend the evening talking to a soul mate on phone, says Ganesh.

LEO
There are rough patches that all families must deal with. Ganesh says there are chances that today, you may disagree with your siblings and other members of the family. Money and property will be your key areas of concern. At work too, you may find yourself beset with a confrontational attitude towards peers. The best thing you can do today, advises Ganesh, is to keep your emotions in check.

VIRGO
You're the magician when it comes to people and relationships, says Ganesh. Later in the day, you may become all hush-hush about certain affairs. The real worry might come at the end of the day when you realise fun and frolic have been big-tickets. Ganesh foresees a happy and cheerful day, nonetheless.

LIBRA
Ganesh says today will be a lucky day for you. You will make all efforts possible to please the person you love. You will pay special attention to your appearance and try to change your personality and attitude. There are chances of new romantic relationships developing for those looking for love.

SCORPIO
Ganesh foresees that you may not be at the best of your health as agitation and irritation create pressure on your physical being. Watch your temper and tongue, or a critical situation may take an ugly turn. Keep away from unnecessary discussion with peers or colleagues. By the end of the day, you may ponder upon the problems and would be wise enough to arrive at solutions.

SAGITTARIUS
Money matters stand to be at the forefront today. Lady Luck will smile on you, as you may see monetary gains from your business. But fickle as fortune is – and not that you would mind – evening might be spent in buying the most exquisite jewellery for your sweetheart. But beware of con games and watch that purse carefully.

CAPRICORN
The backbreaking work that you've been doing can drain out all your energy today. But, you'll still be able to cross the finishing line and successfully complete your projects, marks Ganesh. The support and cooperation of your family and friends will be like an oxygen mask for you, as they will understand the hardships you've been facing.

AQUARIUS
You will transform abstract ideas into practical and tangible strategies today, and deserve all the credit. You will also appreciate and understand life a little more, says Ganesh. You may finally reach out for the Bhagwad Gita your mother has been pressing you to read.

PISCES
In spite of the pressure and stress you will be labouring under at the workplace today, you can expect to excel in all the activities that you choose to pursue. On the domestic front, the support that your family members extend will prove to be invaluable, says Ganesh.

An actor's craft is to add layers to character: Gul

MUMBAI: In recent times, actress Gul Panag has played some characters on screen that are completely different from who she is in real life.

In the upcoming web film *420 IPC*, Gul plays the character of a housewife whose husband becomes a victim of a scam.

Being a former beauty queen, who is also a biker, a pilot, a politician and a fitness enthusiast, at the beginning of her career Gul used to get characters of urban cool girls in most of her films.

Asked if she changed her strategy or casting directors have started looking at her differently to offer a variety of roles in recent times, Gul said: "I think each character has two parts, one that is visualised by the writer and director; another in which the actors infuse something from themselves, in their own interpretation and perform that. It is the craft of an actor to add the layer to a character; otherwise, the character becomes so flat. For me, bringing a part of me into the character is how I make it interesting."

In *420 IPC*, which also features Vinay Pathak and Ranvir Shorey, Gul plays the character of Puja Kiswani, a Chartered Accountant.

Directed by Manish Gupta, the movie releases December 17 on ZEE5.



Shai teams up with Walker, MOTi for her new love track

Mumbai-born Shai, after being relocated to the UK, has been writing songs for the likes of Nicky Romero, W&W, Ayokay, Jay Pryor, and Freedo.



Mumbai: Indian pop star Shai has released her new love track *I Wonder* as a part of her collaboration with Canadian DJ Frank Walker and Dutch music producer MOTi.

The deeply intimate track programmed electronically, talks about first glances and manifesting romance.

Frank Walker has previously collaborated with world famous artistes including Astrid S, for his top 10 Canadian top 40 radio single *Only When It Rains*, which earned a Juno Award nomination for Dance Recording of the Year in 2020.

Mumbai-born Shai relocated to the UK after attending the Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts. She has

been writing songs for the likes of Nicky Romero, W&W, Ayokay, Jay Pryor, and Freedo, among others.

Her songs have also been synced on multiple platforms including Netflix's *Lucifer* and ITV's *Love Island UK & USA*. She has also had chart success on the Billboard dance charts at the 20th spot.

MOTi, on the other hand, is a renowned music producer and DJ from Amsterdam. He has produced for multi-platinum hip-hop artistes like Ty Dolla \$ign and Wizkid and collaborated with multi-platinum major legends including Tiesto, Major Lazer and Martin Garrix.

Kala Kumbh celebrating valour of unsung heroes

BHUBANESWAR: Kala Kumbh, a six-day artists' workshop to celebrate the unsung heroes of Indian freedom struggle, is underway here on the campus of Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS).

The event, a collaboration of KISS, Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT) and National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA), Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India, is being organised under *Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav*, a 75-week-long grand celebration to commemorate the 75 years of Indian Independence. The workshop will conclude December 17.

KISS and KIIT authorities had recently signed a MoU with NGMA to work jointly for the preservation and promotion of tribal art, craft, stories and culture through research and documen-



tation, exhibitions of contemporary artworks, seminars, conferences, and exchange visits of the tribal artisans.

"It is intended to showcase our rich cultural heritage of indigenous and contemporary visual art practices with focus on di-

verse geographical locations of India," stated NGMA director Adwaita Gadanayak.

Artists from Odisha, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh and North-east region are participating in the event. Local art forms such as Pattachitra, Talapatrachitra, Manjusa, Madhubani and Jadupatua are on display at the event.

Expressing happiness, KIIT & KISS founder Achyuta Samanta, said, "It is a matter of pride for Odisha that such a mega artists' workshop is being organised in the state. Odisha is known for its rich heritage and it is a privilege for KIIT & KISS to come on board for the event."

Freida Pinto fulfills her career ambition

LOS ANGELES: Actress Freida Pinto, who plays music manager Megnah Rai in *A Christmas Number One*, says she fulfilled a career ambition by starring in a festive flick.

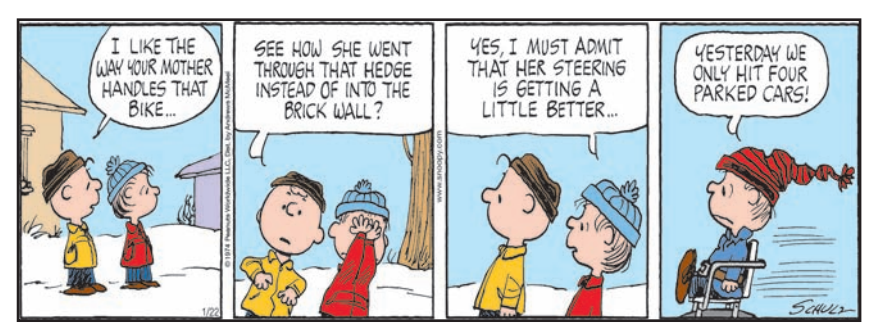
The *Slumdog Millionaire* actress said: "I play a music manager on the hunt for a Christmas hit song. It's a romcom but it brings in quite a few other elements. It's funny and heartfelt. Our goal was to put smiles on people's faces and bring cheer to their lives. 'I've always wanted to be part of a Christmas movie. I've been on the lookout for the perfect one to be part of and here it is.'"

She also shared that the 2006 movie *The Holiday*, which stars Cameron Diaz and Kate Winslet, is her favourite Christmas movie, reports femalefirst.co.uk

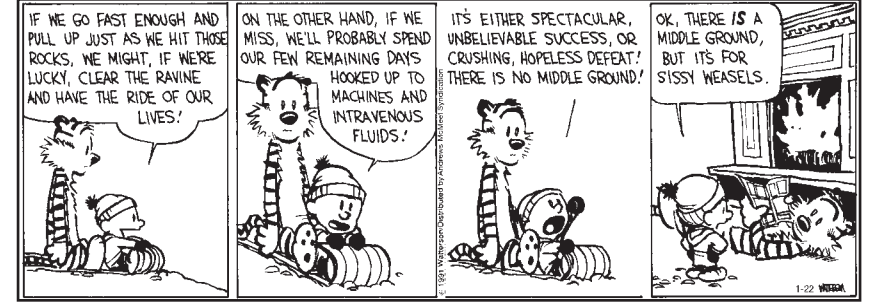
Pinto was previously in a relationship with her *Slumdog Millionaire* co-star Dev Patel and is proud to see how his career has progressed since their amicable split in 2014.



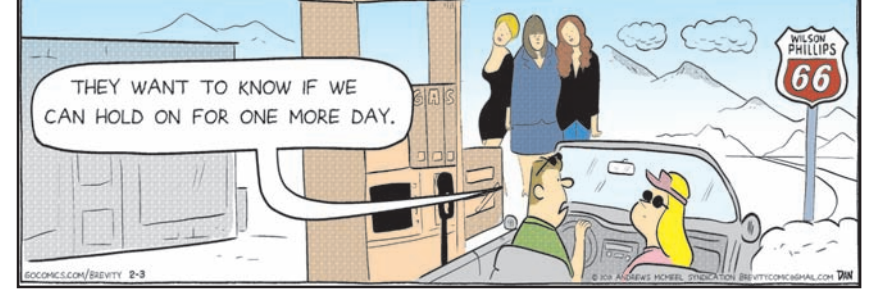
PEANUTS



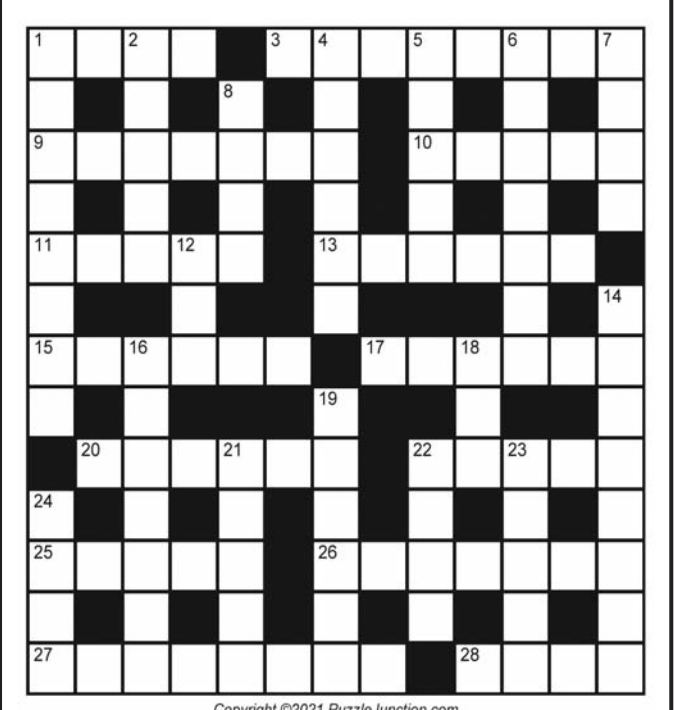
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



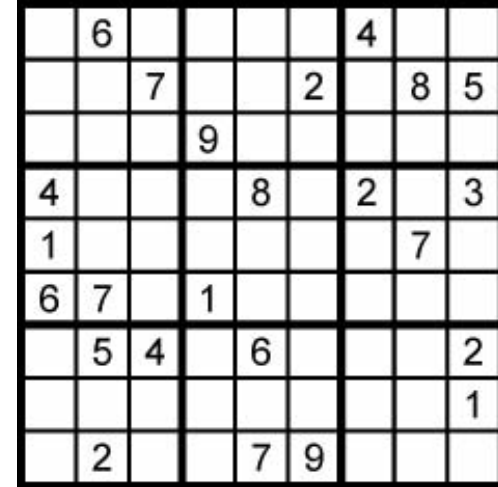
FUN post CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Celestial bear
 - 3 Intuitive feeling
 - 9 Mixer
 - 10 Toast maker
 - 11 Vacuous
 - 13 Soothsayer
 - 15 Hardy's chum
 - 17 Plaster of Paris
 - 20 Buddha, e.g.
 - 22 Corolla part
 - 25 Irascible
 - 26 Mongoose-like animal
- Down**
- 1 London
 - 2 Blind followers
 - 4 Constrictive
 - 5 Leg bone
 - 6 Sewing machine parts
 - 7 Shipshape
 - 8 Vortex
 - 12 Road crew supply
 - 14 Brunch order
 - 16 James Joyce novel
 - 18 Cobbler
 - 19 Seafood entree
 - 21 Culinary herb
 - 22 "Not guilty," e.g.
 - 23 Hungarian wine
 - 24 Eczema symptom

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS



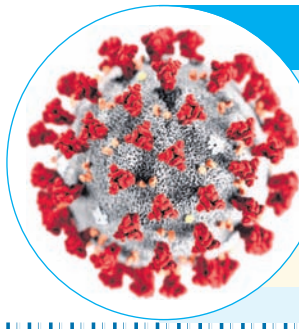
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown



XMAS AHEAD

A girl trying a Santa Claus cap from a roadside vendor at Nayapalli in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	27,20,23,864	24,45,34,999	53,41,064
India	3,47,10,628	3,41,46,931	4,76,135
Odisha	10,52,145	10,41,836	8,439

DELICACIES FOR LORD



Altogether 701 dishes were offered to Lord Krishna and Sradha at Srigauravihar Ashram in Puri on the occasion of *Byanjan Dwadashi*, Wednesday OP PHOTO

LAW & ORDER IN TWIN CITY

CM announces spl unit for crime investigation

THE CHIEF MINISTER ALSO APPROVES COMMISSIONING OF THREE NEW POLICE STATIONS - PAHALA, INFOVALLEY AND BENTAKAR

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 15: A dedicated crime investigation unit will be set up under Bhubaneswar-Cuttack Commissionerate Police in order to control crime in the twin cities, said Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, Wednesday.

Approving the proposal in this regard, the Chief Minister announced that the Special Crime Unit will investigate and prosecute various cases of organised crimes, economic offenses and drug trafficking.

This special branch will operate under the supervision of a Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP). It will have 59 employees including an Additional DCP, three Assistant Commissioners of Police (ACPs), nine inspectors, 12 Sub-Inspectors, three ASIs (Communication), three constables (Communication) and



27 constables.

Patnaik's announcement came a day after the government decided to set up 14 new cybercrime and economic offence police stations across the state.

The Chief Minister also approved the commissioning of three new police stations in the Commissionerate Police area to

The unit will have 59 employees including an Additional DCP, 3 ACPs, 9 inspectors, 12 SIs, 3 ASIs (Communication), 3 constables (Communication) and 27 constables

The Chief Minister also approved the commissioning of three new police stations in the Commissionerate Police area to provide better police services to the people in view of growing population.

provide better police services to the people in view of growing population.

The new police stations are: Pahala, Infovalley and Bentakar. The three new police stations have been upgraded from Police Outposts operating under Baliaanta, Jatni and Cuttack Sadar police stations respectively.

Two new places added to Eco-Retreat

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 15: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Wednesday inaugurated the third edition of a glamping event across seven exotic locations in Odisha.

THE NEW PLACES ARE: PATI-SONAPUR IN GANJAM, PUTSIL-DEOMALI BASE IN KORAPUT DISTRICT.

THE OTHER FIVE DESTINATIONS ARE: KONARK IN PURI DISTRICT, SATKOSIA IN ANGUL DISTRICT, BHITARKANIKA NATIONAL PARK IN KENDRAPARA, DARINGBADI IN KANDHAMAL DISTRICT AND HIRAKUD IN SAMBALPUR

Patnaik described the 'Eco Retreat 2021' as the "foremost luxury camping festival of eastern India", adding that it would go a long way in encouraging tourists to explore beautiful destinations set deep in the hinterlands of the state.

Glamping is a portmanteau of the words glamorous and camping. It is different from the traditional camping as it is more comfortable with luxurious accommodation and amenities. In a virtual address, the



Chief Minister said the event was an ideal gateway to enjoy the much-needed leisure to conclude the year.



Dignitaries at the inaugural ceremony of Konark Eco-Retreat OP PHOTOS

He added that two more locations were added this year, riding on the popularity of the model with "enthusiastic response received by each of the previous editions across five diverse locales".

The new places are: Pati-Sonapur in Ganjam, Putsil-Deomali Base in Koraput district.

The other five destinations are: Konark in Puri district, Satkosia in Angul district, Bhitarkanika National Park in Kendrapara, Daringbadi in Kandhamal district and Hirakud in Sambalpur.

"The facilities and services at the eco-retreats are in complete compliance of Covid-safety norms," Patnaik added.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 15: The Bhubaneswar Development Authority (BDA) Wednesday extended the last date for submission of applications for the lease deed execution till December 31.

Earlier, the last date for submission of applications for the lease deed execution was December 15.

The deadline was extended as the applicants failed to submit the documents, said a notice issued by the BDA.

The applicants can now apply for online submission of the same from December 20 to December 31. The applicants are requested to apply for the lease deed execution

by visiting www.bda.gov.in to complete the whole process in a hassle-free manner, said the notice.

"We have decided to extend the deadline upon request of some applicants as they failed to submit required documents regarding execution of their lease deeds. Hence, those who didn't submit their applications by 15th December can submit them through online mode by December 31," said BDA Secretary Kabindra Kumar Sahoo.

If an applicant faces any trouble during online application, then he/she can dial 0674-2396437. This notice is not applicable for allotment under discretionary quota/task-force/audit report/third party transfer and any other allotment

having legal issues, said BDA sources.

Similarly, this notice is not applicable for Lingaraj Vihar Housing & Shopping Scheme, Baramunda Housing Scheme & Shopping Scheme, District Centre Commercial Complex, Mahatab Market, Subham Market and Barabhuja Market Complex.

It can be mentioned here that the BDA had warned stringent action against people who have been allotted plots in the state Capital but failed to construct houses on them. In many cases, it has been observed that the allottees sell the plots to builders when there is a rise in land prices in violation of BDA's plotting scheme norms.

Two-day bankers' stir begins today

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 15: United Forum of Bank Unions (UFBU) and All India Bank Officers' Confederation (AIBOC) have declared a two-day nationwide bank strike from December 16 against the Banking Laws (Amendment) Bill 2021, which is likely to be presented during the Winter Session of Parliament.



