

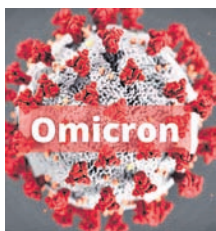


DISHA'S MANTRA

Actor Disha Patani says martial arts have helped her maintain physical and mental wellness and remain fit

LEISURE

P2



VIRUS FEAR FACTOR

Researchers from Hong Kong have found that Omicron infects and multiplies 70 times faster than Delta variant

INTERNATIONAL

P10



SINDHU IN QUARTERS

Shuttler PV Sindhu defeats Thai player to enter quarterfinals of the BWF World Championships

SPORTS

P12

VOLUME 11, ISSUE 256 | www.orissapost.com

BHUBANESWAR | FRIDAY, DECEMBER 17 | 2021

12 PAGES | ₹5.00



Parliament, Naveen laud Armed Forces

New Delhi: The Parliament paid tributes to Bangladeshi freedom fighters and Indian Armed Forces on the 50th anniversary of 'Vijay Diwas', to celebrate India's victory over Pakistan in the 1971 war. Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik also recalled the valour and sacrifice of the Indian soldiers. "On Golden Jubilee of #VijayDiwas, tributes to brave soldiers who fought with exemplary courage to make India triumphant in the 1971 Indo-Pak war," Patnaik tweeted. Others who paid tributes to the Armed Forces were Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla and Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu.

MORE P7



US imposes sanctions on China

Washington: The Biden administration said Thursday it is imposing new sanctions on several Chinese biotech and surveillance companies for actions in Xinjiang province, the latest step against Beijing over human rights abuses of Uyghur Muslims in the country's western region. The Commerce Department is targeting China's Academy of Military Medical Sciences and its 11 research institutes that focus on using biotechnology to support the Chinese military. The Treasury Department is also set to issue penalties against several Chinese entities, according to a senior Biden administration official.

MORE P10



NIA GRILLS TOP MAOIST LEADER

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 16: A two-member team of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) Thursday grilled dreaded Maoist leader, Dubashi Sankar in the special jail at Jharpada here for several hours over the Improvised Explosive Device (IED) blast and ambush on security personnel in Chitrakonda area of Malkangiri district in 2012. Four BSF persons died while several others sustained serious injuries in the blast and subsequent firing. The NIA later took over the investigation of the incident from the local police.



The Odisha police and BSF during a joint operation September 13 in Boipariguda area of Koraput district arrested Sankar who was carrying a bounty of ₹20 lakh on his head. Following his arrest, a NIA team from Kolkata reached Jeypore and sought permission of the SDJM court to interrogate Sankar. The court December 13, gave permission to the NIA to do so. Subsequently, Sankar was brought to Jharpada prison from Koraput circle jail on the same day.

The NIA team grilled the Maoist leader for several hours till 5.00pm. Sources revealed that the team will again interrogate Sankar in the next two days. Sankar hails from Medak district in Telangana. He is involved in more than 50 cases of left wing violence in various districts of Odisha, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh since 1987.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



He's not able to get proper sleep on a bed inside the house. You see, he just returned after a year from Delhi border!

MARKET WATCH	
INDEX	VARIATION
SENSEX	57901.14 ↑ 113.11
NIFTY	17248.40 ↑ 27.00
DOLLAR	76.19 ↓ ₹0.20
EURO	86.33 ↑ ₹0.18
GOLD	₹48,600 ↑ ₹513
SILVER	₹61,988 ↑ ₹1,780

WEATHER	
	BHUB CTK
MAX	25.6°C 26.8°C
MIN	14.4°C 14.0°C
Humidity	86% 86%
Rainfall	Nil Nil
Forecast	Dry weather most likely

Women's marriage age raised to 21 yrs

■ The task force on this issue had earlier proposed that women should also get equal opportunities as men and there should not be any gender-based decision on marriages

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 16: The proposal to raise the minimum age of marriage for women from 18 to 21 years was cleared Wednesday by the Cabinet. It came a year after PM Narendra Modi said that the plan is under review. Modi, during his Independence Day speech last year, had made a mention of the proposal. With this, the legal marriage age of women is at par with men.

This has been done to bring in uniformity in the marriageable age of men and women, sources said Thursday. The government is likely to bring a bill in the ongoing Winter Session of Parliament to amend the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, they said.

The proposed bill may also seek to make consequential changes to various personal laws relating to marriage of different communi-



ties to ensure a uniform marriage age, the sources informed.

The decision is based on the recommendation of a four-member task force led by former Samata Party chief Jaya Jaitley.

Speaking about the recommendation, Jaitley said there were two main reasons that were focussed on. "If we talk about gender equity and gender empowerment in every field, we cannot leave marriage out because this is a very odd message that a girl can be fit to be married at 18 that cuts away her opportunity to go to college, and the

man has the opportunity to prepare himself for life and earning up to 21 years," Jaitley said.

"But these days when girls are capable of doing so much, they are married off because they are not an income earning member of the family. However, we should give them an opportunity to earn and be equal to a man and she cannot become equal at 18 years when man has 21 years to do that," Jaitley pointed out.

"Secondly, we took opinions from lots of people, but those who were most attentive were the stake-

COURT DIKTAT ON LIVE-IN RELATION

Chandigarh: The Punjab and Haryana High Court has observed that merely because two adults are living together for a few days, their claim of a live-in relationship based upon a 'bald averment' may not be enough to hold that they are truly in a live-in-relationship. Justice Manoj Bajaj observed this while dismissing the plea of a couple of Haryana's Yamunanagar district seeking protection from the family members of the woman. "Merely because the two adults are living together for a few days, their claim of live-in-relationship based upon bald averment may not be enough to hold that they are truly in live-in-relationship," the court said in its November 26 order.

holders themselves. They all said that marriageable age should be 22 or 23 and this opinion was shared by women across all religions," Jaitley added.

Jaitley said the task force submitted its recommendations to the PMO, Ministry of Women and Child Development and NITI Aayog last December.

Sports infra gets govt boost

■ Naveen, while reviewing the work, said that the aim is not to just make Odisha a hockey hub, but to make it a modern sports destination in India

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 16: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik inaugurated Thursday five sports infrastructure projects and laid the foundation stones for 89 multi-purpose indoor stadiums during a programme at the Kalinga Stadium here. Patnaik inaugurated the Biju Patnaik Weightlifting Hall and a new sports hostel. He also declared open a swimming pool each in Angul and Baripada and an indoor stadium in Rourkela.

Officials said land for all the 89 stadiums have been identified. The tender process to build infrastructure on 87 locations has been initiated and work is expected to start soon. The stadiums are expected to be ready for use in 2022-23. The



multi-purpose indoor stadiums will have facilities for badminton, table tennis and weightlifting. They can also be used as disaster shelters and hospitals, official said.

The newly-inaugurated weightlifting hall at the Kalinga Stadium here will certainly be a huge boost to young lifters in the state, opined officials. The new sports hostel will give a feeling of home to its residents and will enable them to concentrate on their respective disciplines, offi-

cials informed.

The Olympics-type swimming pools in Angul and Baripada will be run by professional instructors with life guards also present. The pools will be used to develop local talent and also benefit local community. The indoor stadium will stand out as a milestone for Rourkela and development hub for shuttlers of that region.

During his visit to the Kalinga Stadium, the CM reviewed the progress of the ongoing projects within it, particularly the indoor aquatic centre. Once completed, the centre will be huge boon for swimmers. Patnaik also reviewed the work on the indoor athletics stadium, the first of its kind in the country. Officials said almost all the projects will be completed within a year.

"These are landmark sports infrastructure which will make Kalinga Stadium as the leading destination in India," Patnaik said expressing satisfaction at the work in progress.

FLOUTING RULES WITH IMPUNITY



Women without masks huddle together at the rear of an auto-rickshaw as they travel on Jharpada prison road putting their lives at risk and breaking Covid-19 protocols at the same time

OP PHOTO

No home isolation for Omicron patients

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 16: With new cases of the Omicron variant of Covid-19 emerging in both the neighbouring states of West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh, the Odisha government is on a high alert and is keeping a close watch on the situation. Health Director of the Odisha government, Niranjan Mishra said Thursday that the Omicron variant is five times more transmissible than Delta.

"Hence we have taken the deci-

15 +ve in Steel & Mines dept
Bhubaneswar: The Steel and Mines department announced Thursday that its office will be closed for 48 hours after 15 of employees tested positive for Covid-19. The office will remain shut December 16 and 17, an official said Thursday morning. Normal work will resume again from Saturday, he added. "Employees who are not attending office will work from home and also be available over telephone at all times," the official informed.

sion that there will be no home isolation for those infected with the Omicron variant. They will be kept in designated blocks in Covid-19 hospitals in Odisha. This will be done so that they do not come in contact with anybody other than the medical staff attending to them," Mishra said. "Steps will be taken to ensure that Omicron variant infected patients will not come in contact with other unwell persons at the health facilities," Mishra added.

Mishra also said that a strict surveillance is being kept on the visitors coming to Odisha. Foreign returnees from 'at risk' and other countries are being monitored closely. "As Omicron is five times more transmissible than the Delta variant, infected persons will not be allowed home isolation. They will have to stay in the hospitals designated for them," Mishra informed.



husband Sanjeev Khanna in April 2012. As per the CBI, Indrani disapproved of Sheena's relationship with Rahul Mukerjee, son of former

media baron and her then husband Peter Mukerjee from an earlier marriage. She and Sheena also had financial dispute, the agency said.

Accused Indrani claims 'dead' Sheena is alive

■ It has been alleged that Indrani strangled her daughter Sheena and then burnt her body before burying it in a forest in 2012. The matter surfaced in 2015 when Indrani's driver confessed

AGENCIES

Mumbai, Dec 16: In a dramatic development in the Sheena Bora murder case, allegedly accused mom Indrani Mukherjee has claimed that her daughter is alive, her lawyer Sana Khan said Thursday. She informed that Indrani has written to the CBI last month, asking the agency to look for Sheena

in Kashmir. This latest development has added a bizarre twist to the sensational case.

In the letter, Indrani claimed that a woman told her that she had seen Sheena while on vacation in Srinagar. "She wrote to the CBI, we have no details of what she wrote," said Sana Thursday. Sana added that she will move a formal application for bail when the matter comes up for hearing in the special CBI court here December 28. Indrani has been lodged in the Byculla Women's prison here since 2015 as the main accused in Sheena's murder case.

Sheena (24) was allegedly strangled in a car by Indrani, her then driver Shyamvar Rai and her former

FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshaSpeaks.com™
accuracy • reliability • trust
FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL \$5181*

ARIES

If you are involved in monetary matters, today you will find yourself weighing the benefits. A loan that you have applied for may be sanctioned. Look at a range of choices, says Ganesha, and you will end up feeling very happy about it.

TAURUS

This day you will have an urge to take a trip, be it a small one. Ganesha sees you enthusiastically making detailed plans and arrangements, arranging for funds and getting in touch with all those you desire to take along. It is possible that you may ultimately scrap your plans and choose to stay at home. However, be sure you'll be making that trip in due course.

GEMINI

You will feel blue and out of sorts today. You will feel that you are all alone in the world, emotionally. Your repressed desires and your philosophical streak will come to the fore today and will influence your dark mood, says Ganesha.

CANCER

You will get a surprise gift or god news from your friends or relatives. You will enjoy with your family. You will get the affection and co-operation of family members. Happiness and rapport in domestic life is indicated. Ganesha's grace is upon you.

LEO

Most of your time will be spent at the work place. You will excel in all your tasks today. Professional relationships will be marked by co-operation. You will have cordial relations with your colleagues. It is an auspicious and progressive day for business, says Ganesha.

VIRGO

Confidently take on the challenges that in all likelihood will test your business abilities, especially the ones that are related to your investments and monetary matters. You will most probably come up with novel ideas to solve long-pending issues, and Ganesha says that this will be very effective.

LIBRA

Ganesha says those of you who are married or in love will experience a good time today. As you spend more time with your life partner by going out for a drive or for dinner, you will come closer to them. Today is a day full of joy, vigor and happiness for you.

SCORPIO

Today, there may come up situations which may test your patience, predicts Ganesha. However, it would be wise to sit and sort out all the differences with your colleagues or family members or your partner.

SAGITTARIUS

As Ganesha foresees, you will be religiously inclined today. Listening to soft, instrumental music will soothe your nerves. You also feel like going back to school days and dig into detective and suspense stories of Nancy Drew or Hardy Boys. It was fun being kid, isn't it?

CAPRICORN

Though less, you will get money from your investments and other resources. Don't ignore pending projects; complete them at the earliest so that you will have clear picture about your requirements and responsibilities, advises Ganesha. Once you are done with them, you will enjoy happy times with your friends and family in the evening.

AQUARIUS

Cooperative and supportive, your colleagues will help you improve your performance at work. Also, your creativity will win you praises from one and all, foretells Ganesha. The day will have a perfect end as you will spend quality time with your friends and family.

PISCES

You are going to be very emotional today. You will be able to express your love to your wife or other loved ones in a very unique and dramatic way. It is not a good day for putting forth marriage or love proposals, and if you do it could be disappointing. Ganesha says that professionally you will be very successful in all tasks.



LADY GAGA NEEDED PSYCHIATRIC NURSE ON HOUSE OF GUCCI SET

Singer-actress Lady Gaga, who plays Patrizia Reggiani in director Ridley Scott's latest movie *House Of Gucci*, shared that she needed a psychiatric nurse on set because she pushed herself to the limit. "I had a psychiatric nurse with me towards the end of filming," she said on the *Just for Variety* podcast.

BEN SCHWARTZ JOINS DRACULA TALE RENFIELD

Emmy-winning comedian and actor Ben Schwartz has joined the ensemble cast of *Renfield*. The anticipated take on the mythology of Dracula has already cast Nicholas Hoult in the title role. Nicolas Cage will play Dracula, and Awkwafina is also on board, reports *variety.com*



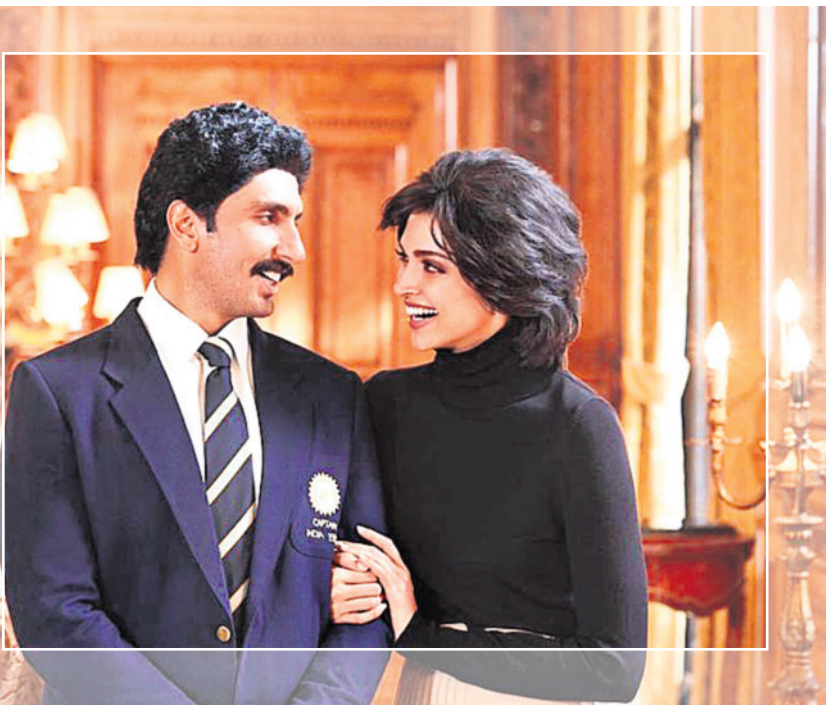
Martial arts have been a saviour for DISHA

On the occasion of World Martial Arts Day Wednesday, actor Disha Patani, who has been learning martial arts for a long time now, opened up about how the sport has helped her. "For me personally, Martial Arts have been a true saviour, when it comes to maintaining physical and mental well-ness. It is a great form of exercise as it has a number of health benefits. From physical fitness to mental and physical enhancement, martial arts pave way for people to reach their peak potential.

In my journey of self-actualisation, martial arts and kickboxing have played a crucial part, and I urge everyone to practice the arts," she shared.

Meanwhile, Disha is currently busy shooting *Ek Villain Returns*. In the film, she will be seen doing her own action scenes. As the plot of *Ek Villain Returns* is spiced with twists and turns, Disha is really pushing the envelope in terms of her performance and action stunts as this time around the action, drama and suspense have really ramped up in this part. She specifically asked for her action sequences to be done on her own as much as possible and trained a lot for this.

AGENCIES



Standing ovation for 83 at premiere

The much anticipated film *83*, starring Ranveer Singh in the lead, had its world premiere at Red Sea Film Festival in Jeddah Wednesday and got a standing ovation from the audience.

Ranveer Singh, Deepika Padukone, *83* film director Kabir Khan along with his wife Mini Mathur made a grand appearance at the ongoing Jeddah Film Festival recently. The stars along with former cricket legend Kapil Dev and his wife Romi marked their presence at the

festival where *83* was also screened for the audience.

Reliance Entertainment and Phantom Films present *83*, a Kabir Khan Films Production. The film is produced by Deepika Padukone, Kabir Khan, Vishnu Vardhan Induri, Sajid Nadiadwala, Sheetal Vinod Talwar, Reliance Entertainment and *83* Film Ltd. A Reliance Entertainment and PVR Pictures release slated this Christmas 2021 in Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam.

AGENCIES

SLB's Gangubai Kathiawadi heads to Berlin film festival

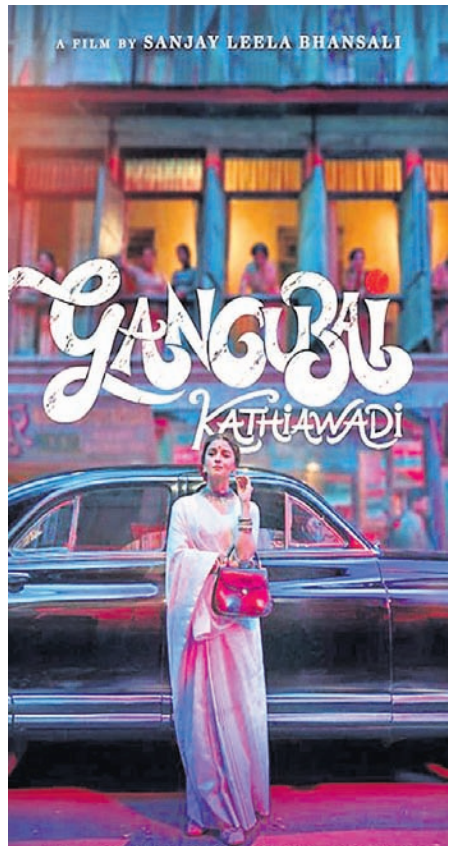
Mumbai: Sanjay Leela Bhansali (SLB)'s upcoming drama *Gangubai Kathiawadi*, starring Alia Bhatt and Ajay Devgn, will have its world premiere at the 72nd edition of the Berlin International Film Festival in February.

For Bhansali, who celebrates 25 years in cinema, with his 10th film *Gangubai Kathiawadi*, it's a special moment as he said, "The story of *Gangubai Kathiawadi* has been very close to my heart. My team and I have given it all to make this dream possible. We take pride and honour in showcasing our film at the prestigious Berlin International Film Festival."

