



## SUSH'S ASSERTION

Actor Sushmita Sen feels this is the best time for creative people to push the boundaries

LEISURE P2



## FRESH CURBS IN EUROPE

Nations across Europe are moving to reimpose tougher measures to stem a new wave of Covid-19 infections amid Omicron surge

INTERNATIONAL P10



## NEW RESPONSIBILITY

KL Rahul has been named the deputy of skipper Virat Kohli for the Test series against South Africa

SPORTS P12

## TYPHOON FURY



Residents carry what's left of their belongings as they walk past a damaged boat due to Typhoon Rai in Surigao city of central Philippines



Our election campaign has started. I-T has just raided Opposition leaders

## State braces for likely third wave

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 18:** Amid rising Omicron cases in the country, the Odisha government has geared up its preparedness to fight against a possible third wave of Covid-19, a senior Health department official said.

Odisha has not recorded any case of the new coronavirus variant so far, but neighbouring Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal have reported such infections. The state has arranged for an adequate number of hospital beds, medical oxygen and medicines to deal with any emergency, Public Health Director Niranjan Mishra said.

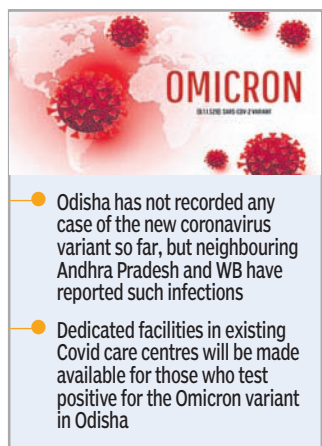
"No one can rule out the possibility of the third wave of Covid-19 with increasing Omicron cases. We are well prepared to tackle the situation," the official said.

Samples of those who are returning from countries where the new strain of coronavirus has been detected are being tested and they are being kept in isolation, he said.

"Their samples are also being re-tested after seven days. Samples of Covid-infected passengers are being sent for genome sequencing to ascertain whether they contracted the Omicron variant, which has been classified as a highly transmissible virus of concern," he said.

Replying to a question about two returnees from Nigeria, Mishra said, "The Cuttack administration has been asked to collect their samples and send them to laboratories for genome sequencing." They have been kept in isolation as per Covid-19 protocols.

Mishra said dedicated facilities in existing Covid care centres will be made available for those who test positive for the Omicron variant in



Odisha and they will not be allowed to go for home quarantine. "Omicron-infected patients will be isolated in institutional quarantine centres. Special measures will be taken to ensure that these patients do not come in contact with others at designated health facilities," he said.

India's Omicron Covid count rose to 126 Saturday after Karnataka and Kerala reported six and four cases respectively, while three more persons in Maharashtra also tested positive for the variant.

Odisha Family Welfare Director and Nodal Officer for Immunisation Bijay Panigrahi urged all eligible beneficiaries to take the second dose of Covid vaccines.

The administration has so far inoculated over 2.86 crore people, and 1.85 crore of them have received both doses of vaccines. Odisha's Covid-19 tally rose to 10,52,641 Saturday as 169 more people tested positive for the infection.

One fresh fatality pushed the coronavirus death toll to 8,442, the Health department official said.

## POLYGRAPH TEST LIKELY IN SANJAY AIDE DEATH

**Puri:** Additional Director General of Police, Crime Branch, Sanjeeb Panda Saturday visited Puri and reviewed the progress of the probe into mysterious death of Chittaranjan Palai, a close aide of State Planning Board Deputy Chairman Sanjay Das Burma. Panda also visited the spot from where Palai's body was found December 13. Puri SP Kanwar Vishal Singh, a four-member team of the CB and officials of a forensic team accompanied Panda to the spot at Gadamrugasira. The CB team has recorded the statements of several persons whose involvement is suspected in the incident. The team also interrogated six persons and detained Palai's friend Jagannath Sarangi. "If required, we will conduct lie detection tests on some people," said Panda. However, he did not clarify whether the CB has collected postmortem and viscera reports.

## O-Hub to propel startup growth

The state incubation hub aims to mobilise startup investments to the tune of ₹100 crore per year through venture capitalists, angel networks, HNIs & state and Central depts or PSUs

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 18:** Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Saturday inaugurated O-Hub, a flagship initiative of state government, to support startup formation and the subsequent scale-up.

The state supported incubation hub is located in the special economic zone at Patia here and offers 1,50,000 square feet area with state-of-the-art facility, plug-n-play infrastructure to support startup activities within the state.

This initiative would provide a platform for innovators and entrepreneurs to develop products or services, establish formal businesses and interact with stakeholders of the ecosystem.

Inaugurating the world-class incubation centre, the Chief Minister said, "O-Hub will be the first point to identify the best in the industry for co-creation & development of business with their new ideas and it will be a conglomerate for business houses & innovation."

He said now the innovators, mentors, corporate partners, ecosystem enablers and facilitators—all of them will work under one roof.

Patnaik also said that O-Hub will facilitate 200 startups every year in diverse sectors like healthcare, renewable energy, ICT, artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, augmented reality/virtual



Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik inaugurating O-Hub (far right) in Bhubaneswar, Saturday, as Secretary to CM (ST) VK Pandian (left) looks on

reality, internet of things, handlooms and handicrafts, agri-tech and many more.

Expressing happiness over creation of more than 1,200 startups under Odisha Startup Policy 2016 that have generated 10,000 employment opportunities in the state so far, Patnaik expressed confidence that the state will achieve the goal of 5,000 startups by 2025.

O-Hub will be a propellant to foster a spirit of entrepreneurship by providing end-to-end assistance to a startup during their startup journey, he stated.

The Chief Minister said that Startup Movement in Odisha is growing every day and Startup Odisha has been a catalyst to this movement, driving them by energy, enterprise and innovation.

The state has proposed in the new draft policy 2021 to reach out to the young minds in school by adding entrepreneurship as a part

## FILLIP TO INDUSTRY

- O-Hub will facilitate 200 startups every year with a target of achieving 5,000 startups by 2025
- New Startup Policy 2021 to include entrepreneurship in school curriculum
- More than 1,200 startups under Odisha Startup Policy 2016 have so far been created in the state, generating 10,000 employment opportunities

of the school curriculum, he announced.

Patnaik further said that the narrative of Odisha is changing and progressing towards a new world of ideas, innovations and a budding entrepreneurial community.

Speaking on the occasion, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Minister Dibya Shankar

Mishra applauded the state's initiatives towards entrepreneurs and how Start-up Odisha has been pivotal in nurturing grassroots innovations and aiding them to be a scalable business.

The state incubation hub aims to mobilise start-up investments to the tune of ₹100 crore per year through venture capitalists, angel networks, high net-worth individuals (HNIs), state and Central government departments/agencies/PSUs.

Odisha Skill Development Authority chairman Subrato Bagchi said that O-Hub is a great platform to celebrate startups and provide an investor ecosystem in the state.

Principal Advisor to Chief Minister Asit Tripathy elucidated about how O-Hub would bring the startup community together by providing a common platform. The Chief Minister also released a coffee table book on Startup Odisha.

## Mahanadi tribunal seeks witness list

POST NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi, Dec 18:** The Mahanadi Water Dispute Tribunal (MWDT) Saturday directed both Odisha and Chhattisgarh to submit list of witnesses in connection with water dispute within two weeks.

A three-judge bench of the tribunal headed by Supreme Court judge Justice AM Khanwilkar and comprising Justices Indermeet Kaur and Rabi Ranjan also asked both the states to file affidavits of witnesses in the Mahanadi river water dispute.

The tribunal posted the matter for hearing to February 5, 2022. The written order of the tribu-



nal is awaited.

Earlier, October 23, Odisha and Chhattisgarh had filed applications seeking coercive action and summoning of Central agencies which, despite repeated requests, have not provided the documents related to Mahanadi river basin

sought by both the riparian states. The tribunal had asked the Central agencies to supply documents required by both the states.

Odisha and Chhattisgarh have filed petitions in the MWDT in respect to sharing of Mahanadi river water.

## Man lynched over sacrilege bid at Golden Temple

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Amritsar, Dec 18:** A man hailing from Uttar Pradesh was beaten to death after he allegedly attempted to commit 'sacrilege' inside the sanctum sanctorum of the Golden Temple in Amritsar Saturday evening.

The incident drew sharp reactions from political leaders, with Punjab CM Charanjit Singh Channi ordering a probe into it.

The incident took place when the man jumped golden grills inside the sanctum sanctorum, picked a sword and reached near the place where a Sikh priest was reciting the holy Guru Granth Sahib. The man was caught by Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) task force members.

When he was being taken to the SGPC office, angry crowd thrashed him badly that later led to his death.

Deputy Commissioner of Police PS Bhandal said the man, hailing from UP, could be around 25 to 30 years of age and his antecedents are being verified. All CCTV cameras are being checked to know when he entered the Golden Temple and how many people were with him.

After the incident, a large number of Sikh devotees and various Sikh outfits slammed the SGPC for its laxity. A heavy police force has been deployed around the SGPC complex at Teja Singh Samundri Hall to maintain law and order.

Several political leaders condemned the alleged sacrilege attempt at the temple. Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi ordered a probe into the matter.

## India successfully tests 'Agni P'



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Balalore, Dec 18:** India Saturday successfully tested the new generation nuclear-capable ballistic missile 'Agni P' from Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Island off the Odisha coast, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) said.

The 'Agni P' is a two-stage canisterised solid propellant ballistic missile with dual redundant navigation and guidance system, it said. The test was conducted at 11.06 am.

"Various telemetry, radar, electro-optical stations and downrange ships positioned along the eastern coast tracked and monitored the missile trajectory and parameters. The missile followed textbook trajectory, meeting all mission objectives with a high level of accuracy," the DRDO said in a statement.

This second flight-test has proven the reliable performance of all the advanced technologies integrated into the system, it said. The surface-to-surface ballistic missile has a range of 1,000 to 2,000 km.

## Myanmar civilians prepare for battle in jungle camp

The new recruits feel that taking up arms is the only way as mass demonstrations in the wake of the coup failed to deter their new rulers, who waged a violent crackdown on the protesters

REUTERS

for homemade bombs as they prepare to battle the army behind the February 1 coup.

Reuters has taken rare footage of young men and women who said they left jobs in the city to become guerrilla fighters, swapping branded t-shirts and colourful dresses for army fatigues.

The pictures and video were taken in September.

A spokesperson for Myanmar's military government did not respond to a request for comment about the group and other civil defence forces around the country.

Some recruits said they took up arms because mass demonstrations in the wake of the coup failed to deter their new rulers, who waged a violent crackdown on protesters.

"Taking up arms is the only op-



Members of the People's Defence Force gather at a training camp

Hundreds of similar resistance groups have popped up across the country, a loose coalition of anti-coup armed rebels calling themselves People's Defence Forces

tion for us," said a 34-year-old former fitness trainer, who did not want his name to be used.

Tattooed across his back were the words "Freedom to Lead" and the face of Myanmar's ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi, detained during the coup and convicted this month of incitement and breaching coronavirus restrictions.

The ruling drew international

condemnation. The junta said it showed that none was above the law and that the judicial system "has no partiality".

Training the civilians is the Karen National Union (KNU), one of the country's largest ethnic armed groups who expressed solidarity with the protesters and allowed thousands to seek shelter in their territories. The KNU did not

respond to requests for comment.

Hundreds of similar resistance groups have popped up across the country, a loose coalition of anti-coup armed rebels calling themselves People's Defence Forces.

One training organiser, a former student activist, said there were more than 100 young civilians in his group training to fight, with new recruits arriving regularly. Reuters could not independently confirm this. In the evenings would be fighters sit around campfires playing guitars and violins - remnants of past lives.

The former trainer, shorn of the ponytail he wore when he arrived at the camp, said he feared combat with a 3,00,000-strong military. But, he added, "Fighting back was the only way. I want to be proud of my death protecting my people."

WEATHER		BHUB	CTK
TEMP	MAX	26.6°C	26.8°C
	MIN	13.0°C	13.0°C
Humidity		71%	73%
Rainfall		Nil	Nil
Forecast		Mainly clear sky	





## BLANCHETT TO GET FRENCH CINEMA'S TOP HONOUR

Oscar winner Cate Blanchett will be felicitated with French cinema's top honour, the Cesar d'Honneur. The announcement was made by the French Film Academy Friday in a statement posted on its official website, as per *The Hollywood Reporter*.

## CONNERY'S GRANDDAUGHTER BLASTS EMILY RATAJKOWSKI

Sir Sean Connery's granddaughter Saskia Connery has blasted model Emily Ratajkowski for promoting an unhealthy body image after she shared a picture of her extremely taut tummy on social media.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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#### ARIES

Today, you may get to share your ideas and opinions with like-minded people. Ganesh says you may finally have a heart-to-heart chat with your beloved, and express your deep commitment. You may even talk of your long cherished dreams.

#### TAURUS

Logic may be your forte today, but in the game of life, sometimes the heart wins and sometimes the head. Your analytical skills will help you understand things better, in turn, making you wiser. You may feel an urge to spend on music cassettes, CDs and electronic gadgets.

#### GEMINI

You will witness a marked improvement in your emotional quotient, says Ganesh. This change may either come through watching a film, listening to a song or just a simple insight. At the workplace, people will be lavishing praise on you for your excellent performance.

#### CANCER

There is a fat chance that you will take pleasure in the company of your close friends and relatives, predicts Ganesh. You may have an awesome time with your mate. There may be a few minor problems here and there, but your family will rally behind you and will help you in solving your problems.

#### LEO

It may be that the best daffodils bloom early in the morning, but good ideas can come any time of the day, says Ganesh. So spruce up your management skills, as you shall need them to help organise and cash in on the multitude of ideas that will bombard you today. Remember, says Ganesh, a good idea can change your life, just the way a good poem can help you win a wife! So, if it is some love that you are fishing for, then express yourself without inhibitions today.

#### VIRGO

Take a little break today, and spend some time looking within. At your office there may be some bitter confrontations, so Ganesh advises you to be very careful and try to prevent things from getting too difficult. In matters of love, a new romance may develop. Ganesh says you may enjoy a peaceful evening with friends.

#### LIBRA

Some days you get the carrot, while on others, it is the stick! Today is going to be one of those 'stick' days when it comes to dealing with your seniors, foresees Ganesh. It would be wise to delay auction bids or sealed tenders. Sometimes, waiting patiently is the best policy, especially if you are a job aspirant. Do not expect immediate success. Take abundant precautions in all matters today, warns Ganesh.

#### SCORPIO

There is a big black hole in your pocket, and it's high time you looked for remedies there. Loved ones will make use of your money as sultan cream - liberally and carelessly. You are most likely to burn the holes larger by spending lavishly, especially to impress a member of the opposite sex. Ganesh advises you to keep in mind that time is money and time never returns.