The Union government is expected to bring the Banking Laws (Amendment) Bill 2021, which will allow privatisation of two public sector banks

Holding a presser Wednesday, General Secretary of AIBOC Soumya Datta said, "We discussed the matter with officials of the Union Ministry of Finance and urged them to withdraw the Bill from the list as it will severely affect all the stakeholders. However, they didn't show any interest in withdrawal of the Bill, forcing us to go for the two-day nationwide strike."

The Centre is expected to bring the Banking Laws (Amendment) Bill 2021, which will allow privatisation of two public sector banks (PSBs) as part of its Rs 1.75 lakh crore disinvestment plans for the current fiscal year.

The Bill seeks "to effect amendments in Banking Companies (Acquisition and Transfer of Undertakings) Acts, 1970 and 1980 and incidental amendments to Banking Regulation Act, 1949 in the context of the Union Budget announcement 2021 regarding privatisation of two Public Sector Banks."

All private and public sector banks in the state will remain shut for two days. However, it will be a relief for the customers as the banks will be opened Saturday (December 18).

Around 10 lakh employees and staffers from across the country will come forward to participate in the strike, said the AIBOC.

UG, PG exams to be conducted offline

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 15: The Higher Education (HE) department Wednesday directed the colleges and universities in the state to conduct all the examinations (annual/semester) in offline mode with strict adherence to the Covid-19 protocols.

HE department Secretary Saswat Mishra sent a letter in this regard to the principals of all government and non-government degree colleges and vice chancellors of all public universities of the state, sources said.

"It is hereby intimated that all undergraduate (UG) and postgraduate (PG) level examinations will henceforth be conducted in offline mode

Higher Education Secretary Saswat Mishra has written to the principals of all govt and non-govt degree colleges and vice chancellors of public universities in the state in this regard

with strict adherence to the Covid-19 protocols," said the letter.

With the improvement in Covid-19 situation in Odisha, the HE department had allowed the state public universities and degree colleges to commence classroom teaching for PG first year and UG pre-final

year students, except 2020-21 UG first year students, from August 16.

At that time, the department had made it clear that the examinations would be conducted in online mode, sources said.

Notably, more than 10 staff members of Kendriya Vidyalaya-1 in the city here and two students of the Capital High School tested positive recently. This apart, some students in Angul, Mayurbhanj and Sundargarh districts tested positive for the deadly virus. Taking the issue seriously, the Odisha State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (OSPCPCR) asked the district Collectors to ensure that all school and college students undergo Covid-19 testing and adhere to the virus protocols strictly.

Research on Himalayas encouraged to find solutions to calamities: Govt



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 15: Scientists studying glaciers in the upper Kali Ganga valley in Uttarakhand have found that a 5-km-long unnamed glacier abruptly changed its main course and merged with an adjacent glacier named Sumzurkchanki several lakh years ago, the Parliament was informed Wednesday.

"Scientists from the Wadia

Holocene (10,000 years ago)," Earth Sciences and Science & Technology Minister Jitendra Singh told the Lok Sabha in a written reply.

Stating that the government encourages further research and study on the Himalayan region to find solutions to frequent natural calamities by numerous research institutes, universities, IITs and IISc, he said, "The Ministry of Earth Sciences, through its National Centre for Seismology, is involved in the research using the recorded earthquake data to understand various phenomena related to earthquake processes and seismic hazard assessment particularly for Himalayan region."

The Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology has been pursuing research in understanding the causes and consequences of earthquakes, landslides and avalanches in the Himalaya with a view to provide mitigation measures, it was learnt.

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WINTER ACCESSORIES AND AN EXCITING COLLECTION OF SHAWLS

Cold wave grips state; Daringbadi at 7.5°C

Bhubaneswar, Dec 15: Cold wave conditions gripped Odisha Wednesday with the mercury dropping below 15 degrees Celsius in several places and Daringbadi recording the lowest temperature of 7.5 degrees Celsius, officials said.



The minimum temperature in the twin cities of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack was 14.5 degrees Celsius

twin cities of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack was 14.5 degrees Celsius. The dry spell will prevail across the state and the minimum temperature is unlikely to see a major change over the next 24 hours. Thereafter, it will gradually fall by 3-4 degrees Celsius across the state, the weather office said.

tensify as dry and chilly winds from north and northwest India enter the state, it added. Owing to the widespread presence of water vapour in the upper reaches of the atmosphere, the temperature during daytime in most parts of the state is also expected to be below the normal with daytime fog, the weather office said.

Naveen condoles Group Capt Varun's demise

Bhubaneswar, Dec 15: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Wednesday condoled the demise of Group Captain Varun Singh, who succumbed to the injuries sustained in the chopper crash near Coonor last week.

Singh was initially admitted to a hospital in Wellington in Tamil Nadu with severe burn injuries following the Mi-17V5 helicopter crash, in which Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat, his wife, and 11 armed forces personnel were killed.

The 39-year-old was shifted to a military hospital in Bangalore where he breathed his last Wednesday morning.

"My thoughts and prayers are with the bereaved families in this hour of grief," the Chief Minister said.

Singh is survived by his wife, an 11-year-old son, and an eight-year-old daughter.

218 new nCoV cases

Bhubaneswar: After a gap of four days, the daily Covid load in Odisha again crossed 200-mark as 218 fresh cases were detected in the past 24 hours, taking the tally in the state to 10,52,145, a Health official said Wednesday. Health department sources said of the total 218 new positive cases, 127 were reported from the quarantine centres and 91 local contact cases. Khurda saw the highest number of 117 cases followed by Cuttack (15) and Mayurbhanj (14).

CCTVs in MEMU train

Bhubaneswar: The Bhubaneswar-Nayagarh Town Mainline Electric Multiple Unit (MEMU) train has been fitted with CCTVs and modern amenities. The train has been fitted with GPS-based passenger information system and passenger address system to disseminate information to the passengers. This apart, the fibre-reinforced plastic (FRP) interior panels in the train will give an aesthetic view to the passengers. The MEMU train is manufactured with stainless steel body and has aerodynamically-shaped stainless steel front end nose for reduced air resistance.

Workshop on coating tech

Bhubaneswar: A workshop on coating technologies for industrial application at CSIR-Institute of Minerals and Materials Technology (IMMT) was held here Wednesday. PK Gupta, Director, MSME Development Institute, Ministry of MSME, was the chief guest while Satwik Swain, Secretary General, Odisha Assembly of Small and Medium Enterprise (OASME) graced the occasion as the guest of honour. The workshop aimed at deliberating on scientific interventions required by MSME for their specific coating needs.

Gadkari okays ₹324 crore 4-lane ROB at Kesinga

New Delhi, Dec 15: Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari has approved several construction and upgradation projects in Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.

The Union minister informed that construction of 4-lane ROB including land acquisition in lieu of level crossing No- RV-172 at 176 km of NH-201 (presently NH-26) at Kesinga in Odisha has been approved with a budget outlay of ₹324.09 crore.

He also informed that rehabilitation and upgradation from 2 lane to 2/4 lane with paved shoulder of Mulakalacheruvu to Madanapalle section of NH-42 on engineering procurement and construction (EPC) mode in Andhra Pradesh has been

The Union minister also informed that rehabilitation and upgradation from 2 lane to 2/4 lane with paved shoulder of Mulakalacheruvu to Madanapalle section of NH-42 on EPC mode in Andhra Pradesh has been approved with a budget outlay of ₹480.10 crore

Gadkari also approved development of 23 project works under CRIF scheme for FY 2021-22 in the Madhya Pradesh with a budget outlay of ₹1814.90 crore

approved with a budget outlay of ₹480.10 crore.

The Union minister also approved development of 23 project works of 600.13km length under central road and infrastructure fund (CRIF) scheme for FY 2021-22 in the Madhya Pradesh with a budget outlay of ₹1814.90 crore.



Dignitaries including, Ravenshaw University vice chancellor Sanjay Kumar Nayak, at the launching of the varsity's e-Office in Cuttack, Wednesday

Srimandir open for devotees from 5:30am to 9:30pm

Puri, Dec 15: The Srimandir here will remain open for devotees from 5:30am to 9:30pm from Thursday, marking the beginning of 'Pahili Bhoga' rituals of the sibling deities in the 12th century shrine.

During the period from Dhanu Sankranti to Makara Sankranti of Odia calendar (December 16 to January 14) a special bhoga known as "Pahili Bhoga" (first offering) is offered to the deities along with "Ballava Bhoga" in the morning, a temple priest said.

This was part of the new Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) announced by Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) effective from Thursday.

The temple will remain out of reach for the devotees December 31 and January 1, 2022 keeping in view the possible rush for the New Year celebration.



The Chhatisa Nijog (temple apex body) meeting December 10 finalised these SOPs and also stated that the "Niti Nirghanta" (timing) for the "Pahili Bhoga" of Lord Jagannath will be performed from December 16 to January 13, 2022, while "Niti Nirghanta" for Makara Sankranti and Debahishika Purnima are slated for January

The temple will remain out of reach for the devotees December 31 and January 1, 2022

14 and January 17, 2022, respectively. This apart, the new SOPs said that the temple will remain closed on New Year's Day to avoid any spike in Covid-19 cases on account of large gatherings. The Jaya-Vijaya Dwar and Beherana Dwar (two main doors) will remain closed for performance of special rituals

like 'Banaka Lagi and Paita Lagi'. There will be no restrictions on the entry of devotees to the temple complex for the darshan of Parshva Devatas and to visit Anand Bazaar. "The above guidelines will be reviewed periodically and revised instructions will be issued from time to time to further facilitate darshan by devotees and also for the management of COVID-19 pandemic," SJTA Chief Administrator Krishan Kumar said in the notification.

The apex body meeting was also attended by SP, Puri, senior officials of SJTA and Chhatisa Nijog members of Shree Jagannath Temple. Kumar said in view the large number of devotees visiting the Srimandir and possible onset of the 3rd wave of Covid-19 pandemic, a detailed discussion was held and a decision was taken to revise the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP).

CLEAN BEACH CAMPAIGN



NCC cadets clean Puri beach during a special drive, Wednesday

OP PHOTO

Meta, CBSE tie up for enabling students to embrace new tech

New Delhi, Dec 15: Meta (formerly Facebook) Wednesday said it will expand its partnership with the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) to provide a curriculum on digital safety and online well-being and augmented reality (AR) for over 10 million students and 1 million educators in the country over the next three years.

Additionally, in line with the government's vision of universalizing education, Meta and CBSE will democratise the high school curriculum by allowing students access to quality educational content online through modules which would be made available on CBSE's website. The announcement was made by Meta founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg at Meta's Fuel for India, 2021.

"I'm really excited about this partnership and I think it's a huge opportunity to (invest in) this entrepreneurial spirit and bring some of these tools around the meta-verse, and training to the education system here in India," he said.

The first phase of 'FB for Education' initiative was launched in June 2020, aimed at preparing students and teachers for the future of work and creating a safe online environment and learning experience. It witnessed over 500,000 students show interest for digital safety and online well-being and more than 14,000 teachers apply for training in augmented reality.

The partnership will also aim to empower educators with new age tools and skills needed to nurture the Generation Z and Generation Alpha students into responsible digital citizens.



Aligned to the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, Meta and CBSE will collaborate on content curation and development of curriculum integrating immersive technologies, AR and Virtual

Reality (VR) that is relevant for the evolving digital landscape by introducing these as skills subjects for students.

By integrating AR experiences into the curriculum, students will

In line with the government's vision of universalizing education, Meta and CBSE will democratise the high school curriculum by allowing students access to quality educational content online through modules which would be made available on CBSE's website.

The announcement was made by Meta founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg at Meta's Fuel for India, 2021

be able to collaborate more actively and create using emerging technologies of the future. Immersive education will also enable students with different learning challenges and lack of access to lab resources to learn in an engaging manner. CBSE will aim to empower students in the under-served regions

of India through its community skill centers making these new age skills available to the youth and help them become creators in the digital economy through equitable access to resources.

Biswajit Saha, Director (Skills Education and Trainings) at CBSE, said the pandemic has impacted lives all around.

"The learning process has undergone an unforeseen shift. This drastic change has brought along a wall of challenges in facilitating the process of learning. With the assistance of Meta, we hope to build on our online teaching and curriculum capabilities and make them available to students across the country," Saha added.

This partnership will help equip our teachers with requisite skills to effectively use online tools for student engagement, Saha noted.

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SHORT TAKES

Gobinda Sahu's bail plea deferred

Balangir: A local court deferred the hearing of the bail plea of Gobinda Sahu, the prime accused in the murder case of lady teacher Mamita Meher again for a week. The next date of hearing has been scheduled for December 21, Tuesday. The hearing was postponed till December 21 after Additional District Judge, Kantabanji, granted the time petition of the government pleader Wednesday. Additional public prosecutor Kanan Kishore Panda filed a time petition praying to grant additional time of a fortnight to file the case diary (CD). ADJ, Kantabanji, had earlier asked Sindhkela police to file the case diary (CD) by Wednesday on which he will take up the bail plea for hearing. Sources said the bail petition of Gobinda Sahu was put up for hearing in the ADJ Court of Kantabanji, Wednesday. As a result, the next hearing was scheduled for December 21. Worth mentioning, Govind's bail plea was earlier rejected by the JMFC Court Bangomunda. Notably, police arrested Gobinda Sahu on charge of murdering lady teacher Mamita Meher and he was produced in court. Currently, Gobinda is kept in judicial custody of Kantabanji sub-jail.

Dengue cases rise to 321 in Ganjam

Berhampur: Dengue has been alarmingly spreading in Ganjam. Four more cases were detected in Berhampur Municipal Corporation (BeMC) and Kukudakhandi block Wednesday leaving health officials and the civic authorities in a tizzy. With this, the number of dengue cases rose to 321 in the district, said Chief District Medical Officer Dr Umashankar Mishra. Among the new cases are an 18-year old youth of Ramaskrushnanagar, a 20-year-old woman of Babajitota, a 37-year old man of Srikhetrabihar and a 26-year old youth of Kukudakhandi. All four were admitted to MKCG Medical College and Hospital.

Village parks with DMF funds

Keonjhar: The district administration will develop village parks in 92 panchayats, particularly those affected by mining activities with funds from the district mineral foundation (DMF). The administration has drawn up blueprints to develop the open spaces in villages, dig ponds and water bodies, apart from taking up beautification of some tourist spots. The village parks will have facilities like paved paths, outdoor gymnasiums, acupressure exercise zones, playgrounds, mandaps for exhibitions of local art and crafts, platforms for yoga and meditation and flower gardens. Water bodies will be barricaded. Elevated platforms and bathing ghats will be constructed.

Ganjam to be free of child marriage from January

also asked sub-collectors, ICDS officials and district social welfare officer to review the women and child welfare programmes every month. According to a report on gender ratio, female population has seen an increase in Ganjam in the last five years. Similarly, the National Family Health Survey Report claims that the female population was 801 per 1000 males in 2015-16 but has since increased to 855 in 2020-21. The report also said, the rate of child marriage in Ganjam district was 29 per cent but has declined to 21 per cent after schemes like Nirbhaya Kadihi were implemented in the district. Officials were asked to ensure that no person visits the collectorate for pension and ration issues. Kulange asked the officials to keep all government offices clean and make it free from tobacco consumption. All officials consuming tobacco have been asked to shun the habit. He said he will personally visit the offices to oversee the implementation of the order.

BSKY rollout covers all 30 dists

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 15: In yet another milestone in the history of healthcare, the state government's flagship health scheme Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojna (BSKY) culminated Wednesday after covering all 30 districts. Launched in Malkangiri August 20, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik concluded the event by distributing BSKY Smart Health Cards in Kendrapara and Jajpur districts through video conferencing. As many as 11 lakh people in Kendrapara and 15.40 lakh people in Jajpur will get smart health cards under the scheme. Addressing the people of both the districts, the Chief Minister said, "Smart Health Cards of the BSKY would alleviate the cost of hospitalisation for the poor people that provides free treatment at the best hospitals in the country."



Launched in Malkangiri August 20, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik concluded the event by distributing BSKY Smart Health Cards in Kendrapara and Jajpur districts through video conferencing. As many as 11 lakh people in the coastal district and 15.40 lakh people in Jajpur district will get Smart Health Cards under the scheme

The CM said that projects worth ₹1,000 crore have been started for providing piped drinking water in four other blocks including Vyasanaagar. Similarly, piped water projects are also being implemented for Bari and Korei blocks. By 2024, all households in the district will have access to piped water

been launched across the state from September 1 and will benefit 3.5 crore people from 96 lakh households.

"Odisha is the only state where the state government bears all the costs, from testing to treatment to all patients affected with Coronavirus. With the help of Smart Health Cards, the plight of poor people will be alleviated," the CM stated.

The function was attended by Health Minister Naba Kishore Das, Water Resources Minister Raghunandan Das, Science and Technology Minister Ashok Panda and MLA Shashi Bhushan Behera.

water, the CM said all households in Jajpur municipality have been provided with piped water.

"Rs 1,000 crore worth of projects have been started for providing piped drinking water in four other blocks including Vyasanaagar.

Similarly, piped water projects are also being implemented for the Bari and Korei blocks. By 2024, all households in the district will have access to piped water," he added.

The Chief Minister said that BSKY Smart Health Card service has

Bargarh farmers stage demo over denial of claims by insurers



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bargarh, Dec 15: Stepping up protests over cancellation of insurance claims of farmers under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana by private firms on various pretexts, hundreds of farmers staged a demonstration outside the district collectorate here on the issue, Wednesday. The farmers under the aegis of Raja Bodasambar Krushak Sangathan led by Ashok Sahu, Ramesh Mohapatra and Ajit Satapathy came in a bike rally and

staged protests outside the collectorate. However, no officials met the farmers even though the latter continued with their demonstration till 4pm.

Later, some farmers managed to sneak inside the collectorate and dumped their memorandum outside the Collector's chamber. They warned of intensifying their agitation in front of the sub-collector's office at Padmapur from December 27.

Hundreds of farmers travelled over 80 km from Padmapur on bikes and assembled outside the district collectorate. Apprehending law and order situation, police closed down the main gate of the collectorate before the arrival of the agitating farmers.

The farmers demanded that their applications for insurance claims which have been rejected on flimsy grounds by the insurance firms must be accepted. They sought payments for 1,200 farmers who were deprived of Kharif insurance claims of last year, to make the crop cutting report of last rabi crops public and to stop arbitrary functioning of insurance companies during the crop cutting season. They said the last date of filing insurance claims was fixed on December 31, but the insurance firms had stopped receiving applications from December 15. The farmers said that the Centre has implemented the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana to make good of the crop loss suffered by them during calamities.