Talking about the film's screening at the Berlinale, producer Jayantilal Gada of Pen Studios said, "I believe in Mr Bhansali and his craft. It gives me great joy that our film will be presented at the Berlin International Film Festival and I am proud to be associated with him. Alia

has given a great performance and I am thankful to Ajay Devgn too for being a part of this project."

IANS



Spider-Man: No Way Home: Satisfyingly entertaining

TOM HOLLAND STEALS THE SHOW AS THE PROTAGONIST DESPITE HIM COMING ACROSS AS A YOUNGER AND LESS MATURE SPIDER-MAN THAN TOBIE MAGUIRE AND ANDREW GARFIELD

Director Jon Watts' *Spider-Man: No Way Home* is the 27th film in the Marvel Cinematic Universe and the sequel to the last two Spider-Man films that were released in 2017 and 2019 respectively. Despite a complex premise that incorporates two decades of its cinematic history and three Spider-Men, the film is satisfyingly entertaining.

Being a sequel, the film takes off from its last edition. Peter Parker's life has been turned upside-down after Mysterio, the bad guy he killed in *Far from Home*, revealed his secret identity to the public at large.

Spider-Man is now a wanted man, and the public has made his life miserable. There is a threat to the lives of his near and dear ones including his Aunt May (Marisa Tomei), his best friend Ned (Jacob Batalon), and his girlfriend MJ short

for Miss Jones Watson (Zendaya). Desperate to protect them, Peter does the only sensible thing he can think of: he appeals to a fellow Avenger - the all-powerful wizard Doctor Strange (Benedict Cumberbatch) for help.

He requests the doctor to cast a spell that will make everyone forget his identity. But halfway through the ritual, Peter changes his mind. He does not want everyone to forget him, especially his aunt, best friend, and girlfriend, and while stopping the process, the spell goes awry and cracks open a new dimension.

And through this multiverse di-



Film Review

ment, we are introduced to a set of villains - Otto Octavius (Alfred Molina), Green Goblin (Willem Dafoe), Electro (Jamie Fox), Sandman (Thomas Haden Church), and The Lizard-man (Rhys Ifans).



Similarly, MJ and Ned accidentally learn how to open portals using Dr Stang's ring, and in their attempt to find Peter Parker, they summon two other

Peter Parkers - Andrew Garfield and Tobey Maguire from another universe. How the trio battles the enemies forms a major part of the plot.

Director: Jon Watts

Cast: Tom Holland, Zendaya, Benedict Cumberbatch, Jacob Batalon, Jon Favreau, Jamie Foxx, Willem Dafoe, Alfred Molina, Benedict Wong, Tony Revolori, Marisa Tomei, Andrew Garfield, Tobey Maguire

At the core of it all is Holland's stellar performances despite him coming across as a younger and less mature Spider-Man than Maguire or Garfield.

With its multiple villains, foraying into magic and multiverse weirdness, and earnest character motivations, the film leans into its comic book roots far more than any previous Spider-Man film. IANS

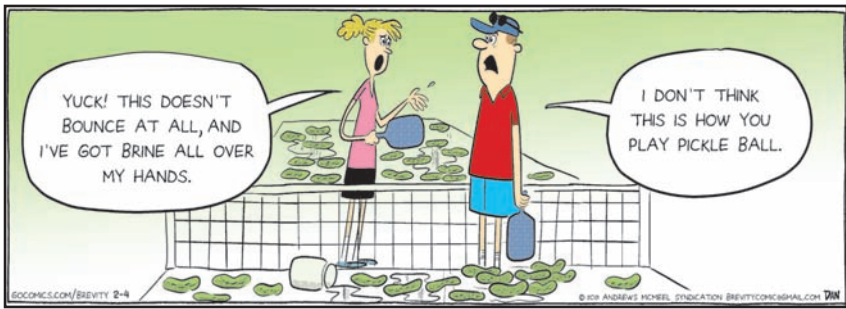
PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

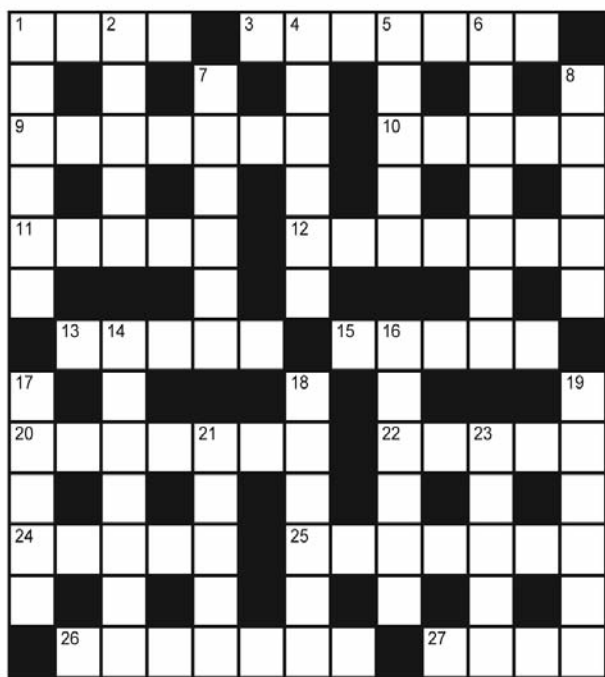


BREVITY



FUN post

CROSSWORD



Copyright ©2021 PuzzleJunction.com

Across

- 1 Glitch
- 3 Bit-by-bit
- 9 Bridge type
- 10 Expels
- 11 Gate fixture
- 12 Shirts and pants, e.g.
- 13 Harsh
- 15 Reef material
- 20 Eyeglass
- 22 Designer's concern

Down

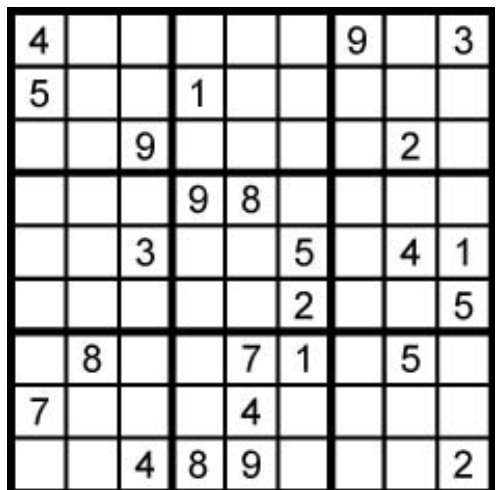
- 24 Sensational
- 25 Enumerate
- 26 Beryl variety
- 27 Flock
- 1 Horse hangout, at times
- 2 English race place
- 4 Landing strip
- 5 Wilt
- 6 Graz locale

- 7 Stringed instrument
- 8 Sacred hymn
- 14 Connexion fit
- 16 Heaps
- 17 Sufficient
- 18 Antenna
- 19 Fresh and animated
- 21 Hot or cold drink
- 23 Shoot 'Em Up actor Owen

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

SUDOKU

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

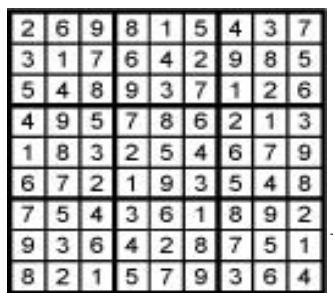


SOLUTIONS



CROSSWORD

SUDOKU



NATION FLARES UP



Alongside Covid-19 pandemic, rising fuel prices upset every Indian household's budget in the outgoing year. Coming on top of thinning out of personal incomes, prohibitive fuel prices kept people on a low. Diesel rates skyrocketed as high as over 30 per cent in one single year while petrol went past a prohibitive `110 per litre. As if this was not enough, the govt kept jacking up cooking gas prices. Pump prices of petrol, diesel along with domestic and commercial LPG prices broke all records. The rates relentlessly went up through most part of the year. There was hardly any slide. Barring short intervals of pause necessitated by state polls, fuel continued to burn a hole in everybody's pocket right through the year. A steep cut in excise rate by the Centre and a relatively small cut in VAT by the state government even failed to assuage the burning tempers of people.

35% SURGE IN 1 YR

DIESEL, PETROL AND LPG PRICES WENT THROUGH THE ROOF IN 2021

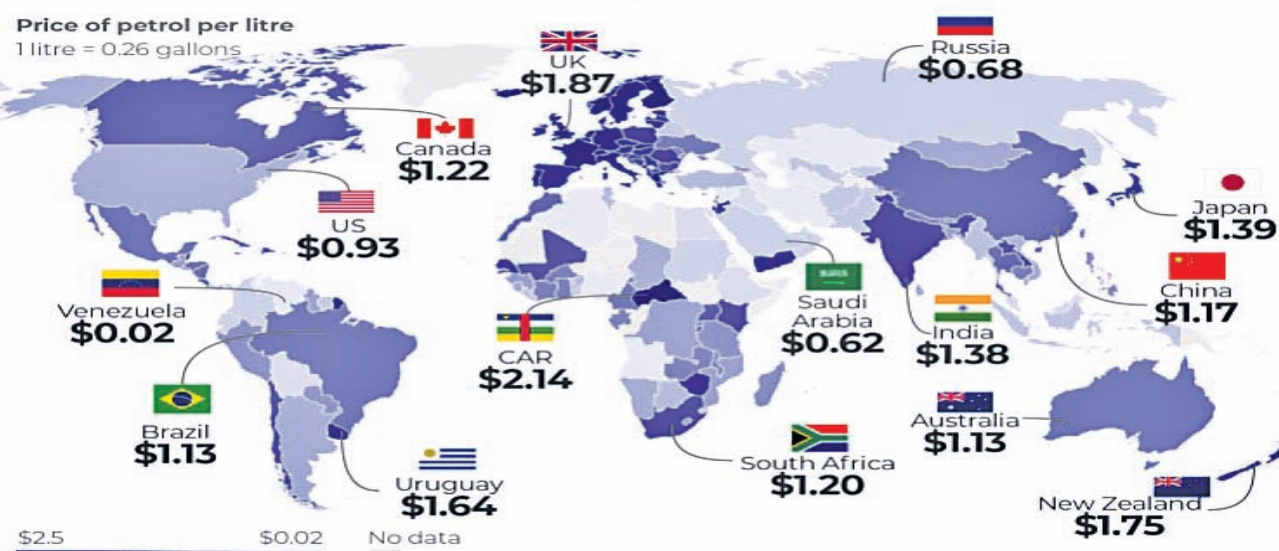
The total increase in petrol and diesel prices added up to ₹36 per litre and ₹26.58 per litre since early May 2020 when taxes on the two fuels were raised to record levels. The spike followed the hike in international oil prices. But the government had skimmed the steep fall in crude prices when they had dropped to 20 dollar a barrel. Petrol went over ₹110-a-litre-mark in all major cities, while diesel crossed ₹100-a-litre in more than a dozen states including in Odisha.

The government had raised excise duty on petrol and diesel to mop up gains that would have otherwise accrued to consumers from international oil prices crashing to as low as USD 19 per barrel. The price onslaught on consumers when they were already suffering from job loss and a sudden contraction in incomes was uncalled for. The increase in fuel prices pushed inflation levels as diesel is the mainstay fuel used for transporting goods, including agriculture commodities. Opposition parties including the Congress have been critical of the government over the price hikes and have been demanding

a further reduction in taxes. Bowing to sustained pressure from the opposition and electoral compulsions, the Centre November 3, on the eve of Diwali, announced a reduction in the excise duty levied on petrol and diesel. While the excise duty on per litre of petrol was reduced by ₹5, the same has been brought down on diesel by ₹10. The reduction in excise duty is higher on diesel due to its wide usage in the agriculture sector. The state governments took a cue from the Centre and cut the sales tax (VAT) on fuel by up to ₹5 per litre. Every one rupee reduction in excise duty on petrol or diesel leads to a hit of approximately ₹14,000 crore to the exchequer. Hence, a ₹5 cut in excise duty on petrol and ₹10 on diesel would lead to a revenue loss of around ₹2.10 lakh crore for the Centre.

Highest and lowest petrol prices

Many countries are facing a rise in fuel prices largely brought on by tight supply and surging demand. The average price of gasoline is \$1.20 per litre.



FOR CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS CONTACT OUR BOOKING STATIONS

Acharya Vihar-Dayal Agency-9437135727, A.P. Tours and Travel, Maitri Vihar, C.S. Pur- 9861301598, **Aurobindo Market**-Sai Audio & Electronics-9438304668, **Airport Road**-Sai Baba Variety Store-9090071530, **Anish Infotech**- Tankapani Road-9861341488, **Bapuji Nagar**- Dreamland Studio- 9777517314, **Baramunda Rental Colony**-Maa Ramchandi Communication-9658821469, **Baramunda Housing Bopai Colony**-Pappu Variety Store-9040500106, **Cuttack Road**-Alishan Snacks-8984236754, **District Center (Chandrasekharpur)**- Sai Google Mat-9776056507, **Forest Park**-DTDC Couriers & Services (HB Services)-7381024156, **IRC Village**-Bapi Xerox-9090090404, Gift Hut(Antriksh Gifts & Decoros Pvt. Ltd.)-9954781084, Pruthvi Medicine-9853314816, **Janpath**-Krupajal Book Store-7978646669, **Jaydev Vihar**-AK Enterprises-7978116618, Subam Sai Books Store-8895550649, Swain Graphics- 9337121249, **Jagannath Mobile Point**- Janpath Road, Ram Mandir- 9938475415, **Kanan Vihar**-Auro Electronics-8260697560, **Khandagiri**- Swosti Mobile Centre- 7992914045, World Solution- 9938317559, **KIIT Road**-Jugad Jn-9338545031, **Laxmi Nagar**-Aditya Mobile-9438191836, **Lewis Road**-Spider Web-7809186415, **Metro Satellite City**-Arogya Mitra Medicine Store-9853621640, **Madhusudan Nagar**-Mohapatra Communication-9124446664, **Maa Santoshi travels**- Gajapati Nagar- 9777675867, **Nayapalli**- The Cake Room- 7873660137, **Near Mayfair Lagoon**-Cookiemann-9439491273, **Nigamananda-Omm Sai Travels**-9668284823, **Nr Cosmopolis Main Gate**- Shreeram Medical Store- 8763711714, **Net Square**- Niladri Vihar (C.S. Pur)- 7205634821, **Priyadarshini Market**-Astro Point-9938134346, **R.N. General Store**-Nilakantha Nagar-9438642501, **Sahid Nagar**-Maa Communication- 9437353424, **Sahini General Store**- Near Patia Railway Station, Mahavir Vihar- 9937586626, **Satya Nagar**-Baishnavi Mixture & Sweets-78948421764, **Samantapur**- Download Point-7504557743, **Sailashree Vihar**-Harsha Book Store-8093449515, **Saheed Nagar**-Jagannath Graphics-7978652670, Photo World-7978468191, **Sainath Photo Studio**-8984436129, Shanti & Co-9937701063, **Siripur-Omm Maa Sarala Communication**-9777682449, **Sushree fashion**- Jagmaara-9938714347, **Shree Vision**- Sailashree Vihar-9861476678, **Unit-3**-LIC of India Premium Photo-9337787080, **Unit-7**- LIC Premium Point- 9338227422, **VSS Nagar**-Friends Cake & Bake-8658200930, Jeet Infoworld-7205195782, **XIMB Square**-LD Books-9658061373.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



Jumbo death chokes water supply to Keonjhar town

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, Dec 16: Electrocution of an elephant at Kanjhari dam in the district has disrupted drinking water supply to Keonjhar town for a week. Officials of the energy department disconnected the supply to the area following electrocution of the elephant in a jungle near Nekdaghar December 8, last week. The officials snap supply to the area at night as a herd of 16 elephants moves in the jungle. They also disconnect power supply during day to repair transmission wires and utility poles passing through the forest. As a result, thousands of families in Keonjhar town have been left parching without a drop of drinking water in their taps. The residents have demanded immediate restoration of the water supply failing which the situation might slip out of hand. Reports said over 63,075 households in Keonjhar town are supplied with



drinking water from Sana Machhakandana and Kanjhari dam. Among the two dams, maximum water supply is made to 38,315 households in the town from Kanjhari dam. The residents face water supply problems throughout the year due to frequent power cuts and leakage in pipes in various areas. However, after the animal was electrocuted, water supply to the town has come to a halt

due to complete power cut during day and night. This has left the residents to suffer without drinking water. Senior resident Mansoor Alam alleged the problem has taken place as the officials have not installed a DG set without proper earthing works in the Kanjhari dam. He alleged that nobody is concerned about the problem. He said that those who have dug up bore wells are unmindful

of the problem but the common residents are the ones who are suffering the most. When contacted, Kishore Rout, executive engineer, public health engineering department (PHED) said it requires 15-16 hours uninterrupted power supply for drinking water to the households in the town. However, the problem arose after power supply was cut off to the area due to the movement of the elephants in the forest. The energy department has been asked to immediately restore the power supply which is expected to resume within a day or two, he added. BN Sahoo, executive engineer of energy department said power supply is being cut off at night due to movement of elephants in the area while it is also being cut off during day-time for repair and maintenance works. He, however, assured to resume power supply for 12 hours in the area within a day or two.

SHORT TAKES

Farmer faints, dies at mandi

Bargarh: A farmer collapsed and died while verifying his token at Chhindekela paddy yard (mandi) near Jamseth under Paikamal block in Bargarh district, Thursday. The deceased was identified as Prahlad Rout, 75, of Temrimal village under Jharbandh panchayat of the block. Rout had come to the mandi to verify his token. He, however, came to know that he could sell only six quintals of paddy with the token despite cultivation in five acres of land. He was stunned by the disclosure and started inquiring about the discrepancy from the staff present at the mandi. Meanwhile, he collapsed and died at the mandi. The actual reason about his death is yet to be ascertained, but it is suspected that he might have died after experiencing a cardiac arrest due to the disclosure.

Sonu Sood seeks help for K'mal kid

Phulbani: Bollywood actor turned philanthropist Sonu Sood Wednesday appealed to people to help out one-and-a-half-year old Rajveer from Ambapada village in Kandhamal district, who has been suffering from a rare genetic disorder. The well-known philanthropist requested all to donate whatever they can for the child who needs crores of rupees for medical treatment and save an innocent life. The appeal came close on the heels of Rajveer's parents visiting Sood in Mumbai for help. "We have seen in the past days what public cooperation can do. Many people have been cured of this disease before. Hence, I request every one to come forward and donate as per your capacity so that the child gets a new lease of life," said the Bollywood actor in a video message. It is pertinent to mention here that Rajveer has been suffering from Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA) disorder. A patient of this rare genetic disorder becomes incapable in controlling the movements of his/her muscles due to loss of nerve cells in spinal cord and brain stem. The boy's health is deteriorating day by day.

Dolphin counting begins at Bhitarkanika, Gahirmatha



POST NEWS NETWORK

Rajnagar, Dec 16: The annual census of dolphins in the water bodies of Bhitarkanika National Park and Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary under Rajnagar forest division in Kendrapara district began Thursday. An official source said the state forest and environment department has formed nine teams comprising 29 members for the purpose of counting dolphins. The teams have been equipped with binoculars, Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) handsets, cameras and handycams. The nine teams began annual census at 6 am. The three-day drive will continue till December 18. Counting of the dolphins will be carried out in waterbodies starting from the sea mouth at Dhamra to Devi river mouth. The teams were trained

Wednesday at Gupti by Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Yajnadatta Pati, Assistant Conservator of Forests (ACF) Biranchi Narayan Samal and Head of Zoology Department Siba Prasad Parida, the source added. Dolphin counting will be extensively carried out from Outer Wheeler up to Chinchiri mouth, from Barunei up to Paradip, from Hansina bridge up to Maipura mouth, from Hansua river in Rajnagar up to Khola, from Dhamra mouth up to Khola via Nalita Patia, from Kalibhanjadian and Jambu Kharanasi up to Hukitola, from Jatadhara mouth up to Paradip and from Devi River mouth up to Jatadhara mouth. Five teams will count in the sea and four others in rivers and creeks, the official said. It is pertinent to mention, the state had 62 dolphins as per 2020 census, which was a drop in the population of the aquatic animal.