#### SAGITTARIUS

A la a phoenix from the ashes, find yourself reborn as the perfect family person. You are bound to shower love and care on your betrothed. Children, too, will receive your share of love, and they will love it. Enjoy spending quality time with your loved one, says Ganesh.

#### CAPRICORN

Work will suck you dry of your energy today, says Ganesh. Business rivals will go out of their way to mar your reputation and project you as incompetent. But to their dismay, you will prove to be way too smart to let them succeed in their sinister motives. In fact, you will hit where it hurts most and show your foes that you have all it takes to be a winner. Your superiority will reign over theirs.

#### AQUARIUS

You get a pat on the back due to your brilliant academic standing. People will admire your business acumen and may imitate your choices. But this doesn't mean you become haughty and unapproachable. Carry on the good work with a humble attitude, says Ganesh.

#### PISCES

Anticipation is all the fun. Sadly, this only alludes to your months-in-preparation travel plans that are most likely to be delayed today on one count or the other. Though, if this is any consolation, your trip, when it finally occurs, will bring you as much pleasure and satisfaction that you expected out of it, if not more, says Ganesh.

## Neeraj, Vidyut bond over passion, dedication

MUMBAI: Action star Vidyut Jammwal and Olympic hero Neeraj Chopra recently had a conversation over Instagram Live about what it takes to be a champion, dedication and hard work.



While Vidyut joined live from Egypt, where he's shooting for *Khuda Haafiz Chapter II Agni Pariksha*, Neeraj joined from the US. The Olympic javelin gold medalist shared his thoughts on the secret to being a champion, he said, "Whatever work you do, be 'ziddi' (determined). Be determined for your goal. Work very hard. Be extraordinary in your field and make India proud."

Having popularised the sport of javelin, Neeraj told the actor, "You've built a great body and worked hard for it and it shows. If we ever meet, we'll try javelin together (sic)."

Vidyut too praised the athlete and said he admires the latter for how he perceives practice. "I just love the fact that he (Neeraj) is enjoying life. Practice is enjoyment for him (sic)." IANS

### Sushmita Sen on the digital age

## 'Best time to be a creative person'

MUMBAI: Sushmita Sen, who has been basking in the success of *Aarya 2*, feels that with digital innovations and the medium of OTT on an upward curve, now is the time for creative people to experiment and exhibit their craft.

In fact, the current times have enabled people with a creative bent of mind to push the boundaries, she said, adding, "Actually the best time to be any creative person, I feel, it's because now you have options and you have viewership, with the click of a button. Globally the world can see you all for your work."

Social media is one thing that she would have loved to have around in the decade when she was crowned Miss Universe, "I miss the fact that there was no social media during the '90s era because there's so much of my life that I could not document which was so personal and today that can be done." IANS



## PC felt intimidated by *The Matrix* cast



MUMBAI: As the new kid on *The Matrix Resurrections* set, Priyanka Chopra Jonas says she initially felt intimidated by the cast from the previous movies but it turned out to be a wonderful experience to work on the film that's led by formidable women.

The upcoming film in the popular sci-fi film franchise is written and directed by Lana Wachowski, who along with her sister Lilly had helmed the previous three titles - *The Matrix in 1999*, *The Matrix Reloaded* and *The Matrix Revolutions*, both released in 2003.

Asked about the film's action sequences, Priyanka said though she has done stunts in many of her films in Hindi film industry, her character of Sati specifically did not require any physical training.

"When it comes to women, especially with *The Matrix Resurrections*, it's led by extremely formidable female characters. All of them that you see, they are the ones leading the action... I think that was very important to our director Lana. It was something that really matters to her; she has spoken about," the 39-year-old actor told PTI in a Zoom interview from Los Angeles.

*The Matrix Resurrections* brings back the original cast of the film series alongside a new set of characters. Keanu Reeves returns as Neo, Carrie-Anne Moss as Trinity and Jada Pinkett Smith as Niobe.

## Poonam recalls giving jewellery to Padmini who ran away to tie knot

MUMBAI: Veteran actress Poonam Dhillon reveals how she gave her jewellery to her friend and fellow actress Padmini Kolhapure, who was preparing to run away and get married.

Poonam, who is appearing as a special guest along with Padmini on singing reality show *Sa Re Ga Ma Pa*, shared: "In simple words, Padmini eloped to get married. Whatever jewellery she was wearing, we gave it to her. We were all so young, and we had no clue what she was going to wear for her wedding, so we organised her clothes. We have seen a lot

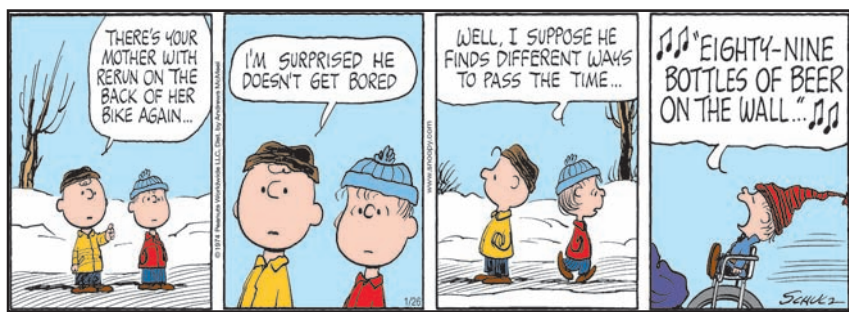
of ups and downs together, happy and sad. I believe, family is chosen by God but there is this one relationship we have the liberty to choose for ourselves and that is friendship and I can do anything for this friendship."

Padmini adds: "I feel Poonam has been very giving and put in huge efforts in the course of our friendship, when my mother and father were not supportive of my marriage, Poonam helped me a lot."

*Sa Re Ga Ma Pa*, judged by Himesh Reshammiya, Vishal Dadlani and Shankar Mahadevan, airs on Zee TV. AGENCIES



### PEANUTS



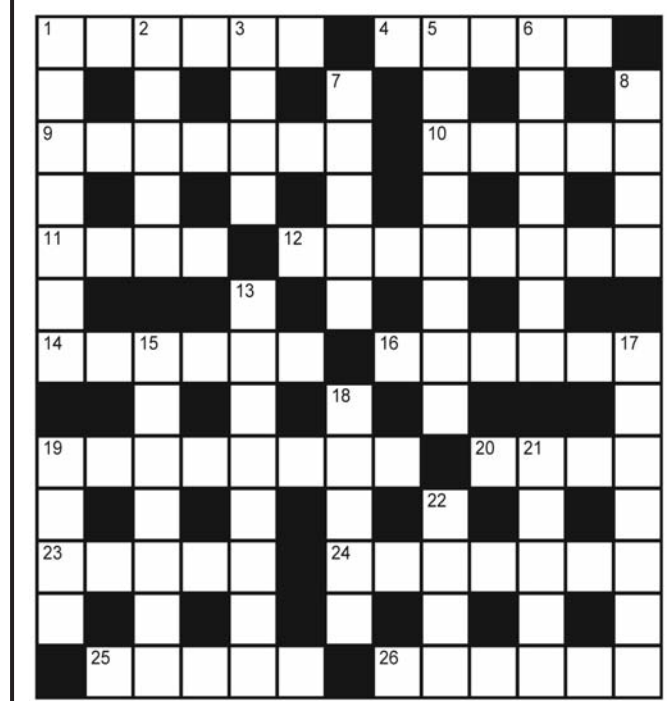
### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### BREVITY



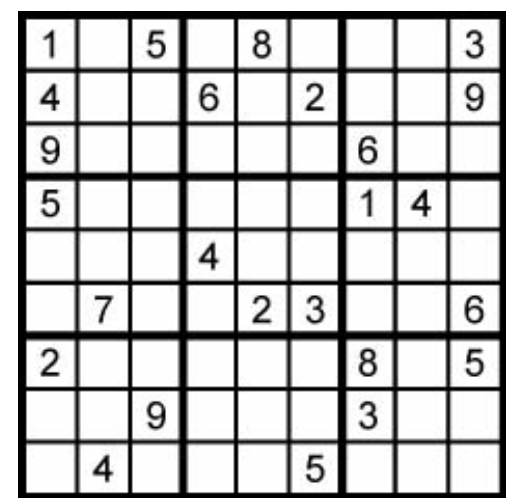
### FUN post CROSSWORD



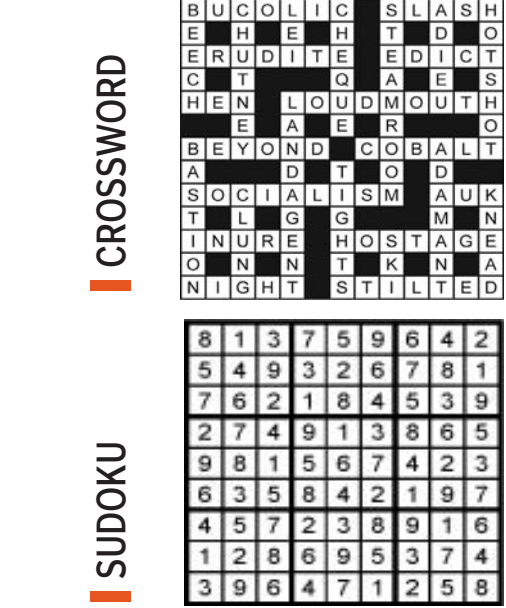
- Across**
- 1 Scream
  - 4 Speech disorders
  - 9 Medieval brass instrument
  - 10 Physically weak
  - 11 Reverberate
  - 12 Intrepid
  - 14 Winter Olympics event
  - 16 White whale
  - 19 It's all in the family
  - 20 Healing sign
  - 23 Side dish
  - 24 Blow up, as a photograph
  - 25 Past its prime
  - 26 Track event
  - 5 Knowledgeable
  - 6 Tableland
  - 7 Computer key
  - 8 In addition
  - 13 Contact sport
  - 15 Nominate
  - 17 Completely enveloping
  - 18 Daisylike bloom
  - 19 Average
  - 21 Welsh dog
  - 22 Radar signal
- Down**
- 1 Triumph
  - 2 Arrive
  - 3 Door sign

### SUDOKU

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



### SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



# WRONGDOERS' DOSSIER

Amid Covid-19 that claimed millions of lives and put paid to jobs many times that number, there were many who indulged in crimes. Five workers of DRDO at Chandipur were honey-trapped and passed on sensitive info on the nation's security. A three-year-old boy at Bhimtangi lost his mother in a brutal crime while the grownup son of a scribe was killed in a violent tiff over the payment of a bill at a bar. The mysterious death of a young ACF proved the age-old saying that marriages are made in heaven wrong. A gangster who lived by bullets fell victim to one. The prime accused of the Anjana gangrape case was rounded up after evading arrest for over two decades. As the year is about to roll on,

**ORISSA POST** takes a bird's eye view of the most gruesome and brutal crimes of the year



DRDO STAFF



## Das Burma in the soup

Chittaranjan Palai, a close aide of State Planning Board Deputy Chairman Sanjay Das Burma, was found dead under mysterious circumstances in Bhargavi river in Puri district December 13. Palai was missing since December 11. His motorcycle, footwear and chain were recovered from near Gadamrugasira bridge. Palai's body bore multiple injuries. Palai's uncle Purnachandra lodged a complaint and alleged that it was a pre-planned murder. As per the complaint, Palai had gone to attend a party in the evening of December 11 but did not return home. Das Burma and Palai's family members met Puri Superintendent of Police (SP) and sought a Crime Branch probe into the incident. Palai's family members suspected his friend Jaga's involvement in the incident. They alleged that Jaga had borrowed Rs 3 lakh from Palai but was refusing to return the amount. However, the BJP sought Das Burma's resignation in connection with the incident. Taking the issue seriously, outgoing Director General of Police Abhay directed a Crime Branch probe into the incident. A four-member team led by DSP SK Mishra has been formed to investigate the case.

## Law finally catches up with Anjana tormentor



The prime accused in infamous Anjana Mishra gangrape case was arrested by the Commissionerate Police 22 years after the incident. A team of the Commissionerate Police nabbed Bibekananda Biswal alias Biban through 'Operation Silent Viper' February 20. Biban was nabbed from Aamby Valley at Lonavala on Pune-Mumbai Highway. Biban and his associates Pradeep Sahoo alias Padia and Dharendra Mohanty alias Tunia had gangraped Anjana at an isolated place near Barang when she was on her way to Cuttack with a journalist friend January 9, 1999. The incident caused a massive furore in the state and led to the ouster of then Chief Minister Janaki Ballabh Patnaik. The police had arrested Padia and Tunia while Biban managed to flee. The case was subsequently handed over to the CBI. The sessions court of Khurda sentenced Tunia and Padia to life imprisonment April 29, 2002. Tunia has been lodged in Choudwar

jail while Padia died while serving the jail term. Then Police Commissioner Sudhanshu Sarangi won laurels from several quarters for the arrest of Biban. The idea to reopen the gangrape case struck to Sarangi's mind when he met Tunia during a visit to Choudwar jail. A four-member police team came to know that Biban was staying at Lonavala impersonating as Jalandhar Swain. He had managed to collect an Aadhaar card and a voter identity card in the name of Jalandhar Swain.

## HYDER ENCOUNTER

Notorious gangster Hyder was killed in a police encounter near Simulia in Balasore district when he was being shifted from Choudwar jail to Baripada jail for security reasons July 24. The gangster was being shifted in a vehicle with police escort. He tried to escape from the clutches of the escape party on the pretext of attending nature's call. Hyder reportedly tried to flee by snatching a gun from a policeman.



The security personnel were forced to open fire at the gangster in a 'controlled manner' to prevent him from escaping. A bullet hit Hyder around his stomach. He was rushed to Balasore district headquarters hospital in a critical condition. But he could not survive. Notably, Hyder was undergoing life term imprisonment following his conviction in a murder case. The gangster had managed to escape from SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack while undergoing treatment for some complications April 10. The incident created a lot of hue and cry in the state. However, the Odisha police managed to arrest Hyder from Sangareddy district in Telangana April 15.

## HONEY-TRAPPED



Hemant Mistri



Basant Behera



Sk. Musafir



Tapas Ranjan Nayak



Sachin Chheta

Odisha Police September 14, 2021 arrested five contractual employees of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) at Chandipur in Balasore district on charges of sharing vital and classified defence related information on social networking sites after being honey-trapped by a woman, suspected to be from Pakistan. Four contractual employees at DRDO namely Basant Behera, AC operator, Hemanta Kumar Mistri, DG operator, Tapas Ranjan Nayak, a contractual employee and Sk Musafir, AC operator as well as Sachin Chheta, a driver were arrested by police. The Crime Branch took them on remand and found them to have been sharing classified information with enemy countries. A two member NIA team also conducted a probe into the case. The suspected

Pakistani agent had seven Facebook accounts under different names and was in contact with the five accused. Officials said investigation is underway to get details of her UK phone number and her bank account in Dubai. The officer said investigators were able to trace the accounts to Pakistan, adding that she used proxy IPs (Internet Protocol) of the US, India and Germany to chat with the accused.