Spl Adarsha Vidyalaya in Kotia soon

POST NEWS NETWORK

Koraput, Dec 15: With an aim to ensure quality education for children in Kotia panchayat of Koraput district, the state government has decided to set up a special Adarsha Vidyalaya in the area. Admission for the 2022 academic session will start soon. This was stated by Collector Abdaal Mohammed Akhtar.



The school will be set up at Ganjeipadar village under Pottangi block. The district administration had earlier requested the state government for such a school in the fringe area where neighbouring Andhra Pradesh has been making persistent bids to encroach upon lands and allure people with sops.

Initially, the school will function in some buildings of the SC and ST welfare department at Ganjeipadar. However, the school will be shifted soon after a new building for the Special Adarsha Vidyalaya is completed.

The CBSE school is aimed at preventing children of the area from pursuing education in Telugu language in the schools of Andhra Pradesh. Notably, Odisha and Andhra Pradesh are at loggerheads over Kotia and 20 other fringe villages over years.

Explosives seized from Maoist hideout

POST NEWS NETWORK

Malkangiri, Dec 15: Security personnel got a huge cache of explosives hidden underneath ground by Maoists. The jawans were carrying out a search operation in a jungle near Nadamenjeri village under Jodamba police limits in this district, Wednesday. This was stated here by SDPO Abhilash Jee at a press meet, Wednesday.

The seizure is an outcome of the combing operation launched in the jungle by a joint team of security personnel comprising BSF, SOG and DVF days after a BSF camp was set up at Ghanabeda in Swabhiman Anchal.

Meanwhile, intelligence inputs alerted security forces about existence of explosives hidden underneath ground. They immediately rushed to the site and

recovered five IEDs, coded wires of over three metre, three detonators, a bundle of electric wire, two batteries, camera flash, polythene sheets, Maoists literature, medicines and other articles from the spot. The seizure of the explosives came two days after DGP Abhay took stock of anti-Maoist operations by BSF, SOG and DVF in Swabhiman Anchal, once a cut-off area and a Maoist hot bed.

Bank of India E-Auction Sale Notice. Includes details of two properties for auction, reserve prices, and terms of sale. The notice is for the Bank of India, Zonal Office: Bhubaneswar Zone, 1/1D, Star House, Jayadev Vihar, Nayapalli, Bhubaneswar-751015, Ph.: 0674-2362249.

Kasia mines ops yet to start, ₹15cr loss/day

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar/Bhubaneswar, Dec 15: Leading steel producer JSPL finds it difficult to start operation of its Kasia iron and dolomite block as a handful of people with 'vested interests' has been inciting trouble here for last one month.

According to report, a group of about 25-50 people have been blocking the entry to the mines and not allowing men and machinery of JSPL to the site since November 23, 2021.

JSPL won the Kasia iron and dolomite block in Keonjhar district at a 118% premium in the recent mines auction conducted by the state government. After deposit of upfront payment on performance security and stamp duty, the lease deed of this block was

executed with the government in November.

Sources said, non-operation of the mines is causing huge revenue losses to the state government to the tune of over ₹15 crore on a daily basis besides loss of livelihood to local people.

The company has intimated the district administration about the issue and all endeavours have been made to address the grievances of the local community.

"A coordination meeting has been held with local community members and opinion leaders in the presence of the district administration at the site. Such initiatives were appreciated by the local opinion makers and community members. Still, vested interests are inciting some people to block the entry," sources added.



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We have to inform you that your account/accounts M/s. GURUDATTA TRADERS, Prop. Mr. Vangalapudi Varahala Babu has been/have been classified as NPA account AS ON 30.04.2021 pursuant to your default in making repayment of dues/installment/interest. As on date a sum of Rs.2017379.51 (Rupees Twenty lakh and seventeen thousand Three Hundred Seventy Nine and Paise Fifty One only) as of 30.04.2021 with interest and charges thereon is outstanding in your account/accounts as shown below:

Table with 2 columns: Name of Facility, Amount Due. Row 1: OCCGN, Rs.2017379.51 (Rupees Twenty lakh and seventeen thousand Three Hundred Seventy Nine and Paise Fifty One only) as of 30.04.2021 with interest and charges thereon

Total Amount: Rs.2017379.51 (Rupees Twenty lakh and seventeen thousand Three Hundred Seventy Nine and Paise Fifty One only) as of 30.04.2021 with interest and charges thereon.

In spite of our repeated demands you have not paid any amount towards the amount outstanding in your account/accounts / you have not discharged your liabilities.

We do hereby call upon you in terms of section 13(2) of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002, to pay a sum of Rs.20,17,379.51 together with interest at the rate of contractual rate of interest from 30/04/2021 with monthly rest/par per the terms and conditions of loan documents executed by you and discharge your liabilities in full within 60 days from the date of receipt of this notice, failing which, we shall be constrained to enforce the following securities created by you in favour of the bank by exercising any or all of the rights given under the said Act.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SECURED ASSETS: EMD of Residential land site belongs to Mr. Vangalapudi Varahala Babu under Khata No. 59/2437, Plot No. 654, J K Pur Road, Komtalpeta, Thana No. 107, P.S.- Chandili, Rayagada.

Boundaries: East: Land of Sri V Prakasham West: Land of J.S.Co. Limited South: Land of J.S.Co. Limited North: Land of Kranti K Thakkar (Survey Plot No. 656)

1) Please note that if you fail to remit the dues within 60 days and if Bank exercises all its rights under this Act and if the dues are not fully satisfied with the sale of proceeds of the secured assets, we shall be constrained to take appropriate legal action against you in a court of law/Debt Recovery Tribunal for recovery of the balance amount from you. 2) As per sec. 13 (13) of the Act, on receipt of this notice you are restrained from disposing of or dealing with the above securities except in the usual course of business without the consent of the Bank. Please note any violation of this section entails serious consequences. 3) Your kind attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of Section 13 of the SARFAESI in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

Yours faithfully, (G. N. Das) AUTHORISED OFFICER

FOCUS SOCIETY

FREEDOM IN THE VEIL



France is not the only European country that restricts the hijab. The inflow of Muslim immigrants to Europe and the threat of violent Islamist groups have made Muslim minorities a target of hostility and discrimination, and the hijab has become a visual symbol of these tensions

The latest controversy over the hijab, the headscarf worn by Muslim women, erupted at the end of October. Ironically, the trigger was an anti-discrimination campaign launched by the Council of Europe. The Council posted a short video on its social media channels comprising a series of images split in half. One side features a woman wearing a hijab, and the other shows the same woman without the head covering. At the end of the video, the text "Beauty is in diversity as freedom is in hijab" appears, followed by the hashtags #celebratediversity and #JOYinHIJAB.

The video caused an uproar in France, where government spokesman Gabriel Attal was quoted by the Financial Times as saying that "one shouldn't confuse religious freedom with the de facto promotion of a religious symbol." Attal called wearing the hijab an "identitarian" position "contrary to the freedom of conscience that France supports." The French minister for youth and sport, Sarah El Haïry, spoke out forcefully against the video and claimed credit for the Council's decision to withdraw it from circulation. Right-wing politicians such as Marine Le Pen and Michel Barnier and prominent television pundits added their voices to the criticism of the campaign.

France is not the only European country that restricts the hijab. The inflow of Muslim immigrants to Europe and the threat of violent Islamist groups have made Muslim minorities a target of hostility and discrimination, and the hijab has become a visual symbol of these tensions. Of the 27 EU member states and the United Kingdom, nine have some legal restriction on veiling; there have been legislative proposals to limit the practice in five more. In countries with no national restrictions, some regions have decided independently to ban face coverings. There are only six EU countries - Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Poland, Portugal, and Romania - where there has been no public debate so far on restricting the veil.

The supporters of restrictive measures represent a diverse range

of perspectives. Many liberal politicians, staunch believers in the secular state, regard religion as a private affair to be kept out of sight. Some feminists view the headscarf as a symbol of patriarchal or religious oppression of women. But the most vociferous backers of bans have been populist, right-wing politicians who find it expedient to hide their xenophobia behind arguments that have broader ideological appeal. Amid all the grandstanding, little heed is paid to the perspectives of Muslim women. Sociologists long have predicted that modernisation would bring about a decline in religiosity and thus in the use of religious symbols such as the hijab. This prediction has been borne out in both Christian and Muslim societies, and as modernisation increases, the frequency of veiling generally decreases.

But there is a crucial nuance in the interaction between prior levels of religiosity and modernisation. For example, among highly religious Muslim women, the probability of wearing the hijab increases with women's participation in modern social life, particularly if they are young, educated, and single. This seems true not only in predominantly Muslim countries, but also where Muslims are a minority, as in Belgium. The more Muslim women who identify as

deeply religious associate with native Belgians, the likelier they are to wear the hijab. This trend also can be seen in countries where religiosity remains high. For example, in Indonesia, the number of women who wear the hijab has shown a tendency to increase with prosperity.

Studies show that most women do not wear the hijab because of pressure from their families or communities. In fact, the practice is more widespread among highly religious women who, because of their employment status, education, income, and political participation, should be relatively better prepared to resist family pressure.

Veiling seems to be not just an expression of religiosity, but also a strategic decision. Religious women seem to wear the hijab to reconcile their life outside the home with the social norms of their community. Adopting the hijab reassures their communities that their involvement in "riskier" secular lives away from their homes should not be interpreted as an opportunity to engage in behaviour contrary to their religious norms. The hijab then signals the resilient piety of truly religious women against the perils that modernization could pose to their reputations.

This understanding of veiling has implications for cultural pol-

icy. In Europe, the hijab could be a sign not of segregation, but of integration of Muslims into society. As highly religious Muslim women make more non-Muslim friends and move to neighbourhoods where they are the minority, they may choose to wear the hijab as a means to safeguard their pious reputation in the face of modernity. Bans on some forms of the veil would deprive these women of a choice that allows them more freedom, not less.

If wearing the hijab were barred, a woman who wants to signal her piety and her decision to abide by the norms of her own community would be forced to seek alternatives that could be so cumbersome that she decides to stay at home. That, presumably, is not an outcome that many proponents of prohibition desire.

Not all that lies behind the veil is to be feared. The Council of Europe's slogan is, perhaps surprisingly, not far from the truth. There certainly is more "freedom in hijab" than there would be in banning it.

Diego Gambetta is an emeritus fellow at Nuffield College, University of Oxford. Ozan Aksoy is an associate professor of social science at the Social Research Institute at University College London.

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Diego Gambetta & Ozan Aksoy

THE MOST VOCIFEROUS BACKERS OF BANS HAVE BEEN POPULIST, RIGHT-WING POLITICIANS WHO FIND IT EXPEDIENT TO HIDE THEIR XENOPHOBIA BEHIND ARGUMENTS THAT HAVE BROADER IDEOLOGICAL APPEAL



THE MOTHER

Let nothing short of Perfection be your ideal in work and you are sure to become a true instrument of the Divine.

Vicious Crises

Those who are disappointed by the inconclusive outcomes of the COP26 climate-change meeting, US President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping's recent virtual summit, or efforts to achieve COVID-19 vaccine equity need to wake up about the world we live in. Under current circumstances, global governance is guaranteed to disappoint.

In a new report, Our Global Condition, I and my colleagues on the Global Commission for Post-Pandemic Policy attribute these difficulties to the fact that we are in the grip of not one but four crises. The only way forward is to recognise the connections between planetary public health, climate change, declining public trust and democratic legitimacy, and geopolitical instability. These issues are interlinked. Treating them as separate domains will get us nowhere. Environmental stresses increase the likelihood that zoonotic diseases will spread to humans and become pandemics. The social, political, and economic stresses introduced by a pandemic then foster attitudes and behaviours that undermine social solidarity, making it harder for governments to secure public buy-in for strong decarbonisation measures. In countries and political systems where trust in institutions and the authority of expertise has been undermined by the legacy of the 2008 financial crisis and the growth of social media, coping with new crises remains an uphill struggle.

This description is especially apt for the United States, the country to which so many look for leadership. The crisis of trust has weakened the US both internally and on the world stage, contributing to the deteriorating relations between the West and China. Following the logic of feedback loops, tensions over the pandemic and climate change have contributed to the world's foremost geopolitical crisis. Yet without US-China engagement and mutual understanding, little substantive progress against either the pandemic or climate change can be made.

Similar dynamics are evident in the failure to deliver a sufficient supply of vaccines to poorer countries, a reality made salient by the emergence of the new Omicron variant in southern Africa. According to the Global Commission's vaccination countdown, Asia, Europe, and the US are on track to have vaccinated 80 per cent of their populations by March-May 2022, whereas most African countries will not have reached that point until mid-2025.

Sino-American cooperation could close this gap, given the two countries' unmatched capital and logistical resources, and also could deal swiftly with the looming sovereign-debt crisis that is likely to strike low-income countries and then the rest of the world in 2022. Unfortunately, there is no prospect of such agreements any time soon. It is a bleak picture, auguring not imminent disaster but rather continuing disappointment and vulnerability. To confront this situation, we must develop new strategies based on four key principles.

The first principle - and the most immediate task - is to get all populations vaccinated, so that we can accelerate the shift from a pandemic to a more manageable endemic public-health issue. Whether they act alone or in groups, all countries need to place the highest priority on delivering vaccines to Africa and other lagging regions, as well as devoting more resources - medical, financial, logistical, and administrative - to support vaccination programmes. Eliminating pandemic-driven uncertainties may also be the surest way to create trust and public buy-in for sustained climate measures and other necessary but costly "build back better" policies.

The second (and longer-term) principle is to recognise that the US-China rivalry plays a central role in global affairs. Neither that rivalry nor the continuing importance of either countries can be wished away. The most urgent task therefore is to define an agenda and create a mechanism for the two superpowers to consult each other and collaborate on global challenges, even as they continue to compete in other fields.

The US and the Soviet Union exercised such discipline during the Cold War. But learning to do so took decades. Neither climate change nor international security nor effective governance can wait.

The third principle is that the trust and legitimacy crisis in the West needs to be taken more seriously. Western democracies' increased vulnerability to extremist politics poses a danger not only to those countries but also to global stability and security. Here, the most urgent tasks are to update democratic rules and institutions for the twenty-first century; regulate social media to make those platforms more responsible; rekindle citizenship through new forms of participation; and expand investments to ensure greater equality of treatment and opportunity.

The fourth principle is a pragmatic one. As with vaccines, countries cannot sit around and wait for proper global governance to provide solutions. Following on the successes of public-private partnerships that delivered safe and highly effective vaccines in record time, confronting today's interlocking crises demands coalitions of the willing to address common, borderless problems. Other areas that could benefit from intense multi-country collaboration include technology to identify and monitor new pathogens and bigger bets on non-carbon energy technologies, such as nuclear fusion.

Our interlinked crises demand an interlinked, concerted response. If that proves impossible, we should not be surprised if countries decide to pursue less consensual means on their own.

The writer, a former editor-in-chief of The Economist, is Co-Director of the Global Commission for Post-Pandemic Policy.

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Bill Emmott

Following the logic of feedback loops, tensions over the pandemic and climate change have contributed to the world's foremost geopolitical crisis

SPECTRUM ENVIRONMENT

Clean energy minerals are not always clean

As the planet moves away from fossil fuels toward a green future, the focus now is on the ramping up of mining for various rare earth minerals like lithium, cobalt and nickel. These minerals are crucial for the production of batteries, solar panels and wind turbines which are going to replace our fossil fuel-based society by 2040. To achieve this objective, we will see a four to six times increase in overall requirement of these minerals by 2040: for lithium it is 40 times higher and for cobalt and nickel it is 20 to 25 times higher. However, the ramping up of mining of these minerals has been slow enough to meet the energy transition goals of the Paris Agreement as it is plagued by a lot of hurdles like technical barriers, environmental and ethical issues.

First, their mining is a time taking process and it often takes nearly five to 10 years for these minerals from mines to reach the market. Secondly, as the source of these minerals is very scarce and limited to a very few countries like China and Africa, the world has not enough circulation of these minerals for the production of clean energy to meet the global need.

Thirdly, unlike oil, these minerals do not burn off completely in the machines as they can be recycled many times to retrieve nearly 10 to 15% of the useful materials in recycling plants and, this too, is a great technical challenge. Lastly, the quality of these ores is liable to be declining by 2040 with their dwindling reserves in nature and we must need very advanced technologies and energy intensive processes by that time to harness these minerals.

However, the mining industries dealing with these minerals across the world are now paralysed by many hurdles. On the health front, lung diseases and heart failure have been linked to high levels of these elements in our biosphere, while scientists are also investigating a possible link to cancer. From the environmental point of view, the mines that produce them are blamed for devastated landscapes, water pollution, contaminated crops and loss of soil fertility. Blasting activity and high electricity consumption are also detrimental to the environment. Global warming resulting out of these activities is the most impacting factor in climate change as carbon dioxide and nitrogen diox-

ide emissions are highest from these mining.

Ethical issues like human rights abuses, illegal trafficking, corruption that have been always associated with the mining industry are also expected to make their footprints felt in the extraction of these clean energy minerals. To cite an example, for cobalt, the key ingredient for the lithium ion batteries used in our smartphones, laptops, and electric cars, more than 60 per cent of the supply comes from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in Central Africa, a country that has historically been affected by conflict and corruption. Although low labour costs, loose safety regulations and poor governance in the DRC allow for the flourishing of the mining industry and cheap sources of cobalt, the sector in the country is tainted by many ethical and humanitarian glitches like child labour and corruption. In 2017, some campaign groups in the country found that only 6 per cent of the country's mining revenue ended up in the national treasuries meant for the benefit of the population and the rest of the money was siphoned off. This is primarily because the

major owners of these mines, the Chinese companies, are not paying much heed to resolve the humanitarian and environmental issues arising out of these activities at the cost of their lucrative trading practice. Dozens of environmental groups and NGOs of Africa have raised concern in the recently concluded COP26 climate summit about the impact of mining of these clean energy minerals on the communities and the environment.