Photo of BJP leader along with woman goes viral

POST NEWS NETWORK

Balasore, Dec 16: A photograph of president of BJP's Balasore district Unit Umakant Mohapatra along with the picture of a woman in objectionable position went viral Thursday. The photograph prompted Mohapatra to come out with an explanation on the issue at a presser and saw the hand of BJD leaders behind the viral photograph. "My photograph has been morphed with that of a woman and shared by some Facebook groups linked with the BJD. With panchayat polls in view, such malicious act has been done by ruling party workers to tarnish my image," he said. He also lodged a complaint with police in this regard. BJP's social media coordinator Srinibash Pradhan said the morphed photograph of Mohapatra is politically motivated. Party leaders condemned it and demanded an investigation into the matter.

Crop loss in 65K ha in Bhadrak

Bhadrak: The agriculture department has assessed crop loss in 65,000 hectares in Bhadrak due to cyclone Jawad. In its report, the department has told the district administration that due to incessant rains under the impact of the cyclone have affected 196 panchayats under seven blocks and 1,183 villages under three civic bodies. In Bhadrak block, paddy has been damaged in 5,650 hectares in 164 villages; 7,600 hectares in Tilhidi block; 28,540 hectares in Chandbali; 2,280 hectares in Dhamnagar; 7,015 hectares in Bhandaripokhari and 1,885 hectares in Bant. Collector Trilochan Majhi said the report will be submitted to the government.

Baladev, Gundicha temples set to get facelift: Collector


POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, Dec 16: The administration will soon chalk out detailed plans for beautification and development of Baladev Jew and Gundicha temples including Grand Road (Bada Danda) in Keonjhar; Collector Ashish Thakare informed Thursday. A decision to this effect was taken at a meeting of district-level officials. An official source said, beautification and development of Grand Road of the 16th-century old temple will also include a patch of road stretching up to Siddhamatha. Thakare discussed with local residents in this regard the previous day, the source added. In addition, a separate slot will be developed for trucks and other heavy vehicles presently parking on both sides along the Grand Road. The road will be widened, various temporary sheds will be erected along it and front portion of the temple will be beautified. Furthermore, surrounding areas of Gundicha temple will be decorated with



Jhoti (mural artworks) and other ornamentations. "Locals will be appealed not to let their domestic cattle through the Grand Road. The proposed beautification and development works will be started soon and completed well ahead of Rath Yatra," Thakare expressed. Forest garden will be developed along-

side the patch of the road stretching up to Siddhamatha, the Collector stated. Keonjhar Sub-Collector and Executive Officer of Baladev Jew temple Ramachandra Kisku, Regional Transport Officer Nirmal Mohanty, several other senior citizens and officials attended the meeting.



GRIDCO LIMITED
No. CAD-2319
Regd. Office : Janpath, Bhubaneswar-751022, ODISHA

PUBLIC NOTICE

Application under Section 86 (1) (a) & (b) and other applicable provisions of the Electricity Act, 2003 read with relevant provisions of OERC (Conduct of Business) Regulations, 2004 along with other related Rules and Regulations for determination of Aggregate Revenue Requirement and Bulk Supply Price for the FY 2022-23, filed by GRIDCO Ltd. before the Odisha Electricity Regulatory Commission, Bhubaneswar-21.

- GRIDCO Ltd. has filed an Application on 30.11.2021 before the Odisha Electricity Regulatory Commission for approval of Aggregate Revenue Requirement and determination of Bulk Supply Price (BSP) for the financial year 2022-23 which has been registered as Case No. 107 of 2021. The application has been filed under Section 86(1) (a) & (b) and other applicable provisions of the Electricity Act, 2003 read with relevant provisions of OERC (Conduct of Business) Regulations, 2004. The Commission has decided to dispose of the said case through a public hearing.
- Copies of the aforesaid filing as mentioned in Para-1 above together with supporting materials along with the related documents are available with the office of the CGM (PP), GRIDCO Headquarters, Bhubaneswar. This public notice along with the details of filing and relevant matters may also be downloaded from the GRIDCO's website www.gridco.co.in as well as the Commission's website www.oriereg.org.
- The Bulk Supply Price is applicable for supply of power to the Distribution Utilities of Odisha by GRIDCO. The proposed Bulk Supply Price application for the financial year 2022-23 contains details regarding energy charges, demand charges, charges for over-draw of energy, rebate and delayed payment surcharge etc.
- The rates and charges proposed by GRIDCO are published herewith for the information of the general public.
- (a) A summary of the proposal will be posted in the Commission's website after **12.01.2022** for general reference.
(b) Interested persons may inspect/peruse the relevant records pertaining to the matters enumerated in Para-1 above and take note thereof at the office mentioned at Para-2 above, during office hours on or before **15.01.2022** by making a plain paper application to the aforesaid authority.
- The salient features of the Bulk Supply Price application as mentioned in Para-1 above shall be available to the interested persons from the office mentioned at Para-2 above, during office hours on or before 15.01.2022 on payment of the photocopying charges of Rs.50/- only. The said salient features shall include;
(a) Write up of the BSP application.
(b) Proposed Bulk Supply Price schedule.
(c) Bulk Supply Price revision proposal (T-17).
(d) Revenue Requirement (F- 4).
- A full set of the Aggregate Revenue Requirement and Bulk Supply Price application for the financial year 2022-23 can also be obtained from the office of the CGM (PP), GRIDCO Head quarters, Bhubaneswar during the office hours on or before **15.01.2022** on payment of the photocopying charges of Rs.100/- only.
- Suggestions/objections, if any, together with supporting materials may be filed before the Secretary, Odisha Electricity Regulatory Commission, Plot No. 4, Chunokoli, Sailashree Vihar, Chandrasekharpur, Bhubaneswar-751021 in person or through Registered Post including Courier Services only so as to reach him on or before **15.01.2022** positively. A copy of the said suggestions/objections along with relevant documents shall also be served on the undersigned.
(a) The suggestions/objections should be filed in seven copies and should carry full name and postal address with PIN Code including e-mail ID & contact Telephone Number of the person/ organizations/ institutions sending the suggestions/objections and shall be supported by an affidavit.
(b) There shall be clear indication if the suggestions/objections are being filed on behalf of any organization/institution representing any category of consumers. It should also be specifically mentioned, if it is to be heard in person by the Commission.
(c) Suggestions/objections received after the date mentioned above or those which will prove deficient on any or more of the above points may not be admitted for hearing. Only those objections/suggestions supported through affidavit will be taken up for hearing.
- As directed by the Commission, the date of hearing shall be duly published in the newspapers and also communicated to the parties whose objections are admitted.

Dated : 16 /12/2021
Place : Bhubaneswar

Sd/
MANAGING DIRECTOR
GRIDCO Ltd.

Note: i) The above public notice along with the proposed Bulk Supply Price schedule is also available in GRIDCO's website www.gridco.co.in as well as the Commission's website www.oriereg.org.
ii) In case of any ambiguity in the notice published in Odia language, the notice published in English language may be referred for authenticity.

Proposed Bulk Supply Price Schedule of GRIDCO for carrying out Bulk Supply Activity for the FY 2022-23

Bulk Supply Price:
This Bulk Supply Price is applicable for supply of power to Distribution and Retail Supply Licensees (DISCOM Utilities) in the State. The total charges shall be calculated by summation of following charges stated in Para (A) to (G) below as applicable:

- Energy Charge:**
GRIDCO proposes to recover its net Revenue Requirement of Rs.10,945.36 Crore through Energy Charge only from the DISCOM Utilities towards sale of 28414 MU. The average BSP is proposed @ 385.21 P/U only for recovery of above proposed net Revenue Requirement.
- Demand Charge:**
Demand Charge @ Rs.250 KVA/Month is proposed to be levied from DISCOM Utilities on the excess SMD only when the actual SMD of DISCOM Utilities in a month exceeds the permitted monthly SMD (110% of the approved SMD), to take care of monthly variations subject to year-end adjustment within the permitted annual SMD i.e.110% of the approved annual SMD.
- Over Drawal and Year End Charges:**
The Over Drawal and Year End Charges payable by DISCOM Utilities are presently billed at the corresponding OERC approved applicable BSP in terms of the Judgment dated 07.05.2018 of the APTEL passed in Appeal No.55 of 2015, till intra-State DSM Regulations is pronounced by OERC and implemented in the State. GRIDCO proposes that any excess drawal of energy by a DISCOM Utility during a month over and above the approved energy quantum (Approved MU for FY 2022-23 X No. of days of the relevant month / 365 days) would be payable on provisional basis at the highest OERC approved Power Purchases Rate fixed for a Station for FY 2022-23 (which includes transmission charges and transmission loss) on monthly basis instead of the normal differential BSP applicable to the respective DISCOM Utilities, subject to final Year End Adjustment (YEA) considering the highest Power Purchases rate/ cost including the rate/s of energy drawn through U.I./deviation settlement of the month plus transmission charges and transmission loss.
- Fuel Price Adjustment :**
Fuel Price Adjustment (FPA) mechanism needs to ensure timely recovery of changes on account of fuel cost which is an uncontrollable expense. Ex-post facto approval is provided on quarterly basis by MERC, Maharashtra allowing monthly adjustment of tariff to account for FPA. Some other States also determine the fuel price adjustment on quarterly basis. In Gujarat, FPA upto 10 paise/unit is allowed to be levied without any prior approval of GERC. GRIDCO requests the Commission to provide a mechanism for monthly or quarterly determination of FPA component which can be recovered through tariff as per the practices followed in other States.
- Rebate:**
At present, GRIDCO is raising the BSP bill for a particular month during the 1st week of the subsequent month. The due date for payment of retail supply bill by different category of consumers to DISCOM Utilities is presently kept at seven days and rebate is allowed for payment made by the consumer within three working days. As such, DISCOMs are collecting the revenue from different category of consumers by end of the month of billing itself. In view of above, the BSP bill of GRIDCO needs to be settled by the end of the month of billing itself. Hence, due date of bill may be kept at 25 days from the date of presentation of bill.
GRIDCO states that the maximum rebate to be allowed to DISCOMs needs to be in line with the maximum rebate allowed to GRIDCO by the Generators under prevailing CERC / OERC Terms & Conditions of Tariff Regulations. Accordingly, GRIDCO proposes the following graded rebate for payment of BSP dues by the DISCOM Utilities:
 - For crediting the BSP bill of the DISCOM to GRIDCO's designated current bank account through Letter of Credit on presentation or through NEFT/RTGS within a period of five (5) working days, a rebate of 1.5 % shall be allowed.
 - Where the amount is credited on any day after five (5) working days and within a period of twenty five (25) days of presentation of bill, a rebate of 1.00% shall be allowed.
 - The DISCOMs may pay their BSP dues in staggered manner under different rebate option, but for eligibility of rebate, total current BSP dues needs to be settled by the DISCOM within 25th day of presentation of BSP bill.
- Delayed Payment Surcharge:**
For delayed payment of Bulk Power Supply Bills i.e., payment after the periods of 30 days from the date of submission of bills, the surcharge is to be levied @ 1.50% per month.
- Duty and Taxes:**
The Electricity Duty levied by the Government of Odisha and any other statutory levy/ Duty/ Tax/ Cess / Toll etc. imposed under any law from time to time shall be charged over and above the Bulk Supply Price.

OIPR-04056/11/0002/2122

●●●●

●●●●

●●●●

●●●●

The consciousness of the seer, is a greater power for knowledge than the consciousness of the thinker. The perceptual power of the inner sight is greater and more direct than the perceptual power of thought ...

SRI AUROBINDO

The Legal Gift

The Christmas shopping season is upon us. Whether one is a believer or not it is almost impossible to resist the lure to shop and give gifts at this time of the year. But the biggest gift givers are inanimate creatures without any capacity to believe anything. I am referring not to artificial intelligence but to the legal persons known as ordinary corporations. Corporations are currently doling out millions, if not billions, of dollars in year-end gifts. In the financial sector, bonuses are up 20-35% compared to last year, representing a merry-go-round that puts several hundred thousand dollars, on average, into the pockets of every recipient. Yet while the amount of these gifts is sizeable, the greatest gift that a corporation can bestow is legal. By securing a new corporate charter, corporations can give their investors everything on their wish lists.

Royal Dutch Shell is only the latest corporation making headlines for gifting a new charter to its shareholders, by moving its headquarters from The Hague to London. The company will ditch its royal title in return for extra cash for its shareholders. Two other Dutch corporations, Unilever and RELX (Elsevier), have already made similar moves. And, more generally, many merger transactions are, in fact, thinly disguised bargains for reaping the benefits of a different legal order.

Where does the extra money for Shell's shareholders come from? A possible source is the new legal and regulatory environment. The fact that shareholder protections in the United Kingdom are stronger than those in the Netherlands arguably could give the company a boost. After all, past research on law and finance suggests that countries with better shareholder protection tend to have more developed financial markets.

But extending this argument specifically to Shell's move raises several objections. At the level of an individual company, there simply are too many variables in play for corporate governance to have a large effect on the outcome. Moreover, when applying the standard measure for the quality of corporate law – the (corrected) Antidirector Rights Index – the difference between Dutch and English law is not all that great.

The real benefit for shareholders is not governance but cash, which is determined by the prevailing tax law. The Netherlands taxes both dividends and share buybacks at 15%, whereas UK tax law makes it possible to exempt buybacks, provided that a firm has a good tax lawyer on its side.

For Shell and other major polluters that are just beginning the process of shifting from oil and coal to cleaner energy sources, keeping shareholders happy ultimately is more important than achieving a successful transition. As the Financial Times reports, energy executives and investors have come to a "quiet understanding... As companies invest less in oil, more money should flow back to shareholders when energy prices are high."

Moreover, Shell is using its exit from the Netherlands to put some distance between it and the Dutch courts, which reprimanded the company twice in the past year for failing to meet legally required climate commitments that were touted by the company's own public relations materials. So much for the idea that the private sector will lead the transition to a green economy.

Where does this leave us? In short, polluters plan to butter up their shareholders with handouts and tax-avoidance schemes while their customers foot the bill for the energy transition, and while governments deal with the political fallout. Worse, the gift being lavished on shareholders is not a return on an especially good investment, nor does it bespeak some breakthrough in the energy transition. Rather, it reflects the cash-value of a legal arbitrage scheme that is designed to circumvent the laws of a democratic country – the same laws that breathe life into legal creatures like Shell and every other corporation in the first place.

Given their legal pedigree, it is perhaps not surprising that corporations prefer to treat law like just another asset that can be exploited for profit. They routinely hunt for cheaper supplies and outsource production to countries with lower labor costs and weaker worker protections, so why not shop around for law as well?

Legal arbitrage is often rationalised as a form of healthy competition that will push lawmakers to write optimal rules. But for whom should the law be optimised? Obviously, shareholders would prefer zero taxes, and polluters would prefer zero emissions standards. The tens of millions of people who are worried about their children's future on a warming planet may have different preferences.

The writer, Professor of Comparative Law at Columbia Law School, is the author of *The Code of Capital: How the Law Creates Wealth and Inequality*.

WISDOM CORNER

- Don't limit yourself. Many people limit themselves to what they think they can do. You can go as far as your mind lets you. What you believe, remember, you can achieve.
- If something is important enough, even if the odds are stacked against you, you should still do it.
- We need to accept that we won't always make the right decisions, that we'll screw up royally sometimes – understanding that failure is not the opposite of success, it's part of success.

WORDSWORTH

Captology

The word captology is still relatively unusual outside a group of researchers in the Persuasive Technology Lab at Stanford University. The group studies the theory and design of the ways computing technology can be used to influence people. If you think that sounds a bit Big Brotherish, you are not altogether in error. The emphasis is on influencing people for good, for example to encourage healthy living or improve road safety, but the group is aware such methods could just as well be used for baser ends, such as persuading you to buy things, or to hand over personal data that could then be misused. The word was coined by Professor Fogg in 1996 as a partial acronym – from the initial letters of Computers As Persuasive Technology – together with the ending -ology for a field of study. Someone engaged in the field is a captologist.

LOL

PASSING A FOOTBALL

The huge college freshman decided to try out for the football team. "Can you tackle?" asked the coach. "Watch this," said the freshman, who proceeded to run smack into a telephone pole, shattering it to splinters. "Wow," said the coach. "I'm impressed. Can you run?" "Of course I

can run," said the freshman. He was off like a shot, and, in just over nine seconds, he had run a hundred yard dash. "Great!" enthused the coach. "But can you pass a football?" The freshman hesitated for a few seconds. "Well, sir," he said, "if I can swallow it, I can probably pass it."

Carlo Ratti

LIKE MANY OTHER HOTSPOT DESTINATIONS, BARCELONA HAS SUFFERED THE NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES OF MASS TOURISM: STRAIN ON PUBLIC GOODS, EROSION OF COMMERCIAL SERVICES FOR RESIDENTS, AND INDIRECT EXPULSION OF THE LOCAL POPULATION

SPECTRUM BILATERAL TIES

India-Vietnam strategic partnership

The two-day visit to India of a high-powered parliamentary delegation from Vietnam led by the president of Vietnamese National Assembly Vuong Dinh Hue this week on the occasion of the 5th anniversary of the 'comprehensive strategic partnership' between the two countries is suggestive of the growing friendship and cooperation between the two countries and their people. The two countries are also celebrating the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the diplomatic relations between them. India has strategic partnership with more than a dozen countries, but India-Vietnam strategic partnership, which was elevated to 'Comprehensive Strategic Partnership' during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Vietnam, is unique in many respects. The two countries share cultural proximity and political convergence; there is no major bilateral issue and so much of complementarities and convergence of approaches to international issues. In India's 'Act East Policy', Vietnam is truly the pivot. China's belligerence has given traction to India-Vietnam relations as the two countries continue to face China's aggressive behaviour. The interaction between the two countries at various levels has been consistent and continuous, and there are a number of institutional

Rup Narayan Das

INDIA HAS STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP WITH MORE THAN A DOZEN COUNTRIES, BUT INDIA-VIETNAM STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP IS UNIQUE IN MANY RESPECTS

FOCUS BARCELONA

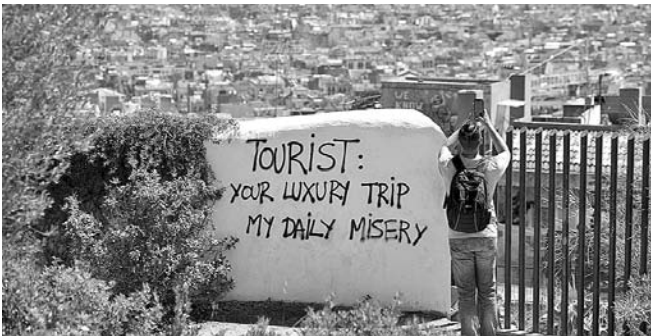
THE URBAN REVOLUTION

When I first began visiting Barcelona in the early 2000s, it was a dazzling metropolis – optimistic, lively, progressive, and teeming with young people from all over Europe. It balanced its Catalan pride with openness to the world. The 2002 film 'The Spanish Apartment', a comedy about a group of exchange students in Barcelona, showed why it was considered the unofficial capital of Mediterranean Europe. Unfortunately, in the years since, Barcelona has become a victim of its own success. But the COVID-19 pandemic might open new avenues for its future.