She even had proposed to two accused. The woman had been using a UK phone number and chatted with the accused to get "valuable information" on missiles test-fired at DRDO's testing range facility in Chandipur area of Balasore district. A high-level team from the Intelligence Bureau in New Delhi also visited Balasore and conducted a probe.

## ACF's death a mystery

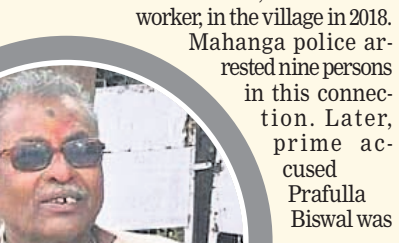
The death of Paralakhemundi Assistant Conservator of Forest (ACF) Soumya Ranjan Mohapatra, 32, July 12, 2021 remains unresolved due to frequent flip-flops by police. The ACF was rescued from his quarters in Paralakhemundi with 90 per cent burns and succumbed July 13 during treatment at a private hospital in Cuttack. His family members have alleged involvement of DFO Sangram Keshari Behera, wife Bidya Bharati and cook Manmath Kumbha in his death. Initially, Gajapati SP Tapan Patnaik gave a clean chit to the DFO. The ACF's wife Bidya Bharati and the DFO were grilled by

Paralakhemundi police. After interrogation, Patnaik said the DFO had no relationship with Bidya. He said this based on their call detail records (CDR). Later, Gurandi OIC Mamata Rani Panda, a relative of Bidya, was also grilled. Soumya's family questioned the SP's statement. Later, the probe was handed over to the Crime Branch. A team led by DSP Gyana Ranjan Mishra took up a fresh investigation into the case. The CB also conducted polygraph tests on Bidya, DFO and the cook. The CB in its chargesheet claimed it was an accident. Crime Branch ADG Sanjeeb Panda said Bidya Bharati had made no attempt to rescue Soumya Ranjan nor had sought any help for which a case has been registered against her. Moreover, the couple were not on good terms adding that Bidya Bharati had no relationship with the DFO. Such flip flops by the cops have ensured that the case still remains a mystery and accused still at large.



## Mahanga double murder

The murder of former Mahanga block chairperson and BJP leader Kulamani Baral, 73, and his associate Dibyasingh Baral, 80, drew the kind of attention and intense media glare that few other cases could get in 2021. The Barals were brutally hacked to death by miscreants over political rivalry January 2 (Saturday night). The two were returning home on a motorcycle when miscreants waylaid them and attacked them with sharp-edged weapons leading to the death of Kulamani on the spot. Dibyasingh succumbed during treatment at SCB January 3. The incident rocked the entire Mahanga Assembly segment as tension prevailed in the area. Police registered a case after Kulamani's son Ramakant Baral filed an FIR. The incident was the fallout of exposure of massive corruption in the implementation of the Prime Minister Awas Yojana (PMAY) in the region, Ramakant alleged in his FIR. Ramakant also alleged that the attack was carried out at the behest of state Panchayatiraj and Law Minister Pratap Jena. The accused had brutally murdered Bikash Jena, another BJP worker, in the village in 2018. Mahanga police arrested nine persons in this connection. Later, prime accused Prafulla Biswal was a protest petition in the court of JMFC at Salipur. The court heard the matter August 26 and directed Mahanga police to reinvestigate the case and file the call detail records of Jena's associate Umashankar Biswal, Mahanga block chairperson Sarat Chandra Nayak and the prime accused-cum-deceased Prafulla Biswal. Police delayed in filing the reinvestigation report and CDR while the state government filed two revision petitions with the ADJ. Mahanga IIC Nihar Ranjan Mohanty finally submitted the CDR in the case. The issue created furore in state politics as the BJP and the Congress demanded the resignation of Jena. The issue will sure generate intense political heat with the panchayat elections in the state scheduled in February. Dispute arose after police struck off the name of the minister. Ramakant filed



found dead under mysterious circumstances. Bijay Kumar Baral, another accused, is still absconding. Panchayatiraj minister was named as the 13th accused. Dispute arose after police struck off the name of the minister. Ramakant filed

## BHIMTANGI HORROR

The brutal murder of a 26-year-old married woman at Bhimtangi in Bhubaneswar July 5 shook the conscience of locals. Deceased Priyanka Priyadarshini Sahu's three-year-old son escaped the killer's knife. Priyanka along with her husband Rakesh and son had been staying in a rented house. Rakesh, a private sector employee, was in his office when the incident occurred. Accused Jagannath Pradhan of Jajpur district slit Priyanka's throat after locking her rented home from inside. He also cut his own wrist in a bid to kill himself. Before cutting his wrist, Pradhan had sent fatally-wounded Priyanka's photo to Rakesh. Police reached the spot and rushed the accused to hospital. Pradhan and Priyanka were known to each other since their college days. Pradhan was trying to meet Priyanka after her marriage despite strong objections from the latter. Pradhan and Priyanka had entered into an argument a few days prior to the incident when the woman visited her paternal village in Jajpur. In order to take revenge, Pradhan had hatched a plot to kill Priyanka and her son.



Priyanka Priyadarshini

## Scribe's son killed over bar bill

The body of journalist Navin Das's son Manish Anurag was found in a pond in Patrapara area of the Capital city under mysterious circumstances October 10. Manish went missing a day before. His car was found from near one of his friends' house in Infocity area of the city. Manish's family members alleged that he had been killed by some of his friends. They claimed that Manish's friends had invited him to attend a feast on the night of October 9. During investigation, police came to know that Manish was killed by three of his friends over payment of bills at a bar. According to police, accused Amrit Pritam Biswal, Dinesh Kumar Mohapatra and Mrutyunjaya Mishra had coaxed Manish to attend a bachelors' party as his marriage was scheduled to be held in November. They initially partied at a hotel in Laxmisagar and later went to the bar in South City Hotel at



Manish Anurag

Bhaganpur in Patrapara. The trio forced Manish to foot the bill worth Rs 8,000 for food and drink. Later, a violent scuffle ensued between Manish and the accused trio outside the bar. Manish lost his sense and died, police said. The trio later dumped his body in a pond at Bhaganpur.



# Cold wave grips state; 12 places record below 12°C



temperature of 11°C each. The night temperature at Malkangiri and Chandbali was 11.5 and 11.6°C respectively, the Met Centre said. All places of the state witnessed a minimum temperature of below 20°C. The Met office further said the minimum temperature will drop by

3-4°C over the districts of Odisha during next four-five days. Due to the sudden chill, normal life was affected in interior pockets of the state.

The situation is expected to aggravate and continue for a week, said director of Centre for Environment and Climate (CEC) of SOA University, SC Sahu.

Between December 19 and 24, the winter chill is set to worsen due to a combination of the north-westerly wind flow in the lower and upper atmosphere along with clear sky conditions for radiational cooling from the surface of the earth, he added.

The cold condition might decrease slightly due to change in wind direction and western disturbance in the north-west part of India from the Christmas day, he said.

## AGRI BOOST



Agriculture Minister Arun Sahoo and other dignitaries visit stalls during the Odisha Farmer Producer Organisations' Conclave at Lokseva Bhawan in Bhubaneswar, Saturday

## CM launches book on King Gajapati



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 18:** Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik released a book titled, 'Gajapati: A King without a Kingdom'. Written by Ashok Bal, the book deals with the fascinating history of Gajapati kings beginning from Suryavanshi Gajapati Kapilendra Deb.

The book highlights a unique facet of ritual association between Gajapati kings with Lord Jagannath. Ganga king Chodaganga Deb held Purusottam Jagannath as the supreme. The remarkable association of Gajapati as Adyasevak is a unique aspect in the relationship between the Lord and royalty that earned respect and reverence for the Gajapati. The distinctive aspect of linkage based on the doctrine of surrender and subordination, was an innovative experiment in statecraft which helped in securing continued trust of people and expanding the kingdom.

Kapilendra Dev's regime was the pinnacle of Odia glory and grandeur when the kingdom stretched from river Ganges up to river Cauvery.

## Esplanade One unveils tallest Christmas tree



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 18:** Celebrating the Christmas fervour, Esplanade One Mall unveiled the tallest Christmas tree in the state and opened a Christmas-themed bazaar for its customers. With this, the mall has brought unique Christmas set-up which has never been seen in the city before.

With Christmas and New Year around the corner, the mall also announced their 'End of Season Sale'.

"Not only will the best of national and international brands offer discounts, but any customer who shops for ₹10,000 and above will also take home assured prizes. The more you shop, the better will be your gratification from Esplanade One," a release said.

As a part of the campaign, Esplanade One will have over 100+ brands on sale. The mall, adding brands like One Plus, Sugar Cosmetics and Ethnicity over the last six months, has given customers something new to look forward to.

## Eminent veterinarian Surendra Ray no more

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 18:** Eminent veterinarian Surendra Kumar Ray breathed his last at 8.30 am Saturday due to cardiac arrest at the age of 79, family sources said. His last rites were performed at Swargadwar in Puri.



Born in Dashrathpur in Jajpur district in 1942, Ray graduated from OUAT in 1964 and joined the same institution as a lecturer in 1972. He was awarded with doctorate from Punjab Agriculture University in 1976. He was appointed as the Veterinary Director of Odisha in 1997. He also served as the chief of Medicine department of OUAT from 2000 to 2002. In a career spanning over 30 years, as many as 49 research articles of his have been published in many national and international journals.

## Books on 'Ethics and Values' for UG students launched

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 18:** State Higher Education Minister Arun Sahoo, Saturday, launched the first unit of books on 'Ethics and Values' here as part of mandatory introduction to a new compulsory course on the same topic at the Undergraduate (UG) level.

Initiated during a number of brainstorming sessions of the Odisha State Higher Education Council (OSHEC) with academicians local, the idea of introducing a course on "Ethics and Values" has been on the wish list of the state government for long. The objective of the course is to develop awareness and sensitivity among the students vis-à-vis their interactions with the society at large. It is hoped that it will help them strengthen their moral principles.

"The idea is to demonstrate the concept of contemporary ethics and value system to our students through analysis of few selected examples of social, personal and professional conflicts that the youth face in their daily lives. The course will help students distinguish between good and evil, justice and injustice, fair practice and unfair practice as well as motivate them to internalise their duties, obligations and rights as responsible citizens," the minister said.

Sources said that the courses have been prepared for the undergraduate curriculum in the form of an Ability Enhancement Compulsory Course module. The entire course is divided in to six units (six credits); 1 unit of 1 credit (15 classes) to be taught in each semester to students of all streams and disciplines.

## WASSUP TODAY

### BHUBANESWAR

- Open Odisha State Karate Championship, Railway Indoor Stadium, Mancheswar, 10 am
- Meeting of Utkal Sammilani Mancheswar Industrial Estate Branch, Mancheswar, 11.30 am
- Book release, Symphony Mall, Hanspal, 4 pm

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

## CLASSIFIED

### AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an affidavit before Executive Magistrate, Bhubaneswar on dated 18.12.2021, I, Niranjan Sahoo declare that my son Mohapatra Bhanupratap Sahoo have chagned his name to Bhanupratap Sahoo for all purposes.

# Make all-out effort to raise conviction rate: CM

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 18:** Noting that a low conviction rate is a matter of concern for the state, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Saturday asked police personnel to use modern technology during investigation and also focus on crime against women and children.

Addressing the valedictory session of the annual senior police officers conference, Patnaik said all possible steps should be taken to enhance the conviction rate in Odisha.

According to the NCRB statistics, the conviction rate in Odisha stood at 11.2 per cent in 2020, the second lowest after Assam whose conviction rate was at 5.4 per cent. In 2019, the state's conviction rate was 21.5 per cent, the NCRB report said.



Asserting that crime against women and children should always be a focus area for the police, Patnaik said any complaint received in this regard should be dealt with immediately and with empathy. "The special wing in Odisha Police to look after offences against women and children should provide leadership in this field," he said.

Highlighting that road safety also continues to be an area of concern, Patnaik said there was an urgent need to take up preventive and innovative steps to reduce the number of deaths due to road accidents.

Emphasising that his government was committed to maintaining peace and harmony in the state, the chief minister said, "Expect all of

you to lead the police by personal example and provide quality leadership. I also expect you to be caring and sensitive to the victims."

Patnaik also said for the next five years, a sum of ₹1,000 crore will be provided for the construction of police buildings with special emphasis on housing for law enforcers.

Praising the force for its selfless service during cyclones and the Covid-19 pandemic, Patnaik paid homage to 61 police personnel who sacrificed their lives in the line of duty as Covid Warriors and assured support to their families.

He also lauded the role of the police in tackling the challenge of Left Wing Extremism as a result of which Angul, Boudh, Deogarh, Nayagarh, and Sambalpur have been declared LWE free this year.

"Swabhimana Anchal, an erstwhile cut-off Area in Malkangiri district has seen remarkable improvement over the last couple of years," he said.

"I am happy to note that the law and order situation in the state remained peaceful in 2021," he added.

Describing that the aim of 'Mo Sarkar' is that people coming to public offices should be treated with dignity, Patnaik said good feedback has been received under 'Mo Sarkar' regarding Odisha Police.

Under the 5T charter of the police, good initiatives like strengthening of civil police, fast passport verification, timely promotion of policemen and e-FIR in theft cases have been undertaken, he said.

The chief minister also congratulated STF for organising an effective drive against Narcotic drugs.

# Over ₹26K cr transferred to Panchayati Raj bodies in 11 yrs

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 18:** The state government has allocated grants to the tune of ₹26,308 crore recommended by the Central and State Finance Commissions to the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) since 2010-11 fiscal.

As per the data submitted by Panchayati Raj Minister Pratap Jena in the Assembly during the recently-concluded Winter Session, grants to the tune of ₹13,519.17 crore have been transferred to the PRIs during the tenures of 13th, 14th and 15th Central Finance Commissions (CFCs).

Similarly, grants worth ₹12,789.73 crore have been released to the

Panchayati Raj Institutions during the tenures of 3rd, 4th and 5th State Finance Commissions (SFCs).

As per the data, the tenure of the 3rd SFC began in the financial year 2010-11 and continued till 2014-15. During this period, the PRIs got ₹584 crore each year, totaling ₹2,920 crore.

During the 4th SFC period (from 2015-16 to 2019-20), funds to the tune of ₹7,379.30 crore have been transferred to the PRIs. During the tenures of 3rd and 4th SFCs, a total amount of ₹10,299 crore has been transferred to the PRIs.

An amount of ₹2,490.43 crore has been sanctioned to the PRIs during 2020-21 fiscal which comes under the tenure of 5th SFC.