As the mining industry is changing, the future of these clean mineral industries to enjoy the confidence of the people depends a lot on all their stakeholders on how they formulate policies and practices for the mining, processing, recycling and marketing of these minerals. It is, however, hard to imagine how these clean energy minerals, which are going to revolutionise our carbon-based society in the near future, can be mined sustainably in the most environment-friendly ways free from conflicts, human rights abuses and ecological damage. Clean energy minerals are not always clean!

The writer is Education Officer, Regional Science Centre, Bhopal.

WISDOM CORNER

- It is better to err on the side of daring than the side of caution. ALVIN TOFFLER
- There is no cosmetic for beauty like happiness. MARIA MITCHELL
- Your attitude, not your aptitude, will determine your altitude. ZIG ZIGLAR

WORDSWORTH

Psytrance

By the time the names for musical styles hit the mainstream press they're often about to go out of fashion. However, a festival of psytrance music recently held in Brixton, south London, suggests that this genre is moving out of specialist clubs, away from the meditation and yoga crowd, and is about to become more widely popular. The Glastonbury Festival will devote a whole day to it this summer. It has had various names, such as psychedelic trance and Goa trance. As these names suggest, it's a blend of psychedelic and trance music, essentially electronic in nature with a thumping beat and highly repetitive style which makes the average listener drift into a dissociated state.

LOL

Dealing with criminals

A local policeman had just finished his shift one cold November evening and was at home with his wife. "You just won't believe what happened this evening, in all my years on the force I've never seen anything like it." "Oh yes dear, what happened?"



"I came across two guys down by the canal, one of them was drinking battery acid and the other was eating fireworks." "Drinking battery acid and eating fireworks!! What did you do with them?" "Oh that was easy, I charged one and let the other off."

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, Rusaagarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

Masking is a must

Sir, Amid the rise in the number of Omicron cases in India, the Centre has warned that the drop in mask usage could result in spiking infections. The holiday season and Assembly elections in states may cause a spike in infections. In such a scenario, following COVID-appropriate behaviour is of utmost importance. However, a large number of people in the country disregard the norms, throw caution to the wind and do as they wish. Stringent enforcement of masking has slackened over time. Considering the gravity of the situation, strict measures need to be adopted. Vaccination and masking are two ways of combating the disease. As masks can be bought at reasonable prices, everyone can buy them and wear them. According to the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation's projections, India's mask usage has dwindled to 59 per cent currently. In April, it had steadily risen and throughout May it touched 80 per cent. The surge in infections and strict enforcement during the second wave prompted people to wear masks. Countries such as Japan and South Korea where 92 per cent of citizens wear masks serve as a model for India. In spite of high vaccination rates, infections have been on the rise in several countries. Given that India is an overpopulated country, a sudden surge in infections will lead to an out of control situation and it will put strain on healthcare facilities. Mask usage in the country decreased as the vaccination drive gained pace. Considering that there is a delay in the availability of booster dose, masking is the only approach. Political leaders must ensure that those participating in election campaigns wear masks. As the pandemic has not gone away, it is the responsibility of everyone to ensure that the disease does not spread.

Venu GS, KOLLAM

Kheri violence exposure

Sir, The revelation by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) that the killings of farmers in the Lakhimpur Kheri case were not an act of negligence but a pre-planned conspiracy spells more trouble for minister Ajay Mishra's son, Ashish Mishra, the prime accused. Ajay Mishra's tall claims that his son was innocent, and he was not present at the scene of the crime stands exposed. The minister continues to cling to his chair despite demand for his ouster. A car mowed down eight people, including four farmers, allegedly at the behest of Ashish Mishra in October this year.

NJ Ravi Chander, BANGALORE

national

of the day quote

During the assembly polls, we have seen the campaign that the BJP had unleashed in the state. Everybody was afraid of it. But the people of the state defeated them. What Bengal thinks today, India thinks tomorrow. We will defeat the BJP in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. It will meet the same fate as it had faced in the last assembly polls

MAMATA BANERJEE | WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER

Indira Gandhi reached out to all political parties and public figures, wrote to presidents and prime ministers, dispatched emissaries abroad, ensured that the USSR was with India, travelled tirelessly to Western capitals and sensitised the entire world community to the cause of the people of Bangladesh with personal interviews, meetings and appeals

SONIA GANDHI | CONGRESS CHIEF

Strict action will be initiated against those who attacked police personnel in Uppinangady in Dakshina Kannada district

ARAGA JNANENDRA | KARNATAKA HOME MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Varanasi's PM2.5, NO2 levels alarming

New Delhi: An analysis of PM2.5 and NOx levels in Varanasi - Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Parliamentary constituency - has shown that its levels remained much above the Central Pollution Control Board's (CPCB) safety limit for the last three years consistently.

Big shock to Maha govt

New Delhi: The Supreme Court Wednesday dismissed a Maharashtra government plea seeking a direction to the Centre to disclose to the state the Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) 2011 raw caste data on Other Backward Classes (OBCs). A bench of Justices A M Khanwilkar and C T Ravikumar noted that the affidavit filed by the Centre before it emphatically stated that the data of SECC 2011 is "not accurate" and "fraught with mistakes", and unusable for any purpose whatsoever.

Kolkata's air quality worsens

Kolkata: The city's air quality index (AQI) Wednesday worsened to poor level, a week after recording satisfactory category, an official said. In parts of North Kolkata, the AQI even breached the 300 mark which is categorised as very poor.

Ganja seized

Nagpur: The Nagpur unit of Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad seized 10.35 kg of ganja from a train at the railway station here, an ATS official said Wednesday.

LS adjourned over Lakhimpur killings

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 15: Lok Sabha proceedings were adjourned for the day Wednesday as opposition members raised slogans and waved placards demanding sacking of Union minister Ajay Mishra 'Teni' in connection with the Lakhimpur Kheri violence, which claimed the lives of eight people, including four farmers.

Opposition members trooped into the Well of the House, waving newspaper re-



ports on the findings of the Special Investigation Team probing the violence and forced adjournment of Lok Sabha proceedings during the Question Hour.

Congress members wanted Speaker Om Birla to admit the notices for Adjournment Motion on the Lakhimpur Kheri killings submitted by

party leader Rahul Gandhi and other opposition members. Birla continued with the Question Hour amid sloganeering by opposition members and also urged them to allow the smooth functioning of the House proceedings. "I always give adequate time to members to raise issues. You (protesting members) are disrupting the Question Hour. It is not a good tradition and does not respect the dignity of the House. You don't want to have discussions," Birla said.



Other states of the country are progressing along with their traditions and culture. We too have to march forward rapidly, otherwise we will lag behind

HEMANT SOREN | JHARKHAND CM

PROPOSAL FOR AADHAAR-VOTER ID LINKING GETS CABINET NOD

The decision comes at a time when Assembly elections are due in several states next year, including Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Uttarakhand, Goa & Manipur

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 15: The Union Cabinet Wednesday learnt to have cleared a bill on electoral reforms, including the one to link electoral roll with Aadhaar on a voluntary basis to root out multiple enrolments.

According to the Bill, the electoral law will also be made "gender neutral" for service voters. An army man's wife is entitled to be enrolled as a service voter, but a woman army officer's husband is not, according to provisions in the electoral law. But this may change once the bill gets Parliament's nod.

The poll panel had asked the law ministry to replace the term 'wife' with 'spouse' in the provision in the Representation of the People Act related to service voters.

Another provision of the proposed bill will allow the youth to enrol as voters on four different dates every year. As of now, those turning 18 on or before January 1 of every year are only allowed to register as voters. The Election Commission of India (ECI) had been pushing for multiple cut-off dates to allow more eligible people to register as voters.

Currently, for an election to be held in a particular year, only an individual who has attained the age of 18 years as on January 1 of that year or before is eligible to be enrolled in the voters' list.

The EC had told the government



Representational image

that the January 1 cut-off date set for the purpose deprives several youngsters from participating in the electoral exercise held in a particular year.

Due to only one qualifying or cut-off date, a person attaining the age of 18 years on January 2 cannot be registered. Therefore, a person who turns 18 after January 1 will have to wait for the next year to get registered.

The law ministry had recently told a parliamentary panel that "it is proposed to amend section 14(b) of the Representation of the People Act to insert four qualifying dates (or cut-off dates) — January 1, April 1, July 1, and October 1 — of every year".

In March, then law minister Ravi Shankar Prasad had told Lok Sabha in a written reply that the poll panel has proposed to link electoral roll with the "Aadhaar ecosystem" with a "view to curb the menace of multiple enrolment of the same person at different places".

He said this would require amendments to the electoral laws.

The minister had said the poll panel has informed that it has taken multiple measures for the security and the safety of the electoral roll data platform.

The poll panel has been pressing the government to amend provisions of the Representation of the People Act allowing EC to seek Aadhaar numbers of those applying to be voters and those who are already part of the electoral rolls.

According to the EC proposal sent in August 2019, the electoral law should be amended to empower electoral registration officers to seek Aadhaar number of existing voters as well as of those applying to enrol themselves in the voters' list.

In August 2015, a Supreme Court order on Aadhaar had put the brakes on the EC's project to link UIDAI (Aadhaar) number with voters' electoral data to check multiple entries in electoral rolls.

T'GANA, WB REPORT 1ST OMICRON CASES

Telangana and West Bengal reported their first cases of the Omicron variant of Covid-19 Wednesday, while four more persons tested positive in Maharashtra. So far, Maharashtra has reported the highest number of cases at 32, followed by Rajasthan at 17. Omicron cases have also been reported in Karnataka (3), Gujarat (4), Kerala (1), Telangana (2), West Bengal (1) and Andhra Pradesh (1) and Union Territories of Delhi (6) and Chandigarh (1)



HC rejects Rashmi Shukla's petition to quash FIR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 15: The Bombay High Court Wednesday rejected senior IPS officer Rashmi Shukla's petition seeking to quash the FIR registered by the Mumbai Police in connection with the alleged phone tapping and leak of sensitive documents case, noting that prima facie a cognisable offence is made out.

A division bench of Justices Nitin Jamdar and Sarang Kotwal also rejected Shukla's prayer to transfer the case to the Central Bureau of Investigation. Shukla, currently serving as ADGP, CRPF (south zone) and posted in Hyderabad, had headed the Maharashtra Intelligence Department when the alleged phone tapping took place last year.

The bench also noted that since Shukla has not yet been named as an accused in the FIR, the Maharashtra government shall give her a seven-day notice if it intends to take any coercive steps against her. "Both the prayers - quashing of the FIR and transfer the case to CBI are rejected. If the state government intends to take any coercive steps against the petitioner (Shukla) then it shall give seven days notice to the petitioner," the bench said.

While pronouncing judgment on the petition filed by Shukla, the HC held that the FIR prima facie discloses cognisable offences. "Since the FIR discloses a cognisable offence, the police has a duty to investigate. No ground is made out to quash the FIR and to prevent any further investigation," the bench said. "The prayer for transfer of the investigation to CBI on the ground that the CBI is investigating the postings of the police officers is without merit as both the investigations are different," it added.

LAKHIMPUR KHERI VIOLENCE

Ajay Mishra calls journalists 'thieves'



AGENCIES

Lakhimpur Kheri (UP), Dec 15: Union minister Ajay Mishra lost his cool at reporters here Wednesday calling them "thieves" and lunging at one of them when they questioned him on the October 3 violence for which his son is among the accused.

A memorandum submitted by reporters also accused the Minister of State for Home Affairs of scuffling with them and snatching a reporter's mobile phone.

The opposition has renewed its demand for the minister's dismissal after a special investigation team (SIT) told a local court that the Lakhimpur Kheri violence in which eight people, including four farmers, were killed was a "pre-planned conspiracy." The court Tuesday also allowed the SIT to add the

attempt to murder charge in the FIR against the minister's son, Ashish Mishra, and 12 others booked in the case, replacing it with lesser charges. The charge under section 302 (murder) is retained in the FIR.

A video clip purportedly shows the minister getting angry when asked about these developments by a reporter from a television news channel. "Don't ask questions like a fool. Have you lost your mental balance (Dimag kharab hai kya)?" he is heard saying in Hindi. "What do you want to know? You turned an innocent person into an accused. Aren't you ashamed?" He is also heard calling the media "chor", or thieves, and angrily asking a journalist to switch off his mobile phone.

The clip shows him moving aggressively towards a reporter.

No. 16/13/2019-M-1(Pt.1)
Government of India
Ministry of Culture
 Applications are invited from suitable candidates for appointment to the post of Director General in the National Museum at New Delhi in Level-15 of Pay matrix [Pre-revised-Pay Band Higher Administrative Grade(HAG) Rs. 67000/- (annual increment @ 3%) -79000/-] plus allowances as admissible under rules. The applications in the prescribed format, typed on plain paper furnishing complete Curriculum Vitae with detailed educational, professional qualification and experience should be sent by registered / speed post to Shri Arun Kumar, Under Secretary, Ministry of Culture, Room No. 210, D Wing, 2nd Floor, Shastri Bhawan, Dr. Rajendra Prasad Road, New Delhi 110001 so as to reach him within a period of **sixty days** from the date of publication of this advertisement in Employment News. Persons employed in Government Department/ Autonomous Organisations and Public Sector Undertakings should submit their applications through proper channel. Complete details including format of applications and Recruitment Rules attached to the post are available at Ministry of Culture website <http://www.indiaculture.nic.in>. The post has already been advertised in the Employment News on 20th November, 2021.
 davp 09101/11/0029/2122

French defence minister to arrive in India today

New Delhi: French Defence Minister Florence Parly is scheduled to arrive in India Thursday on a two-day visit that is aimed at further strengthening the already close bilateral strategic ties, people familiar with the developments said. Parly will hold wide-ranging talks with her Indian counterpart Rajnath Singh Friday to enhance defence and security ties between the two countries besides delving into pressing regional issues, they said. The recent developments in Afghanistan and the situation in the Indo-Pacific region are likely to figure in the talks.

Kolkata Durga puja bags UNESCO heritage tag

AGENCIES

Kolkata, Dec 15: The UNESCO Wednesday accorded heritage status to Kolkata's Durga puja festival, bringing glory to the country, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee lauding the move.

"Durga puja in Kolkata has just been inscribed on the intangible heritage list. Congratulations India," the organisation said in a tweet attaching a photo of the goddess with hashtag 'living heritage'. Modi has hailed UNESCO's decision as a "matter of great pride and joy for every Indian".

"Durga Puja highlights the best of our traditions and ethos. And, Kolkata's Durga Puja is an experience everyone must have," he said. The Chief Minister underlined that Durga puja was not just a festival, but an emotion. "Proud moment for Bengal! To every Bengali across the world, Durga Puja is much more than a festival, it is an emotion that unites everyone. And now,



People feed Siberian migratory birds at Sangam in Prayagraj

UNI PHOTO



#DurgaPuja has been added to the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. We are all beaming with joy!" she tweeted. The Ministry of Culture, too, took to the microblogging platform to extend its wishes to the residents of the city on this achievement.

"Overjoyed that 'Durga Puja in Kolkata' joins the @UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

WINTER GUESTS



Many congratulations! It is a confluence of the rich heritage and culture of the county's art, crafts, rituals and practices. Jai Maa Durga!" the ministry wrote.

The department of state information and cultural affairs in Bengal issued a statement to congratulate the people of the state as well as the country. "The 16th Committee of UNESCO for safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) in its meeting held on 15th December 2021 in Paris has inscribed Durga puja in Kolkata on the representative list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity," it said. The department also noted that this was the "first festival in Asia" to get such recognition.

"It is a red letter day for us. In real sense Bengal is now Biswa Bangla. Our congratulations to all the people of Bengal, country and the world. We convey our thanks and gratitude to UNESCO for the recognition bestowed on this great festival as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity," the statement main-

ained.

Suvaprasanna, the chairman of West Bengal Heritage Commission, said the annual Red Road carnival, which displays the craftsmanship that goes into the making of Durga Puja pandals, have made more people across the world aware of the grandeur that is synonymous with the festival.

"It was Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee who started the Red Road Carnival to showcase the art work, culture and traditions associated with the festival. Durga puja is being celebrated for decades, but the festival got a new dimension with the carnival," he stated.

Welcoming the development, indologist and academician Nrisingha Prasad Bhaduri said Durga puja is a "universal festival" binding millions of people.

He, however, claimed that the festival should have been accorded the status much earlier. The annual Red Road carnival, organised ahead of the immersion ceremony, was last held in 2019.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, KANUPUR REHABILITATION, CAMPS & BUILDING DIVISION
 At/P.O.- Basudevpur, Dist.- Keonjhar, PIN - 758047
e-PROCUREMENT NOTICE
 Bid Identification No. SE, KRC & BD - 06/2021-22
 Email: eekrcbdsbasudevpur@gmail.com
No. A-740

Sl. No.	Name of work	Approx. value of work (Rs. in Lakhs)	E.M.D/ Bid Security Declaration	Cost of Bid Document in Rs. (To be remitted online)	Period of Completion	Name & address of the Division under which the work will be executed
01	Construction of Playground at Dnobilabeda (Dadun) for the DPs of village Dadun of KIP	23.16	Nil/Bid Security Declaration	6,000.00	06 (Six) Calendar Months	Kanupur Reh. Camps & Building Division, At/P.O. Basudevpur, Dist.-Keonjhar
02	Construction of Village pond with Bathing Ghat at R&R Colony Birikata for the DPs of Village Birikata & Gobindapur of K.I.P.	25.18	Nil/Bid Security Declaration	6,000.00	06 (Six) Calendar Months	-do-

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender Online for Bidding	Date & time of opening of Tender	Place of Opening
Superintending Engineer, Kanupur Reh. C & B Division, Basudevpur, Dist.-Keonjhar	SE, KRC & BD - 06/2021-22	From 18.12.21 From 10.00 hours	27.12.21 upto 17.00 hours	Office of the F.A. & C.A.O., Kanupur Irrigation Project, Keonjhar

OIPR-32053/11/0010/2122 Superintending Engineer, Kanupur Reh., C & B Division, Basudevpur

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
ST & SC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE PROJECT ADMINISTRATOR
INTEGRATED TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY, RAIRANGPUR
e-Procurement Notice
 Bid Identification No. PA, ITDA (RAIRANGPUR) - 02/2021-22
 No. 2099/2021-ITDA Dated: 15.12.2021
 No. CAD-2307: Bid documents consisting of work, tender value, cost of tender paper, 'Bid Security Declaration' instead of EMD, time of completion, class of contractors and the set of terms and conditions of contract and other necessary documents can be seen in Govt. website i.e. "www.tendersodisha.gov.in".