It wouldn't be the first time Barcelona has rebounded. During Francisco Franco's dictatorship, it was considered a gray place that repressed both its natural beauty and its civic life. After Spain's transition to democracy, Barcelona seized the opportunity to be reborn. Many say the turning point was the 1992 Olympic Games, which savvy local administrators leveraged to showcase the city internationally and transform it into an urban heavyweight.

With a limited budget, Mayor Pasqual Maragall capitalised on the Olympics to begin one of the most successful urban redevelopments in late twentieth-century Europe. He enlisted the help of top local and international design professionals to create a municipal plan that ensured the city would benefit from the legacy of the Games long after they ended.

Beyond constructing sports facilities, the plan tackled two of Barcelona's most profound urban challenges: its waterfront and its public spaces. The waterfront had long been cut off from the rest of the city due to myopic infrastructural and industrial development. Today, thanks to major work completed just in time for the Olympics, the port has been integrated with the city by road and public transport, and has become a lively district where swimmers



After hosting the Olympics in 1992, the Catalan capital became one of Europe's most popular destinations, but the influx of tourists strained infrastructure and fueled resentment among residents. The COVID-19 pandemic has given the city a chance to try new initiatives that make visitors a part of the community

swarm the beaches.

Reinventing the public spaces required thinking of them not only as physical places but as the soul of Barcelona's civic spirit. Projects to reclaim squares and parks re-oriented citizens' conception of their collective heritage and identity and helped to cultivate local architectural talent, reviving a noble tradition that Francoist Spain disrupted.

These clever design choices were amplified through "urban marketing." With national borders softening across Europe in the late 1990s, regional capitals found themselves competing to attract talent, tourists, and capital using the tools of planning and design. Barcelona's efforts at urban marketing, beginning with the 1992 Games, proved particularly successful. Since 2012, the city has attracted between 25 and 30 million visitors every year – an enormous number for a municipality of just over 1.5 million inhabitants.

Like many other hotspot destinations, Barcelona has suffered the negative consequences of mass tourism: strain on public goods, ero-

sion of commercial services for residents, and indirect expulsion of the local population to make room for hotels and short-term rentals.

"Being a tourist means escaping responsibility," as the novelist Don DeLillo put it. Tourists often travel with impunity, distorting local economies and moving on.

Locals have responded with increasing anger. Anti-tourist graffiti and even petty violence against tour groups have made international headlines. The backlash helped the populist Ada Colau win the 2015 mayoral election. Colau proposed radical policies, including confiscation of empty apartments for use as public housing. But such proposals do not add up to a new urban vision.

The COVID-19 pandemic turned Barcelona's woes into a crisis. In 2020, the horde of tourists suddenly disappeared, leaving the streets empty and hundreds of shops on the verge of closure. Political, business, and academic leaders agree that the era ushered in by the 1992 Games – defined by the hit-and-run tourism that produced Barcelona's success and became its undoing – is ending.

Perhaps it is time to consider an alternative mode of travel – let's call it "pace tourism" – that could be used to reinvent Barcelona and other cities around the world. Pace tourists would remain for weeks or months in a single place instead of constantly jumping from one city to the next, allowing them time to rediscover the meaning of concepts like integration and civic contribution. Historically, long sojourns have been considered a luxury for elites – think of Peggy Guggenheim or Cole Porter in Venice – but the rise of remote work could make such timeframes accessible to many more people.

Video conferencing already allows "digital nomads" to settle in places far from home without interrupting their professional lives. And the otherwise questionable flexibility of the so-called "gig economy" could create local job opportunities that swiftly adjust with shifting urban challenges. Cities like Barcelona could harness the power of online platforms to attract pace tourists.

Likewise, cities could benefit from the pandemic's impact on the infrastructure of higher and vocational education. If Barcelona offered students attending online classes low-cost accommodations, they could finish school and then work in the city as nurses, solar panel installers, or even tech entrepreneurs.

There are numerous, complex issues that would need to be resolved to realise these ideas. And executing them would require courage and audacity. But few places have these qualities in Barcelona's abundance. Catalan creativity and resourcefulness could contribute to solving the great urban conundrum – how to engage with global tourism without succumbing to it – that Barcelona itself helped introduce to the modern world.

The writer is Director of the Senseable City Lab at MIT.

©PROJECT SYNDICATE

Thoughts in danger

Sir, Students of Classes X and XII of the Uttar Pradesh Board will no longer study the works of great poets and litterateurs like Rabindranath Tagore, Milton or Shelley from the new academic session (2021-22). The UP Madhyamik Shiksha Parishad is implementing the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) syllabus for English literature in these classes from this year. In the process, Tagore's story 'The Home Coming' (Chhuti) and Dr Radhakrishnan's essay 'The Women's Education' have been removed from the Class XII syllabus after its revision. AL Basham's 'The Heritage of India' has also been removed from the curriculum of Class XII along with Mulk Raj Anand's story 'The Lost Child' and 'An Astrologer's Day' by RK Narayanan. The students of Class XII will no longer be taught the poems of renowned renaissance poets like John Milton, PB Shelley and William Wordsworth. In the Class X syllabus, Sarojini Naidu's poem 'The Village Song' and the works of Chakravarty Rajagopalachari, WM Raeburn, and R Srinivasan have been removed from this year. This is not an isolated incident. After coming to power in 2014, the incumbent government started attacking democratic, secular and scientific education. In a democratic country, religion has no place in education and politics. It is a personal affair of an individual. If it is mixed with education and politics, it will create chaos and unscientific thoughts in the society.

Asit Mohanty, JAJPUR

Banking at its best

Sir, The country's banking system has now been democratised in the true sense of the word. In the 52nd year of bank nationalisation we have achieved significant progress in reaching out to people in every nook and corner of the country. New payment systems have been made easy with the help of mobile banking. The number of accounts for women in urban India was matched by those in rural India. We are looking at strengthening resilience, and are now doing root cause analysis, looking at business models of banks to see if they are viable, without of course, interfering in the commercial flexibility which the banks must have for their success. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while speaking at the 'Depositors First: Guaranteed Time-bound Deposit Insurance Payment' has hiked the payable sum from ₹1 lakh to ₹5 lakh if any bank closes down suddenly. Banking is at its best now and will make phenomenal changes in the coming years.

MR Jayanthi, COIMBATORE

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

OrissaPOST

B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

of the day quote

Those who had said we don't allow Durga Puja in Bengal should be ashamed of themselves for spreading lies

MAMATA BANERJEE | WEST BENGAL CM

This is a disastrous government. To cover up its monumental failures, this government has taken recourse to religion. Another reason to take side with religion is to divide the country on religious lines to win elections

P. CHIDAMBARAM | CONGRESS LEADER

Prices of all items have gone up by three times during the seven-month DMK rule

O. PANNEERSELVAM | FORMER TN CM

SHORT TAKES

2 militants killed

Srinagar: Two Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) militants were killed in an encounter with security forces in Kulgam district of Jammu and Kashmir Thursday, police said. Security forces launched a cordon and search operation in Redwani area of the district late on Wednesday night, a police spokesperson said. He said the search operation turned into an encounter after militants opened fire at the security forces who retaliated. Two ultras were killed in the exchange of fire in the early hours of Thursday, the spokesperson said. He said the slain militants were identified as Amir Bashir Dar and Adil Yousuf Shan who belonged to the LeT's offshoot, The Resistance Front.

Three Naxals held

Bijapur: Three lower rung Naxals have been arrested in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district, police said Thursday. The rebels were apprehended on Wednesday night near Kandulnar village under Modakpal police station limits, where a joint team of security forces was out on an anti-Naxal operation, an official said. Personnel from the CRPF's 170th battalion and district police force were involved in the operation, he said. The three, identified as Gote Lakshmaia (50), Raju Yalam (35) and Anganpalli Hanaiya (35), were low ranking Naxals, the official said.

Two arrested

New Delhi: Two persons were arrested in connection with the murder of a man by six people in the city's Triolkuri area, a police official said Thursday. Two of the accused have been arrested. According to the official, information was received Tuesday morning that an unconscious person was lying outside Central Park in Triolkuri, Delhi. The police reached the spot and rushed the man, identified as Shabir, to Lal Bahadur Shastri hospital. "There were five injuries on his body and the doctor stated his condition to be critical after which he was referred to the GTB Hospital," the official said.

Narrow escape

Amaravati: Passengers of a private bus had a narrow escape when the vehicle caught fire in Andhra Pradesh's Prakasam district early Thursday. The bus, which was on its way from Hyderabad to Chirala in Prakasam district, was completely gutted in the fire. Noticing the smoke, the bus driver applied brakes and alerted the passengers who were asleep. Some of them jumped from windows to save themselves. The incident occurred near Timmarajupalem in Paruchuru mandal around 5.30 a.m.



10 cases of the new COVID-19 variant Omicron have been detected in the national capital so far and none of them has developed "severe" disease

SATYENDAR JAIN | DELHI HEALTH MINISTER

156 RENAL STONES REMOVED

As many as 156 kidney stones were removed from a 50-year-old patient at a Hyderabad hospital



Rahul seeks Ajay's ouster, LS adjourned



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 16: Lok Sabha proceedings were adjourned for the day Thursday amid continuous protests by opposition members led by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi demanding sacking of Union Minister Ajay Mishra from the government in connection with the Lakhimpur Kheri violence.

Rahul Gandhi, who had a question on MSME sector listed Thursday, linked Mishra with the Lakhimpur Kheri violence and demanded his ouster when Speaker Om Birla called his name during the Question Hour.

It was trouble from the word go, as opposition members trooped into the Well raising slogans and waving placards demanding removal of Mishra, whose son has been arrested in connection with the Lakhimpur Kheri violence in October in which eight people, including four farmers, were killed. Trinamool Congress members, who had earlier stayed away from the opposition grouping, were also in the Well of the House raising slogans along with members of the Congress and Left parties.

"This minister should be removed from the government... Action should be

taken against him," Gandhi said. "We should be allowed to speak about it (Lakhimpur Kheri)," the Lok Sabha member from Wayanad said as opposition members waved placards and raised slogans in the Well of the House.

The Speaker asked Rahul Gandhi to stick to the question related to the MSME sector that was listed against his name.

"You are a senior member. You ask the question number 262. You will be given adequate time to ask the question you have listed for Question Hour. You claim that you are not allowed to speak in the House. I will give you adequate time if you stick to the question listed by you," the Speaker said.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi said Rahul Gandhi was trying to speak at a time when Congress members were in the Well of the House. "How can this be allowed. Ask him to call the members back to their seats," Joshi said.

BJP members too were up on their feet as Rahul Gandhi continued to speak on the Lakhimpur Kheri violence. "Your minister... Should resign. He should be punished for that. He should be removed from the government," Rahul Gandhi said.

CONGRESS TARGETS GOVT ON VIJAY DIWAS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 16: The Congress Thursday accused the government of indulging in petty politics by not remembering former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi during Vijay Diwas celebrations and termed it of being "misogynist".

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi recalled Indira Gandhi's role in Bangladesh's liberation and said it was under her leadership that India won the war to save the idea of democracy. "Remembering the martyrs and veterans of the 1971 war. India won the war to save the idea of democracy under the able leadership of Former PM Smt. Indira Gandhi ji. Jai Hind! #VijayDiwas2021," he tweeted.

He also accused the government of ignoring his grandmother's role in the 1971 War and said victory was achieved as the country was united then. She took "32 bullets for the country" but her name was not even mentioned at a government event in New Delhi on the anniversary of the victory over Pakistan, he said in Dehradun, adding "However, it does not make any difference because I know what she did for the country by giving her blood."

He said the credit for the 1971 War victory goes to the "united fight put up by Indians regardless of their cast or religion". His sister and AICC general secretary Priyanka Vadra said, "Our first and only woman Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi is being left out of the misogynist BJP government's Vijay Diwas celebrations."

She said, this happened on the 50th anniversary of the day that she led India to victory and liberated Bangladesh. "Narendra



Congress MP Rahul Gandhi felicitates a war veteran during Vijay Samman Rally, organised on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the 1971 Indo-Pak war victory, at Parade Ground in Dehradun

PTI PHOTO

Modi ji, women don't believe your platitudes. Your patronising attitude is unacceptable. It's about time you started giving women their due," Vadra said.

Congress president Sonia Gandhi had at a function on Wednesday said that "1971 - in many ways was Indira Gandhi's finest year". "It was this extraordinary convergence of a well-planned political, diplomatic and military strategy that gave 1971 a distinctive place in the history of the sub-continent. It was a history that reshaped geography as well," Sonia Gandhi said, adding that the 1971 war was a victory of the people of India under the leadership of Indira Gandhi.

Senior Congress leader and Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge said it was unfortunate that the government did not recognise the role played by Indira Gandhi during the liberation of Bangladesh during

the celebrations.

He said Indira Gandhi used all force to help liberate Bangladesh from Pakistan, which was broken into two pieces, but some people today sought to forget Indira Gandhi and her contribution and did not remember her for her role in the Vijay Diwas.

"They give speeches on Vijay Diwas, they should also tell which government was there at the time and who was leading it," he said, recalling how thousands of Pakistani soldiers were also held at the time and they were later released.

"Bangladesh remembers Indira ji, but our people forget her. Former prime minister Indira Gandhi lauded Indira Gandhi and termed as 'Durga'. The good work done for the country should be remembered and not forgotten. It is very unfortunate that the prime minister and the government did not even name then Prime Minister

Indira Gandhi," he told reporters.

Kharge alleged that even inside Parliament, they were not allowed to say anything on this occasion and only the chairman spoke a few words. Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala accused the BJP government of indulging in petty and cheap politics by not naming Indira Gandhi who led from the front and gave decisive leadership at the time.

"The Modi government and the BJP will not deter from their cheap and petty politics. On the 50th Vijay Diwas of Bangladesh's independence, the Prime Minister and the people in the government did not even take the name of Indira Gandhi, the "Iron Lady" of the 1971 war, is an example of their frustrated and narrow mindset," Surjewala said in a tweet in Hindi, using hashtag "Bangladesh". Deputy leader of Congress in Lok Sabha Gaurav Gogoi said it is unfortunate that the prime minister feels so insecure to not even name Indira Gandhi who gave the leadership during the 1971 war with Pakistan that led to the liberation of Bangladesh.

"Today our prime minister unfortunately is so insecure and so weak that he cannot even name the role of Indira Gandhi. This is nothing but an attempt to whitewash and change history. But that will not happen as we will continue to highlight the role played by Indira Gandhi to the next generations," he told reporters outside Parliament.

He said the people of India know what role Indira Gandhi played during the Bangladesh liberation war. "It is unfortunate that the government is indulging in such petty politics. It is another blot on the prime minister's record," Gogoi alleged.

Over 32,000 RTI appeals pending with CIC: Govt

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 16: More than 32,000 RTI appeals are pending with the Central Information Commission (CIC), the Rajya Sabha was informed Thursday.

In a written reply, Minister of State for Personnel Jitendra Singh said there was a pendency of 35,178 and 38,116 RTI appeals during 2019-20 and 2020-21, respectively.

A total of 32,147 RTI appeals were pending in 2021-22, as on December 6, 2021, he said. Singh said the government has taken several steps like capacity building through training

and issuance of guidelines for Public Information Officers and First Appellate Authorities, so as to enable them to supply information/dispose of first appeal effectively, resulting in less number of appeals to the information commission.

The government has also issued clarificatory orders impressing upon the public authorities to disclose maximum information proactively so that citizens need not resort to filing of Right to Information (RTI) applications to access information available with the public authorities, he said.

The Department of Personnel and

Training is implementing an annual programme Improving Transparency and Accountability in Government through Effective Implementation of RTI Act wherein state administrative training institutes (ATIs) and State Information Commissions (SICs) have been given financial assistance for awareness generation on RTI by taking up various activities which may include nukkad natak (street plays), use of local folk troupes, development of publicity material in local languages, distance learning programmes, online certificate courses in regional languages, among others, the minister added.

Omicron cases on the rise

Maharashtra has so far reported the highest number of Omicron cases at 32, followed by Rajasthan at 17

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore/New Delhi, Dec 16: Karnataka, Delhi and Gujarat together Thursday reported 10 fresh cases of the Omicron variant of coronavirus taking the countrywide tally of this strain to 83 even as the national capital with a total of 85 new COVID cases recorded its highest single day rise in the last 137 days.

Karnataka, Delhi and Gujarat reported five, four and one fresh cases of the Omicron variant to take the total to eight, ten and five respectively, according to a tally of the new infections from the states.

Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla, meanwhile, reviewed the COVID-19 situation in the country and the preparedness of the health infrastructure of all Union territories, according to a home ministry spokesperson.

Maharashtra has so far reported the highest num-

ber of Omicron cases at 32, followed by Rajasthan at 17. These cases have also been reported in the states of Karnataka (8), Gujarat (5), Kerala (5), Telangana (2), Tamil Nadu (1), West Bengal (1) and Andhra Pradesh (1) and Union Territories of Delhi (10) and Chandigarh (1). The country's first two cases of the Omicron variant were detected in Karnataka on December 2.

Karnataka Health Minister K Sudhakar said five more cases of the Omicron variant were detected in the state to take its tally of the new strain to eight. "Five more cases of Omicron have been detected in Karnataka today: 19 yr male returning from UK, 36 yr male returning from Delhi, 70 yr female returning from Delhi, 52 yr male returning from Nigeria, 33 yr male returning from South Africa," Sudhakar tweeted.

The country's first two Omicron cases-- a South

African national who has left the country and the other a local person, a doctor with no travel history-- were detected in Bengaluru. Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain said the Omicron variant was detected in 10 people so far in the national capital and none of them has developed "severe" disease.

He said 40 people are currently admitted to the special facility at the Lok Nayak Hospital meant for isolating and treating suspected Omicron cases. Of them, 38 are COVID positive. "Ten Omicron cases have been detected in Delhi so far. One of them has been discharged," Jain told reporters.

There has been no "severe" case so far, he said. The minister said many international travellers are turning out COVID positive upon arrival at the Indira Gandhi International Airport. "Eight such people were admitted to the hospital today (Thursday)," he added.

On Tuesday, Jain had said the Omicron variant of coronavirus has not spread in the community so far and the situation is under control. On August 1 this year, Delhi had logged 85 COVID-19 cases at a positivity rate of 0.12 per cent along with one fatality.



OFFICE OF THE NOTIFIED AREA COUNCIL, CHANDBALI
PIN - 756133 (ODISHA)
E-mail: chandbalin-hud@gov.in / chandbali.nac@gmail.com
Letter No. 2811 Dt. 15.12.2021

QUOTATION CALL NOTICE
No. C-1600: The Executive Officer, Chandbali NAC invites quotation for following works.

- Supply of Installation of LED Rope waterproof light in existing of Street Pole.
- Cement Concrete Flowerpot with different item for Park.