The Centre has also allocated ₹2,107.16 crore to the PRIs during the 13th Central Finance Commission period (2010-15) while the allocation has been increased substantially to ₹7,965.30 crore during the 14th CFC period (2015-20).

During the 15th CFC period, ₹3,446.71 crore has been released to the PRIs of Odisha. While ₹2,258 crore has been transferred to the PRIs in 2020-21, the remaining ₹1,188.71 crore released during the current fiscal.

Out of the amounts granted during the period of 15th CFC, ₹1,308.15 crore has been utilised by the PRIs.

Similarly, the PRIs have so far utilised ₹385 crore from the grants of 5th SFC, said the data.

# City victims lost ₹7cr to cyber frauds in '21

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 18:** Cyber fraudsters have siphoned off around ₹7 crore from the bank accounts of victims in Bhubaneswar between February and December 15 this year.

The Commissionerate Police, while sharing the data with the media Saturday, claimed that the cyber crime help desk at the Bhubaneswar DCP's office received 6,495 calls from victims of various cyber frauds across the state during the above period.

As many as 2,872 people of the Capital city, who lost their money to the tune of ₹6,79,85,344 to cyber criminals, contacted the cyber help desk through the designated

helpline number in 2021.

However, the Commissionerate Police managed to recover and block ₹1,48,11,870 out of the total ₹6.79 crore withdrawn by the fraudsters through various fraudulent means.

Many victims got a part of the siphoned off money back due to early reporting of the matter to police.

Cops succeeded in recovering ₹91,40,530 and managed to block ₹56,71,340.

As many as 13 individuals have been arrested by police in various cyber fraud cases.

The Commissionerate Police Registered 67 cases in connection with cyber crime incidents during the aforesaid period.

# 44 per cent posts of doctors vacant in govt-run hospitals

An affidavit filed by the state Health department in Orissa High Court admitted that numerous posts in Odisha Medical Health Services are lying vacant

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Cuttack, Dec 18:** The Odisha government filed an affidavit in the High Court wherein the Health department has admitted that nearly 44 per cent of the posts for doctors in government-run hospitals are lying vacant in the state.

The affidavit has been filed in the court of division bench of Chief Justice S Muralidhar and Justice AK Mohapatra. It says that the total sanctioned strength of medical officers, including general doctors and specialists under the Odisha Medical Health Services, is 8,546. The sanctioned posts include 5,838 general duty medical officers and 2,708 specialist medical officers.

Special Secretary (Medical Services) Dr Dinabandhu Panda

submitted the affidavit in response to a PIL filed by social activist and lawyer Chittaranjan Mohanty on a query related to vacancies of doctors in state hospitals.

Against the sanctioned posts of 5,838 general duty medical officers, 3,523 posts are lying vacant, while 1,221 posts of specialist medical officers are lying vacant against 2,708 sanctioned posts.

The highest number of vacancies of general duty doctors was reported in Ganjam (226), followed by the Mayurbhanj (165), Sundargarh (129) and Balangir (125). On the other hand, the highest number of vacancies of specialist medical officers was reported in Mayurbhanj (117), Sundargarh (90), Koraput (78) and Ganjam (69).

The bench has fixed January 8 for the next hearing on the matter.

## DRAMA SHOW



Artistes of cultural outfit Hrudaya stage play 'Raja Oedipus' at Rabindra Mandap in Bhubaneswar, Saturday

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SHORT TAKES

**2 minors hurt as mobile battery blasts in Balasore**

**Sajanagarh:** Two minor boys were critically injured after a mobile battery exploded at Dhabasila village under Nilagiri police limits in Balasore district Friday. According to reports, the two siblings were playing with a mobile battery. One of them was connecting an electric wire to the mobile battery when it exploded, leaving both of them critically injured. Family members first rushed them to Nilagiri hospital. Later they were shifted to the district headquarters hospital. As condition of the eldest one deteriorated, he was shifted to SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack.

**DM for crackdown on mineral smuggling**

**Chhatrapur:** As illegal mining of minor minerals has been rampant in some pockets of Ganjam district, the administration has directed to carry out crackdown on smuggling of minor minerals. Holding a review meeting on the activities of the revenue department, Collector Vijay Amruta Kulange here, directed the officials to keep a close watch on sand and stone quarries under all tshells. He also sought immediate steps for operationalisation of over 200 quarries. The Collector wanted crackdown on those indulging illegal mining and transportation of sand and stone. Kulange also ordered action against bootleggers in the district.

**2-yr jail term for ex-ICDS supervisor**

**Jeyore:** A Vigilance court here Saturday handed down two years of imprisonment to a former ICDS supervisor of Korukonda block in Malkangiri district after convicting her of fraudulently availing promotion to a post. The Special Vigilance Judge Rajesh Ekka also slapped a penalty of Rs 7000 on Subha Mani Dei. According to the case diary, a complaint was filed in 2012 with the Vigilance that the then ICDS supervisor Subha Mani Dei had got promotion by submitting a forged HSC certificate. She submitted a forged certificate and earned Rs 9.37 lakh during the period. The Vigilance registered a case after receiving the complaint.

**Jumbos trample woman to death**

**Baripada:** A herd of elephants trampled a woman to death in Morada area of Mayurbhanj Friday night. The deceased was identified as Samitra Dehury (45), the wife of Sarbeswar of Khadikapadar village. Samitra was going to her daughter's house in a nearby village when she came across the pachyderms and was trampled on Mahulabanji forest road under Betanoti range, an official said. Some local residents found the mutilated body of the woman around 200 metres away from the village.

**Leopard falls into poachers' trap, dies**



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Boinda, Dec 18:** A leopard has reportedly died after falling into a trap laid by poachers for hunting boars near Batrakhol gramya jungle under Handapa range in Angul district Thursday night. However, poachers had tried to hide the incident, but failed. Forest officials have seized its carcass Saturday. The dead leopard was male and aged about six years. According to

reports, population of boars has increased in Batrakhol and Handapa range. The animals have allegedly been damaging crops. Some poachers had laid traps to kill boars Thursday night. But the big cat got trapped and died due to suffocation. The poachers were trying to hide the carcass Friday, but some cowherds spotted it and informed forest officials about the incident.

Athagarh DFO S. Anand and Handapa ranger Chaitanya Behera Saturday seized the carcass and sent it for post mortem. However, the officials have not yet identified the poachers.

Locals pointed out that as population of boars is on the rise in the area, farmers have to bear brunt of the animals. They alleged that due to lack of patrol by forest officials, wildlife poaching has been rampant with traps.

**6 VSSUT students in the soup for ragging**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Burla, Dec 18:** A second year B.Tech student pursuing production engineering at Veer Surendra Sai University of Technology (VSSUT) in Burla has lodged an FIR accusing his seniors of mental and physical torture Saturday morning. The victim identified as Manas Singh approached the police and lodged a complaint against six of his seniors.

As per the FIR, Singh had gone to Kirba Square along with his friend Friday evening at around 8 pm. Singh said he went to a snacks shop where six of his seniors present at the shop ragged him. He added that all the six who were in an inebriated condition thrashed him.

"The seniors called me and asked whether I knew their names or



Victim identified as Manas Singh has approached the police and lodged an FIR against his seniors. Burla police have started a probe into the matter

not. As I could not tell their names, they thrashed me. They punched on my face, neck, back and other parts of the body," Singh said. "Later, the seniors grabbed me by my neck and tried to choke me," Singh added.

After returning from Kirba Square, Singh informed his family

members about the unpleasant incident. Saturday morning, Singh along with his brother went to Burla police station and lodged the FIR against the six senior students. Acting on the FIR, Burla police have launched an investigation into the incident. However, no arrests have been made so far.

**Consumer forum issues arrest warrant against four officials**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Jagatsinghpur, Dec 18:** The district consumer disputes redressal forum (DCDRF) has issued arrest warrants against four senior officials of separate agencies for their failure to file reply to the cases filed before the forum, a report said.



The forum has directed police to arrest and produce the senior officials before it by January 17, 2022. Among the accused, one of them is the branch manager of Bank of Baroda while another is the branch manager of private Cholamandalam Investment and Finance Company Ltd. The other two are a sub-divisional officer and a junior engineer of Tata Power Central Odisha Distribution Ltd (TPCODL).

According to reports, a case was filed against the branch manager of Bank of Baroda in the forum by Zakir Hussain of Samangar under Jagatsinghpur police

limits. Hussain alleged that he was sanctioned a loan for a poultry farm by the bank but its manager harassed him and prevented him from withdrawing the total sanctioned amount.

The branch manager was asked to file his reply December 4, 2019 and later he was issued a show-cause notice January 6, 2020. The forum has sought the arrest of the branch manager in this case.

A similar arrest warrant was issued against the branch manager of Cholamandalam finance over a complaint filed by Saroj Kumar Jena of Raghunathpur. The manager was asked to file a reply August 13, 2021 and a show-cause notice was issued to him September 3, 2021 after he failed to file his reply.

Arrest warrants have also been issued against SDO, Raghunathpur and junior engineer, Biridi electrical section of TP-CODL. A case against the SDO was filed over a complaint of Rahemat Ali Khan of Muslim Sahi in Hajipur under Biridi police limits. The SDO was asked to file his reply February 25, 2021 and later was issued a show-cause notice March 15, 2021 after he failed to file any reply.

The respective IICs have been asked to make their submissions before the forum January 17 after releasing the above officials on bail.

**Woman bludgeons daughter to death**

**Sundargarh:** In a shocking incident, a woman bludgeoned her 17-year old daughter to death with a stone pestle at Kalamegha RI Colony under Hemgiri police limits in Sundargarh Friday. The deceased was identified as Dipanjali Bhorasagar. After killing her daughter, the women tried to commit suicide by feeding on urea fertiliser. Police rescued and admitted the woman to the district headquarters hospital. Police said, Dipanjali and her mother had tiff over the former's talks with someone over phone most of the time. Her mother in a fit of rage hit her daughter with the stone pestle, leaving her dead.



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**CLEAN MAHANADI DRIVE**



Boatmen ready to start their boats at a boat race jointly organised by the district administration and Sambalpur Municipal Corporation on the occasion of Mahanadi Utsav-2021, Saturday. The boat race was part of an awareness drive to keep the river clean

**NINE INMATES OF SAMBALPUR RESIDENTIAL COLLEGE COVID+**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Sambalpur, Dec 18:** Covid infections at Vedic College, a private residential college under Sasana police limits in Sambalpur district, went up to nine Saturday after six more students of the college tested positive for the disease.

Three days back, three students had tested positive for the virus. All affected students were residing in the college hostel. The development has sparked panic among students, staff and guardians after reports surfaced.

On being informed, a team from the district health department visited the college and collected swabs of students, staff and other inmates of the hostel. The team will visit the college Sunday and officials are in regular touch with the college authorities following the develop-

ment, a health official requesting anonymity said. Moreover, attempts are being made to stop the spread of infection, he said.

Initially, two of them were found positive while the total count reached nine by Saturday. A team from the district administration will visit the college and take subsequent steps. The matter came to the fore after a student underwent a test of thalassaemia, ADMO Dr Ashok Das said.

There the doctor noticed Covid symptoms with the student and asked him to undergo a test for Covid-19. The test report came out positive.

Principal Anand Agarwal said initially a Class-XI boy displayed symptoms for which an antigen test was conducted on him. The report came out negative. He, however, was sent back home after family members said the boy's RTPCR report had come out positive.

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**INVITATION FOR BID (IFB)**  
IDENTIFICATION No. SE-HWD-08/2021-22

No. A-762: The Superintending Engineer, Head Works Division, Samal, At/P.O. - Samal Barrage, Dist. - Angul on behalf of the Governor Odisha invites sealed tender in conformity with the Detailed Tender Call Notice from the intending bidders having valid GST & PAN for "Disposal of Un-serviceable Scrap Materials & Special T&P materials of Head Works Division, Samal" as follows:

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Upset value of Scrap and T&P Materials (in Rs.)	Place of Sale & Receipt of Bid Document	Caution Money to be furnished (In Rupees)	Cost of Bid Document (in Rupees)
1	Disposal of Un-serviceable scrap materials & special T&P materials of Head Works Division, Samal.	17,59,388.00	(i) O/o. the Superintending Engineer, Head Works Division, Samal, At/P.O. - Samal Barrage, Dist. - Angul (ii) O/o. the Additional Chief Engineer, Rengali Head Works Circle, Samal, At/P.O. - Samal Barrage, Dist. - Angul (iii) O/o. the Superintending Engineer, Rengali Dam Division, Rengali Dam Site, Dist. - Angul	87,969/-	6000/-

- The sale and receipt of Bid document shall start on Dt.20.12.2021 from 10.00 hours & will be closed on Dt.30.12.2021 upto 16.00 hours during working days.
- The bids will be opened on Dt.31.12.2021 at 11.00 hours in the Office of the Superintending Engineer, Head Works Division, Samal in the presence of the bidders or their authorized agents who wish to attend. If the office happens to be closed due to unavoidable circumstances on the last date of sale, receipt & opening of the bids as specified, the bids will be sale, receipt & open on the subsequent working days at the same time and venue.
- The bid documents can be downloaded from the website of Govt. of Odisha (named <http://www.dowrorissa.gov.in>) or may be purchased from all the offices mentioned above in Column - 4 against the non-refundable fee towards cost of Bid document as indicated above in Column-6 of the table.
- Cost of tender paper (Non-refundable) in shape of Demand Draft only from State Bank of India drawn in favour of the A.F.A., RMP, Samal payable at State Bank of India, Samal Barrage Branch and submit the Demand Draft in a separate envelope marked (Cost of Bidding Document). Bid must be accompanied by Caution money of 5% of the Bid value i.e. Rs.87,969.00 (Rupees eighty seven thousand nine hundred sixty nine) only in shape of NSC/KVP/Postal Saving Passbook/Term Deposit Receipt of any Nationalized Scheduled Bank duly pledged in favour of the Superintending Engineer, Head Works Division, Samal and shall be valid for a minimum period of net less than 120 days from the date of opening of tender.
- The authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all Bids without assigning any reason thereof.
- Other details can be seen in the Bidding document.

Sd/- Superintending Engineer, Head Works Division, Samal  
OIPR-32020/11/0003/2122

**Tapaswini resumes dharna in front of husband's home**

POLICE START PROBE INTO MATTER, LOOK FOR HER HUSBAND DR SUMIT

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Berhampur, Dec 18:** Marital discord between Tapaswini Dash aka Dimple and Dr Sumit Sahu took a new turn Friday evening as the woman again launched her dharna in front of her in-law's house after leaving the guest house earlier in the day.

Meanwhile, police have launched an investigation into the case Saturday. A police team led by Berhampur ASP Ramesh Chandra Sethi visited Sumit Sahu's residence at Brahmanagar to inquire about the latter's whereabouts.

However, Sumit's father reportedly told the cops that his son was unwell following which, the team had to return without meeting Sumit.