01 Name of the work	: Civil works as mentioned in DTCN
02 No. of works	: 10 (Ten) Numbers only
03 Estimated Cost	: Rs. 7.00 lakhs to Rs. 82.00 lakhs
04 Period of Completion	: 1 (One) month to 9 (Nine) months as per work category
05 Date & time of availability of bid document in the portal	: 16.12.2021 at 10.00 A.M. to 30.12.2021 17.00 hours
06 Last date for receipt of bids in the portal	: 30.12.2021 till 17.00 hours
07 Bid received online shall be opened on	: 31.12.2021 at 11.00 hours onwards respectively
08 Name and address of the Officer Inviting Bid	: Project Administrator, I.T.D.A., Rairangpur

Further details can be seen from the "www.tendersodisha.gov.in".
 Sd./- Project Administrator, I.T.D.A., Rairangpur
 OIPR-26041/11/0002/2122

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA No. B-804
"E" Procurement Tender Notice
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, RAYAGADA (R&B) DIVISION NO. - II
 E-mail ID: eepwd765017@gmail.com, Phone: (06856) 299969
Bid Identification No. RC (RANDB) RGD No.-II 16/2021-22 (Online Tender)

No. 6017	Dated: 10.12.2021
1. Total No. of the works	: 08 Nos. of Building work
2. Approximate estimated cost	: Rs.54 lakhs to Rs.95.66 lakhs
3. Period of Completion	: 6 (Six) to 9 (Nine) Calendar Months
4. Date & time of availability of bid document in the portal	: 11.00 hrs. of Dtd.17.12.2021 to 17.00 hrs. of Dtd.29.12.2021 for Online bidding
5. Last date/time for receipt of bids in the portal	: Upto 17.00 hrs. of Dt.29.12.2021
6. Name and address of the Officer Inviting BID	: Executive Engineer, Rayagada (R&B) Division No. - II
7. Date of opening of Bid	: At 11.00 hours on Dt.30.12.2021
8. Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal: www.tendersodisha.gov.in .	
9. Date of Opening of Financial Bids to be announced.	
10. Further Addendum/Corrigendum if any will be hosted in the above website only.	

Sd./- Executive Engineer
 Rayagada (R&B) Division No. - II
 OIPR-34040/11/0010/2122

Don't book scribes at drop of a hat: NHRC to 3 NE states

The direction was given to chief secretaries and the director generals of police of Tripura, Meghalaya & Mizoram

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Shillong, Dec 15: Tripura, Meghalaya and Mizoram have been directed not to register cases against journalists at the 'drop of a hat', National Human Rights Commission member Justice MM Kumar said Wednesday.

The direction was given to chief secretaries and the director generals of police of the three states during their deposition to the Commission at a two-day hearing here which concluded Wednesday.

The NHRC direction was given in connection to a complaint filed by Sanit Debroy of the Assembly of Journalists in Tripura and the Commission has given specific directions to that state's chief secretary and director general of police, Kumar said.

"We have told the states' authorities during the hearing that they need to show patience and to



give them (journalists) enough space to express their point of view ... We have also told them don't register cases at the drop of a hat," he told PTI. Debroy had approached the NHRC with his complaint that since the BJP-IPFT government

came to power in the state in 2018 many scribes had been attacked and many newspaper offices had been vandalised.

The other two states, whose representatives were present at the meeting, were also directed to do

Since the BJP-IPFT government came to power in Tripura in 2018 many scribes had been attacked and many newspaper offices had been vandalised

the same. "I have told the chief secretaries (of the three states) this (Wednesday) afternoon and they have taken note of the direction," he said.

The Commission recommended compensation of Rs 7 lakh to a minor who was raped by a para-military personnel in Tripura. In another case, top government officers of the state were directed to provide proper medical care and treatment to a handicapped person. Kumar said the Commission has also asked the

Mizoram government to pay as compensation Rs 7 lakh to the next of kin of a person who died in police custody, while Meghalaya government has been asked to submit proofs of payment of Rs 3 lakh to the next of kin of a victim who died in a police encounter.

Two cases in connection to the death of labourers in illegal coal mines in Meghalaya were heard and the state government was directed to give Rs 5 lakh as compensation to the kin of each victim, he said.

In all 19 cases were heard during the two day-public hearing here. Ten of the cases were from Tripura, six from Meghalaya and three from Mizoram. NHRC general secretary Bimbadhar Pradhan said that the Commission is extensively using the NHRC portal for ensuring easy and quick submission of reports and action taken reports from state governments on 22 advisories issued earlier.

Pan-Assam protests seeking CAA repeal



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, Dec 15: The Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuva Chhatra Parishad (AJYCP) Wednesday held protests across the state against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and demanded immediate scrapping of the legislation.

The youth organisation held its demonstrations in front of deputy commissioner's offices across several districts and submitted memorandums to the Prime Minister through the DC.

The main protest took place in front of the DC office of Dibrugarh district in Upper Assam where hundreds of agitators blocked the way to demand repeal of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA). "The CAA is simply an anti-Assam act and it has to go away. If CAA is implemented fully,

the Assamese language will die," an AJYCP leader said in Dibrugarh.

A protester in Lakhimpur said that "the Assamese identity and Assamese community will cease to exist if CAA is not scrapped in the near future."

Apart from Dibrugarh and Lakhimpur, protests took place in Bajali, Charaideo, Mangaldoi, Biswanath, Jorhat and Nalbari among other districts.

In every place, the AJYCP submitted memorandums to the Prime Minister through the Deputy Commissioner of the respective districts. The CAA seeks to provide Indian citizenship to Hindus, Jains, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Parsis entering India on or before December 31, 2014 from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan after five years of residence here.

Amid protests, Kerala school implements unisex uniform



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kozhikode, Dec 15: Amid protests by some people under the collective of Muslim coordination committee, the Balussery government girls' higher secondary school here Wednesday implemented the gender-neutral uniform for its students, a move which the state Higher Education Minister R Bindu termed as a radical step forward.

Bindu, who inaugurated the new gender neutral uniform of the school, said those who oppose such moves are acting against the interests of Kerala and its future generations.

"At a time when the world is heralding an age of gender justice and equality, Balussery Government Girls' HSS has taken a radical step forward. Glad to have had the opportunity to officially inaugurate the school's new gender neutral uniform, which students have welcomed with open arms," Bindu said.

She said there are always people who oppose the new changes.

"However, such people are not protecting the interests of Kerala and our future generations. Those who love children will never oppose such progressive changes. Those who love children will support them to get adapted to clothes that suit our climate and give children freedom of movement," Bindu said.

Earlier in the day, a section of people under the collective of Muslim coordination committee staged a protest march to the school against

the new unisex uniforms, saying the decision amounts to insulting the modesty of women and that it was part of 'imposing liberal ideology' among students.

They described it as anti-democratic and an encroachment on people's right to wear anything. The higher secondary section in the school is open to both girls and boys.

"There are 200 girl students and 60 boys in the batch. The authorities have asked the girl students to wear the same dress as that of the boys. We feel that it is a wrong decision. It was not taken after discussing the matter with the PTA or other stakeholders. There was no discussion prior to implementing this and it seems like this was part of imposing liberal ideology in the school," a representative of the coordination committee told the media. Meanwhile, general education minister V Sivankutty said the state government will encourage decisions that ensure gender justice. "In general, the state government wants to provide education without any gender bias. The government will encourage such decisions which will help bringing in gender justice," Sivankutty said.

The State had earlier announced that it would back the idea of gender-neutral uniforms in schools—a concept that was perhaps hitherto unthinkable to students and academics alike. Nearly a dozen schools in Kerala have already shifted to the new gender neutral uniform.

Tripura tribal council plans to raise own police force

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Agartala, Dec 15: Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAACDC), which comprises two-thirds of the state's territory, is planning to raise its own police force.

Chairman of the tribal council Jagadish Debbarma said discussions should be held for at least 10 days in one or more sessions of the TTAADC before passing the ADC Police Bill.

In 1994, the Congress-TUJS controlled ADC had passed a resolution in the council to raise its police force and the proposal was sent to the governor for his approval.

The governor had approved the Bill in 2007 but it was not ultimately implemented due to some technical reasons, Debbarma

“During the formation of the TTAADC in 1985, the total tribal population was 88 per cent and it has now declined to 84 per cent. On the other hand, the non-tribal population in the ADC areas has increased to 16 per cent from 14 per cent.” Debbarma said.

JAGADISH DEBBARMA | TTAADC CHAIRMAN

told PTI. "After detailed discussions, the tribal council will prepare rules, which should be passed in the council. Once the rules are framed and passed, the ADC will be able to recruit police personnel," the veteran tribal leader said.

Debbarma claimed that the tribal population is declining in the TTAADC areas compared to what it was during its formation. "During the formation of the

TTAACDC in 1985, the total tribal population was 88 per cent and it has now declined to 84 per cent. On the other hand, the non-tribal population in the ADC areas has increased to 16 per cent from 14 per cent," Debbarma said.

The tribal population is facing threats due to unchecked migration of people from outside the tribal council areas, Debbarma said.

Tipraha Indigenous Progressive Regional Alliance (TIPRA) swept the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAACDC) elections in April this year, winning 18 of the 28 seats.

In the 30-member tribal council, elections are held in 28 seats. Representatives for the remaining two seats are nominated by the governor on the advice of the state government.

'AFSPA no solution to Naga problem'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kohima, Dec 15: The Naga club, a unique, century-old organisation in Nagaland, has demanded scrapping of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA), even though it feels the end of the law itself will not solve the decades-old Naga political strife.

The club, which became a platform for the Nagas to assert their rights since its formation in 1918, made the demand in a representation to President Ram Nath Kovind Tuesday, days after the killing of 14 civilians by security forces in a botched up operation and its aftermath in the state. A copy of the representation, signed by Naga Club president Kuolachalie Seyie and general secretary KN Mhonthung Lotha, was made available to the media on Wednesday. "AFSPA is not the an-



swer to the decades-old problem of the Nagas. Political will is the answer to this longstanding issue," the representation said, alleging that people of the state were tortured by security forces as they get immunity under the law.

In 1947, the Naga National Council (NNC) declared Nagaland as independent following which the central government sent forces to the state. The AFSPA was enacted in 1958. After decades of insurgency, peace process started and a Framework Agreement with

NSCN(IM) was signed in 2015 after over 80 rounds of negotiations spanning 18 years. "The situation in Nagaland has changed from the 1950s to the 1990s. Since the ceasefire and the negotiation started in 1997. The public has witnessed peaceful atmosphere..." the Naga Club said in the representation.

However, the peace process has been dragging on, it said. The nation needs laws to counter separatist movements but while deciding on the continuance of a certain law, the situation in which it is being used should be reviewed, the club said. The club, which submitted a memorandum to the Simon Commission formed in 1927 to study potential constitutional reforms, requesting that Nagas be given a choice of self-determination after the British leave India, claimed AFSPA is an offshoot of a colonial era law.

Forest dept calls in trained jumbos to end tiger menace

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Thiruvananthapuram, Dec 15: For over two weeks, residents of Kurukenmoola village in Kerala's Wayanad district have been living under stress with a tiger on the rampage in the area and to deal with the menace, the forest department has now called in two 'Kungi' (trained) elephants to aid its hunt.

The village has, in the past 15 days, lost 16 domesticated animals to the tiger and its residents are not happy, as despite the best efforts of forest officials who have strived hard to trap the big cat, and it continues to cause havoc.

DFO, Wayanad South, A. Shajana said that they are now awaiting the arrival of two trained elephants who will be employed to trap the tiger. "Cages have been put up at a few locations in the locality, besides drones will also be put into service to locate the tiger. The trained elephants of the Forest Department are expected to arrive anytime and once they reach, they will be used to locate the tiger," said Shajana.

B'desh keen to protect Mukti Bahini training camps in Tripura

THE TRIPURA GOVERNMENT HAS ALREADY DEVELOPED A BIG MEMORIAL AND PARK AT THE BORDER VILLAGE OF CHOTTAKHOLA IN MEMORY OF INDIAN SOLDIERS AND BANGLADESHI FREEDOM FIGHTERS WHO SACRIFICED THEIR LIVES DURING THE WAR

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Agartala, Dec 15: The Bangladesh government 'keenly wants' to protect the graveyards, training camps of 'Mukti Bahinis' (freedom fighters) and other commemorative houses and installations of Tripura, where around 15 lakh Bangladeshi refugees - a number almost equal to the state's then population of around 16 lakh -- also took shelter during the nine-month long 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War.

Assistant High Commissioner of Bangladesh in Agartala, Mohammad Jobayed Hosen said that there are many graveyards, training camps of Bangladesh 'Mukti Yoddhas' in all the eight districts of Tripura, and the Bangladesh government is keen to develop and protect them for the future generation.

"At our government cost we want to build a 'Shaheed Minar' (martyrs' memorial) in Agartala. I have also discussed this with Tripura's Education and Law

Minister Ratan Lal Nath," Hosen told IANS.

He said as India helped a lot in the Bangladesh Liberation War, and provided shelter and training to the 'Mukti Yoddhas', the protection of the graveyards, training camps and erection of the 'Shaheed Minar' would be 'very imperative' for the continued friendship of the two good neighbours and the upcoming generations as well.

Bangladesh Liberation War expert and writer Swapan Bhattacharjee said that there are many private and government houses in Tripura used by the 'Mukti Yoddhas' for numerous purposes including functioning of camp office in 1971, these should be protected for obvious reasons. "The Mukti Yoddhas' biggest training camp in bordering Melaghar, hospitals in Habul Banerjee garden in Nalchar and Dhajanagar, training camp at Palatana and many graveyards, where Bangladesh 'Mukti Yoddhas' had been buried must be preserved



so that future generation of the two countries could know about the history," Bhattacharjee, who was conferred by the Bangladesh government's "Friends of Liberation War Honour" in 2013, told IANS. He said that the Pakistan army had tried many times to blow up all the camp offices and important training centres in Tripura but they failed.

Tripura Minister Nath said that

the state government has no objection in protecting the graveyards, training camps and construction of 'Shaheed Minar' in Agartala, but these needs government of India permission.

"We are always sympathetic and supportive to Bangladesh. For each others' progress, continued support is necessary," Nath told IANS. As Tripura is surrounded by Bangladesh on almost all four

sides, strategically the state's various setups played an extremely vital role during the Bangladesh Liberation War.

"In the Eastern Frontier of 1971 war, major operations like Operation Cactus Lily and Operation Nut Cracker took place - and the 57 Mountain Division was actively involved in both operations," said Manas Paul, a defence analyst. Both the operations progressed from Agartala westwards towards Dhaka. The war finally culminated December 16, 1971 with the unconditional surrender of 93,000 Pakistani soldiers.

"Lt Gen Sagat Singh, Maj Gen JFR Jacob, Maj Gen BF Gonsalves, Vice Admiral N Krishnan, Lance Naik Albert Ekka are a few of our war heroes," Paul told IANS.

He underscored the valiant sacrifices made by the officers and soldiers of the Indian Army, especially Lance Naik Albert Ekka of 14 Guards regiment.

Paul said: "The Indian Army, accompanied by the people of the then East Pakistan, fought the

war most effectively and decisively for Bangladesh Liberation."

Tripura's capital city Agartala, and other bordering towns of the state, had played crucial role as those places were the launch pad for the main offensive into Bangladesh.

"Local residents of Tripura played a huge role by providing support to the Indian Army and Mukti Yoddhas," he added.

Paul said: "Around 15 lakhs Bangladeshi refugees - a number equal to the state's then population of around 16 lakh -- had taken shelter in Tripura alone. During the war, 10 million men, women and children from then East Pakistan took shelter in West Bengal, Tripura, Assam and Meghalaya."

The Tripura government has already developed a big memorial and park at the border village of Chottakhola - 132 km south of Agartala - in memory of the Indian soldiers and Bangladeshi freedom fighters who sacrificed their lives during the war.

national

of the day quote

Babasaheb laid the foundation of modern India. Today, we are launching the theme song of the play with Indian Ocean band. This play is an effort to express our gratitude towards Babasaheb's contribution towards the country in this 75th year of independence.

MANISH SISODIA | DELHI DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER

Earlier governments used to open fire on the farmers. They were a symbol of exploitation but we waived off farm loans to get farmers to get them out of debt

YOGI ADITYANATH | UTTAR PRADESH CHIEF MINISTER

Deeply saddened by the passing of IAF Group Captain Varun Singh who was injured in the helicopter accident at Coonoor. Salutes to the bravery and commitment that he upheld in the service to the nation. Condolence to his family and friends

PINARAYI VIJAYAN | KERALA CHIEF MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Powerful blast in Manipur, none hurt

Imphal: A powerful bomb was detonated in Imphal East District of Manipur though none was hurt in the explosion as it occurred early in the morning Wednesday, police officials said. They said that an explosion took place in front of a medicine shop at Khurai Tinsed road in Imphal East District. No outfit has yet claimed responsibility for the blast. Police said that the explosion was so massive that the iron shutter of the shop was blown several metres away and partially damaged the nearby shops.

Top Hizbul terrorist killed in encounter

Srinagar: An 'A+' category terrorist of proscribed terror outfit Hizbul Mujahideen (HM) was Wednesday killed in a gunfight with the security forces in South Kashmir's Pulwama district. He was involved in several terror crimes, including attack on policemen guarding a minority housing camp in 2018 at Zainapora in Shopian, in which four police personnel were killed. Police said during the intervening night of 14/15 December, acting on a specific input regarding the presence of a terrorist in Uzrampathi village of Pulwama, a joint cordon and search operation was launched by the Jammu and Kashmir Police, Army's 44 RR and 182 Battalion of the CRPF.

2 foreigners test +ve for Omicron

Hyderabad: Two foreign nationals who arrived here from abroad have tested positive for the new coronavirus variant, Omicron, a health official said Wednesday. A 24-year-old woman from Kenya and a 23-year-old man from Somalia landed in the city December 12, Telangana Director of Public Health G Srinivasa Rao told reporters here. They tested positive for Omicron Tuesday night during genome sequencing.