The detail information with Term & Conditions are available at NAC Office. The rate should be furnished in each quotation paper. The quotation paper cost Rs.2000.00 (Rupees two thousand) only & available from 15.12.2021 to 22.12.2021 during office hour expect holidays. The sealed quotation paper reached to the undersigned on or before 22.12.2021 by 11.00 P.M. through Speed Post/Regd. Post/ by Hand. The quotation paper will be open on 22.12.2021 at 2.00 P.M. in presence of interested party or their authorized agent. The authority reserves all the rights to reject any or all quotation without assigning any reason thereof.

Sd./- Executive Officer, Chandbali NAC
OIPR-131219/11/0010/2122

OFFICE OF THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL, BHADRAK
No. C-1604
SHORT TENDER CALL NOTICE
(Through E-Procurement)
Tender Reference No. BM-BDK-09-2021-22
Tender Call Notice No. 8358/BM Dt. 15.12.2021

Tender Id No.

- Name of the Work : Individual Civil Construction works as per DTCN published in the website
- No. of works put to tender : 34 Nos. individual civil construction works
- Estimated Cost : As per DTCN
- Period of Completion : As per DTCN
- Date and time of availability of bid document in the portal : From 10.00 hours of Dt. 17.12.21 to 15.00 hours of Dt. 23.12.21
- Mode of deposit towards cost of Bid document & EMD : Online
- Date and time of opening of Bid : 16.00 hours and onwards of Dt. 23.12.2021
- Name and address of the Officer Inviting Bid : Executive Officer, Bhadrak Municipality, Bhadrak

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal "https://tendersorissa.gov.in" or "http://tenders.ori.nic.in/nicgep/app".
Sd./- Executive Officer, Bhadrak Municipality
OIPR-13152/11/0022/2122

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (AGRI.), DHENKANAL DIVISION, DHENKANAL
No. 1524 Date, 14.12.2021

INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB) e procurement notice
Bid identification number / Tender call Notice No. - EE (A) D/D-04 of 2021- 22
No. L-111:- The Executive Engineer (Agril.), Dhenkanal Division, Dhenkanal who has been authorised as the procuring officer for the projects of Dhenkanal Division, Dhenkanal is directed to invite percentage rate bid on behalf of the Governor of Odisha for the Civil Construction Works under Dhenkanal Division. The costs of the projects are approximately from 5.00 lakhs to 18.00 lakhs. Bid document consisting of detailed tender call notice, the schedule of quantities and the set of terms and conditions of the contract and other necessary documents can be downloaded from www.tendersorissa.gov.in from 17.12.21 at 10.00 hours to 24.12.21 at 16.00 hours. The bid will be opened on 29.12.21 at 11.00 hours in the O/o Executive Engineer (Agril.), Dhenkanal Division, Dhenkanal. All other details regarding term and conditions, corrigendum from time to time if any, DTCN etc. can be seen and downloaded from www.tendersorissa.gov.in.
Email ID:- eeagri.dhenkanal@gmail.com
Sd./- Executive Engineer (Agril.), Dhenkanal Division, Dhenkanal
OIPR-01446/11/0002/2122

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA No. B-816
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, SUNDARGARH (R&B) DIVISION, SUNDARGARH
E-mail ID: pwd_sng@yahoo.co.in, Tel./Fax: (06622) 272230

"e" Procurement Notice
Bid Identification No. SE-R&B-SNG-25 of 2021-22
Letter No. 5813/WE Date: 10.12.2021

- The Superintending Engineer, Sundargarh (R&B) Division on behalf of Governor of Odisha inviting percentage rate bid in Single Cover System on ONLINE mode from eligible contractors with valid licences for execution of **Road Work** as detailed in DTCN.
- Nature of Works : Road Work
- No. of work : 04 (Four) Nos.
- Tender Cost : Rs.6,000/-
- Class of Contractor : 'D', 'C', 'B' & 'A'
- Availability of Bid document in the website : From 10.00 A.M. of date 16.12.2021 to 05.00 P.M. of date: 27.12.2021.
- Date of Opening of Bid : 11.00 A.M. on Dt.28.12.2021
- The bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website (<https://tendersodisha.gov.in>). Any addendum/corrigendum/cancellation of tender can also be seen in the website said only.

Sd./- Superintending Engineer Sundargarh (R&B) Division
OIPR-34043/11/0017/2122

LAKHIMPUR KHERI CASE

No action likely against MoS
Ajay Mishra, say sources

The view within the government and BJP is that the SIT report, which claimed that the Lakhimpur incident was a “planned conspiracy to murder protesting farmers”, is not the final word in the case

New Delhi, Dec 16: Amid a chorus of Opposition leaders demanding his removal from the Union Cabinet over the Lakhimpur Kheri incident, the Centre is unlikely to take any action against MoS Home Ajay Mishra, sources said.

According to sources, the view within the government and ruling BJP is that the SIT report, which claimed that the Lakhimpur incident was a “planned conspiracy to murder protesting farmers”, is not the final word in the case. There is also a view within the government that the matter is sub-judice and pertains to Ajay Mishra's son, Ashish, and not him, sources said.

The government has also called out Ajay Mishra for his behaviour with a few journalists who asked him over the SIT report, sources said. In a video that went viral, Ajay Mishra could be seen losing his cool as the reporters asked him about the SIT report.

Meanwhile, Ajay Mishra continued work at the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) Thursday. He held some official meetings related to his department.

On October 3, four farmers were mowed down by an SUV in Lakhimpur Kheri in Uttar Pradesh when a group agitating against the Centre's three farm laws was staging a demonstration against the visit of UP Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya. Two BJP workers, a driver in the



Congress leaders protest demanding resignation of Union MoS for Home Affairs Ajay Kumar during the Winter Session of Uttar Pradesh Assembly in Lucknow, Thursday

employ of Ajay Mishra, and a journalist were killed in the ensuing violence. In its report, the special investigation team (SIT) constituted by the Uttar Pradesh government said the Lakhimpur Kheri violence incident was a “planned conspiracy” and not a result of criminal negligence as claimed earlier. The SIT also wrote to a judge to modify the charges against the accused, including Ashish Mishra.

On Ashish Mishra, the SIT has sought permission to apply Section 307 (attempt to murder), Section 326 (causing hurt with dangerous weapon), section 34 (acts done by several persons in furtherance of common intention), and Section 3/25 Arms Act.

Opposition leaders have been

demanding the removal of Ajay Mishra from the Union Cabinet over his son's involvement in the Lakhimpur Kheri violence.

Meanwhile, Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav has demanded dismissal of Union Minister of state for home affairs, Ajay Mishra, after the SIT report said that the Lakhimpur Kheri incident was ‘well planned.’

Talking to reporters on his Vijay Yatra for the second consecutive day in Jaunpur, Akhilesh said, “Truth has been exposed and now it has become clear that as a part of a conspiracy, the people associated with the BJP had killed the farmers in Lakhimpur Kheri by crushing them. If the BJP has morality left, it should immediately sack the minister who is also an accused in the case.”

DEFAMATION CASE

Bombay HC defers hearing on Rahul Gandhi's petition

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 16: A BJP worker, who had filed a defamation complaint against Rahul Gandhi over his “commander-in-thief” remark targeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi, told the Bombay High Court Thursday that a local court had summoned the Congress leader after forming an opinion that the evidence prima facie points to an offence.

The Bombay High Court Thursday posted Gandhi's petition challenging the summons for final hearing January 18, 2022, and directed the magistrate's court to defer hearing on the defamation complaint till January 25.

Rahul Gandhi was directed by the local court to appear before it November 25 in connection with the defamation complaint filed by Mahesh Shrishrimal, who claims to be a member of the BJP Maharashtra Pradesh Committee since 1997.



Shrishrimal filed the complaint against the Congress leader for his remark targeting PM Modi in 2018 over the Rafale fighter jet deal.

Gandhi had approached the HC challenging the summons issued to him. Last month, a single bench of Justice SK Shinde directed the local court to defer hearing on the defamation complaint, which meant the Congress leader would not be required to appear before the magistrate. Shrishrimal Thursday filed his affidavit in the HC seeking dismissal of Gandhi's petition.

In the affidavit filed in response to the plea, the complainant said the magistrate issued summons and initiated criminal proceedings against Gandhi as he (Shrishrimal) had made out a prima facie case against the Congress leader.

Wankhede led a ‘dual life’: Malik to HC

MALIK'S AFFIDAVIT WAS IN RESPONSE TO A DEFAMATION SUIT FILED AGAINST HIM BY SAMEER WANKHEDÉ'S FATHER DNYANDEV

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 16: Maharashtra minister Nawab Malik has stated before the Bombay High Court that he spoke out against Sameer Wankhede as people has the right to know how the NCB official ‘lied’ about caste to get his job.

He wanted people to know that Wankhede, zonal director of the Narcotics Control Bureau here, was leading a “dual life” as “a Hindu and a Muslim”, the NCP leader said in an affidavit filed two days ago. “The materials published by me show the illegal manner in which Sameer Wankhede acquired his job and the illegalities committed by him during the discharge of his official duties,” it said. “Thus, the public has a right to know the truth related to the same,” the affidavit added.

Malik's affidavit was in response to a defamation suit filed against him by Sameer Wankhede's father Dnyandev. Dnyandev filed the suit in November after Malik posted a series of tweets claiming, among



other things, that Sameer Wankhede was born a Muslim but submitted a false caste certificate declaring that he belonged to a scheduled caste to secure a Central government job. Dnyandev denied the allegation and claimed that Malik was targeting him and his family because the minister's son-in-law

had been arrested by NCB officials led by Sameer Wankhede in a drugs case.

Last month, a single HC judge rejected Dnyandev's prayer for an interim order to Malik not to make statements against the Wankhede family during the defamation suit's pendency. The suit and interim re-

lief prayer will now be heard afresh by another judge after Christmas vacation as both the parties have agreed to a fresh hearing. The minister also denied that he was making statements against the Wankhede family because of his son-in-law's arrest in January 2021. He had been speaking out about the NCB's illegal actions since November 2020, before the arrest and subsequent release on bail of his son-in-law, Malik said. The minister said he started criticizing the central agency after noticing that it was going after celebrities for publicity instead of busting big drug syndicates. “Various illegalities have been committed by him (Sameer Wankhede) in raids conducted under his charge, which included high profile cases and cases involving Hindi film celebrities,” the affidavit said. “The material available also shows that Sameer Wankhede is leading a dual life, as a Muslim and a Hindu. He has illegally obtained his job under the SC category,” the minister alleged.

FIGHT FOR RIGHTS



Farmers during their protest march at the Chilla border in Noida, Thursday

PTI PHOTO

No death due to lack of O₂ during Covid 2nd wave, claims UP govt

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, Dec 16: The Uttar Pradesh government Thursday told the legislative council that no death due to lack of oxygen was reported in the state during the second wave of COVID-19, a claim rejected by the Opposition.

The government said the death certificates made no mention of ‘death due to lack of oxygen’ in any of the 22,915 patients that died due to the pandemic.

Replying to Congress member Deepak Singh during the Question Hour, Health Minister Jai Pratap Singh said, “No death has been reported in the state due to lack of oxygen during the second wave.”

Raising a supplementary question, Deepak asked whether the government had details on similar cases that were flagged by its own ministers. “Many ministers wrote letters saying deaths are taking place due to lack of oxygen in the state. Apart from

this, many MPs had also made such complaints. Many incidents of deaths due to lack of oxygen had come to light. Is there any information with the government about these deaths in the entire state. Has the government not seen the dead bodies flowing in the Ganges and people suffering due to lack of oxygen?”

Giving clarification, Pratap said a doctor issues death certificate in case a hospitalised patient dies. He said there was no mention of ‘death due to lack of oxygen’ anywhere in the 22,915 death certificates that were issued by the doctors for COVID-19 victims in the state.

The minister said several deaths during the pandemic were due to various other diseases, including terminal ones, and that the government had arranged oxygen from other states when there was a shortage. Samajwadi Party's (SP) Udayveer Singh had earlier said, “The Uttar Pradesh government took action against Paras Hospital in Agra be-

cause the video of a doctor there had gone viral... Half of the patients there were given oxygen and the other half died. Oxygen supply was stopped on the instructions of the district magistrate.” He sought to know when the government itself has taken action in the case, how it could make a “false statement” in the House.

In response, the minister said the district magistrate and police commissioner's investigation report mentioned about a ‘mock drill’ in the hospital and it was during this time that the oxygen supply had allegedly been stopped.

Udayveer objected to the minister's reply saying the “truth will not change” if the government writes “extinct” instead of “death” in the certificate.

Deepak also argued whether the letters written by the ministers on lack of oxygen, too, were false.

Leader of the House Dinesh Sharma said the Health Minister had answered the questions asked.

UPTET paper leak mastermind held

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, Dec 16: The Uttar Pradesh Special Task Force (UPSTF) has arrested a medical practitioner who masterminded the UP Teacher Eligibility Test (UPTET-2021) paper leak for big kickbacks.

The accused doctor, Santosh Chaurasia, was arrested from Mawaiya Metro station in Alambagh in Lucknow Wednesday evening. Chaurasia has eight cases lodged against him in Gwalior, Indore and Jabalpur for his role in the Vyapam scam that rocked Madhya Pradesh less than a decade ago.

Days after the UPTET paper leak, Chaurasia's name cropped up as an accused and an FIR was registered against him in Kaushambhi district, which served as a scam gateway to eastern Uttar Pradesh. Sources said that he was in touch with the tainted exam controller, Sanjay Kumar Upadhyay,

who was posted in neighbouring Prayagraj.

The blueprint for rigging the UPTET exam was hammered out years ago in a Madhya Pradesh prison, where Chaurasia shared his cell with another Vyapam accused Vikas Dixit.

Additional Director General of Police, STF, Amitabh Yash, told reporters that “it was Dixit, who put him through to the scamster duo of Rahul Mishra and Anurag Sharma in February, 2021, and they met in Noida. Rahul was adept at leaking question papers of government jobs and had links with printers”.

After securing an MBBS degree from premier Delhi medical college, Chaurasia joined the solvers' syndicate and made quick money by deputing imposters and rigging OMR sheets of Madhya Pradesh Pre-Medical Test (PMT) in 2013-2014.

He was jailed after the scam-riddled Vyapam board went bust.

Akhilesh patches up with estranged uncle Shivpal

Shivpal Yadav, who broke away from the Samajwadi Party ahead of the 2017 elections and formed his own party, has indicated for long that he is interested in an alliance

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, Dec 16: Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, who is emerging as the big challenger to the BJP ahead of the Assembly polls in Uttar Pradesh, has agreed to mend fences with his estranged uncle Shivpal Yadav. After a 45-minute meeting between the two in Lucknow, Akhilesh Yadav tweeted a picture of him and Shivpal Yadav, saying they had agreed to an alliance for the crucial 2022 Assembly election.

Shivpal Yadav, 66, had broken away from the Samajwadi Party ahead of the 2017 elections and formed his own party – the Pragatisheel Samajwadi Party (Lohia) after very public differences with Akhilesh Yadav.

In the last year, Shivpal Yadav had said openly multiple times that he was ready for a rapprochement.

But there had been no reciprocity from his nephew except for a few non-committal statements

“There was a meeting with the national president of PSPL and the matter of alliance was decided. The policy of taking regional parties along is continuously strengthening the SP and leading the SP and other allies to a historic victory,” Akhilesh Yadav tweeted in Hindi after the meeting.

The SP leader, whose rallies have been drawing increasingly bigger crowds, has been interested in bringing as many smaller parties on board as possible.

Already, he has formed tie-ups with Janwadi Party (Socialist), Om Prakash Rajbhar's SBSP, Keshav Dev Maurya's Mahan Dal, the Apna Dal faction led by Krishna Patel and Jayant Chowdhury's Rashtriya Lok Dal.



Shivpal Yadav's party has sizeable influence on just a few seats in the Etawah region, but as a wily political veteran who was among the founders of the Samajwadi

Party; his inputs are likely to help Akhilesh Yadav immensely in the tough battle ahead for the state.

Samajwadi Party sources say the patch up will also send a mes-

sage of unity to its core voter base. Shivpal Yadav, once the trusted younger brother of Mulayam Yadav and his de-facto second-in-command, had clashed with his nephew ahead of the 2017 elections over leadership of the party.

After a messy tussle through January and February 2017, in which Mulayam Singh Yadav had sided with his brother, Akhilesh Yadav – who was also the Chief Minister at the time – had firmly established his grip on the party.

Shivpal Yadav, who broke away and formed his own party, lost the battle for the party's most valued possession, the cycle poll symbol.

The divide within the first family was seen as another cause for the voters' rejection of the Samajwadi Party, which had a tie-up with the Congress for the election.

Man marries sister to receive govt scheme benefits

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Firozabad (UP), Dec 16: In a bizarre incident, a man married his own sister at a mass marriage event to obtain money from the Mukhyamantri Samuhik Vivaah Yojana scheme, under which weddings are conducted by the social welfare department.

Under the mass wedding scheme, the state government gives ₹35,000 for each couple apart from household gifts given to them. According to the scheme details, ₹20,000 is deposited in the brides' bank account and gifts worth ₹10,000 are also given.

The marriage took place in Tundla in Firozabad December 11 and came to light when the local villagers identified the married couple as brother and sister.

The event was organised on the premises of the Tundla Block Development Office in which 51 other couples were also married.

Block Development Officer of Tundla, Naresh Kumar said that action will be taken against the people involved.

Tikait says he will not contest polls

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Muzaffarnagar (UP), Dec 16: Bhartiya Kisan Union (BKU) national spokesperson Rakesh Tikait has said that the farmers' struggle would be written in golden letters.

Tikait also clarified that he had no intentions of contesting elections and warned people against using his photographs on political hoardings.



“I have nothing to do with any political party,” he said. Tikait was addressing farmers, late on Wednesday night, in Sisauli village when he returned home after 383 days of protest.

“Our struggle will be written in golden letters. I will continue to fight for farmers' rights till my last breath,” he said.

Tikait reached Sisauli in a large procession of his supporters and was showered with flower petals all along the route.

“Laddoos” were distributed at every crossing on the Meerut-Muzaffarnagar highway and langars organised every 25 km from Ghazipur border to Muzaffarnagar. Tikait's wife, Sunita Devi, lit hundreds of diyas to welcome him at their house in Jaat colony.

“My husband is coming home after 383 days today. The number of lamps I should light in his welcome shall be no less. Just as Lord Ram came back to Ayodhya, my Ram is coming home today,” she told reporters.

Tikait had not gone home ever since the start of the farmers' movement.

Those who indulge in divisive politics should think about the future of the country

ASHOK GEHLOT | RAJASTHAN CHIEF MINISTER



The state (Karnataka) government will take all the necessary measures to provide a steady market and price for the weavers' product

BASAVARAJ BOMMAI | KARNATAKA CHIEF MINISTER



1.54 lakh farmer families have adopted natural farming in the state (Himachal Pradesh) by covering 9,200 hectares in the last four years

JAI RAM THAKUR | HIMACHAL PRADESH CHIEF MINISTER



SHORT TAKES

Six killed, 25 hurt in road accidents

Jaipur: Six people, including a woman and a child, were killed and 30 others injured in three separate road accidents in Rajasthan Thursday. A woman and a child were killed while 25 others were injured when a bus overturned in Jhunjhunu district. In another road accident in Udaipur's Sukher police station area, three people travelling in a car were killed and four others injured in a head-on collision with a truck.

Road projects in J&K create history

New Delhi/Srinagar: Mountainous regions are dotted with tough geographical terrain where quality tunnels and roads are a boon. Lofty mountains, slippery peaks, ridges, gorges, and ravines are the definition of J&K and Ladakh, which separate it from the rest of the country during the winter months. However, with the recent developments, the road connectivity across Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh regions has mitigated the threat of accidents, and for the first time allowed speedy, smooth travel.