The ASP told reporters that they had asked Sumit's father to initiate talks with his son and find a way to end the dispute. "He should at least allow them to live in a rented accommodation," the ASP said.

"Sumit's father told us that he is sick



and undergoing treatment. But he did not divulge his son's whereabouts. We are trying our level best to end the marital discord," Sethi added.

Tapaswini has once again launched her sit-in in front of her in-law's house at Brahmanagar. She is demanding her entry into her in-law's house, sitting under a tent and braving the cold nights.

"My petition was scheduled to be heard in the court today. I hoped a judgement in my favour; at least a direction to make arrangements for my living will come. But that did not happen since my in-law's advocate did not file the reply and

instead, asked for 15 more days' time.

However, the court has fixed Monday for the hearing, Tapaswini said, adding Sumit was not responding to anyone's call, not even the CDMO. She also alleged that Sumit came to his house Friday night. She claimed she had seen him going out of the house by scaling the backside boundary wall.

Tapaswini had to leave the Atithi Bhawan after in-charge of the guest house belonging to Aska Sugar Mills here served a notice on the woman to vacate, following a directive from the Berhampur SDJM Court.

The couple had reportedly married earlier at a registrar's office. It was said that respective families later decided to solemnise their marriage again as per the customary Hindu rituals.

However, when Tapaswini and her family were waiting for Sumeet and his kin at the wedding venue November 22, the latter did not turn up. Since then, Tapaswini has been demanding that her in-laws accept her in the house.

**Chola** Enter a better life

**CHOLAMANDALAM INVESTMENT AND FINANCE COMPANY LIMITED**  
Corporate Office : 1st Floor, 'Dare House', No. 2, N. S. C. Bose Road, Chennai - 600 001  
Branch Office : Annapurna Complex, 559, Lewis Road, Cuttack-Puri Road, Bhubaneswar - 751014

**POSSESSION NOTICE**  
Under Rule 8 (1)

WHEREAS the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of M/s. Cholamandalam Investment And Finance Company Limited, under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 hereinafter called the Act and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(12) read with Rules 9 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued demand notices on the dates mentioned against each account calling upon the respective borrowers, to repay the outstanding amount with interest thereon within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

The borrowers having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrowers in particular and the Public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the properties mortgaged with the Company described herein below on the respective dates mentioned against each account in exercise of the powers conferred on him under Section 13(4) of the Act read with Rule 9 of the Rules made there under.

The borrowers in particular and the Public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the properties mentioned herein below and any such dealings will be subject to the charge of Cholamandalam Investment And Finance Company Limited for an amount mentioned against each account along with interest and other charges.

Under section 13 (8) of the Securitisation Act, the borrowers can redeem the secured asset by payment of the entire outstanding including all costs, charges and expenses before notification of sale.

Sl. No.	NAME AND ADDRESS OF BORROWER & LOAN ACCOUNT NUMBER	DETAILS OF PROPERTY POSSESSED	A) DATE OF DEMAND NOTICE B) OUTSTANDING AMOUNT C) DATE OF POSSESSION
1.	Loan Account No : X0HEBH00002551992 1. Purna Chandra Samantray 2. Bishnu Priya Samantray 3. Rangalata Samantray, All are residing at : Plot No. 1106, Mahavir Nagar, Jharpada, Bhubaneswar, Pin - 751006 Also at : Plot No. 581/3560, Madhupatna Unit No. 32, Cuttack Sadar, Cuttack - 753010 4. M/s. New Kalika South Indian Hotel Plot No. 661, Bomikhal, Cuttack Road Ward No. 31, Bhubaneswar, Pin - 751006	All that piece and parcel of the property and construction thereon situated in District - Cuttack, P. S. - Madhupatna No. 7, Tahasil & D. S. R. O. : Cuttack Sadar, Tahasil No. 231, Mouza - Cuttack Sahar Unit No. 32 Madhupatna, Mutation Khata No. 861/518, Plot No. 581/3560, KISSAM - Gharabari One, Area Ac 0.020 Decimal, Hal Khata No. 818, Hal Plot No. 581. <b>Bundled and bounded by:</b> North - By Road, South - By Govt. Land, East - By Building (Mr. Panda), West - Vacate Land.	A) 15.06.2021 B) Rs. 22,99,027.50 (Rupees Twenty Two Lakhs Ninety Nine Thousand Twenty Seven and Paise Fifty Only) as on 10.06.2021 and interest thereon C) 17.12.2021

Date : 19.12.2021  
Place : Bhubaneswar

Authorised Officer  
Cholamandalam Investment and Finance Company Limited



FOCUS EDUCATION

# REVERSING THE LOSSES



**Access to quality education was uneven before the pandemic, and now it is even more so. By investing in learning recovery and using technology wisely, it is possible to use the pandemic experience as a catalyst to improve education for all children**

closed. Likewise, before the pandemic, the Indian state of Gujarat, betting on big data analysis and machine learning, set up state-of-the-art digital-support centers for schools. When schools closed, Gujarat was able to respond quickly by distributing material digitally and personalising remote education to the learning level of each student. And in Kenya, all children, including those with disabilities, can access specially designed and inclusive digital textbooks.

The UNICEF and the World Bank Group are working together to ensure that all education systems use technology effectively to close gaps and help reverse learning losses. Embedding the use of technology within an overall strategy for ending learning poverty can help improve foundational skills, increase instructional time, and make the most efficient use of resources. This is particularly critical in low-income countries, where technology can provide teachers with the support they need quickly.

Digital access can serve as a great equaliser. Resources must be invested wisely, taking into account countries' electricity infrastructure, internet connectivity, digitally enabled devices for the most disadvantaged students, and data-management and implementation capacity. Without a carefully considered process to increase the use of technology, good intentions and well-designed policies will fail to achieve the recovery and acceleration of learning that developing countries need.

Access to quality education was uneven before the pandemic, and now it is even more so. By investing in learning recovery and using technology wisely, it is possible to use the pandemic experience as a catalyst to improve education for all children.

*Henrietta H. Fore is Executive Director of the UNICEF. David Malpass is President of the World Bank Group.*

©PROJECT SYNDICATE

As the third year of the COVID-19 pandemic approaches, classrooms remain fully or partially closed for as many as 647 million schoolchildren around the world. Even where schools have reopened, many students continue to lag behind.

It is now abundantly and painfully clear that children have learned less during the pandemic. According to World Bank estimates, pandemic-related school closures could drive up "learning poverty" – the share of 10-year-olds who cannot read a basic text – to around 70% in low- and middle-income countries. This learning loss could cost an entire generation of schoolchildren \$17 trillion in lifetime earnings.

As the Omicron variant takes hold, more governments may be tempted to close schools. Without the online infrastructure in place to support learning, doing so would extend the educational losses and deny children the many other benefits of daily school attendance, like the possibility to connect with classmates and develop social skills for personal growth. Interactions with teachers and peers are essential to develop the abilities necessary to work collaboratively. Being part of a class promotes a sense of belonging and helps build self-esteem and empathy.

Throughout the pandemic, marginalised children have struggled the most. When classrooms around the world reopened this fall, it became clear that these children had fallen even further behind their peers. Before the pandemic, gender parity in education was improving. But school closures placed an estimated 10 million more girls at risk of early marriage, which practically guarantees the end of their schooling.

Unless this regression is reversed, learning poverty and the associated human capital loss will hold economies and societies back for decades. Children must be given a chance to recover the ed-

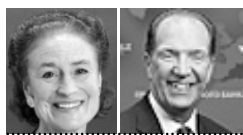
ucation they have lost. They need access to well-designed reading materials, digital learning opportunities, and transformed education systems that help prepare them for future challenges. Well-qualified teachers and effective use of technology are fundamental to this process.

Many countries have deployed massive stimulus packages in response to the health crisis. But, as of June 2021, less than 3% of these funds was devoted to the education and training sector. And most of these resources were spent in advanced economies.

For many low-income countries, elevated debt-service payments crowd out essential social spending – including for education. The resulting weakness in investments to support education and training threatens to deepen the dispar-

ities in learning outcomes that existed prior to the pandemic. And while narrowing the education gap will require using resources more efficiently, the bottom line is that more resources are needed. For the world's poorest countries, in particular, an acceleration in debt relief under the G20's Common Framework would provide fiscal space to increase support for human capital.

Investment in education must include funding for educational technology, taking into account what has worked well in different contexts around the world. Uruguay is one of the success stories. Over the past 10 years, the Uruguayan authorities have invested in infrastructure, digital content, and teacher capacity, leaving the country better prepared to shift to online schooling when classrooms



Henrietta H. Fore & David Malpass

**SCHOOL CLOSURES PLACED AN ESTIMATED 10 MILLION MORE GIRLS AT RISK OF EARLY MARRIAGE, WHICH PRACTICALLY GUARANTEES THE END OF THEIR SCHOOLING**



There is nothing mind can do that cannot be better done in the mind's immobility and thought-free stillness.

SRI AUROBINDO

## Hate & State

This week the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) published a report on the concerted attacks against Karnataka's Christian community and their places of worship. Also this week, Karnataka has announced a law that further curbs religious freedom for minorities. I contributed to the PUCL report and thought its findings were worth sharing. The background to this is that targeted attacks on religious minorities and their places of worship are on the rise across India. In the first two weeks of December 2021 alone attacks against Christians were reported in Madhya Pradesh, Haryana and Karnataka.

Incidents of organised violence and disturbance against the community have been accompanied by threats that are being followed up by legislation. Laws restricting religious freedom and regulating inter-faith marriage have been legislated in five Bharatiya Janata Party-ruled states since 2018, squeezing the right to freely propagate and practice religion. The BJP government in Karnataka is also proposing to survey the state's churches, to no apparent end other than monitoring Christians, their religious activity and their places of worship.

Hate crimes are not registered as a separate category by the State and there is little official information available on the matter. A fact-finding report released earlier this year documented over 90 hate crimes and mentioned over 300 against Christians and their churches and prayer halls, primarily in northern India. This report ('Christians under attack in India', by the Association for Protection of Civil Rights, United Christian Forum and United Against Hate) has recorded themes that the present report also corroborates. These are the denial of worship, the illegal detention of clergy and worshippers and the filing of false complaints. And all of this is accompanied by the pushing of legislation and of inflammatory rhetoric from the BJP and its leaders and associates. It is important that civil society documents to the best of its ability the violence, repression and intimidation aimed against India's minorities, often with the approval of the State and the parties in power.

In Karnataka, this is the way in which the attacks happen: An organised group often numbering in the hundreds intrudes and begins chanting bhajans and slogans inside the church and prayer hall while the service is on. They shout accusations of 'forcible conversion' without defining what this is or any evidence that it is happening. They are often violent and assault those gathered for prayer. The police appear to be aware of the impending violence but arrive often after the event. The mobs record their criminal trespass and violence on phones but often prevent the worshippers from doing the same, leaving little or no visual record of the offence. The mobs signal their religious difference through flags, scarves and slogans emphasising the intended polarisation. Their trespass is not seen as the primary crime by the State and also the media which does not appear to be able to look past the unsubstantiated and even undefined accusations of 'forced conversion'. The pastor and other clergy are often snared by the mobs and the police file cases against the victims, including those who are merely exercising their Constitutional and fundamental right to practice their faith.

The role of the State is often negative, and the police intrude into the personal lives of the worshippers, demanding to know what caste they belong to. They note the identities and the personal details of the clergy and worshippers and tend to intimidate those they are required to protect. Often the result is that worshippers stop coming to mass, and perhaps that is what is intended. Indeed the State itself often instructs, as this report will show, the church to discontinue its activity and its prayer, ostensibly a fundamental right enjoying a high degree of freedom from State encroachment. In one instance the police were offended that Christians were congregating to worship on the day of a Hindu festival. Often the role of the police is not to ensure that the violence and intimidation is contained, but to seek 'compromise' between the attackers and the attacked so that 'order' is prioritised over law. The focus is usually on looking beyond the acts of violence and intimidation.

The violence is also accompanied by casteism and caste-based abuse and violence. The attackers and intruders often use casteist abuse when addressing the worshippers. Worshippers continue to be targeted after the initial act of intrusion and violence. After the violence, this report documents the trauma that ensues from societal causes: the loss of livelihood in some cases, social boycotts, ostracisation, the loss of entitlements, the loss of residences in other cases and in all cases a loss of dignity.

The individuals that cause offence come from the Hindutva umbrella groups and are organised by them, as the PUCL report shows. BJP legislators and ministers also are sometimes directly involved. However, the ensuing damage in terms of the social ostracisation and boycott usually happens because it is the neighbours and associates, previously unperturbed, who turn against the victims. Sometimes the victims and survivors also lose their jobs and livelihood. This seems to show that the spread of the prejudice ripples on after the event and the immediate act of violence is not the only problem.

The impending legislation in Karnataka will accelerate the process of the targeting of minorities by Hindutva groups, will give cue to the State and particularly the police to join in and prevent and obstruct the freedom of religion of Karnataka's Christians and will encourage vigilantes to make their name by attacking congregations. This will be consistent with events in the other five BJP-governed states that have legislated laws against freedom of religion since 2018.



Aakar Patel

**Laws restricting religious freedom and regulating inter-faith marriage have been legislated in five Bharatiya Janata Party-ruled states since 2018, squeezing the right to freely propagate and practice religion**

SPECTRUM GEOPOLITICS

## A Quad in West Asia

A West Asia Quad is on the anvil. This quadrilateral partnership comprising India, the USA, the UAE and Israel will provide a solid window for India to the Arab world. Following the creation of the Quad in the India-Pacific consisting of India, the USA, Japan and Australia, and the reactions it incurred from countries, mainly China and its new ally Russia, the new grouping is likely to draw similar attention. India teaming up with America in any part of the world will raise eyebrows of China and Pakistan. Hence, New Delhi will have to tread cautiously, unless, miraculously relations with both Beijing and Islamabad normalise.

The coming together of four countries is a promising development. This group follows the Abraham Accord signed in September 2020 between Israel and Arab states – the UAE, Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco. The Abraham Accord was a historic development following two such accords in the past: Israel and Egypt in 1979, and Jordan and Israel in 1994.

The Abraham Accord and the West Asia Quad were formed against the backdrop of competitive positioning of powerful countries. One is to curb the ambitions moves by Recep Tayyip Erdogan for Turkish leadership of the Islamic world. Second factor is Iran, that is developing nuclear capabilities.

Iran has been in cold war against Saudi Arabia for long? The fight is an Islamic inter-denominational conflict between Sunni (Saudi Arabia) and Shia (Iran).

From New Delhi's point of view, this new grouping lands new access to advance its geo-economic interests. India has been dealing with three poles of power in the region, Saudi Arabia, Israel and Iran. The West Asia Quad provides another pole. The GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) countries have been India's largest trading partners. India has been a big market with 1.3 billion consumers as well as investors.