Man held for bomb hoax call

Mathura (UP): Police have arrested a man who Tuesday allegedly made a hoax call to the Railways saying a bomb had been planted in a Bangalore-bound train, police said. The 12628 Delhi-Karnataka Express was stopped for 25 minutes at Mathura Junction at night and thoroughly checked.

Farmers vacate Ghazipur border



Rakesh Tikait prepares to leave after farmers ended their year-long agitation

After an iconic fight with the Centre that resulted in the withdrawal of contentious farm laws, farmer leader Rakesh Tikait and his supporters Wednesday left for their homes from Ghazipur on the Delhi-Uttar Pradesh border that had become their residence for 383 days

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 15: Farmers camping at the Ghazipur border for over a year to protest against three contentious farm laws, Wednesday vacated the place. Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) national spokesperson Rakesh Tikait was present on the occasion.

Before leaving, farmers held 'havan' (a Hindu ritual) and expressed gratitude to all who stood with them in solidarity with the farm movement. Tikait, along with other farmers, will reach their home in Sauram, via Sisauli, Modinagar, Meerut, Daurala Toll Plaza and Mansurpur, celebrating their victory.

Talking to mediapersons Tikait said: "I want to thank everyone,

and particularly those who organised langars at the border." He said, the agitation has been suspended, but has not ended.

Children and elders who gathered there to see farmers depart from the border expressed happiness by dancing while playing songs.

Sisauli village has been decked up like a bride, while the Kisan Bhavan has been illuminated to welcome farmers who will be reaching their home after 380 days. BKU spokesperson Dharmendra Malik said Tikait would be visiting Soram, the headquarters of the sarv-khap, in Muzaffarnagar before returning home in Sisauli.

While the farmers returning from protests got a hero's welcome on their way, Sisauli, the native village of the Tikait family and BKU's headquarters, also got decked up overnight for their reception.

The National Highway Authority of India has started working to open the road which was closed from one side for over a year. The BKU, an influential farmers' union, is a part of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) which spearheaded the protests against the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020, Farmers' (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020 and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020.

Thirteen months of struggle on the streets and returning home today. Heartfelt thanks to the citizens of the country

RAKESH TIKAIT

Top court grants protection from arrest to Raj Kundra

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 15: The Supreme Court Wednesday issued notice to Maharashtra government on a petition filed by businessman Raj Kundra seeking anticipatory bail. The top court granted him four weeks protection from arrest in one of the cases related to porn film racket.

In November, the Bombay High Court had declined to entertain the anticipatory bail application filed by Kundra in connection with an FIR registered against him by the Mumbai Police in the porn film racket case. Kundra approached the top court after high court re-

fused relief. Kundra, who is married to actor Shilpa Shetty, first sought anticipatory bail from the session court, which refused to grant him any relief.

Thereafter, he moved the Bombay High Court claiming that he was allegedly framed. A bench comprising Justices Vineet Saran and Aniruddha Bose after hearing arguments in the matter granted protection of arrest to Kundra and scheduled the matter for further hearing after four weeks.

In the top court, Kundra was represented by advocate-on-record Shakti Pandey and advocate Prashant Patil.



30-fold increase in DDoS cyber attacks in festive season

A DDoS attack is a malicious attempt to disrupt the normal traffic of a targeted server, service or network by overwhelming the target or its surrounding infrastructure with a flood of Internet traffic

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 15: There has been a 30-fold increase in distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) cyber attacks in India in October, compared to the volume recorded in the previous month, a new report showed Wednesday.

Cyber-security analysts at Tata Communications found that while the attacks started with a few targeted broadband providers in early October, the pattern evolved and by the end of the month, attacks targeted multiple broadband providers simultaneously.

Most such attacks were designed to flood an Internet serv-

ice provider (ISP) network with malicious traffic - consuming all available bandwidth and rendering the network unavailable to legitimate users.

"A deeper analysis of the data found that these attacks were focused on services that are used extensively during the festive season, including media streaming, Internet phone services and online gaming," the findings showed.

A DDoS attack is a malicious attempt to disrupt the normal traffic of a targeted server, service or network by overwhelming the target or its surrounding infrastructure with a flood of

Gangster Suresh Pujari deported to India

PUJARI, WANTED IN EXTORTION CASES IN MUMBAI, THANE, KALYAN, ULHASNAGAR AND DOMBIVLI NEAR MUMBAI, WAS BROUGHT BACK TO INDIA LATE TUESDAY NIGHT

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, Dec 15: Two months after he was nabbed by the Philippines Police, dreaded absconding gangster Suresh Pujari was deported to India and brought from New Delhi to Mumbai to face charges for nearly two dozen serious crimes here, officials said Wednesday.

The ATS recovered 2 international mobile SIM cards from him and the arrest happened just 4 days before the validity of his red corner notice of December 20, 2016 was to expire - December 19.

He was whisked off to Chief Judicial Magistrate Court in Thane which granted 10 days police custody in an extortion case registered at the Mahatma Phule Chowk Police Station which the ATS is investigating.

In mid-October, Pujari was nabbed by the Paranaque police's Fugitive Search Unit in southern Manila metropolitan region and



Suresh Pujari being produced in court in Thane

(PHOTO CREDIT: TWITTER)

the extradition process was initiated, culminating in his deportation late on Tuesday to New Delhi.

Pujari is a relative of another notorious mafiosi, Ravi Pujari, who was deported to India from west Africa's Senegal in February 2020, and is currently in custody being probed by central agencies and police of Karnataka, Gujarat, and Maharashtra. Shortly after he

sneaked out of the country in 2007, the Mumbai Police had shared a detailed dossier on Suresh Pujari with the Centre over a decade ago, said officials. Since the two Pujaris fell out due to territorial disputes, Suresh Pujari, along with a few others, launched independent mafia operations in the early 2000s, with activities in parts of Mumbai, Navi Mumbai, and Thane regions.

In a secret operation, Pujari was flown from the Philippines to New Delhi where he was arrested by a waiting team of ATS

Living in Asalpha area of Ghatkopar suburb in north-east Mumbai, he managed to hoodwink the law enforcers and slipped out of almost India 15 years ago. Later, the InterPol issued a notice for him and the Maharashtra Police was closely monitoring his movements in different countries.

Suresh Pujari faces at least 10 major cases of extortion, threats to murder, killings, etc, in Mumbai, Thane and more offences elsewhere in the MMR region, other cities and the Mumbai Police CID, the CBI and the FBI were on the lookout for him in the past nearly 15 years.

IN FULL SWING



Police personnel during a full dress rehearsal ahead of the Madhya Pradesh Police Foundation Day celebrations at Motilal Nehru Police Stadium in Bhopal

Ensure no gap in Oxygen supply: Centre to states

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 15: The Union Health Ministry Wednesday asked the states and UTs to review and monitor the status of oxygen concentrators, ventilators, oxygen cylinders, Liquid Medical Oxygen (LMO) plants and Medical Gas Pipeline systems (MGPS) on a daily basis to ensure that the gap between the equipment and systems delivered to the districts and installed at the healthcare facilities is reduced to zero.

The Centre has asked the state nodal officers to streamline coordination with Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO), HLL Infra Tech Services Limited (HITES) and Central Medical Services Society (CMSS) for resolution of electricity related and site related issues for ensuring quick operationalization of the entire medical oxygen supply infrastructure.

In a virtual meeting with states and UTs to review their pre-



paredness regarding Medical Oxygen devices and systems, LMO Plants, Oxygen Concentrators and others, Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan underlined that medical oxygen is an essential public health commodity and its uninterrupted supply in sufficient quantity is of critical importance to tackle the pandemic.

It was also pointed out to the states that ECRP-II funds have been sanctioned for installation of 958 LMO Storage Tanks and med-

ical gas pipeline systems in 1,374 hospitals. States were advised to utilize this opportunity to enhance domestic oxygen production capacity and ensure the completion, installation and commissioning of medical gas pipelines in government hospitals expeditiously.

The states have been asked to schedule and conduct mock drills of all installed and commissioned PSA Plants to ensure functionality so that the oxygen with the required quantity, pressure and purity reaches the intended patients at their bedside.

These drills are to be completed by the end of December 2021. The states were also requested to complete the pending Oxygen Audit reports and submit this through the designated portal by the end of December 2021.

Moreover, 1,14,000 Oxygen Concentrators are being provided to states under PM CARES and ECRP-II, said the ministry in a statement.

Bus plunges into rivulet, 9 killed

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Amaravati, Dec 15: Nine people, including the driver of an Andhra Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation bus, were killed as it fell into a rivulet near Jangareddygudem in West Godavari district Wednesday.

At least 12 other passengers, who suffered injuries in the accident, were admitted to the area hospital in Jangareddygudem while another seriously injured was shifted to the District Headquarters Hospital in Eluru. Conductor of the bus and several other passengers escaped with minor injuries, RTC and Revenue officials said. In all, there were 45 passengers and two crew in the ill-fated bus. Some of the passengers and the conductor crawled out of the bus windows even as the local people who rushed to the scene pulled them out to safety.

Some of the passengers sustained minor wounds as the window glass splinters struck them when the bus plunged into the rivulet. The bus was on its way to Jangareddygudem from Aswaraopet in neighbouring Telangana when the mishap occurred.



Internet traffic. The consequences can be much more serious when it comes to ISPs that form part of

a nation's critical infrastructure. The stakes have become even higher in the wake of the pan-

dem, with enterprises relying heavily on their networks to maintain business continuity.

In these challenging times, it's crucial to stay aware of the ongoing DDoS threat targeting ISPs and to put in place best practises to defend against attacks, the researchers warned. In the first half of 2021 alone, cybercriminals launched approximately 5.4 million DDoS attacks.

During this period, multiple ISPs in Europe were targeted, causing major operational disruption for the businesses connected to them. Similar attacks have been observed in other parts of the world including India.

In October, installation frauds of e-commerce apps in the peak sale season accounted for half of the total downloads according to a study by mFilterit, a global digital ad and fraud detection and protection company based in India. The company handles sites accounting for over 50 per cent of the country's e-commerce customers which include top global players. The share of app installation frauds - in which cheap human labour or automated tools are used to make fake installs which are never opened for use - hit 51 per cent in October. The average between April to November 14th was 47 per cent.

international

of the day quote

Of course, our long-term concern is, if it turns out that new variant vaccines are required, that there may be an 'inequity 2.0' where we see wealthy countries hoard those vaccines once again, like we saw at the beginning of the pandemic

SETH BERKLEY | GAVI CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Moldova wants to become a member of the EU one day. We will insist that it is our choice and we would like other countries to respect that choice

MAIA SANDU | PRESIDENT, MOLDOVA

There are groups that are actively fighting for the human rights of people on the ground in India that will get direct engagement from me. We know that democracies are complicated and we can look at our own and at India's, but it's a cornerstone of our shared values

ERIC MICHAEL GARCETTI | NOMINEE FOR NEXT US ENVOY TO NEW DELHI

SHORT TAKES

Deuba re-elected as party president

Kathmandu: The delegates of Nepal's largest democratic party, the Nepali Congress, Wednesday re-elected Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba as the president. Deuba, who secured 2,733 votes during the second round of election, defeated Shekhar Koirala, who secured 1,855 votes, according to the 14th General Convention of the Nepali Congress. Koirala is the nephew of former Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala. The total number of votes cast during Tuesday's election was 4,623 while 35 votes were declared as void.

Inflation in UK hits 10-yr-high

London: Consumer prices in the UK are rising at their highest rate in over a decade as a result of soaring energy costs and blockages in the supply chain, official figures showed Wednesday, a day before the Bank of England is set to next decide on interest rates. The Office for National Statistics found that inflation rose by 5.1 per cent in the year to November, up dramatically from October's 4.2 per cent.

Webb telescope launch delayed

Cape Canaveral: Next week's launch of NASA's new space telescope is delayed for at least two days because of a communication problem between the observatory and the rocket. Liftoff of the James Webb Space Telescope is now targeted for no earlier than Dec 24. NASA announced the latest delay for the \$10 billion telescope late Tuesday. More information will be available later this week, officials said. Webb is awaiting launch aboard an Ariane rocket at the European Space Agency's spaceport in French Guiana. The telescope had been put on top of the rocket last Saturday.

Storm drenches southern Calif

Los Angeles: A powerful storm charged south through California Tuesday, drenching the drought-stricken state with desperately needed rain but also triggering rescue efforts on a swollen river and mandatory evacuations due to the threat of mudslides in some areas scarred by wildfires. The National Weather Service reported remarkable rainfall in several parts of the state. North of the Golden Gate Bridge, Mount Tamalpais accumulated more than 11 inches over 72 hours.



Yes, things will get better; yes, we will pursue the fight against this pandemic with the greatest determination; and yes, we will win this fight

OLAF SCHOLZ | CHANCELLOR, GERMANY

FRENCH MILITARY DRAWDOWN

French forces left the city of Timbuktu late Tuesday, the latest sign that the former colonial power is drawing down its presence in northern Mali nearly nine years after driving Islamic extremists from power there in a military intervention



NASA's solar probe creates history, touches the Sun

THE NEW MILESTONE MARKS ONE MAJOR STEP FOR PARKER SOLAR PROBE AND ONE GIANT LEAP FOR SOLAR SCIENCE

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Washington, Dec 15: For the first time in history, a spacecraft has touched the Sun. NASA's Parker Solar Probe has now flown through the Sun's upper atmosphere -- the corona -- and sampled particles and magnetic fields there, the US space agency has said.

The first-ever passage through the corona at 4.89 million miles lasted only a few hours. It is also one of many planned for the mission.

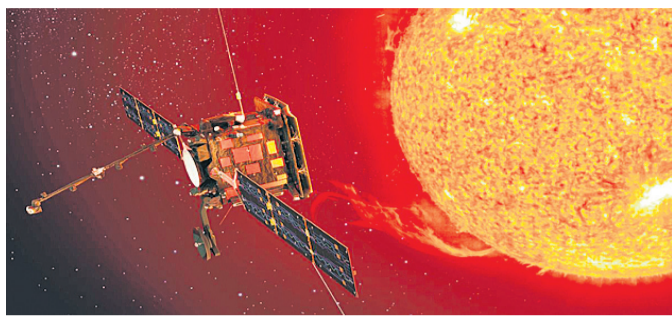
Launched in 2018 to explore the mysteries of the Sun, the Parker Solar Probe has, so far, completed

nine full orbits of the Sun. Before its prime mission ends in 2025, it will complete another 15 orbits.

It is expected to spiral closer to the Sun in January, eventually reaching as close as 3.83 million miles from the surface.

During its eighth flyby of the Sun in April, the spacecraft encountered the specific magnetic and particle conditions at around 8.1 million miles above the solar surface that told scientists it finally entered the solar atmosphere.

Parker Solar Probe "touching the Sun" is a monumental moment for solar science and a truly remarkable feat, said Thomas



Zurbuchen, the associate administrator for the Science Mission Directorate at NASA Headquarters in Washington, in a statement. Not only does this milestone

provide us with deeper insights into our Sun's evolution and it's impacts on our solar system, but everything we learn about our own star also teaches us more about

stars in the rest of the universe, he added. As it circles closer to the solar surface, Parker is making new discoveries that other spacecraft were too far away to see, including from within the solar wind -- the flow of particles from the Sun that can influence us at Earth.

In 2019, Parker discovered that magnetic zig-zag structures in the solar wind, called switchbacks, are plentiful close to the Sun. But how and where they form remained a mystery. Halving the distance to the Sun since then, Parker Solar Probe has now passed close enough to identify one place where they originate, the solar surface.

Xi backs Putin's pursuit of guarantees from West



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Moscow, Dec 15: Chinese President Xi Jinping supported Russian President Vladimir Putin in his push to get Western security guarantees precluding NATO's eastward expansion, the Kremlin said Wednesday after the two leaders held a virtual summit.

Putin and Xi spoke as Moscow faces heightened tensions with the West over a Russian troop buildup near Ukraine's border. In recent weeks, Western nations engaged in diplomatic efforts to prevent a possible invasion of Ukraine. The Kremlin has denied harbouring

plans to storm its neighbour. Putin, meanwhile, demanded guarantees that NATO will not expand to Ukraine or deploy troops and weapons there.

He told Xi Wednesday about "mounting threats to Russia's national interests from the US and the NATO bloc, which consistently move their military infrastructure close to the Russian borders," Putin's foreign affairs adviser, Yuri Ushakov, said.

The Russian leader stressed the need to hold talks with NATO and the US on legally binding security guarantees, according to Ushakov. Xi responded by saying he "understands Russia's concerns and fully supports our initiative to work out these security guarantees for Russia," Ushakov said.

He said Moscow's proposals have been passed on to US Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Karen Donfried, who visited Moscow Wednesday and met with Russia's deputy foreign minister, Sergei Ryabkov.

In recent years, China and Russia have increasingly aligned their foreign policies to counter US domination of the international economic and political order.

'Omicron evades vaccines'

EU PREZ SAID THAT OMICRON IS EXPECTED TO BE THE DOMINANT VARIANT IN THE 27-NATION BLOC BY MID-JANUARY

AGENCIES

Geneva, Dec 15: Preliminary evidence indicates that COVID-19 vaccines may be less effective against infection and transmission linked to the Omicron coronavirus variant, which also carries a higher risk of reinfection, the World Health Organisation said Wednesday.

The WHO, in its weekly epidemiological update, said that more data was needed to better understand the extent to which Omicron may evade immunity derived from either vaccines or previous infection.

"As a result of this, the overall risk related to the new variant of concern Omicron remains very high," it said, echoing comments made by WHO officials at an online briefing Tuesday.