Punjab to set up Chair to study Bible

Gurdaspur (Punjab): Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi Thursday made a slew of historical announcements for the Christian community, including setting up of a Chair at university level for the study of the Bible. In his address here, the Chief Minister said that Christians would be given due representation in the state government boards. He said the problem of graveyards would be resolved in the districts where the community has a presence. "The land for graveyards would be provided where it is not available but the community has a sizeable presence," said Channi.

Couple hacked to death in Raj

Jaipur: A couple was hacked to death, allegedly by their elder son, in Hanumangarh district of Rajasthan, police said Thursday. The 16-year-old accused also attacked his younger brother, they said, adding the motive behind the killings and attack is not yet established. "Shivpal (45) and his wife Indra (42) were sleeping in their house when the incident occurred. They died on the spot while their younger son is injured. Primary investigation suggests that their elder son attacked them with an axe," a police officer said. He said the teenager has been detained and is being questioned.



We need to take away farming from the chemistry lab to nature's lab
NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER OF INDIA

VACANCIES IN JUDICIARY

There are over 5,000 vacancies in the subordinate judiciary, Rajya Sabha was informed Thursday. Law Minister Kiren Rijiju said in a written reply that as December 13, the sanctioned strength of judicial officers was 24,489 as against a working strength of 19,356, a shortfall of 5,133



SC allows bull races in Maha

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 16: The Supreme Court Thursday allowed bull races in Maharashtra, after a four-year hiatus, on the basis of same conditions and regulations as laid down in the amendments to the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (PCA Act) by Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

A bench headed by Justice A.M. Khanwilkar was hearing an application in the Maharashtra government special leave petition challenging the 2018 Bombay High Court order which stayed the bull-lock-cart races in the state. The high court passed the order in the backdrop of top court judgment banning traditional animal sports like Jallikattu, terming it an offence under the PCA Act.

Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi represented the Maharashtra government in the top court. He submitted that Tamil Nadu and Karnataka have passed amendments to the Act to permit races. Rohatgi added that the high court did not grant permission for the races, though the Maharashtra government framed rules to allow them under strict regulations.

The top court noted that Tamil Nadu and Karnataka governments have passed amendments to the Act to allow animal sports. The top court said the same dispensation must apply to the provisions of Maharashtra government, which are similar to the amendments carried out in other states.

These amendments have also been challenged in the apex court; however, the two-judge bench had referred the matter to the Constitution Bench, without a stay on the amendments.

India to host 3rd India-Central Asia dialogue Sunday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 16: India will host the third edition of its foreign ministerial dialogue with five Central Asian countries December 19 with a focus on pressing regional issues like connectivity and developments in Afghanistan.

External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said foreign ministers of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan will participate in the meeting. The dialogue is taking place in the backdrop of India reaching out to the five countries for participating of their top leaders as chief guests at the upcoming Republic Day celebrations. In the last few years, India has been focusing on enhancing overall co-operation with the energy-rich Central Asian countries, considering them to be part of its extended neighbourhood.

The recent developments in Afghanistan reinforced the importance of the Central Asian countries with three of them -- Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan -- sharing borders with the war-torn nation.

The national security advisors of all the five Central Asian countries attended an India-hosted regional dialogue on Afghanistan November 10. It was also participated by NSAs of Russia and Iran.

DELHI POLLUTION

WORK ON PERMANENT SOLUTION: SC

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 16: The Supreme Court directed the Commission for Air Quality Management on Thursday to invite suggestions of the public and experts about a permanent solution to the problem of air pollution in Delhi-NCR.

A bench headed by Chief Justice N V Ramana took note of a report filed by the commission which informed it that a decision to lift the ban on certain industries has been taken.

"The committee's report states measures that have been taken. So far as construction activities have been taken it's been stated that a decision will be taken tomorrow. We will list the matter in the first week of February. Meanwhile, we direct the commission to invite suggestions of the general public and experts about a permanent solution to the pollution," the bench also comprising Justices D Y Chandrachud and Surya Kant said. At the outset, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta



told the bench that operation of industrial processes related to milk, dairy processing, manufacture of drugs, life-saving medicines and medical equipment has been permitted. He said some industries were permitted for eight hours, some industries said their nature of industries is such that eight hours is not sufficient. "We have asked them to have a continuous process but five days not seven days. And we have staggered industries so they don't function on

the same days," Mehta said.

"Thermal power plants that are closed will remain shut but more will not be closed. Decision on construction activities will be taken tomorrow. Hospital constructions are permitted, while trucks, etc. Continue to be banned," he submitted.

Senior advocate Vikas Singh, appearing for the petitioners in the case, said only short term measures have been proposed and the problem of air pollution, long term permanent measures are needed.

"These (submitted by SG) are short term measures. I've some suggestions. Some permanent solution has to be found," Singh said. The bench, however, asked him to submit suggestions which would be considered by an expert group constituted by the commission. The commission has told the top court that milk and dairy processing units, medicines, drugs and life-saving equipment industries have been allowed to resume full time operations. Besides these, paper and pulp processing industries have been allowed to work five times a week while paddy, rice industries and textile, garment units have been permitted to work five days a week. The commission further told the apex court that power plants have been permitted to operate keeping in view the demand for power.

The ban on construction activities, however, will continue and schools will also continue to function through online mode for the time being which will be reviewed again December 17. The apex court

had earlier taken note of slight improvement in air pollution levels in Delhi-NCR and permitted the commission on air quality management to take a decision on various representations seeking easing of curbs, like ban on construction activities, within a week.

On December 3, the bench had directed the Centre and the NCR states to implement the panel's order to curb pollution and sought a proposal to ensure switching over of all industrial units to PNG or cleaner fuel in a time-bound manner or face closure. The bench had also rued that some news reports tried to "portray the court as a "villain" that wanted to close down schools in Delhi-NCR. It had taken note of the commission's proposal that industrial operations in the NCR, where gas is not available and the industrial unit is not running on PNG or cleaner fuels, shall be allowed to operate only up to eight hours a day during weekdays and shall remain closed during Saturdays and Sundays.

CREATIVITY ON DISPLAY



Soldiers of the Madras Regiment of Army perform during Swarnim Vijay Varsh celebrations at Balidan Stambh in Jammu

5 killed, 16 injured in Guj factory blast

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Godhra, Dec 16: Five labourers were killed and 16 other workers injured, some of them critically, after a huge explosion followed by fire occurred in a chemical unit in Gujarat's Panchmahal district Thursday, officials said.

The blast took place around 10 am at the chemical manufacturing plant of Gujarat Fluorochemicals Limited (GFL), situated near Ranjitnagar village in Ghoghamba taluka, said Panchmahal district collector Sujal Mayatra. Of the 16 workers injured in the mishap, 14 received minor injuries, while two suffered over 50 per cent burns, Mayatra said, adding that all of them were referred to different hospitals for treatment and they are out of danger. "A huge explosion followed by fire occurred at the chemical manufacturing plant of GFL. We

have recovered five dead bodies from the blast site during our search and rescue operation after the fire was doused. The Chief Minister's Office (CMO) also contacted us and gave necessary instructions," the collector added. On being alerted, the firefighters rushed to the spot and Mayatra as well as district SP Leena Patil also reached the site. After the fire came under control, search teams initially found two bodies from under the rubble. Later during the day, the bodies of three more victims were recovered when the entire area was scanned, Mayatra said.

Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel immediately contacted the collector upon learning about the incident and instructed him to make necessary arrangements for the treatment of the injured and to expedite search and rescue operation, a statement by the CMO said.

Dengue cases go up every 2 yrs in India

NEW DELHI: The number of dengue cases in India has seen a rise in every second year based on the available data from the last five years. However, the total number of dengue cases reported in each of the alternate years has come down gradually. Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare, Bharti Pravin Pawar, said in the Rajya Sabha that based on the data available for the past five years, it has been seen that the number of cases was higher in 2017 (1,88,401), 2019 (2,05,243), and 2021 (1,77,695), as compared to 2016 (1,29,166), 2018 (1,24,493), and 2020 (44,585). Pawar was replying to a question on whether there has been an increase in the cases of vector-borne diseases like dengue, malaria and chikungunya year to year in the country. However, chikungunya has shown a mixed trend in the country, said Pawar, adding that the number of confirmed cases was 26,364 in 2016, 12,548 in 2017, 9,756 in 2018, 12,205 in 2019, 6,324 in 2020 and 10,553 in the current year.

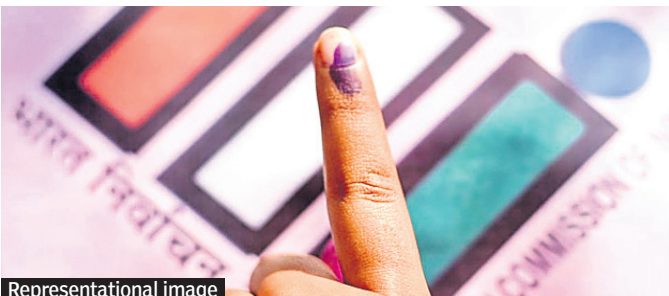
Man bids ₹44 lakh for post of village sarpanch

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bhopal, Dec 16: The schedule for the three-tier panchayat (Gram panchayat, Janpad panchayat and Zilla panchayat) elections in Madhya Pradesh was announced last week and the nomination process for the three-phase polls began December 13, but the people of a village in the state have reportedly already elected the new gram panchayat head (Sarpanch).

As per information, people of Bhatauli village in Ashok Nagar district, which falls under Gwalior division in Madhya Pradesh, have declared a new gram panchayat head on the basis of bidding. On Tuesday, people gathered at a temple located in Bhatauli village and an announcement was made that whoever announces the highest bid, will be elected the new sarpanch of the village.

Four persons participated in the bidding and each participant had to



Representational image

Voting for the Madhya Pradesh panchayat elections will be held in three phases between January and February

deposit Rs 5000 as security money. The bidding process began at Rs 21 lakh and ended at Rs 44 lakh.

The person who won the bidding was identified as Saubhag Singh Yadav and the villagers unanimously decided to elect him their new Sarpanch. As per the state election commission's schedule, the elections in Ashok Nagar district will be held in the third phase and for that the nomination process will begin January 7, after the nomination process for the first two phases is concluded.

After the bidding process was over, the villagers decided that no one would file the nomination for

the panchayat election against Saubhag Singh Yadav and he would be elected unopposed. Yadav has been asked to pay Rs 44 lakh by Wednesday evening and if he failed to do so, he will be replaced by the second highest bidder. As per information, the money will be spent on renovation of the temple.

An official in the Ashok Nagar district collector's office said that they have come to know about it through the news only but its authenticity was yet to be ascertained. A senior official in the Ashok Nagar zilla panchayat (district), talking to IANS said, "This is completely against the rules and the matter will be investigated. If such things were allowed, people will begin a new process to elect their representatives on the basis of paying money." Voting for the panchayat elections will be held January 6 for the first phase, January 28 for the second phase, and February 16 for the third phase from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m.

FOUNDATIONAL LITERACY INDEX

WB tops chart, Bihar at bottom in large states category

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 16: West Bengal topped the chart and Bihar languished at the bottom in the 'large states' category on the 'Index on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy' - an indicator of literacy among children below 10 years.

In the 'small states' category, Kerala grabbed the top spot and Jharkhand was adjudged the worst performer on the index.

There are four categories in which regions have been divided - large states, small states, Union Territories and North East.

The report on the 'Index on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy' was prepared by

'Institute for Competitiveness' and released by Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM) chairman Bibek Debroy.

It said the challenge of ensuring quality Foundational Literacy and Numeracy for all is daunting, yet not impossible to achieve.

"The top-scoring regions are Kerala (67.95) and West Bengal (58.95) in small and large states, respectively," the EAC-PM said in a statement.

Lakshadweep (52.69) and Mizoram (51.64) are top-scoring regions in the Union Territory and Northeast state category, respectively.

As far as worst performers are concerned, Ladakh has featured at the bottom in the list of UTs,



Representational image

while Arunachal Pradesh came last in the North East category. According to the statement, the

'Index on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy' is the first step in this direction, establishing an un-

In the 'small states' category, Kerala grabbed the top spot and Jharkhand was adjudged the worst performer on the index

derstanding of the overall state of Foundational Learning across children aged below ten years in Indian states and Union territories.

The Index includes five pillars comprising 41 indicators. The five pillars are -- educational infrastructure, access to education, basic health, learning outcomes

and governance.

The statement said out of the five pillars, it has been observed that states have performed particularly worse in governance. "More than 50 per cent of the states have scored below the national average, i.e. 28.05, the lowest across all pillars," it said. According to the statement, during the panel discussion organised on the occasion, Debroy said, "Education leads to positive externalities and the quality of Education imparted is important especially during the formative years." The present attainments in literacy and numeracy and the variations among states should be the focus for remedial action, he added.

international

of the day quote

The scope and scale of this destruction is almost beyond belief. I intend to do whatever it takes as long as it takes to support your state, your local leaders, as you recover and rebuild, and you will recover and rebuild

JOE BIDEN | PRESIDENT, US

Our nation is so grateful for you. We have not forgotten about you. We will not forget about you. And you will remain in our minds and our hearts as you continue to process, to heal and to grieve

VIVEK MURTHY | US SURGEON GENERAL

As far as we are concerned, India and Bangladesh are bound by ties of history, language, spirituality and culture. Our ties are unique and we don't compare our relationship with those that of other countries

HARSH YARDHAN SHRINGLA | FOREIGN SECRETARY, INDIA

SHORT TAKES

Typhoon Rai makes landfall

Manila: Thousands of people in the Philippines fled their homes and beachfront resorts as super typhoon Rai lashed the country Thursday, with a charity warning the storm could hit coastal communities "like a freight train". The powerful storm was packing maximum sustained winds of 185 kilometres (115 miles) an hour as it barrelled towards central and southern regions of the vast archipelago, the state weather agency said.

Mt Semeru erupts again

Jakarta: Indonesia's mount Semeru erupted twice Thursday, belching a massive column of ash into the sky followed by a flow of lava that sent hundreds of rescuers fleeing in panic. The highest mountain on the island of Java erupted earlier this month, killing at least 48 and leaving a dozen people missing. Rescuers were digging through the mud and volcanic debris when ash -- which reached 4.5 kilometres from the peak -- and lava flow from the latest twin eruptions forced them to suspend the mission.

22 trapped in flooded mine

Beijing: Twenty-two people were trapped when a coal mine was flooded in the Chinese city of Xiaoyi, as a result of illegal mining, local authorities said Thursday. The accident took place at around 11 pm Wednesday at a coal mine in Duxigou Village, Xinxinhuang Township in Shanxi province. Quoting officials, state-run Xinhua news agency said that an initial investigation showed that a total of 22 people were working under the ground at the time of accident. Rescue work is underway.

Israel to donate 1mn COVID vax

Jerusalem: The Israeli government Wednesday said it was donating 1 million coronavirus vaccines to the UN-backed COVAX programme. The Foreign Ministry said the AstraZeneca vaccines would be transferred in the coming weeks, a decision that was part of Israel's strengthening ties with the African countries. "I am delighted that Israel can contribute and be a partner in eradicating the pandemic around the world," said Foreign Minister Yair Lapid. The announcement said the vaccines would reach close to a quarter of African countries, though it did not provide a list.

'Omicron infects 70x faster, thrives in airways, not lungs'

The researchers from University of Hong Kong found that Omicron infects and multiplies 70 times faster than the Delta variant and original SARS-CoV-2 in human bronchus

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Beijing, Dec 16: The Omicron variant of coronavirus infects and multiplies 70 times faster than Delta and the original COVID-19 strain, but the severity of illness is likely to be much lower, according to a study.

The yet-to-be peer-reviewed study provides the first information on how the novel variant of concern infects human respiratory tract. The researchers from University of Hong Kong found that Omicron infects and multiplies 70 times faster than the Delta variant and original SARS-CoV-2 in human bronchus, which may explain why it may transmit faster between humans than previous variants.

A bronchus is a passage or airway in the lower respiratory tract that conducts air into the lungs.

The study also showed that the Omicron infection in the lung is significantly lower than the original SARS-CoV-2, which may indicate lower disease severity.

The researchers used ex-vivo cultures of the respiratory tract to understand why Omicron may differ in transmission and dis-

Oxford varsity to get Poonawala vaccine research facility

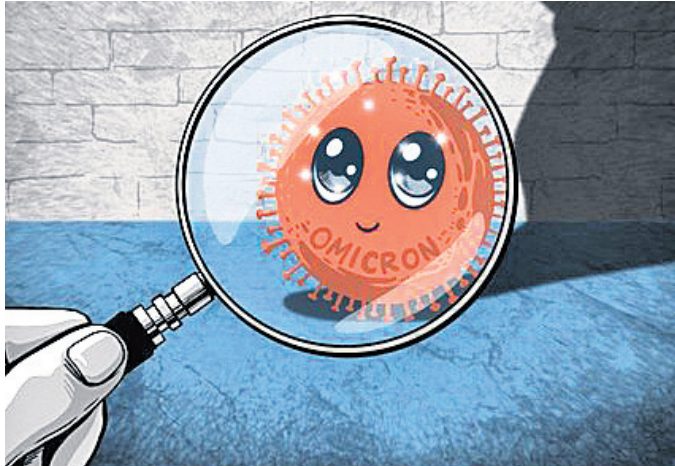
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, Dec 16: The University of Oxford has announced plans to establish a new Poonawalla Vaccines Research Building with a funding commitment of GBP 50 million from India's Serum Life Sciences. Serum Life Sciences is wholly-owned by the Poonawalla family, owners of the Adar Poonawalla-led Serum Institute of India, and the proposed research facility will focus on vaccinology, the university said Wednesday.

The facility will be established at the university's Old Road Campus, and will house over 300 research scientists. It is expected to provide the focus and scale for the university's major vaccine development programmes allowing a rapid, productive and timely expansion of this fast-growing translational area. "I am delighted that through this generous gift, we will be able to further our work on vaccines which have proven so critical to global health," Professor Louise Richardson, Oxford University VC. "The university has longstanding ties with the Poonawalla family and we were delighted to confer an honorary degree on Cyrus Poonawalla in Summer 2019 in recognition of his extraordinary work manufacturing inexpensive vaccines for the developing world," she said.

Dhaka, Dec 16: President Ram Nath Kovind Thursday attended the Victory Day Parade as the Guest of Honour here as Bangladesh marked 50 years of victory in the Liberation War against Pakistan by showcasing its military might which included spectacular aerobatics and display of defence acquisitions.

A 122-member strong tri-services contingent from India also took part in the parade watched by Bangladesh President M Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, as well as ministers, diplomats and other dignitaries at the National Parade Ground.



By infecting many more people, a very infectious virus may cause more severe disease and death even though the virus itself may be less pathogenic. Therefore, taken together with our recent studies showing that the Omicron variant can partially escape immunity from vaccines and past infection, the overall threat from Omicron variant is likely to be very significant

DR MICHAEL CHAN CHI-WAI | STUDY LEADER, HONG KONG UNIVERSITY

ease severity from other SARS-CoV-2 variants.

This method uses lung tissue removed for treatment of the lung, which is normally discarded, for investigating viral diseases of the respiratory tract.