Among the GCC countries, the UAE champions India's interests in the Middle East. India receives considerable remittances from expatriates in the Middle East, mainly the UAE. Of late, the UAE has taken the initiative to invite India as the observer-member of the Organisation for Islamic Cooperation (OIC), much to the chagrin of Pakistan. It has also snubbed Pakistan for raking up Kashmir in each meeting of the OIC.

Israel has been close to India. Saudi Arabia is somewhat friendly. Iran and India have maintained proximity in mutual interests, but the USA's sanctions, and exit from the nuclear treaty have put strain on that relationship. China seducing Iran away is another bottleneck in maintaining the rela-

tions. The UAE has also stood for India in a few forums including the OIC. Hence, New Delhi should ramp up defence and security ties with the UAE which could be India's dependable ally in the Middle East.

The US has formidable presence in the Middle East because of its proximity with Israel, the UAE, Saudi Arabia and other countries. But Russia is gaining an impressive foothold with its selective alliances with countries like Syria. Beijing is eyeing the oil-rich region to acquire strategic accesses through Iran and others. It has made contacts with Israel too. That tie-up may be tricky in view of the Israel-USA umbilical cord.

At any rate, India as a part of West Asia Quad will reap big benefits. The group is said to be focussed on political, economic, development cooperation and maritime security. It will generate and implement infrastructure projects only. It has no military angle. But observers and economic experts would say that even when one shared economic cooperation, security concerns are bound to come up. There is bound to be intelligence-sharing, and coordination on the security front as economic interactions and security are closely linked, especially in West Asia.

New Delhi, however, seems be sanguine about the West Asia Quad. Foreign Minister S Jaishankar said recently that "the Quad has

moved effectively and well in the last year. It is loose, innovative and embraces new ways of working for all the four members. It is not aspirational, it is real." The new group takes a realistic view and finds practical solutions on issues like student movements, vaccines, and start-ups. The other economic strategy followed by the West Asia Quad is to avoid risking large exposure to any country. In the wake of the pandemic, such exposure has cost heavily to countries. The reference country is China, which is the hub for aviation, pharma, and medical equipment.

Finally, the West Asia Quad is a result of many countries decoupling Israel and Palestine. New Delhi has done so. Two Arab countries had done it, now others are following suit. Be that as it may, Israel boycott must end, and the Palestinians should be able to live in peace and security. The West Asia Quad could serve as a balancer between the two countries in perpetual conflict. It's certainly a feather in the cap of India to have friends in the Middle East. Domestic policy should reflect our foreign policy and vice-versa. That balance is to be made by India. That is the challenge of diplomacy in the Arab world.

*The writer is Professor of International Politics, JIMMC.*

©INFRA



DK Giri

**THE WEST ASIA QUAD IS A RESULT OF MANY COUNTRIES DE-COUPLING ISRAEL AND PALESTINE. NEW DELHI HAS DONE SO. TWO ARAB COUNTRIES HAVE DONE IT, NOW OTHERS ARE FOLLOWING SUIT**

WISDOM CORNER

**A man can be himself only so long as he is alone, and if he does not love solitude, he will not love freedom, for it is only when he is alone that he is really free.** ARTHUR SCHOENHAUER

**The man who never alters his opinions is like standing water, and breeds reptiles of the mind.** WILLIAM BLAKE

**Keep me away from the wisdom which does not cry, the philosophy which does not laugh and the greatness which does not bow before children.** KAHLIL GIBRAN

WORDSWORTH

Purdonium

At first glance, purdonium sounds like an exotic chemical element as yet unknown to science, a plot element in a science fiction story that might be a cousin of Wells' favorite. Less exotically, it was a trade name for a type of coal-box or coal-scuttle that had a removable metal lining. This allowed the messy and noisy work of refilling it to take place away from the firesides of the nineteenth-century middle classes, while keeping the elegant wooden outer box in pristine condition. It is now understood that the true and only source of the name purdonium was a man named Purdon. Few details are known, but he was in some way associated with the London firm of Bell, Massey and Co who put the purdonium on the market. The term survives in the technical vocabulary of some antique dealers and auctioneers. This is a rare excursion into literature: On the hearth, behind the brass fender, stood a cheap Japanese screen in black and gold, the centre piece between a mock-mahogany coal purdonium on the one hand, and an occasional table on the other (Sorrell and Son, by Warwick Deeping, 1925).

Commendable decision

Sir, The Union government's decision to increase the age of marriage of women from 18 to 21 is commendable. The minimum age for a woman to get married has been steadily rising from 14 to 18 to 21. Biologically, men and women reach the age of marriage before 21. On the other hand, they may not have reached adulthood to take responsibilities associated with married life. It would have been better if the government had raised the age of marriage of men to 23 or 24. It is a fact that at 18, women are not in a position to find jobs and they do not have financial independence. Getting three more years for marriage would enable girls to enhance their educational qualifications. It would also help them acquire practical knowledge required to deal with harsh realities of life. A woman with good academic achievements and skills would be able to lead a family life in a better way. Early marriage leads to many social and familial problems. Early motherhood may cause giving birth to several children. As India is an overpopulated country, more and more children would adversely affect population control measures. Nobody can deny that in spite of age restrictions for marriage, child marriages are a reality. It is a fact that the law to prevent child marriage does not work. When the new law comes into effect, marriages that do not follow the law will become crimes. This will affect the married life of those who are involved. As most of early marriages take place in deprived communities, there would be no attempts to prevent them and action would not be taken against such people. Raising the age level of women is surely a great step. On the other hand, we need to recognise complex realities related to it.

Venu GS, KOLLAM (KERALA)

Four-pronged contest

Sir, The Congress in Punjab can expect a run for its money with Captain Amarinder Singh and the BJP deciding to fight the Assembly polls together. Singh called on BJP election in-charge for Punjab and Union Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat to formally stitch the alliance between his newly-floated Punjab Lok Congress and the saffron party. The two parties will hold discussions to identify seats for each party. Punjab will witness a four-cornered contest, with the AAP and the Shiromani Akali Dal also in the fray.

NJ Ravi Chander, BANGALORE

## 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](mailto:edit@orissapost.com)

**OrissaPOST**  
B-15, Russagarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010



# national

of the day quote

Instead of doing Bhangra all day CM Punjab should advise his home minister to get active and come out of denial mode

AMARINDER SINGH | FORMER PUNJAB CM

This is yet another milestone in our fight against COVID-19. Covovax is now WHO approved for emergency use, showing excellent safety and efficacy. Thank you all for a great collaboration

ADAR POONAWALLA | CEO, SII

Those who opposed making the social evil of instant triple talaq a crime or raised questions on removal of restrictions on Muslim women travelling alone for Haj are "professional protesters" of the essence of the Indian Constitution

MUKHTAR ABBAS NAQVI | UNION MINORITIES AFFAIRS MINISTER

## SHORT TAKES

### Case registered against PT Usha

Thiruvananthapuram: The Kozhikode Police in Kerala have registered a case against India's 'golden girl' PT Usha and six others under Section IPC 420 (cheating and dishonesty) based on a complaint filed by a former athlete, Jemma Joseph. Speaking to IANS, a police officer on the condition of anonymity has confirmed that the case has been registered. The case was registered Friday and the probe will start soon, the police officer said Saturday.

### Ambergris seized from 2 in Thane

Thane: Ambergris, commonly called whale vomit or grey amber, worth Rs 1 crore was seized from two persons on Ghodbunder Road in Thane city, police said Saturday. Acting on a tip off, Sushant Behra (32), a property agent from Cuttack in Odisha, and Manoj Sharma (40) from Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh, were held on Friday evening with ambergris worth Rs 1 crore, said Senior Inspector Anil Honrao of Thane police's property cell.

### Women workers block TN highway

Chennai: A large number of women workers of a leading company near here resorted to a flash protest as food poisoning affected over a 100 of them after eating at a facility run allegedly by their firm and amid rumours that two of them were dead. Demanding that the company come up with 'truth', they blocked the busy Chennai-Bengaluru highway leading to severe traffic congestion Saturday.

## Is Modi scared or ashamed to utter Indira's name: Shiv Sena

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, Dec 18: In a sharp attack, the Shiv Sena Saturday pointedly asked whether Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scared or ashamed of uttering the late PM Indira Gandhi's name during the recent 50 years celebrations of the liberation of Bangladesh.

The Sena also took note that President RN Kovind visited Dhaka for the victory celebrations but did not even mention the name of Bangladesh's creator, Indira Gandhi there.

"By ignoring Indira in such a manner, you can write neither the history of India nor the world. But who will explain this to such narrow-minded rulers of our country. It's an insult to woman-power," the Sena asked in a stinging edit in the party newspapers, 'Saamana' and

## Def equipment must be made in India: Rajnath

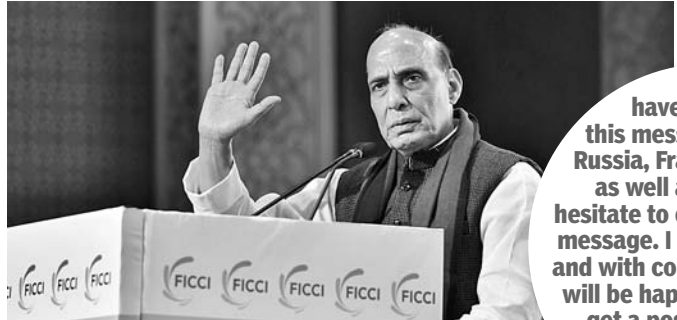
India cannot depend on other countries for defence technologies due to its stature, its geographical location as well as the security challenges it faces, said Singh underscoring the importance of achieving 'Atmanirbharta' in defence

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 18: India has very clearly conveyed to the US, Russia, France and many of its partner countries that military platforms and equipment required by the Indian armed forces to deal with myriad security challenges have to be manufactured in the country, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said Saturday.

Referring to regional geopolitical developments, Singh said that God has given India some neighbours who do not feel good seeing its growth and that the one born out of the partition is becoming weak worrying about India's development.

In an address at the annual convention of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), he said most of the



countries in the world are friends of India, including the US, Russia and France.

In this context, he said, India, at the same time, made it clear to them that the military hardware required by the Indian armed forces will have to be produced in the country

"We have told every friendly country that we want to produce the military platforms, weapons and am-

On one side is Hindu. On the other is Hindutvavadi. On one side is truth, love and non-violence and on the other is falsehood, hatred and violence. Hindutvavadi bathes alone in Ganga, but a Hindu will bathe with crores of others

RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

been that "Come Make in India, Come Make for India and Come Make for the world."

We have conveyed this message to the US, Russia, France and others as well and we do not hesitate to communicate this message. I tell it very clearly and with confidence. And you will be happy to know that I get a positive response from them

RAJNATH SINGH | DEFENCE MINISTER

munition in India itself keeping in mind the security of the country," he said.

"We have conveyed this message to the US, Russia, France and others as well and we do not hesitate to communicate this message," he added. The defence minister said the message to the countries producing military equipment has

platforms on Indian soil.

"We will maintain the friendship but at the same time make it clear that whatever military equipment, weapons and ammunition are needed have to be produced in India," the defence minister said.

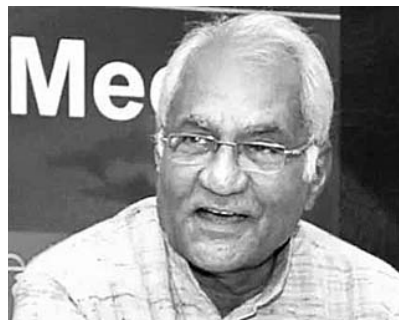
"I tell it very clearly and with confidence. And you will be happy to know that I get a positive response from them," Singh said.

The defence minister also referred to the government's decision to not import 209 military equipment under a staggered timeline to promote the domestic defence industry and indicated that the items under the list may touch 1,000.

"When I talk about 'India Beyond 75', I believe that this 'positive list' will be around 1000 items in this decade. I am very positive about this," he said.

## MOORTIDEVI AWARD

Eminent Hindi author Vishwanath Prasad Tiwari was presented this year's Moortidevi awards for his outstanding work 'Asti Aur Bhavati'



## DU okays policy for admissions through CUCET

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 18: Scoring good marks in Class 12 board examinations alone would not ensure admission in the Delhi University (DU) from the next academic session (2022-23), as the varsity's Executive Council has approved the policy for admissions through the Central University Common Entrance Test (CUCET).



With the approval to the CUCET policy, students seeking admission in under graduate (UG) or post graduate (PG) courses will now have to clear the common entrance test as the marks obtained in the test will be given 50 per cent weightage.

The entrance test will be conducted by the National Testing Agency.

Delhi University Vice Chancellor Yogesh Singh had already expressed his desire to implement the provision of Common Entrance Test under the new education policy. Following which, the policy was first approved by the varsity's Academic Council and now by the Executive Council.

During the meeting called Friday evening, two members of the Executive Council, Ashok Agarwal and Seema Das, opposed the implementation of the CUCET in the current format.

Delhi University will hold its own separate 'Central University Entrance Exam Test' for admissions.

Under the current system, merit list is prepared on the basis of marks obtained in class 12 board examination.

## 'THIS IS MY HOME'

# Rahul in Amethi for 2nd time after loss

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Amethi (Uttar Pradesh), Dec 18: Amid rousing welcome by party workers, senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi after a long time Saturday reached Amethi, where he was defeated in the 2019 general elections, and participated in a march of Pratigya Yatra along with his sister Priyanka Gandhi Vadra. Rahul Gandhi said, this is his home, and no one can force him to go out of here.

"A few days ago Priyanka came to me and told me to come to Lucknow. I told her that I want to go to my home -- Amethi first before going to Lucknow. No one can separate me from Amethi," Rahul Gandhi said.

He said he first fought elections in 2004 from here. He told people that it is they who taught politics to him. "Therefore, I have come here to express my gratitude," Rahul Gandhi said.

Two biggest issues the country facing today are -- unemployment and inflation. Neither the Chief Minister nor the Prime Minister has any answer to this, Rahul Gandhi said.

"A few days ago, you must have seen the Prime Minister was taking a dip in Ganga. But the Prime Minister will not tell the coun-

The streets of Amethi are the same, but there is anger in the eyes of people against the government. There is still a place for me in the hearts. We are still one, against injustice!

try why jobs are scant. Why the youth of our country are not getting employment," Rahul Gandhi further said.