WHO Director General Tedros A Ghebreyesus said that a total of



77 countries have reported Omicron cases so far but the reality is that this variant is probably yet to be detected in some countries. All three US-authorised vaccines appear to be significantly less protective against the newly-detected Omicron variant of the coronavirus in laboratory testing, but a booster dose likely restores most of the protection, according to a study released Tuesday. The study from re-

Omicron is spreading at a rate we have not seen with any previous variant. I need to be very clear vaccines alone will not get any country out of this crisis. It's not vaccines instead of masks, distancing, ventilation or hand hygiene. Do it all. Do it consistently. Do it well

TEDROS A GHEBREYESUS | WHO DIRECTOR GENERAL

Pfizer's pill shows hope as US COVID toll hits 800K



after initial COVID-19 symptoms. The updates come as COVID-19 cases, deaths and hospitalisation are all rising again and the US death toll from COVID-19 topped 800,000 Tuesday, a once-unimaginable figure seen as doubly tragic, given that more than 200,000 of those lives were lost after the vaccine became available practically for the asking last spring. The United States has the highest reported toll of any country. The true death toll in the US and around the world is believed to be significantly higher because of cases that were overlooked or concealed.

searchers at Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH), Harvard and MIT that has not yet been peer reviewed tested blood from people who received the Moderna, Johnson & Johnson and Pfizer BioNTech vaccines against a pseudovirus engineered to resemble the Omicron variant.

The Delta variant is still dominant, however, accounting for 99.2% of the almost 880,000 sequences uploaded to GISAID with specimens collected in the last 60 days.

Olympics boycott row

Putin said that he plans to meet with Xi in person in Beijing in February and to attend the 2022 Winter Olympics taking place in China's capital. "As agreed, we will hold talks and then take part in the opening ceremony of the Winter Olympic Games," Putin said. The US, Canada, Australia and Britain have said they will not be sending dignitaries to the Olympics as part of a diplomatic boycott to protest China's human rights record.



Acrobats dressed as Super heroes come down from the roofs to make a surprise greeting at the windows of the rooms of the little patients in Pediatrics and of all the patients, at the San Paolo hospital in Milan, Italy, Wednesday. PTI PHOTO

HK douses major fire on trade centre roof

DOZENS OF PEOPLE WERE TRAPPED ON THE ROOFTOP OF THE SKYSCRAPER

REUTERS

Hong Kong, Dec 15: A fire broke out on Wednesday in Hong Kong's World Trade Centre, trapping about 150 people on its roof, and 13 people were injured before firefighters put out the blaze, police and the fire department said.

The 39-floor World Trade Centre is home to restaurants, offices and shops in the bustling Causeway Bay commercial and shopping district. The fire broke out in a utility room on a lower level of the building's mall at noon, media said, before it spread to bamboo scaffolding cladding the exterior. City authorities said firefighters

had battled the blaze with two high-powered hoses, using ladders and breathing apparatus in their effort to rescue those trapped.

Police told Reuters 13 people were taken to hospital, one of them semi-conscious.

Earlier, shoppers and office workers streamed out of the building as smoke billowed from it and police blocked off traffic on major adjacent roads.

About 100 people moved from a restaurant to the top 39th floor when the fire broke out and smoke filled the dining area, broadcaster RTHK quoted police as saying.

The cause of the fire was not immediately clear.



After 3 tense months, Spanish volcano eruption may be over

THE CUMBRE VIEJA VOLCANO IN THE CANARY ISLANDS FELL SILENT MONDAY EVENING, AND SCIENTISTS SAID ITS 36 HOURS OR SO OF NEGLIGIBLE ACTIVITY MIGHT SIGNAL THE BEGINNING OF THE END OF THE ERUPTION

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Madrid, Dec 15: Residents on the Spanish island of La Palma dared to hope Wednesday that a volcanic eruption is over after almost three months of unnerving daily explosions, earthquakes, rivers of molten rock and a huge ash plume containing toxic gases.

The Cumbre Vieja volcano in the Canary Islands off northwest Africa fell silent Monday evening, and scientists said its 36 hours or so of negligible activity might signal the beginning of the end of the eruption.

Scientists won't rule out a resurgence of volcanic activity which pre-

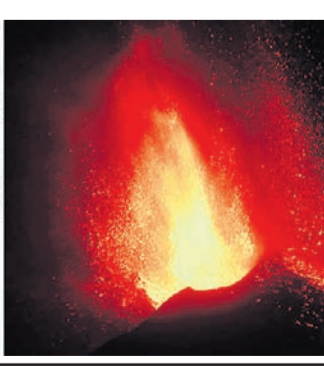
viously abated only to return with renewed force, but say it is unlikely.

"We cannot be 100% sure, as the volcano has been playing a few tricks over the last weeks," Valentin Troll, a geology expert with Sweden's Uppsala University and co-author of a geology study of the Canary Islands, told The Associated Press.

"But many parameters have now subsided, and I think the volcano is indeed in decline now," he said. The Canary Islands government said in a statement that "volcanic activity has fallen to almost nothing." The eruption, which began September 19, is the longest



on record on La Palma and has been a milestone for islanders, many of whom live from farming and tourism. The volcanic Canary Islands are a popular European



vacation destination due to their mild climate. No injuries or deaths have been directly linked to the eruption on La Palma, where around

80,000 people live. While life has continued largely as normal on most of the island, a section of its southwestern side is severely damaged.

The eruption, which began Sept 19, is the longest on record on La Palma and has been a milestone for islanders, many of whom live from farming and tourism

No injuries or deaths have been directly linked to the eruption on La Palma, where around 80,000 people live

Fiery molten rock flowing from Cumbre Vieja down toward the sea has destroyed around 3,000 buildings

The Spanish government has pledged financial aid to help locals rebuild their lives.

Fiery molten rock flowing from Cumbre Vieja down toward the sea has destroyed around 3,000 buildings. The fields of thick, black hardened lava have entombed banana plantations, ruined irrigation systems and cut roads.

The hardened lava covers around 1,200 hectares, according to data collected by the Canary Islands volcanic emergency unit, PEVOLCAN.

Where the molten rock has poured into the Atlantic Ocean, rocky deltas have formed over 48 hectares, PEVOLCAN said.



That is because India's talent pool -- the engineers, developers and creators and the whole vibrant startup ecosystem -- is playing a huge role in shaping the future. India is on track to have the largest app developer base in the world by 2024

MARK ZUCKERBERG | FOUNDER AND CEO, META

TOYOTA MOTOR TO RAISE PRICES FROM JAN 1

Automobile manufacturer Toyota Kirloskar Motor Wednesday said the company will raise prices of its models. Accordingly, the price realignment will take effect from January 1, 2022. "The price realignment is necessitated on the back of sustained increase in input costs including raw materials," the company said in a statement



of the day quote

We are extremely serious about it (NINL) and will bid aggressively for the asset. This asset is more valuable to us in terms of our operations there in Odisha

V R SHARMA | MD, JINDAL STEEL AND POWER LTD

We are constantly aiming to increase our supply chain efficiency and lowering logistics costs. Indian ports have attracted a cumulative FDI to the tune of ₹122 billion

SARBANANDA SONOWAL | SHIPPING AND WATERWAYS MINISTER

Short-form courses will play a critical role in capturing a lion's share of the upskilling and reskilling segment, which has market potential of over \$58 billion

RONNIE SCREVVALA | CO-FOUNDER AND CHAIRPERSON, UPGRAD

SHORT TAKES

SBI, Indian Army renew DSP scheme

Mumbai: State Bank of India Wednesday said it has renewed its memorandum of understanding with the Indian Army to offer specially crafted benefits to all serving and retired Army personnel and their families through its Defence Salary Package (DSP) Scheme. Under the MoU, the bank offers complimentary personal and air accidental insurance (death) covers, additional cover in case of on-duty death, permanent total disability / partial disability covers.

SpiceJet settles disputes with DHC

New Delhi: Airline operator SpiceJet has entered into a settlement deal with De Havilland Aircraft of Canada (DHC). The DHC reportedly moved a Delhi court against the SpiceJet, seeking payments in connection with Q400 aircraft that was not paid. "The parties have agreed to settle all their disputes under and related to the aircraft purchase agreement and component solution agreement, subject to compliance with the terms of settlement," SpiceJet said Wednesday.

RBI penalises PNB, ICICI Bank

Mumbai: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Wednesday said it has imposed a penalty of ₹1.8 crore on Punjab National Bank and of ₹30 lakh on ICICI Bank for deficiencies in the regulatory compliance. In a statement, the RBI said the Statutory Inspection for Supervisory Evaluation (ISE) of Punjab National Bank (PNB) was conducted by it with reference to its financial position as of March 31, 2019. Following the ISE and examination of other documents, the RBI found contravention of its provisions relating to the pledge of shares by the PNB.

ASUS brings first ProArt laptops

Bhubaneswar: Taiwanese tech giant, ASUS, announced the expansion of its consumer PC lineup with the launch of India's first ProArt series laptops. ASUS' ProArt series feature industry-first innovations in the form of ASUS Dial and a touchpad that can support the stylus. ASUS has also launched a series of VivoBook across AMD/Intel and 14inch/ 16inch variant - VivoBook Pro 14 and VivoBook Pro 15 OLED, VivoBook Pro 14X OLED, and VivoBook Pro 16X OLED, to offer a personalized choice for consumers.

Big boost to chip manufacturing

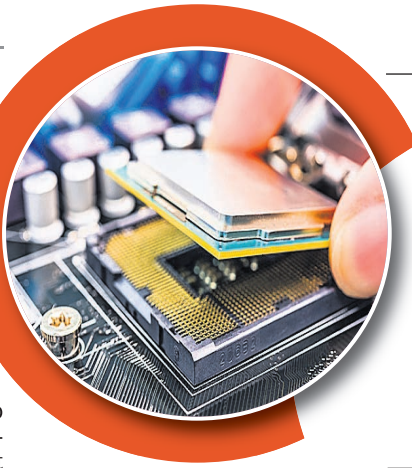
The plan to incentivise semiconductor manufacturing also comes at a time when automakers and tech companies around the world are grappling with a global chip shortage

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 15: India has approved a ₹76,000 crore production linked incentive (PLI) scheme to attract semiconductor and display manufacturers, its technology minister said Wednesday, as part of a deepening push to establish the country as a global electronics production hub.

Under the plan, the government will extend fiscal support of up to 50% of a project's cost to eligible display and semiconductor fabricators, the government said in a statement.

Israel's Tower Semiconductor, Taiwan's Foxconn and a consortium from Singapore have shown



interest in setting up chip factories in India while Vedanta Group was keen to set up a display plant, said a government source.

Make in India

- Cabinet approves ₹76,000 crore to woo chipmakers
- PLI incentives of around Rs 98,000 crore are approved for allied sectors
- Government to extend fiscal support of up to 50% of a project's cost
- Tata Group in talks with three states to invest up to \$300 million

"The program will usher in a new era in electronics manufacturing by providing a globally competitive incentive package to companies in semiconductor and display manufacturing as well as design," the government statement said.

Additionally, PLI incentives of around ₹98,000 crore are approved for allied sectors comprising of ACC battery, auto components, telecom & networking products, solar PV modules, and white goods. Overall, the government has committed monetary support of ₹2,30,000 crore to position India as a global hub for electronics manufacturing with semiconductors as the foundation, according to the Cabinet statement today.

The drive comes as some com-

panies look to diversify their manufacturing bases beyond China due to the ongoing trade war between Washington and Beijing and is a sign India is trying to move up the electronics value chain.

New Delhi also approved an incentive plan to support 100 local firms working on integrated circuit and chipset designs.

Technology Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw told a news briefing the plan would help develop "the complete semiconductor ecosystem - from the design of semiconductor chips to their fabrication, packing and testing in the country".

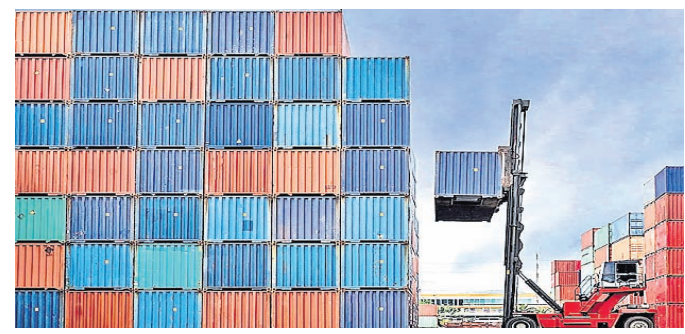
'ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY'

The government said it expected the scheme to create about 35,000 high-quality positions, 100,000 indirect jobs and attract investment worth ₹1.67 trillion.

PM Narendra Modi's government has offered about \$30 billion in incentives to woo some of the world's largest electronics manufacturers to set up shop in India and give the domestic industry a fillip.

It has also helped India win investment commitments from Foxconn, Wistron and Pegatron - three of Apple's top contract manufacturers. "The government's plan will help bring advanced technology, more employment and bigger investments into India," said A Gururaj, MD of Indian contract manufacturer Optiemus Electronics.

Merchandise exports surge 27% YoY in Nov



INSO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 15: India's November merchandise exports rose to \$30.04 billion, higher by 27.16 per cent on a year-on-year basis, official data showed Tuesday. Exports during November 2020 stood at \$23.62 billion.

The data by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry showed that in comparison to November 2019, last month's exports rose by 16.55 per cent.

Non-petroleum and non-gems and jewellery exports in November 2021 were \$23.68 billion, registering a positive growth of 22.26 per cent over non-petroleum and non-gems and jewellery exports of \$19.37 billion in November 2020, it said.

In comparison to November 2019, non-petroleum and non-gems and jewellery exports in November 2021 registered a positive growth of 22.28 per cent. Similarly, India's merchandise imports in October 2021 increased, rising by 56.58 per cent over last year to \$52.94 billion from \$33.81 billion.

The trade deficit widened by 124.77% on a YoY basis to \$22.91 billion in Nov 2021 from \$10.19 billion in the like period of 2020

Non-petroleum, non-gems and jewellery imports were \$31.82 billion in November 2021 with a positive growth of 40.64 per cent over non-petroleum, non-gems and jewellery imports of \$22.63 billion in November 2020 and a positive growth of 41.82 per cent over non-petroleum, non-gems and jewellery imports of \$22.44 billion in November 2019.

Additionally, the early data for December 2021 suggests that the trade deficit in this month will remain well above \$20 billion. In this scenario, we expect the current account deficit to widen to \$25-30 billion in Q3 FY2022 itself, exceeding the full year deficit seen in FY2020.

₹1,300cr push to digital payments

The Union Cabinet Wednesday approved a ₹1,300-crore incentive scheme to promote digital transactions using UPI and RuPay debit cards, Electronics and IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said. The minister said that the government will reimburse transaction charges levied on digital payments made by persons to the merchant as part of the merchant discount rate (MDR). He also said that 423 crore digital transactions valued at ₹7.56 lakh crore took place in November. The approved scheme will cover reimbursement on digital transactions of up to ₹2,000, using RuPay debit cards and BHIM-UPI. Under the scheme, the acquiring banks will be incentivised by the Government, by way of paying a percentage of the value of transactions (P2M) done through RuPay Debit cards and low-value BHIM-UPI modes of payments, at an estimated financial outlay of ₹1,300 crore for a period of one-year w.e.f. April 01, 2021, an official statement said. The scheme was formulated in compliance with the Budget announcements (FY2021-22) by the government to give a further boost to digital transactions in the country.

India ranks third in global data breaches

Some of the biggest data breaches this year included COMB, Clubhouse, Facebook and Raychat, the report stated



AGENCIES

Washington, Dec 15: As per a report from cybersecurity company Surfshark, India ranked third globally in terms of number of data breaches, with a total of 86.63 million users data breached till November 2021. The country showed a 351.6 per cent increase in affected accounts compared to last year.

In 2020, around 19.18 million Indian users' data was breached. "In general, this year was slightly worse than the last in terms of data breach cases," the report added.

The country with the maximum data breaches this year was the United States, followed by Iran. Russia and France are the other countries in the top five as they accounted for more than half of all leaks of 2021, the report stated.

The Middle East particularly stood out among the countries that grew the most year-on-year breach-wise as Iran, Sudan, UAE and Iraq all showed extreme spikes, the report further added.

Nearly 1 billion email accounts have been exposed in both 2020 and 2021 each, the report said. Till November, 952.8 million accounts were breached, meaning that one out of five people were affected globally, as against 921.8 million breaches that happened in the year-ago period.

"In theory, it could take only five years to expose the entire internet population at this rate," it said, adding that "it won't be the case because...data breaches are more centralized across specific countries, and accounts can be breached more than once."

The examined data was taken from a 12-month period between November 2020 to November 2021. The selected data was then analysed and compared to similar information of the year before. The study was conducted after taking information from Surfshark Alert database, which comprises all publicly available breached data sets to inform users of potential threats.

RE proj acquisitions up to \$6bln

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 15: India has recorded acquisitions of renewable energy projects worth \$6 billion till October during the calendar year 2021, which is four times of the \$1.5 billion recorded in 2020, according to a report.

Total value of acquisitions in India's renewable energy sector surged by more than 300 per cent to \$6 billion in the first 10 months of 2021 (till October) from less than \$1.5 billion reported in 2020, according to the report released Wednesday by the CEEW Centre for Energy Finance (CEEW-CF) and



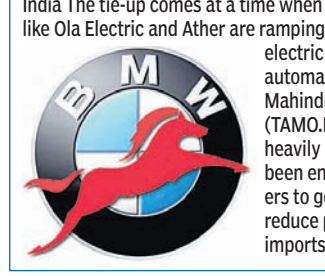
supported by conducive global financial conditions and accommodative monetary policy maintained by the Reserve Bank of India. Adani Green's takeover of SB Energy India, in October, at a reported enterprise value of \$3.5 billion was the biggest deal in the sector," it stated.

The report, titled 'Clean Energy Investment Trends 2021', highlighted that the solar photovoltaic capacity awarded in the first six months of 2021 fell sharply to just 2.6 gigawatts (GW) from 15.3 GW (including 1.6 GW solar-wind hybrid capacity) reported in the corresponding period of 2020.

EV PUSH

TVS, BMW tie up to make EVs

Bangalore: India's TVS Motor Company said Wednesday it will develop electric vehicles (EV) with BMW's motorcycle brand in India, joining a host of Indian automakers that have sought to expand their clean mobility offering. Earlier in the day, TVS shares jumped as much as 7.4% after media reports said the companies were likely to announce a joint alliance for making and exporting electric vehicles from India. The tie-up comes at a time when new-age start-ups like Ola Electric and Ather are ramping up investment in electric scooters. Top automakers like Mahindra & Mahindra and Tata (TAMO.NS) are also investing heavily in EVs as India has been encouraging automakers to go electric in a bid to reduce pollution and fuel imports.