Michael Chan Chi-wai, Associate Professor at University

Beijing Olympics used as political tool: China

CHINA URGES SUPPORT FROM JAPAN



AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE

Tokyo, Dec 16: China's envoy to Japan, Kong Xuanyou, Thursday said the upcoming Beijing Winter Olympics had been unfortunately "used as a political tool," and asked for Japan's support, while also warning Tokyo not to interfere on Taiwan.

Kong's speech came as members of Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) call for a diplomatic boycott of the Beijing Games in February. The United States and other nations have announced a diplomatic boycott of the Beijing Olympics due to what they say are human rights abuses in Hong Kong and China's Xinjiang region, but

Japan has yet to make a decision. Kishida earlier Thursday said he has no plan to attend the Winter Olympics at the moment, taking what appeared to be a slightly softer tone. "Unfortunately, there are people in Japan who have a biased view of China's political system ... and are spreading rumours about human rights in Xinjiang and Hong Kong," Kong said, adding that it appeared the Olympics were being used as a "political tool."

"Given that China supported Tokyo hosting the Olympics, I think Japan should have good intentions towards our Games."

Kong was harsher when discussing tensions over Chinese-claimed Taiwan, which have risen as President Xi Jinping seeks to assert his country's sovereignty claims against the democratically ruled island.

Former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said earlier this month that Japan and the United States could not stand by if China attacked Taiwan, and Beijing needed to understand that.

The comments sparked anger in Beijing, with China's foreign ministry summoning Japan's ambassador in Beijing for an "emergency meeting."

Democratic allies should strengthen cooperation when facing challenges such as swift changes in international affairs and expansion of authoritarianism

TSAI ING-WEN | PRESIDENT, TAIWAN

5 kids die as wind lifts bouncy castle in Australia school

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Sydney, Dec 16: Five children died and four others were in critical condition Thursday after falling from a bouncy castle that was lifted 10 metres into the air by a gust of wind at a school on Australia's island state of Tasmania.

The school was holding a celebration to mark the end of the school year. The children who died included two boys and two girls in year 6, which would make them 10 or 11 years old, said Tasmania police Commissioner Darren Hine. Police later Thursday confirmed a fifth child died in the hospital.

Five other children were being treated, including four in critical condition. Hine said an investigation is underway. Images published by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation showed police officers consoling each other as paramedics provided first aid to victims.

Parents arrived at the school gate to collect their children as helicopters ferried the injured to hospitals. Tasmania state Premier Peter Gutwein called the incident "simply inconceivable... I know this is a strong and caring community that will stand together and support one another."

Tasmania police commander Debbie Williams told reporters "several children fell from the jumping castle. It appears they may have fallen from a height of approximately 10 metres."



President Joe Biden speaks with Raylie Hall, 12, as he surveys storm damage from tornadoes and extreme weather in Dawson Springs, Kentucky
AP PHOTO

Online scammers targeted Indian media persons: NYT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New York, Dec 16: Several prominent female journalists and media personalities in India including ex-NDTV anchor Nidhi Razdan have been targeted by online scammers with promises of prestigious jobs at Harvard, the New York Times reported Thursday.

While the identity of the scammers remains a mystery, the incidents have raised questions about why Harvard — despite its reputation for fiercely protecting its brand — did not act to stop the scam, even after being explicitly warned about it by one of the victims, the Times said.

Another target was a spokes-

'VISIT SRI LANKA YEAR'

The Sri Lankan government is all set to declare 2022 as the 'Visit Sri Lanka Year' in line with the integrated five-year Global Communication Campaign (GCC), as its aims to attract 6 million tourists despite the challenges by the Covid-19 pandemic

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Washington, Dec 16: The Biden administration said Thursday it is imposing new sanctions on several Chinese biotech and surveillance companies and government entities for actions in Xinjiang province, the latest step against Beijing over human rights abuses of Uyghur Muslims in the country's western region.



The move will bar American companies from selling components to the entities without a license

The Commerce Department is targeting China's Academy of Military Medical Sciences and its 11 research institutes that focus on using biotechnology to support the Chinese military.

The move will bar American companies from selling components to the entities without a license. "The scientific pursuit of biotechnology and medical inno-

TAKING STOCK



President Joe Biden speaks with Raylie Hall, 12, as he surveys storm damage from tornadoes and extreme weather in Dawson Springs, Kentucky
AP PHOTO

Online scammers targeted Indian media persons: NYT

While the identity of the scammers remains a mystery, the incidents have raised questions about why Harvard did not act to stop the scam

woman for the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party Nighat Abbass. When the scammers pushed for her passport details and other personal information, she checked directly with one of the Harvard administrators included on the emails.

That administrator, Bailey Payne, a programme coordinator in the office of Harvard's vice

provost for international affairs, responded, saying the official invitation that appeared to have been sent from her Harvard. EU email address was fake. When Payne asked Abbass if she would like to share more information, Abbass sent in a trove - the phone number from the UAE, the emails, screenshots of the fake Harvard documents and hotel booking records. But it's not clear what action, if any, Harvard took, the Times said.

Payne did not respond to requests for comment. Jason Newton, a Harvard spokesman, declined to comment on what the university did with the information Abbass provided, the paper said.

The official, explaining the Commerce Department actions, noted that US intelligence has established that Beijing has set up a high tech surveillance system across Xinjiang that uses biometric facial recognition and has collected DNA samples from all residents, ages 12 to 65, in Xinjiang as part of a systematic effort to suppress Uyghurs.

The department, in a rule detailing its decision, said a review by multiple federal agencies had determined that the Chinese academy and research institutes "use biotechnology processes to support Chinese military end uses and end users, to include purported brain-control weaponry".

Kovind attends Victory Day Parade as B'desh marks 50 yrs

On this day in 1971, 93,000 Pakistani troops, surrendered to the Indian Army in Dhaka, and East Pakistan was declared as the newly liberated Bangladesh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dhaka, Dec 16: President Ram Nath Kovind Thursday attended the Victory Day Parade as the Guest of Honour here as Bangladesh marked 50 years of victory in the Liberation War against Pakistan by showcasing its military might which included spectacular aerobatics and display of defence acquisitions.

A 122-member strong tri-services contingent from India also took part in the parade watched by Bangladesh President M Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, as well as ministers, diplomats and other dignitaries at the National Parade Ground.



The Indian contingent drew loud cheers from the crowd as it marched past with the announcer ac-

knowledging India's contributions to Bangladesh's Liberation War of 1971.

The Indian contingent drew loud cheers from the crowd as it marched past with the announcer acknowledging India's contributions to Bangladesh's Liberation War of 1971

On the occasion of the Victory Day Parade, Wing Commander T Asha Jyothirmai of the Indian Air Force (IAF) carried out a joint skydiving demonstration along with skydivers of the Bangladesh Air Force here. Jyothirmai, a para-

trooper from the IAF, carried the Indian tricolour with her in that para jump as a mark of respect to the personnel of the Indian armed forces who sacrificed their lives during the Liberation War.

President Kovind, who is here on a maiden three-day State Visit, joined as the Guest of Honour at the National Parade Ground to mark the golden jubilee of the Victory Day of Bangladesh.

President Kovind and First Lady Savita Kovind were greeted by President Hamid and Prime Minister Hasina on their arrival at the venue.

"President Ram Nath Kovind attends Victory Day Parade at National Parade Ground in Dhaka.

A 122 member tri-services contingent from Indian Armed Forces also participated in the Victory Day celebrations," Rashtrapati Bhavan said in a tweet.

Kovind was the lone foreign head of state to join the celebrations.

President Hamid took the salute at the ceremony from a saluting dais while his Indian counterpart Kovind witnessed the parade along with Prime Minister Hasina.

Besides India, military contingents from Russia and Bhutan also joined the parade. They had their military bands of their own during the march-past. This was the first time when foreign troops participated in the Victory Day ceremony since Bangladesh's independence.

of the day quote

During April-Nov, 2021, power plants were not able to maintain sufficient stock as coal-based power generation in the country increased by about 16 per cent as compared to the corresponding period of the preceding year due to revival of economic activities

RK SINGH | POWER MINISTER

The launch of our branded stainless steel chequered sheet is another step towards bringing in quality consciousness for the end-customer. We are targeting annual sales of 40,000 tonne (of the product)

ABHYUDAY JINDAL | MD, JSL

Currently, we are studying because there are multiple factors...Like pricing, range, charging infrastructure. So we are looking at all the multiple angles and somewhere next year we will announce our EV strategy

HARDEEP SINGH BRAR | VP AND HEAD (SALES AND MARKETING), KIA INDIA

SHORT TAKES

ShareChat parent raises \$266 million

New Delhi: Mohalla Tech, the parent company of short video platform Moj and ShareChat, Thursday said it has raised \$266 million (about ₹2,028.3 crore) from Alkeon Capital and others, valuing the company at \$3.7 billion. The series G round also saw participation from new and existing investors including Temasek, Moore Strategic Ventures (MSV), Harbourvest and India Quotient, a statement said. This is the third round of funding for the startup in 2021.

Adda247 acquires StudyIQ for ₹150cr

New Delhi: Edtech firm Adda247 Thursday said it has acquired UPSC-focused edtech platform StudyIQ Education for about \$20 million (around ₹150 crore) in a cash and stock deal. StudyIQ education claims to have an organic subscriber base of over 11 million and gets close to 100 million views a month. "StudyIQ youtube channel is India's largest educational youtube channel in terms of monthly viewership, while it is the second largest in terms of subscribers' base after Wifistudy," said an official.

Britannia revamps Good Day brand

New Delhi: Leading food company Britannia Industries has revamped its largest selling biscuit brand Good Day and as part of that, revealed its new identity. Besides, Britannia is also expanding the product portfolio of its most-penetrated brand Good Day by adding three more variants in the premium segment, said its Managing Director Varun Berry. "Britannia will launch Good Day Harmony and two other variants in the premium segment, which is growing fast after the pandemic," he said.

Super Carry sales cross 1L milestone

Bhubaneswar: Maruti Suzuki Super Carry, the country's most powerful mini-truck has recently achieved the record milestone of 100,000 cumulative unit sales in just 5 years of its launch, according to company's press release. Available in both petrol and CNG option, Maruti Suzuki Super Carry was developed specifically for India and commercially launched in 2016. Super Carry is the only mini-truck in India that offers a 4-cylinder engine,



I think cryptocurrencies are a particular challenge for emerging markets. It seems to be more attractive to adopt cryptocurrencies and assets in emerging economies than in advanced economies

GITA GOPINATH | CHIEF ECONOMIST, IMF

BYJU'S IN TALKS TO GO PUBLIC

Edtech giant Byju's is in advanced discussions to go public through one of Churchill Capital's special-purpose acquisition companies (SPAC), sources said. The startup would raise a total of about \$4 billion and seek a valuation of about \$48 billion, sources added



Global debt reaches record \$226trn in 2020: IMF

AGENCIES

Washington, Dec 16: Global debt rose to a record \$226 trillion in 2020 as the world was hit by the raging Covid-19 pandemic and a deep recession, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) announced. Debt increases are particularly striking in advanced economies, where public debt rose from around 70 per cent of GDP in 2007 to 124 per cent of GDP in 2020. Meanwhile, private debt rose at a more moderate pace from 164 to

178 per cent of GDP in the same period, according to the IMF.

The IMF noted that advanced economies and China accounted for more than 90 per cent of the \$28 trillion debt surge in 2020. Egypt's gross public debt to GDP ratio stood at 91.4 percent in 2021, according to the IMF.

The IMF officials said that a crucial challenge for policymakers is to strike the right mix of fiscal and monetary policies in an environment of high debt and rising inflation, as the debt surge ampli-

COVID CRISIS



Global debt rose by 28 percentage points to 256 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2020, the largest one-year debt surge since World War II

VITOR GASPAR | DIRECTOR, IMF'S FISCAL AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT

fies vulnerabilities.

"The risks will be magnified if global interest rates rise faster than expected and growth falters. A significant tightening of

financial conditions would heighten the pressure on the most highly indebted governments, households, and firms," they said.

The IMF explained that emerging markets and low-income countries are facing elevated debt ratios driven by the large drop in nominal GDP in 2020. "In addition, the pandemic and the global financing divide demand strong, effective international cooperation and support to developing countries," they noted.

Ola raises \$500mln loan ahead of IPO

AGENCIES

Bangalore, Dec 16: Indian ride-hailing company Ola said Thursday it had raised \$500 million loan from international institutional investors, as the SoftBank backed start-up preps to make its stock market debut next year.

Ola, which has a majority share of India's ride-hailing market where it competes with Uber Technologies, has plans to raise up to \$1 billion through an initial public offering. Earlier this month, Ola Chief Executive Officer Bhavish Aggarwal said the company planned to go public in the first half of 2022.

"The proposed loan issuance got a staggering response from investors with interest and commitment of about \$1.5 billion," the Bengaluru-based company said.

Aggarwal also plans to list Ola's separate electric vehicle business in the future - a segment it has bet heavily on - and is currently building it out starting with electric scooters. Ola began deliveries of its electric scooters Dec 15.

HAL SIGNS ₹2400CR CONTRACT WITH BEL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, Dec 16: Hindustan Aeronautics Limited Thursday awarded a ₹2,400 crore contract to Bharat Electronics Limited for the manufacture and supply of 20 types of airborne electronic systems for the LCA Tejas Mk1A fighter aircraft programme.

"The order spanning five years from 2023 to 2028 involves supply of critical avionic Line Replaceable Units (LRUs) related to Digital Flight Control Computers, Air Data Computers, Weapon Computers, LRUs related to Radar Warning Receiver (RWR) and Head Up Display," a BEL statement said.

The LRUs have been indigenously designed and developed by Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA), DRDO Labs, Aeronautical Development Establishment (ADE), Combat Aircraft Systems Development and Integration Centre (CASDIC) and Central Scientific Instruments Organisation (CSIO).

According to HAL, "this is the biggest ever order that HAL has placed on any Indian company boosting 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' campaign."

SET TO SURPASS FY'20 RECORD

Apr-Oct iron ore output at 143 MT

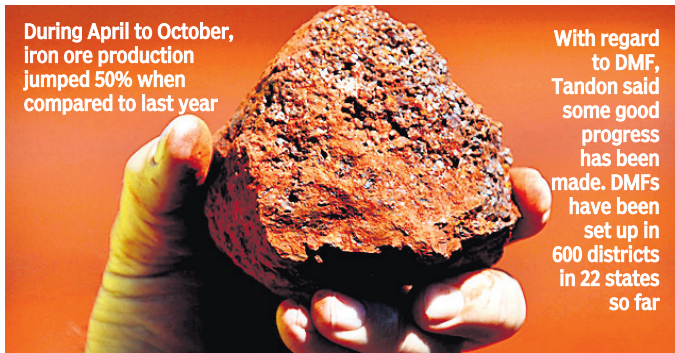
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 16: India's iron ore production has surged to 143 million tonne (MT) in the first seven months of the ongoing fiscal, and the country is all set to surpass the record production of 246 MT achieved in 2019-20, Mines Secretary Alok Tandon said Thursday.

"The production of another key mineral, bauxite, has also witnessed a year-on-year increase in the April-October period of 2021-22," Tandon said during the International Mining Summit with the theme "Towards a Responsible and Competitive Mining Industry" organised by industry body CIL.

"During April to October that is seven months of 2021-2022, iron ore production of 143 million tonne is not only 50 per cent jump from the production of 95.5 million tonne in the corresponding year; it is also well on its way to surpass the record production of 246 MT achieved in 2019-20," he said. Stating that the results of policy changes cannot be seen fully in a short span of time, he said, some early trends pertaining to mineral production are encouraging.

"The government has taken several measures, including legislative actions, to propel competitiveness in this sector and with the aim to increase its contribution to the national economy. Besides, several measures have been directed to-



INDIA IS A LEADING PRODUCER OF MINERALS SUCH AS IRON ORE, ZINC AND BAUXITE. YET THE MINING AND QUARRYING SECTOR CONTRIBUTES TO ABOUT TWO PER CENT OF THE COUNTRY'S GDP

wards the welfare of the people living around the mining areas and sustainability of the environment. With results beginning to show, I find the theme of this conference to be apt in this contextual frame," he said.

In order to boost the competitiveness of the Indian mining industry and to increase social responsiveness, several policy reforms have been brought out in the last few years primarily through the amendments in the MMDR Act.

While certain amendments to the MMDR Act were taken in 2015 and 2020, to meet the changing needs of the mineral sector, the amendment to the Act this year was more wholesome as it was in-

tended to provide a quick boost to mineral production and mineral availability and improve the ease of doing business.

In the context of strengthening the social trust the amendment act of 2015 provides for establishing District Mineral Foundation (DMF) by the state governments in the districts affected by mining operations to take care of people affected by mining related activities.

"The rules stipulate a payment of 30 per cent royalty towards DMF for mining leases granted prior to 2015 and 10 per cent of royalty for mining leases granted thereafter. The amount of money collected in DMF so far is about ₹55,000 crore," Tandon said.

NEW ARRIVALS

Benelli TRK 251 launched at ₹2.51 lakh



member of the TRK range and it has an 18-litre fuel tank resulting in lesser fuel stops and uninterrupted ride hours, the company said.

New Delhi: Superbike maker Benelli Thursday launched its all-new adventure tourer model, TRK 251 in India priced at ₹2.51 lakh (ex-showroom). The TRK 251 is powered by a 250cc, single-cylinder engine with a peak power of 25.8 PS and 21.1 Nm of peak torque, the company said in a statement. The bike is the newest

Kia unveils 'Carens', launch in Q1 of next yr

Gurugram: South Korean automaker Kia Thursday unveiled its all-new model 'Carens' for the Indian market. The model, which the company refers to as a recreational vehicle (RV), is slated for launch in the first quarter of next year. The Carens would be Kia's fourth product in the Indian market. The automaker already sells Seltos, Sonet, and Carnival in the domestic market. "We are confident that the Kia Carens will deliver meaningful experiences to modern families both in their daily and leisure life," Kia Corporation President and Chief Executive Officer Ho Sung Song said.



POST NEWS NETWORK

Paradip/Bhubaneswar, Dec 16: As a part of its commitment to boost socio-economy development of residents near its proposed project, leading steel producer JSW has announced a compensation package claiming that it is way above the policy provisions outlined in the Rehabilitation & Resettlement Policy of Odisha government.

The residents from the villages of Nuagaon, Gada Kujang & Dhinkia GP, for its Integrated Steel Plant (ISP) at Paradip, will be benefited from the compensations, said a company official.

"JSW has sustainability as a core value and in sync, we are stepping up CSR activities in our green-



field project site for the all-round development of the region," said Ranjan Nayak, COO, JSW Steel operations, Odisha. "We are taking up livelihood of the people from the project villages as a priority area and are coming up with a roadmap to address it," he added.

"For loss of betel vines, compensation of ₹17500 per decimal has been declared. This is way above the government provision of

₹6,000/- per decimal, charted out in the Govt. R&R policy. Additionally, a bonus of ₹50,000/- per betel vine, irrespective of size, provided it is demolished within a fortnight of announcement in the said village, has been declared," as per company statement.

"For wider and inclusive coverage all the ration card holders in the eight land losing villages- namely Polang, Bayanalakandha, Jatadhara,

Nuagaon, Gobindpur, Patana, Dhinkia and Mahala; who have not received betel vine compensation or have not received any labour compensation earlier from erstwhile projects, betel vine labour compensation of ₹88,000 - ₹44,000/- as one-time financial assistance after demolition of all betel vines and ₹44,000/- balance as additional bonus after completion of boundary wall of the entire project area, has been offered," the statement added.