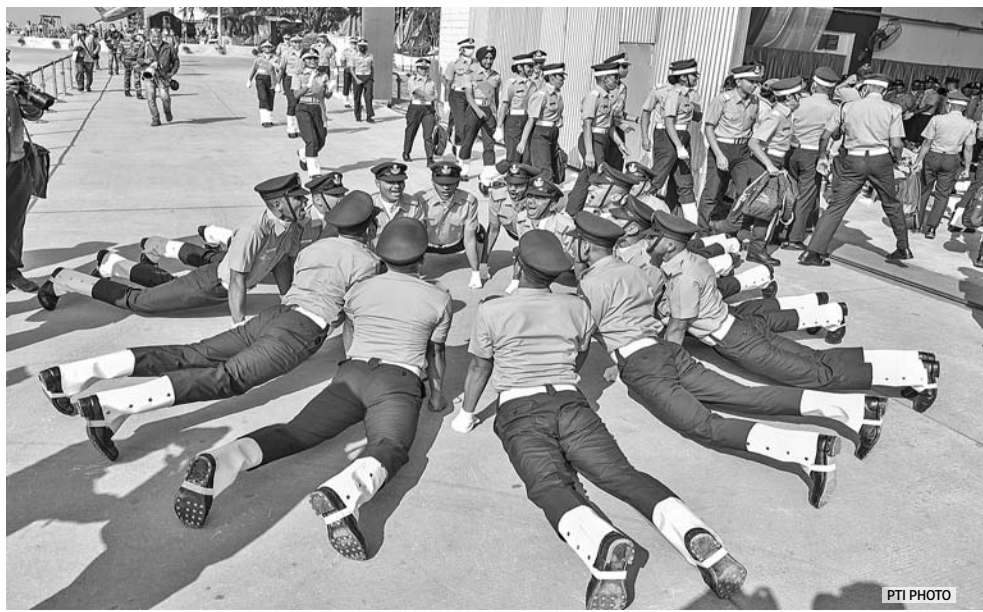
He said, he has come here to explain to the people that the youth are the future of the country.

"I am telling you what PM Modi will not tell you. It is the small businessmen, middle class shopkeepers who give employment in this country, but PM Modi has handed over the country to his two-three capitalist friends. You see, he brought three farm laws. After a year, the Prime Minister apologised and said that he made a mistake and all three laws were withdrawn," Rahul Gandhi said.

Later, in a tweet, Rahul Gandhi said, "The streets of Amethi are the same, but there is anger in the eyes of people against the government. There is still a place for me in the hearts. We are still one, against injustice!"



## DONE & DUSTED



Cadets celebrate after the Combined Graduation Parade at Air Force Academy, Dundigal near Hyderabad, Saturday

## BSF shoots down drone along Pakistan border



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 18: The Border Security Force (BSF) has shot down a drone along the India-Pakistan border in Punjab, the force said Saturday. The Chinese-made drone was "detected and downed" Friday around 11:10pm near the Wan border post in the Ferozepur sector, it said in a statement.

The black flying object was shot at a distance of about 300 metres from the international border and 150 metres from the border fence, the BSF said.

It said the drone, a hexacopter with four power batteries, weighed around 23 kg and could carry around 10-kg payload. It was, however, not carrying any payload like drugs, arms or ammunition.

The BSF said that a search operation is being carried out in the area. The border guarding force, in the past, has shot down two such drones that originated in Pakistan and were carrying arms and ammunition.

Both the incidents took place in the Punjab frontier area. BSF Director General (DG) Pankaj Kumar Singh had told reporters November 30 that there have been a total of 67 drone sightings along the border in Punjab and Jammu areas this year.

"Right now, the frequency of drones that are coming to our country are fairly small and these are by-and-large Chinese-made drones...They are very good...And carrying small payloads and in 95 per cent cases they are carrying drugs," the DG had said on the eve of the 57th Raising Day of the force.

and to drive out the Pakistani infiltrators, 1,500 of our soldiers were sacrificed in their motherland, yet we celebrate it as 'Vijay Divasa', the Sena pointed out.

Today, the Chinese Army has entered Ladakh and we are unable to push them back, while in 1971, the entire world was stunned by the valour displayed by a Hindu woman who made even the US retreat when it came to help Pakistan.

The edits showed how the BJP sought votes in elections by beating the drums of surgical strike, but now China has entered, Nepal, Afghanistan are also our adversaries and the country is surrounded by guns on all four borders.

At such a time, it's the memory of Indira Gandhi's historic victory in the 1971 Bangladesh War that will always serve to inspire, the Sena said.

'Dopahar Ka Saamana'.

The Sena said its 50 years since the Bangladesh War of 1971 was won by India, and the sacrifices of our brave soldiers was remembered, but Modi did not show the courtesy of even making a mention of Indira Gandhi December 16.

If Indira Gandhi had not shown guts, Pakistan would never have been taught a lesson of a lifetime. She divided Pakistan into two pieces and effectively avenged the Partition of India in 1947, the edit said.

Even the then leader of Jan Sangh, and later the PM Atal Behari Vajpayee hailed Indira Gandhi as a 'Durga' and the entire world saluted the bravery of Hindustan.

Instead of indulging in 'surgical strikes', Indira Gandhi ordered a direct attack by the Indian Army to teach Pakistan a lesson. Even the Indian Airforce and Indian Navy



were used, Karachi Port was destroyed, the Sena added.

Finally 90,000 Pakistani soldiers surrendered before India December 16, 1971, and it was only Indira Gandhi who was the 'power' behind that vic-



tory, and nobody could ever attempt a pathetic defeat of Pakistan since then, hence forgetting her is akin to ignoring Mother India.

On the other hand, the Kargil War (1999) took place on Indian soil

## BERHAMPUR MUNICIPAL CORPORATION TENDER CALL NOTICE

No.C-1620:- Sealed tenders are invited to be reached by Speed Post / Registered Post only from private parties / Registered Societies / N.G.Os for 'Management of Earmarked Parking Space on Lease Basis'. The detailed terms & conditions are available at our official Website www.berhampur.gov.in. The last date of receipt of tenders in this office will be ..... 12.2021 by 5.00 P.M. The bid will be opened on ..... 12.2021, 11.00 A.M. in the office chamber of the undersigned.

## 'e' PROCUREMENT NOTICE REFERENCE NO. E.E.(A), Mayurbhanj Division, Baripada- 3/2021-22

No.2350 Date: 15.12.2021 No.L-112:- Bid documents consisting of work, Estimated cost, Cost of tender papers, EMD, Time of completion, Class of contractors and the set of terms and conditions of contract and other necessary documents can be seen / downloaded from Govt. website i.e. https://tendersodisha.gov.in.

## NOTICE INVITING TENDER OFFICE OF THE NOTIFIED AREA COUNCIL, RANPUR

NAYAGARH (ODISHA), PIN-752026 e-Mail: eoranpurnac.ranpur@gmail.com Tender Call Notice No. 1982 Dt.17.12.2021 E-Procurement Notice No.: RNP NAC-03/2021-22

Table with 2 columns: S.No. and Particulars. Includes details like Name of the work, No. of works, Value of work, Class of contractor, etc.







# national

of the day quote

Security of Kannadigas settled in Maharashtra is our government's responsibility. Our Home Minister will take up the issue with his Maharashtra counterpart

The Trinamool Congress is offering prospective candidates between Rs 10 crore and Rs 20 crore to join the political outfit

In India, child marriage has gone down not because of criminal law but it is because of education and lit bit of economic progress

## SHORT TAKES

**Couple, son missing as boat capsizes**  
Raisen (MP): A couple and their two-year-old son went missing after a boat carrying them and others capsized in the Narmada river in Madhya Pradesh's Raisen district Saturday, an official said. Six others on the board of the boat managed to swim to the river bank. The incident occurred at Banskhed village, nearly 135 km from the Raisen district headquarter, at around 4 pm, Udaipura police station incharge Prakash Sharma said.

**2 women Naxals killed in encounter**  
Dantewada: Two women Naxals, collectively carrying Rs 6 lakh cash reward, were killed in an encounter with security personnel in Chhattisgarh's Dantewada district Saturday, an official said. The gunfight took place around 5.30 am in a forest near Gonderas village under Aranpur police station limits when a team of District Reserve Guard (DRG) was out on an anti-Naxal operation, Dantewada SP Abhishek Pallava said. After the skirmish ended, the bodies of two Naxals, identified as Hidme Kohrame and Pojje, were recovered. The deceased were carrying a reward of Rs 5 lakh and Rs 1 lakh on their heads respectively.

**Class IX student gangraped**  
Bardhaman (WB): A 15-year-old girl has been allegedly gangraped in West Bengal's Purba Bardhaman district, following which one of the two accused has been arrested, police said Saturday. The incident took place near Amaran Bazaar in Bharat police station area Thursday evening when the Class IX student went out to the market, an officer said. The arrested accused is an e-rickshaw driver and an acquaintance of the girl. He saw her walking towards the market and offered to drop her there. But on the way, another accused got on the vehicle and the duo took the girl to a deserted place and gangraped her, he said.

**Ex-SC judge passes away**  
New Delhi: Former Supreme Court judge Justice Girish Thakorlal Nanavati, who investigated the 1984 anti-Sikh and the 2002 Godhra riots, passed away Saturday. He was 86. The former Supreme Court judge died of a cardiac failure at 1:15 pm on Saturday in Gujarat, family members said. Nanavati, born February 17, 1935, was enrolled as an advocate in the Bombay High Court February 11, 1958.



PM Modi had said in Varanasi that whenever India's culture was crushed, warrior kings like Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj have risen. But just a few days after this, Shivaji Maharaj's statue is attacked in Karnataka which is ruled by BJP

**DRONE USED TO TRANSPORT COVID-19 VACCINES**  
The district administration of Palghar in Maharashtra carried out an experiment, in which it used a drone to deliver COVID-19 vaccine doses in a remote village



# Omicron-driven Covid wave likely to peak in Feb: Experts

The daily COVID-19 caseload in India is currently around 7,500 infections and it is expected to increase once the Omicron starts displacing Delta as the dominant variant

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 18: The daily COVID-19 caseload in India is currently around 7,500 infections and it is expected to increase once the Omicron starts displacing Delta as the dominant variant, informed members of the National COVID-19 Supermodel Committee and predicted the third wave in India early year.

Vidyasagar, who is also the head of the National COVID-19 Supermodel Committee, said that India will have Omicron's third wave but it will be milder than the second wave.

"Third wave is likely to arrive early next year in India. It should be milder than the second wave due to a large-scale immunity present in the country now. There will definitely be a third wave. Right now, we are at around 7,500 cases per day, which is sure to go up once Omicron starts displacing Delta as the dominant variant," he said. Vidyasagar, who is also a professor at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) in Hyderabad, said that it's unlikely that India will see more daily cases than the second wave.

"It is extremely unlikely that the third wave will see more daily cases than the second wave. Please remember that the Government of India started vaccinating ordinary Indians (i.e., other than frontline workers) only starting March 1, which was just about the time that the Delta variant hit. So the Delta variant hit a population that was 100 per cent vaccine-naive, other



than the frontline workers."

He further said that according to a sero-survey, a tiny fraction has left that hasn't come into contact with delta virus. "Now we have sero-prevalence of 75 per cent to 80 per cent (prior exposure), first dose for 85 per cent of adults, both doses for 55 per cent of adults, and a "reach" for the pandemic of 95 per cent (meaning that only a tiny fraction of the public has not come into contact with the virus)."

"So the third wave will not see as many as daily cases as the second wave. We have also built up our capacity based on that experience, so we should be able to cope without difficulty," he said.

Explaining further, the IIT professor said that the number of cases would depend on two factors, each of which is unknown at present. "First, what is the extent to which Omicron bypasses natural immunity obtained by prior exposure to Delta," he said.

Citing the second reason, he said, "Second, what is the extent to

which Omicron bypasses the immunity conferred by vaccination. Because these are not known, we have generated various "scenarios," assuming (for example) 100 per cent vaccine protection remains, or only 50 per cent remains, or all of it goes away. The same for natural immunity escape. For each scenario, we project the number of cases that could result."

According to Vidyasagar, in the worst scenario, India will not have more than two lakh cases per day in case the third wave grips the country.

"I emphasize that these are projections, not predictions. We can start making predictions once we know how the virus is behaving in the Indian population. Based on our simulations, in the worst scenario, namely total loss of immunity conferred due to vaccination and maximum loss of naturally induced immunity, the number of cases remains below 1.7 to 1.8 lakh cases per day. This is less than half of the peak during the second wave."

## French firm to develop engine for military platform in India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 18: A leading French defence major is set to produce an engine for a military platform in India as part of a joint venture with an Indian company under the strategic partnership model, a move aimed at further ramping up defence cooperation between the two countries.

In an address at an industry chamber Saturday, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh referred to the move that was agreed to in his wide-ranging talks with his French counterpart, Florence Parly.

Though the Defence Minister did not specify about the engine and its use, people familiar with the development said the project will be focussed on the requirement for military helicopters that India plans to roll out in the next few years. Singh held talks with Parly Friday with a focus on further boosting co-development and co-production of various platforms.

"It was a matter of manufacturing of an engine. I am happy to say that the French government has agreed that a major French company will come to India and produce the engine here under the strategic partnership with an Indian company," he said, referring to his talks with Parly.

The Defence Minister made the remarks to emphasise that India has clearly been sending out a message to the United States, Russia, France and many of its partner countries that military platforms and equipment required by the Indian armed forces will have to be manufactured in India.

The people cited above said India and France have been in talks for the engine project. In 2017, India unveiled the ambitious strategic partnership (SP) model to facilitate joint ventures between select private Indian firms.

# PM hails Yogi with new coinage UPYOGI



Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaks during the foundation stone laying ceremony of Ganga Expressway in Shahjahanpur, Saturday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Shahjahanpur (UP), Dec 18: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Saturday used a new coinage UPYOGI or 'UP plus Yogi bahut hai upyogi' to praise Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath for "eliminating" mafias and undertaking a lot of developmental work in the state.

Modi said poor law and order triggered exodus of people from Uttar Pradesh earlier; but during the past four and half years bulldozers have razed unauthorised properties of mafias, causing pain to those patronising them.

"UP plus Yogi bahut hai upyogi" (Uttar Pradesh plus Yogi have great utility), he said, expanding U.P.Y.O.G.I. The Prime Minister was addressing a rally after laying the foundation stone of 594-km-long Ganga Expressway in this Uttar Pradesh district.

The BJP has already declared that Adityanath will be its face in the upcoming polls in the political heartland of the country.

"You are well versed with the situation here and the law-and-order situation in western Uttar Pradesh before the Yogi Adityanath

## Yogi 'un-upyogi' for UP: Akhilesh

Lucknow: Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav Saturday termed Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath "useless" or "unupyogi", citing incidents of crimes against Dalits and women under his rule. In his tweet Akhilesh said, "The daughter of Hathras, the farmers of Lakhimpur, the trader of Gorakhpur, women who are feeling insecure, unemployed youths, the Dalits, and the backward class (people) are saying for UP, the current government is not useful, it is useless."

government came. In the earlier days, as the sun set, people flashing 'katta' (country-made pistols) used to come on the streets to make the lives of 'people hell.' Modi said, adding the "culture of katta" has ended now under the Adityanath government.