L&T launches platform for EV makers

Mumbai: L&T Technology Services has launched a platform for electric vehicle makers along with an EV lab, and an in-house autonomous drive platform. Called e-Volts, it has been developed in-house and is a modular high-efficiency reference platform that can be customised for use in a wide range of vehicle segments such as off-highway vehicles, passenger cars and 23-wheelers apart from EVs. "The platform is designed to offer distinct features in tune with the expectations of the evolved needs of an EV consumers with electric propulsion system comprising inverter converter topology that enables a compact, cost-attractive electric drive proposition," the company said, which has already developed an EV prototype.



Tesla, Mastercard, Google top cos for future-readiness: IMD

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 15: Tesla, Lululemon, Mastercard and Google have emerged as the best companies in their respective industries in terms of their future-readiness in the post-pandemic world, according to a global study released Wednesday.

The Future Readiness Indicator report, released by Switzerland-based Institute for Management Development (IMD), studied more than a decade of data (2010 to 2021) to rank publicly listed companies against their competitors by how future-ready they are for the post-pandemic economy and their likelihood of survival in a world of fast and frequent change.

It has analysed 86 highest-grossing companies in the four highest-revenue industries - fashion and retail, automotive, financial services, and technology.

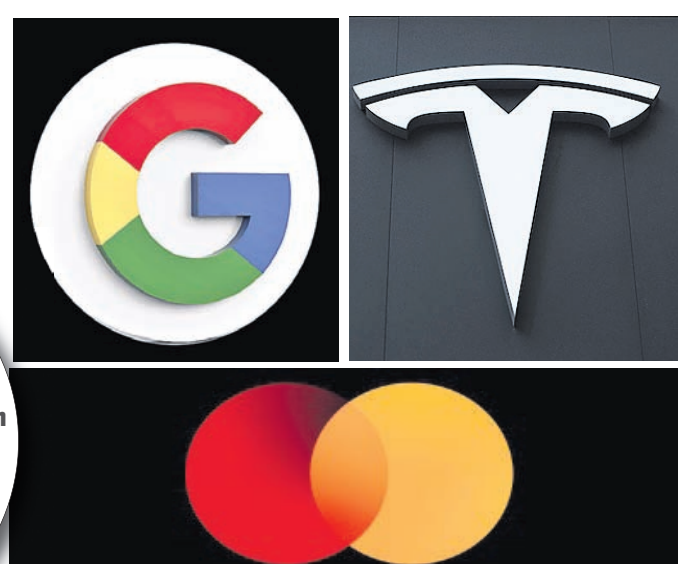
While there is no Indian company on the list, the US led the chart

with 40 companies, followed by seven each from China and Germany; six each from France and Japan; four each from Switzerland and UK; three from South Korea; two from Sweden; and one each from Argentina, Canada, Italy, the Netherlands,

The ease of doing business remains crucial. More than four decades of liberalization propelled India forward, but it still has a long way to go to compete on a global scale. The way the government is handling technological disruptions won't outpace the global competition

HOWARD YU | AUTHOR, FUTURE READINESS INDICATOR

Singapore, Spain, and Taiwan. Professor Howard Yu, author of the Future Readiness Indicator,



said the number of unicorns from India is surpassing China for the first time in 2021 and billion-dollar firms like Flipkart, Snapdeal, and Ola have kicked up a storm in the Indian startup ecosystem.

"Established IT companies have a long history of bringing multinationals to the region. But our ranking reveals the bottleneck lies not on private companies, but at the infrastructure level for India --

Future Readiness Indicator

While there is no Indian company on the list, the US led the chart with 40 companies

As per the study, sportswear brands Lululemon and Nike ranked first and second

The report analysed 86 highest-grossing firms in the four highest-revenue industries

and it's a problem the state must step up to address, not just at the national level," Yu added.

According to the professor, none of the top-ranking companies in the automotive sector are from India, but it was not because firms like Tata and Mahindra cannot innovate.

"They can (innovate). But smart vehicles of tomorrow are largely

based on software and electronics that interact with a city's infrastructure. Even for an EV to take off, you need a network of superchargers."

The study found that the companies that reoriented themselves to new trends before the pandemic outpaced their competitors, while Covid-19 has served as a dramatic test case, rewarding firms that built up their capabilities ahead of time and exposing the institutional inertia of those that did not.

In the automotive segment, Tesla has captured the top spot, while four traditional automakers - Toyota, BMW, Ford, and Hyundai - hold the second through fifth positions.

In the technology space, the five top-ranking companies - Google, Amazon, Microsoft, Facebook, and US-based semiconductor company AMD - all have an entrepreneurial orientation, willingness to branch out from their core businesses, ability to scale up quickly, and a shared inner vision of the future, as per the study.

DILPREET'S HAT-TRICK AND JARMANPREET'S BRACE HELP MEN IN BLUE TROUNCE BANGLADESH 9-0 IN ASIAN CHAMPIONS TROPHY HOCKEY



INDIA'S DEMOLITION ACT

IMPRESSIVE OUTINGS: Dilpreet Singh controls the ball during their match against Bangladesh; (inset) Jarmanpreet Singh (with beard) reacts after scoring against the host nation

Dhaka, Dec 15: Striker Dilpreet Singh struck a hat-trick as defending champions and Tokyo Olympics bronze medalist India humbled hosts Bangladesh 9-0 to register their first win in the Asian Champions Trophy men's hockey tournament here Wednesday.

Dilpreet (12th, 22nd and 45th minutes) scored three field goals for India, while Jarmanpreet Singh (33rd, 43rd) struck a brace from penalty corners situations.

In between Lalit Upadhyay (28th) deflected in a variation from vice-captain Harmanpreet Singh's flick from a penalty corner. Akashdeep Singh (54th) also found the net from a field effort before

Mandeep Mor scored his debut goal for the country from a set piece in the 55th minute.

If that was not enough, Harmanpreet also put his name on the score-sheet, perfectly converting India's 13th penalty corner in the 57th minute.

Playing their first tournament with some new players after the historic Tokyo Olympics campaign, the Manpreet Singh-led India had earlier drawn 2-2 against Korea in their tournament opener Tuesday. India will next play arch-rivals Pakistan in the round-robin stage here Friday.

Held to a draw by Korea in their lung-opener, the Indians came out with purpose against lowly Bangladesh and controlled the pro-

ceedings in the entire first two quarters.

From the onset, India attacked constantly and in the process secured as many as eight penalty corners but could make use of just one.

Bangladesh played the waiting game and defended well with their goalkeeper Abu Nippon shinning bright in set piece situations.

Bangladesh's stout defending could be gauged from the fact that India secured as many as eight penalty corners in the first 12 minutes but the Olympic bronze-medallists failed to breach the opponent's backline.

Seconds later, Dilpreet finally gave India the lead with a field strike after receiving a pass from

skipper Manpreet from outside the circle.

The second quarter continued in the same vein and India doubled their lead courtesy a defensive lapse from Bangladesh.

Bangladesh skipper Ashrafur Islam was at fault as his wayward pass inside their own circle resulted in a free hit for India and Sumit Walmiki was quick to spot an unmarked Dilpreet inside the circle. The alert striker beautifully received the ball and slammed it into the far post with a reverse hit.

In the 28th minute, India tripled their lead when Lalit deflected Harmanpreet's variation from a penalty corner. India extended their lead minutes after the change

of ends when Jarmanpreet scored from a penalty corner.

Jarmanpreet was bang on target from another penalty corner variation in the 43rd minute before Dilpreet scored his third goal of the day two minutes later.

The match was a completely one-sided affair as India mounted attacks after attacks on the Bangladesh goal.

Back into the team after being ignored from the Tokyo Olympics squad, Akashdeep answered his critics with a beautiful reverse hit field strike in the 54th minute.

A minute later, Mandeep scored his first goal for the country and Harmanpreet rounded off the tally for India in the 57th minute by converting a penalty corner.

Can do something special in SA: Virat

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 15: South Africa is the final frontier that the Indian Test team is yet to conquer but skipper Virat Kohli firmly believes that his side can do "something special" in its upcoming tour of the Rainbow Nation with a maiden series win there.

India would look to improve on their recent impressive record overseas when they take on South Africa in a three-match Test series, starting December 26, under Kohli's captaincy.

"We are very well placed in terms of experience, belief and confidence that this time around we can do something special and get the results that we want as a team and overcome probably the toughest conditions to go and win a series," Kohli said Wednesday.

"South Africa is one place where we have not won a series yet. So we are very motivated to do that. And the mindset is always to go there and win a series in any country that we play.

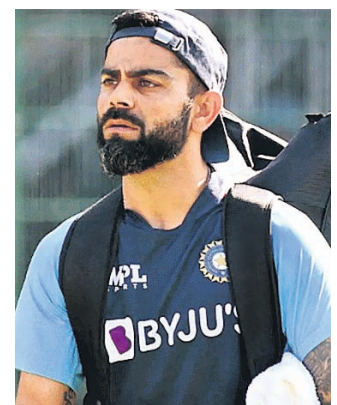
"We don't anymore think of just winning a Test here and there and we will do our absolute best that we can as a team and make sure that we keep contributing towards that cause," he added.

India had created history by beating Australia on their own turf twice, and were leading England 2-1 before their UK tour was abruptly suspended earlier this year.

India have played 20 Tests in South Africa, winning only three, and in their last tour in 2018, they gave a tough fight but still lost the series 1-2. India recently defeated New Zealand 1-0 in a two-match Test series at home.

In the history of Test cricket, there are only three teams - England, Australia and Sri Lanka - who have managed to beat South Africa in their own backyard.

"We can take a lot of motivation from that of course. We probably won in the toughest conditions on



that tour. So that should give us a lot of confidence," Kohli said.

"If we have the right mindset then we start off the series with a lot of confidence and belief we can definitely stand up to any challenge that comes our way and take a lot of heart from it. We will take a lot of motivation and a lot of belief from that victory," he said.

India have in the recent past stuck to a five-bowler combination, in the absence of seam-bowling all-rounder Hardik Pandya. But this time around, they will be tested fully with their spin-bowling all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja out with a forearm injury.

Kohli said they would miss the seasoned Jadeja but that won't be a "deciding factor".

There will be no four game ahead of the first Test on Boxing Day but Kohli stressed on centre wicket practice and match simulation.

"I think those kinds of things really help when you play in conditions which are probably in my opinion the most challenging for batting because of the pace and bounce on offer.

"The conditions can be quite tricky with swing as well bounce. We've seen that in South Africa so I think as much simulation as we can have understanding which areas we're hitting the ball, getting into good shapes and the bowlers as well," he concluded.

'Heartbroken' Aguero hangs up his shoes

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Barcelona, Dec 15: Fighting back tears, Barcelona striker Sergio Aguero announced his immediate retirement Wednesday for health reasons.

The 33-year-old Argentina striker underwent heart tests after leaving the field, holding his chest, during Barcelona's match against Alaves in the Spanish league October 30.

His condition has since been evaluated, and a sobbing Aguero said at a Camp Nou press conference - attended by Barcelona players and board members, family and former colleagues - that he had decided to stop playing.

"I'd like to stay here and keep helping my teammates," Aguero said, "but things happen for a reason." Aguero said he made the decision 10 days ago. He was told after his first heart test that there was a big possibility he could not play again.



ODI WC: Eves to open campaign against Pak

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dubai, Dec 15: India will open their campaign against arch-rivals Pakistan in the Women's ODI World Cup beginning in New Zealand March 4, the ICC announced Wednesday.

The first set of games will see two massive rivalries take the centre stage, with Australia taking on defending champions England at Seddon Park in Hamilton March 5 and last edition's runners-up India facing Pakistan in Tauranga March 6.

A total of 31 games will be played across 31 days, with the eight teams clashing to get their hands on the coveted World Cup trophy. Auckland, Christchurch, Dunedin, Hamilton, Tauranga, and Wellington will be the six cities that will host the tournament.

Australia, England, South Africa and India qualified for the event on the basis of their position in ICC Women's Championship 2017-20 while New Zealand automatically

qualified as hosts.

On the basis of team rankings, Bangladesh, Pakistan and West Indies were the final three teams to book their berth for the World Cup after the Women's Cricket World Cup Qualifier was called off due to COVID-related uncertainty.

The tournament will be played in the league format, where all eight teams will face each other once, at the end of which the top four sides will qualify for the semifinals.

The first semifinal will be played at The Basin Reserve in Wellington March 30 while The Hagley Oval in Christchurch will host the second semifinal March 31 and the final April 3. Both the semi-finals and the finals will have a reserve day in place.

The last global women's event played was the T20 World Cup in Australia in March 2020 when the hosts were crowned champions after beating India in the final. India will be touring New Zealand before the World Cup, serving as ideal preparation for the mega event.

The Ashes: Oz favourites for D/N Test

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Adelaide, Dec 15: While there are question marks over opener David Warner's fitness for the second match of the Ashes series, there are no doubts about Australia's superiority in day-night Tests.

They're a perfect eight from eight as they go into the pink-ball test against England beginning Thursday at the Adelaide Oval.

Warner had a few reprieves on his way to scoring 94 runs in the series-opener at the Gabba in Brisbane, where Australia beat England by nine wickets.

But after taking two hits in the ribs while batting, Warner didn't field for Australia in England's second innings. He still appeared to be in discomfort while batting in practice at Adelaide.

The net session came after his teammate Travis Head, who cemented his spot as Australia's No.5 by scoring 152 in Brisbane, predicted Warner would play in the second Test.

At least one change to the Test line-up is certain for Australia, with right-arm paceman Jhye



England would like to go full throttle with the experienced duo of James Anderson and Stuart Broad are fit for the match in Adelaide

Richardson likely to return for the first time in almost three seasons to replace the injured Josh Hazlewood.

While Australia's record in day-night matches is perfect, England has just one win in four attempts. The win came in its first day-nighter at home against West Indies in 2017.

England will get two chances with the pink ball in this series - the fifth Test in Hobart, which was moved from Perth because of COVID-19 restrictions in Western Australia, will also be a day-nighter.

Going into Adelaide, all-rounder Ben Stokes allayed concerns about the knee injury that hampered his bowling at Brisbane last week,

after coming through a nets session.

The 30-year-old Stokes bowled just 12 overs at the Gabba, his first test match since March, and was in obvious discomfort during his latter spells after appearing to jar his left knee while chasing a ball to the boundary. But he was back to full pace Tuesday, where he bowled for an hour.

All options means veteran pace bowlers Jimmy Anderson and Stuart Broad are back in the selection mix after being omitted for the first Test at the Gabba. Both were reported to be fit, but England went for a different combination with a view to rotating its attack depending on conditions throughout the five-Test series.

England has lost 10 of its last 11 tests in Australia, and has not won a match Down Under since a victorious tour of 2010-11. England was swept 5-0 in 2013-14 and lost 4-0, with one match drawn, in 2017-18.

And to make matters more difficult, no England team has recovered to win an Ashes series in Australia after losing the first test since captain Len Hutton's squad in 1954-55.

Prannoy sails into pre-quarters

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Huelva (Spain), Dec 15: India's HS Prannoy registered a straight-game win over Daren Liew of Malaysia to reach the pre-quarterfinals of the BWF World Badminton Championships here Wednesday.

Prannoy beat his Malaysian opponent 21-7, 21-17 in a men's singles second round match that lasted 42 minutes.

He will play the winner of another second round match between Luis Enrique Penalver of Spain and Rasmus Gemke of Denmark in the pre-quarterfinals.

Prannoy joined two other Indians, Kidambi Srikanth and Lakshya Sen, in the men's singles pre-quarterfinals of the showpiece tournament.

Prannoy faced little resistance from Liew in the first game. From 8-5, the Indian took eight straight points to zoom to 16-5 before pocketing it easily.

The second game was more competitive and the two players were levelled at 6-6. But from there, Prannoy never fell behind as he cruised to 16-11. The Malaysian narrowed the gap but Prannoy was up 19-16 before pocketing the second game and the match.



The women's doubles pair of Ashwini Ponnappa and N Sikki Reddy also entered the pre-quarterfinals after a hard-fought 21-11, 9-21, 21-13 win over the Chinese pair of Liu Xuan Xuan and Xia Yu Ting in a 51-minute second round match.

In the men's doubles however, the Indian pair of MR Arjun and Dhruv Kapila lost to 11th seeded Russian pair

of Vladimir Ivanov and Ivan Sozonov 11-21 16-21 in a second round match that lasted 41 minutes.

Tuesday, defending champion PV Sindhu reached the women's singles pre-quarterfinals with an easy 21-7, 21-9 win over Martina Repiska of Slovakia. Sindhu had got a first-round bye. She will face Pornpawee Chochuwong of Thailand in the pre-quarterfinals.

7-star Man City humble Leeds

ASSOCIATED PRESS

London, Dec 15: Seven goals - even without a recognizable striker. A seventh successive victory. Manchester City is looking ruthless in its Premier League title defense.

Kevin De Bruyne struck twice, while Phil Foden, Jack Grealish, Riyad Mahrez, John Stones and Nathan Ake also got on the score-sheet as the champions overpowered Leeds 7-0 Tuesday.

In a tight title race, the flurry of goals moved City within two of Liverpool's goal difference of plus-33. City has a four-point lead over 2020 champion Liverpool, which plays Newcastle on Thursday. That's when Chelsea, which is a point further back, hosts Everton.

The seven-goal defeat equalled the worst losing margin in the history of Leeds. Marcelo Bielsa's team is five points above the relegation zone.

Pep Guardiola had warned that Leeds' high-tempo style would need to be countered and City did this by tearing into the visitors from the outset.

With Rodri producing one of his best performances in a City shirt, the hosts attacked at will and with great fluidity.



Kevin De Bruyne reacts after scoring against Leeds United, Tuesday

City was absolutely relentless after Foden guided in a shot from outside the box in the eighth minute. Another goal followed just five minutes when Mahrez curled the ball back into the area for Grealish to head into the net.

Rodri played in De Bruyne to thump in a low shot in the 32nd and the only surprise was it took City until four minutes into the second half to score again when a shot from Mahrez deflected in off Junior Firpo.

De Bruyne was on target again with a ferocious long-range strike in the 62nd and Stones scored in the 74th. Ake's powerful header completed Leeds' misery four minutes later.