The company also declared that for the villages from where betel vines have already been removed, eligible families will be paid ₹44,000 after the demarcation of the boundary wall in the said village and rest 44,000 after the boundary construction for the project is complete.

Spl R&R compensation for JSW ISP site

The company has offered ₹17,500 per decimal compensation for betel vine owners and ₹50,000 additional bonus for people affected by the project

EV mkt to see investment of ₹94K cr in next 5 years: Report

THE CONSULTANT ESTIMATED THAT INDIA WILL NEED ABOUT 26,800 PUBLIC CHARGING SPOTS BY 2025, REQUIRING SPACE OF ABOUT 13.5 MILLION SQUARE FEET

AGENCIES

Mumbai, Dec 16: Electric vehicle market is likely to attract investments of ₹94,000 crore over the

next five years and is expected to generate business opportunities in the real estate sector, according to a joint report by Colliers India and Indospace.

The report 'Electric Mobility in Full Gear' mentioned that the electric vehicle (EV) industry in India is currently at a nascent stage but it is likely to grow, backed by government initiatives and a move towards recognising climate change.

"India is taking a step towards sustainability and has vowed to cut its carbon emissions. At the recently concluded CoP26 summit, India pledged to reach net-zero carbon emissions by 2070. In India, the transport sector is currently the third-largest emitter of CO2. This is leading to increased thrust on EVs

'ELECTRIC MOBILITY IN FULL GEAR'

Significant land around 1300 acres will be required pan-India to set up 110 GWh battery manufacturing capacity by 2030



Currently, 15 Indian states have either approved or notified EV policies, with six more states in the draft stage

Many developers have already started to make provision of charging stations for electric vehicles in their projects

in India," it said.

Property consultant Colliers estimated that over the next five years, the EV space in India is likely to see investments of ₹94,000 crore (\$12.6 billion) across the value

chain. There is ample opportunity for landlords across the spectrum from manufacturing to charging infrastructure, it said.

"Landlords can outsource dedicated charging stations to charg-

ing service providers at busy locations. They can also enter into a revenue share model with charging service providers. There is also ample scope for developers to develop retail and recreation spaces in proximity to charging stations," the report said.

Currently, 15 Indian states have either approved or notified EV policies, with six more states in the draft stage. States like Delhi, Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Meghalaya are focusing on demand incentives, whereas southern states and Uttar Pradesh are focusing on manufacturer-based incentives.

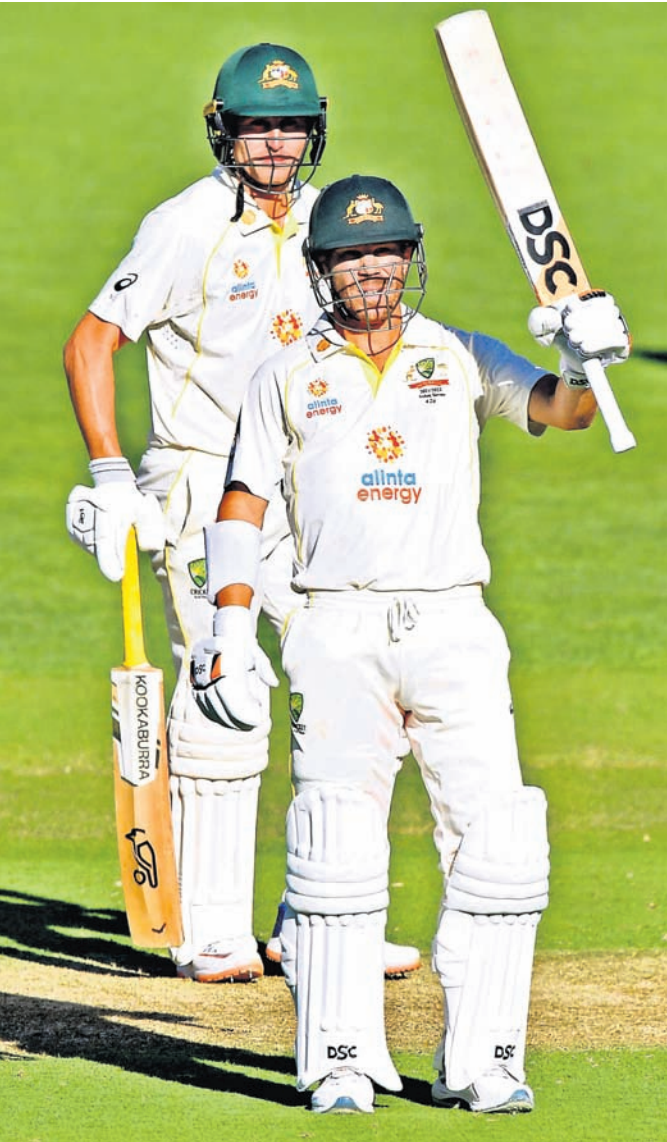
States like Maharashtra, Delhi and Gujarat having strong demand-side incentives should have

provisions to set up industrial parks/clusters for EV or manufacturing of ancillary components with plug-and-play, the consultant advised.

"Real estate players can tap into the opportunity for manufacturing, warehousing, charging stations, and dealerships of EVs," Colliers India Chief Executive Officer Ramesh Nair said.

Mumbai-based Kalpataru is already offering EV-ready parking in its upcoming projects. "To enable parents' peace of mind and security of very young children who are out playing on their own," Kalpataru is working with new technologies that enable effective remote parental supervision and control.

UNFORTUNATE WARNER, LUCKY LABUSCHAGNE HELP SMITH-LED SIDE REACH 221/2 AT STUMPS ON THE OPENING DAY OF THE SECOND ASHES TEST IN ADELAIDE



ON A ROLL: David Warner raises his bat after reaching his half century, while Marnus Labuschagne looks on in Adelaide

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Adelaide, Dec 16: Australia shrugged off the late withdrawal of new skipper Pat Cummins because of coronavirus concerns to dominate England on the opening day of the second Ashes test and reach 221/2 at stumps.

Marnus Labuschagne (95 batting, 275b, 7x4) was dropped twice but remained unbeaten at stumps Thursday after sharing partnerships of 172 with David Warner (95, 167b, 11x4) and 45 with Steve Smith (18 batting).

Smith returned to the Australian captaincy for the first time since the 2018 sandpaper scandal after Cummins was ruled out. He was

deemed to be a close contact of a positive COVID-19 case when he dined at a restaurant on the eve of the match.

Smith won the toss and just about everything else went Australia's way to start the day-night test. He was unbeaten after waiting most of the day to bat, with Australia losing just two wickets despite an England attack bolstered by the return of Jimmy Anderson and Stuart Broad (1/34).

Wicketkeeper Jos Buttler took a brilliant catch in the first hour to dismiss opener Marcus Harris (3) but then dropped Labuschagne twice — once down leg-side when he was on 21 and the other when he fumbled a regulation chance

AUSTRALIA IN FIRM CONTROL

off Anderson's bowling with the second new ball when the Australian No.3 was on 95.

Veteran pacemen Anderson and Broad were recalled after missing the series opener and had the batters in trouble early, Australia surviving three reviews in the first hour and Warner taking 20 deliveries to get off the mark.

The Australians grafted through 25 overs in the first session to be 54/1 and added 84 runs in 28 overs in the middle session to reach the second interval at 129/1.

Warner and Labuschagne continued into the night session and posted their sixth century partnership, and their second in as many Tests after their 156 at the Gabba last week.

But after doing all the hard work early, Warner hit a short, wide ball from Ben Stokes (1/50) directly to Broad in the covers and his 167-ball innings ended on 95 — one better than his innings in Australia's nine-wicket win in the first Test last week.

It was a reward for Stokes, who should have had a wicket in the 35th over when Labuschagne gloved a chance down the leg side but Buttler couldn't complete the catch.

Most of the drama Thursday

happened pre-match. Cricket Australia revealed only three hours before the coin toss that Cummins was ruled out because he was exposed to a person with COVID-19 in an Adelaide restaurant Wednesday night.

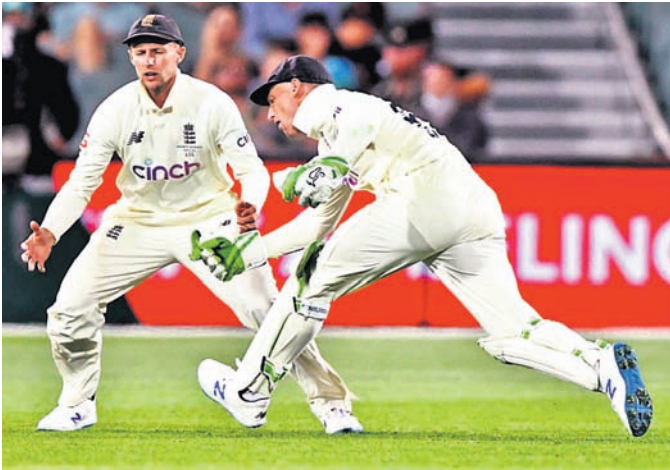
He was deemed a close contact by the state's health authorities and ordered to isolate for seven days. Cummins has already returned a negative test for COVID-19. Smith became the third Australia captain in three Tests, Tim Paine, who replaced Smith as Test captain after the sandpaper scandal in South Africa, quit last month after reports emerged he'd been investigated four years ago for sending an inappropriate text to a work colleague.

He was replaced by Cummins, with Smith as vice-captain for the series-opening win in Brisbane. Now Smith is back.

Cricket Australia chief executive Nick Hockley said Cummins hadn't breached any protocols by dining out and was unlucky to miss the game.

BRIEF SCORES

Australia 221/2 (Marnus Labuschagne 95 batting, David Warner 95; Stuart Broad 1/34) v England. Match to continue.



CHANCE GOES BEGGING: Jos Buttler drops a sitter missing a chance to dismiss Labuschagne, while England skipper Joe Root wears a dejected look, Thursday

BCCI to 'deal with' Kohli's bombshell



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Dec 16: A day after India Test captain Virat Kohli triggered a storm by publicly contradicting him, BCCI president Sourav Ganguly refused to comment on the matter, saying the Board will deal with it.

Kohli, during his pre-departure press conference ahead of the tour of South Africa, said that he was never asked to stay on as T20 skipper when he made his intent clear on relinquishing the post.

This was in complete contrast to Ganguly's assertion a few days back that Kohli had been requested to not quit the position.

"No statements, no press conference. We will deal with it, leave it to (the) BCCI," Ganguly told local mediapersons Thursday.

There was talk of BCCI asking chairman of selectors Chetan Sharma to address the media after Kohli's explosive press conference but the Board eventually refrained

from making any counter statements.

Kohli's comments Wednesday brought to fore the underlying tension in his equation with the administrators. "Whatever was said about the

communication that happened about the decision that was made was inaccurate," Kohli had said with obvious reference to Ganguly's statement.

"When I left the T20 captaincy, I had first approached BCCI and intimated them of my decision and laid down my point of view in front of them (office bearers)."

"I gave the reasons why I wanted to quit T20 captaincy and my view point was received very nicely. There was no offence, no hesitation, no hesitation and not for once was I told that 'you should not leave T20 captaincy'," he had asserted.

Earlier, Ganguly, in an interview to this agency, said that he had spoken to Kohli and told him that two captains in the white ball format was not something that the selectors wanted as there would be "too much of leadership."

KAPIL SLAMS VIRAT

NEW DELHI: World Cup-winning former India skipper Kapil Dev feels Virat Kohli's statements that exposed his differences with the BCCI on the issue of captaincy were ill-timed as they created an unsavoury controversy just ahead of a crucial tour to South Africa. "It is not good to point fingers on anybody at this point in time. The South Africa tour is coming and please pay attention to the tour," Kapil told 'ABP News' when asked about Kohli's remarks. "I would say Board president is Board president but yes the Indian cricket team

captain is also a big thing. But talking badly about each other in public, I don't think it is a good thing, whether it is Sourav or Kohli." The 62-year-old, who led India to the 1983 World Cup title, urged Kohli to take control of the situation and think about the country. "Aap situation ko control kijiye, behtar ye hai ki aap desh ke baare mein sochiye (Please control the situation and it's better to think about the country now)," said Kapil. "Jo galat hai woh kal pata chal hi jayega but I don't think it is right to stoke a controversy before a tour," he opined.

Team India land in SA Sindhu sets up quarters date with Tai Tzu

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Johannesburg, Dec 16: The Indian cricket team, led by skipper Virat Kohli, landed here Thursday for the three-match Test series against South Africa, beginning December 26 at Centurion.

"Touchdown South Africa," the BCCI posted on its official Twitter handle along with pictures of team members, including Test specialist Cheteshwar Pujara, Shardul Thakur and Shreyas Iyer among others.

The Kohli-led Test side had departed from Mumbai for the tour that also includes three ODIs in January. Given the threat posed by the new COVID-19 variant Omicron, the tour's T20 matches have been postponed for now and the two teams will stay in a bio-bubble for the duration of the series.

Star opener and newly-appointed white ball captain Rohit Sharma has been ruled out after sustaining a left hamstring injury during a training session in Mumbai. He was replaced by talented Gujarat opener



Head coach Rahul Dravid looks at his phone after arriving in South Africa

Priyank Panchal.

The side's build-up to the series has been marred by controversies surrounding captaincy and the issue snowballed into a major controversy Wednesday when Kohli said that the Board's assertion of trying to stop him from giving up T20 captaincy was "inaccurate."

He stepped down as T20 captain after the disastrous World Cup

campaign in the UAE and was subsequently removed as ODI captain earlier this month.

While the series-opener will be hosted by Centurion, the other two Tests will be played at Johannesburg and Cape Town respectively.

The Test team's vice captain is yet to be announced after Rohit's injury. He had replaced a woefully out of form Ajinkya Rahane.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Huelva (Spain), Dec 16: Defending champion PV Sindhu stormed into the women's singles quarterfinals of the BWF World Championships with a straight-game win over Pornpawee Chochuwong of Thailand here Thursday.

The World No.7 Indian defeated her Thai opponent, ranked three places below her, 21-14, 21-18 in the pre-quarterfinal match that lasted 48 minutes. With the win, Sindhu, seeded sixth in the showpiece tournament, extended her head-to-head record against Chochuwong to 5-3.

Sindhu also avenged her twin loss to Chochuwong this season — group match of BWF World Tour Finals earlier this month and All England Championships in March.

The double Olympic medallist Sindhu faces top seed and World No.1 Tai Tzu Ying of Chinese Taipei, who beat Kirsty Gilmour of Scotland 21-10, 19-21, 21-11, in the quarterfinals.

Indians, however, suffered defeats in both the women's and men's



doubles in the pre-quarterfinals. The women's doubles pair of Ashwini Ponnappa and N Sikki Reddy lost 13-21, 15-21 to the Thai duo of Jongkolphan Kititharakul and Rawinda Prajongjai.

The men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty suffered a 20-22, 21-18, 15-21 defeat to Ong Yew Sin and Teo Ee Yi of Malaysia.

Sindhu took an early 5-1 lead but Chochuwong rallied to narrow the gap to 5-4 and then to 10-9. The Indian zoomed ahead from there on as she made it 15-10 and then 19-11 to pocket the first game.

The second game was a tighter affair though Sindhu began on the front foot with a 3-0 lead. Sindhu led 11-6 at the change of ends and the second half saw some long rallies with the Thai player winning a few of them.

Sindhu was leading 16-10 but Chochuwong made a comeback of sort as she reduced the gap to 18-15 and then to 19-18. Sindhu won a crucial point after a long rally to make it 20-18 before winning the second game and the match.

Team Mercedes withdraw appeal against FIA

AGENCIES

London, Dec 16: Mercedes have confirmed they are withdrawing their protest over Max Verstappen's controversial drivers' championship victory at the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix.

The Dutchman passed Mercedes' Lewis Hamilton on the final lap of the last race of the season to snatch the crown from under the Brit's nose following a controversial period of running under the safety car.

In fury, Mercedes had lodged an appeal over the result, but have now decided against the procedure following talks with the FIA — the governing body of F1.

The 'Sportsmail' had revealed Wednesday that Hamilton had told the team he did not want to win what would have been a record eighth World Championship in court.

Hamilton had been set to win comfortably at the Yas Marina circuit before Nicholas Latifi's



DEFINING MOMENT: Max Verstappen (R) overtakes Lewis Hamilton in the controversial final lap of the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix, last Sunday

Williams crashed with just a few laps to go.

This enabled Red Bull to pit for fresher tyres, as well as close a gap to Hamilton under the safety car that was brought out following the crash and prevents overtaking while it is on the circuit slowing down all the drivers.

However, on the penultimate lap there was a unique occurrence when race director Michael Masi allowed only the lapped drivers between Hamilton and Verstappen to unlap themselves instead of the whole field of lapped cars. The process was rushed to ensure a final lap dash for the flag and ul-

timately the title would take place between the rivals who went into the race level on points.

In this scenario, Hamilton was a sitting duck with much older tyres allowing Verstappen to make an easy pass on the final lap to deny the Mercedes driver a title which would have taken him clear of Michael Schumacher's record of seven championships.

In fury Mercedes launched two post-race inquiries over separate incidents concerning the use of the safety car that were thrown out by the race stewards, but were considering their right to appeal.

Mercedes though have since backed down and confirmed their appeal withdrawal with a post on Twitter, reading: "We left Abu Dhabi in disbelief of what we had just witnessed. Of course it's part of the game to lose a race, but it's something different when you lose faith in racing."

"We believe that every compe-

tition should be won on merit. In the race on Sunday many felt, us included, that the way things unfolded was not right. The reason we protested the race result on Sunday was because the Safety Car regulations were applied in a new way that affected the race result.

"We appealed in the interest of sporting fairness, and we have since been in a constructive dialogue with the FIA and F1 to create clarity for the future, so that all the competitors know the rules under which they are racing, and how they will be enforced."

"Thus, we welcome the decision by the FIA to install a commission to thoroughly analyse what happened in Abu Dhabi and to improve the robustness of the rules, governance and decision making of F1. We also welcome that they have invited the teams and drivers to take part. We will hold the FIA accountable for this process and we hereby withdraw our appeal."

YOUNG NATIONAL LEVEL SHOOTER FOUND HANGING

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi/Howrah, Dec 16: A young national level shooter Konica Layak was found hanging at her hostel in Bally in Howrah district, police said. According to Howrah Police sources, a suicide note was found with her where she blamed "depression" as the reason for taking the extreme step. The incident happened Wednesday.

"She was depressed for not getting chances, she wrote in the note," said a police official, adding that the 26-year-old girl was due to get married in February. This is the fourth such case in recent times in the shooting fraternity.

The shooter, who had won a few medals at the state level, was training along with Olympian and Arjuna Awardee Joydeep Karmakar in Kolkata. Police have started investigations into the death of the shooter who was from Dhanbad in Jharkhand.

The National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) is aware of the shocking incident. Layak had also won a gold and silver at the Jharkhand State Rifle Championship.

Earlier this year, Konica was gifted a German-manufactured rifle by actor Sonu Sood after he was briefed about her struggles.

She was training at Karmakar's academy for a nominal fee. Her family members are learned to have reached Kolkata.

This is the fourth case of death by suicide in recent months, in the shooting fraternity, raising serious questions. Recently, young pistol shooter Khushpreet Kaur Sandhu, who had made her junior India debut at the last World Championship in Lima, committed suicide after registering low scores at the Nationals.

Before that, two more shooters — Hunardeep Singh Sohal and Namanveer Singh Brar — also took the extreme step.