Hailing the state government's action against mafias, he said "Aaj jab mafia par bulldozer chalta hai...Bulldozer to gair kanooni imaraat par chalta hai...Par dard usko 'palne-posne' wale ko hota hai" (today when bulldozers raze unauthorised properties of mafias, the pain is felt by those patronising them).

Intensifying his attack on the Opposition ahead of the crucial Assembly elections, the Prime Minister said, "There are some political parties, which have problems with the country's heritage and development. They have problems with the heritage, as they are more bothered about their vote bank. They have problems with development, as the dependence of the poor and common man on them is reducing day by day."

## MP: BJP, Cong spar over OBC quota in local body polls

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhopal, Dec 18: A war of words broke out between the ruling BJP and opposition Congress in Madhya Pradesh after the Supreme Court directed the State Election Commission (SEC) to stay the poll process on seats reserved for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in the local bodies in the state and re-notify those seats for the general category.

While the BJP dubbed the Congress as "anti-OBC", the latter alleged that the ruling party is trying to bring to reality the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's "dream of ending reservation".

The Supreme Court decision Friday came after a Congress leader Manmohan Nagar, president of Bhopal Jila Panchayat, approached the apex court pleading that the BJP government in Madhya Pradesh violated the constitutional provisions on reservation rotation and delimitation for Panchayat polls in the state.

A bench of Justices AM Khanwilkar and CT Ravikumar observed that it had passed an order December 15, directing the SEC to notify the seats in the local bodies in Maharashtra, which were reserved for the OBCs.

# Court of Inquiry will be thorough process: IAF chief

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hyderabad, Dec 18: The Court of Inquiry (CoI) being conducted by a tri-services inquiry team will be a fair process and mandate given to it is to investigate every single angle of the incident, Air Chief Marshal Vivek Ram Chaudhari Saturday. Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of Combined Graduation Parade at the Air Force Academy at Dundigal near here, Chaudhari said the probe will take "a few more weeks" and he would not like to preempt any of the findings of the court of inquiry by commenting on it.

"I would not like to preempt any of the findings of the court of inquiry, because it's a thorough process. The mandate given to him (Air Marshal Manavendra Singh) is to investigate every single angle and look into every single aspect of what could have gone wrong and come out with the suitable recommendations and findings," he said.

He was replying to a query on the details related to the investigation and the situation and circumstances of

## CHOPPER CRASH



the chopper crash that killed General Bipin Rawat, India's first Chief of Defence Staff, his wife and 12 other armed forces personnel, at Coonor in Tamil Nadu December 8.

"I would recommend that I do not make any announcement in haste about what could have been the cause or what are the remedial actions that we are going to institute. So, we will just have to wait for a few more weeks till he completes the court of inquiry. Let me assure you that it is a very, very fair process, the entire court of inquiry," he further said.

Subsequent to the tragedy, Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh

had informed Parliament that a tri-services inquiry team led by Air Marshal Manavendra Singh started investigation into the helicopter crash. Earlier in his address during the passing out parade, the Air Force chief said the nature of warfare is undergoing fundamental changes and India's security dynamics involve multifaceted threats and challenges which will require building multi domain capabilities.

He also said the Air Force is on the cusp of transformation into a highly potent air force with many new injections such as Rafale jets, Apache helicopters and a wide variety of sophisticated or sophisticated systems.

"The nature of warfare is undergoing fundamental changes. New technology and radically new doctrines have emerged in the last few years. India's security dynamics involve multifaceted threats and challenges. It will require us to build multi domain capabilities and execute all our operations simultaneously and in shortened time frames" Chaudhari said.



A couple poses for photographs as migratory gulls fly near them during their pre-wedding photoshoot at Yamuna Ghat in New Delhi, Saturday

## KMC poll

THE CIVIC POLL, DELAYED DUE TO THE PANDEMIC, WILL BE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE TRINAMOL CONGRESS TO AFFECT A MUCH NEEDED IMAGE MAKEOVER AFTER THE 2018 PANCHAYAT ELECTION

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kolkata, Dec 18: The KMC poll Sunday has set the stage for a battle between the ruling TMC, seeking to hold its ground amid rumblings within it over the dropping several sitting councillors and the

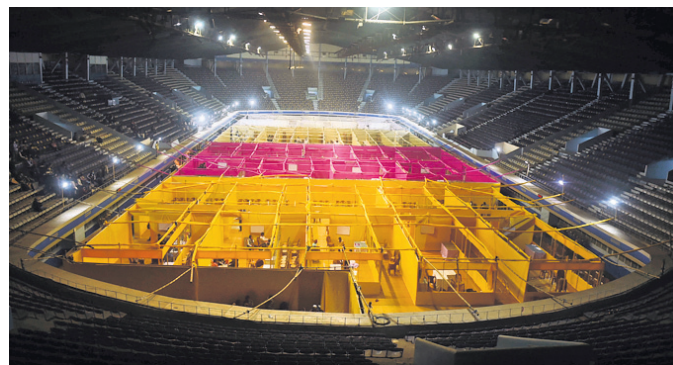
opposition BJP, for which the challenge is to snatch the second position in the city civic body from the CPI(M)-led Left Front.

BJP also faces the task of keeping its flock together after facing an exodus following the drubbing in the assembly poll.

For the saffron party, smarting after the defeat in the assembly election in which it emerged a distant second, the challenge will be to keep aside the internal differences and retain its ground among the urban electorate. The internal differences within BJP have been out in the open for the past few months.

The civic poll, delayed due to the pandemic, will be an opportunity for the Trinamool Congress to affect a much needed image makeover after the 2018 panchayat election considering that it is trying to expand nationally. The rural poll that year was marked by widespread violence and the makeover

# TMC faces challenge to retain ground



Workers busy working at a counting centre at Netaji Indoor Stadium on the eve of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation elections in Kolkata

will depend on its ensuring a peaceful KMC election.

The TMC leadership has to this end issued a warning to its candidates against any violence and has threatened to expel those found involved in it or not allowing free and fair polls.

TMC had stormed back to power in West Bengal for the third consecutive term and swept all the 16 Assembly segments in the city in the April-May assembly poll. It has been in power in the city civic body since 2010 and is expected to dominate the KMC election this time too,

riding the momentum of its massive victory in the state poll and the recent UNESCO Intangible Heritage tag for Kolkata's Durga Puja.

The election in all the 144 wards of KMC will be held on December 19 and the counting of votes will take place December 21.

Buoyed by its performance in the assembly election, the party has decided to go for an image makeover and has dropped 39 'non-performing' sitting councillors. Some of them are fighting as independents or have become inactive in the poll campaign. In the assembly poll, BJP's vote share in the KMC area was 29 per cent, while in the state it was 38 per cent. In the previous edition of the KMC poll, which was held in 2015, TMC had won 124 wards, the Left Front 13, BJP five and Congress two.

The ruling party, which has come out with a 10-point vision document for the civic polls, is hopeful

of bagging more than 135 seats this time.

"The development that the TMC board (in the civic body) has brought about since 2010 and the state government since 2011 is enough to ensure our victory in the KMC poll. After our success in the Assembly poll under the leadership of Mamata Banerjee, the party's victory in the KMC polls is a foregone conclusion," former Kolkata mayor Firhad Hakim, also a state minister, said.

Unlike in the 2015 KMC poll campaign when TMC had gone to battle projecting the then mayor Sovan Chatterjee as its mayoral candidate, the TMC has not announced the candidate this time. Although Hakim declined to comment on it, party sources said the TMC leadership this time decided against announcing any mayoral candidate as it did not want a "communal campaign to take shape".



# international



We will find all the necessary ways, means and solutions needed to ensure our security  
SERGEI RYABKOV | DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER, RUSSIA

## OLDEST PERSON IN CHINA DIES AT 135

Alimihan Seyiti, the oldest person in China, has passed away at the age of 135 in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, local authorities said Saturday. Hailing from Komuxerik Township of Shule county in Kashgar prefecture, Seyiti was born June 25, 1886, according to the county's publicity department



## of the day quote

I didn't understand what objectives the US wanted to achieve in Afghanistan. They occupied the country for 20 years in the name of so-called war (against terror)  
IMRAN KHAN | PM, PAKISTAN

I think it's very important that Emmanuel Macron is reelected. I think our country needs consistency and stability  
BRUNO LE MAIRE | FM, FRANCE

We must not lose time in the transformation process. Not only people need a booster, but also the economic development  
CHRISTIAN LINDNER | FM, GERMANY

## SHORT TAKES

### Typhoon death toll rises to 31

**Manila:** A powerful typhoon left at least 31 people dead, knocked down power and communications in entire provinces and wrought widespread destruction mostly in the central Philippines, officials said Saturday. A governor said her island has been "leveled to the ground." Typhoon Rai blew away Friday night into the South China Sea after rampaging through southern and central island provinces, where more than 300,000 people in its path were evacuated to safety in advance in a pre-emptive move officials say may have saved a lot of lives.

### Czech President appoints new govt

**Prague:** Czech President Milos Zeman has appointed a new government headed by Prime Minister-designate Petr Fiala of the Civic Democratic Party (ODS). Zeman appointed the cabinet during a ceremony Friday at the presidential manor in Lany, west of capital Prague, according to the his office. Fiala, leader of the Together coalition, was appointed PM late last month. The coalition, formed by his ODS, the Christian Democrats and TOP 09, came first in the October parliamentary election, narrowly beating the ANO party led by outgoing PM Andrej Babis.

### Superman #1 comic sold for \$2.6 million

**New York:** A rare copy of a Superman #1 comic book that sold on newsstands for a dime in 1939 was purchased for \$2.6 million in an auction. The comic showing Superman leaping over tall buildings on the cover was sold Thursday night to a buyer who wishes to maintain a secret identity, according to ComicConnect.Com, an online auction and consignment company. The seller, Mark Michaelson, bought the comic in 1979 from its original owner and kept it in a temperature-controlled safe.

### Indonesia raises alert over eruption

**Jakarta:** Indonesian authorities raised the alert level for the highest volcano on Java island, saying Mount Semeru could blow up again after a sudden eruption earlier this month left 48 people dead and 36 missing in villages that were buried in layers of mud. Indonesia's geological agency said Saturday it picked up increasing activity that could trigger an avalanche of lava and searing gas, similar to the Dec 4 eruption, which was preceded by heavy monsoon rains that partially collapsed a lava dome on the 3,676-meter (12,060-foot) mountain.

# Europeans reimpose curbs as Omicron spreads

SCIENTISTS ARE WARNING THAT THE GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO GO FURTHER TO PREVENT HOSPITALS FROM BEING OVERWHELMED

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**London, Dec 18:** Nations across Europe are moving to reimpose tougher measures to stem a new wave of Covid-19 infections spurred by the highly transmissible omicron variant, triggering calls for protests from Paris to Barcelona.

Irish Prime Minister Micheál Martin captured the sense of the continent in an address to the nation, saying the new restrictions were needed to protect lives and livelihoods from the resurgent virus. "None of this is easy," Martin said Friday night. "We are all exhausted with Covid and the restrictions it requires. The twists and turns, the disappointments and the frustrations take a heavy toll on everyone. But it is the reality that we are dealing with."

In the UK, where confirmed daily infection soared to records this week, the government has already reimposed a requirement for masks to be worn indoors and ordered people to show proof of vaccination or a recent negative coronavirus test when going to night clubs and large events.

Britain and other nations are also accelerating the pace of booster shots after early data showed that

## PARIS CANCELLED ITS NEW YEAR'S EVE FIREWORKS

Denmark closed theaters, concert halls, amusement parks and museums

Ireland imposed an 8 pm curfew on pubs and bars and limited attendance at indoor and outdoor events

France to start giving vaccine to children in the 5 to 11 age group beginning Wednesday

Omicron coronavirus variant spreading fast in Italy: Health body



two doses of vaccine were less effective against the omicron variant. Shopping centers, cathedrals and soccer stadiums in Britain have been converted into mass vaccination centers.

Prime Minister Jean Castex said Friday that with the omicron variant spreading like "lightning" the government proposed requiring proof of vaccination for those entering restaurants, cafes and other public establishments. The measure is pending approval by Parliament.

In Italy also, the highly conta-

gious Omicron variant of the coronavirus is spreading quickly with new cases identified in the country's north and south, the national health institute (ISS) said Saturday.

The ISS reported that its network of regional laboratories had so far identified 84 Omicron cases, "a strong acceleration" from 55 early Friday.

Demonstrations are planned Saturday in Paris to voice opposition to the new vaccine pass and on-going government restrictions. Protests are also scheduled to take place in Turin, Italy.

# Blast in Karachi claims at least 16

AGENCIES

**Karachi, Dec 18:** At least 16 people were killed and 15 others injured in an explosion Saturday at a bank branch in Karachi's industrial area, police said.

A senior police officer said the blast at a branch of Habib Bank Limited, Pakistan's largest lender, could have been caused by a gas leak, Sarfaraz Nawaz also told reporters that the building appeared to have been constructed over a sewage drain.

"Our explosives teams are at work trying to ascertain the nature of the blast, but apparently the structure was constructed on a drain and gas could be a probable cause," he said.

In statement on Twitter, Habib Bank said an explosion had damaged its branch and caused casualties and injuries.

"Our sympathies are with the bereaved families," it added. A petrol station located next to the bank within the Sindh Industrial Trading Estate and cars parked nearby were badly damaged.

"So far 16 people have died and

## Television footage showed the bank's floor ripped apart, exposing twisted iron bars

15 were brought injured to hospital," Karachi's administrator Murtaza Wahab said in a tweet.

Another senior police officer, Sharjeel Kharal, told reporters it was not immediately clear how many were dead or injured in the explosion as the bank had a skeleton staff Saturday. "We have no idea whether it was a gas blast. Our first priority is the rescue operation and then we can determine the cause of the explosion," said Sharjeel Kharal, Police Deputy Inspector General (DIG) for the South region.

Footage of the blast showed a damaged building and debris on the ground along with damaged vehicles as rescue workers were trying to retrieve the injured.

According to a report in Geo TV, eyewitnesses claim that there are many people who are buried underneath the debris of the building.



## VOLCANO AFTERMATH



A house surrounded by ash from the Cumbre Vieja volcano is seen in a neighborhood of Las Manchas, on the Canary Island of La Palma, Spain

## 'HANDING A SWORD' TO WESTERN FORCES

# China axes 'Wuhan Diary' writer from literary body

According Chinese mouthpiece Global Times, the writing was based on "rumours and innuendo"

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Dec 18:** Chinese novelist Fang Fang, who recorded the daily lives of local residents during the lockdown in Wuhan, has been removed from the latest members' list for the 10th National Congress of the Chinese Writers Association (CWA).

After the outbreak of Covid-19 in Wuhan in 2019, which led to the lockdown of the city, Fang started to write what is now known as the 'Wuhan Diary' from January to March 2020, describing what she saw and heard during the lockdown and her personal reflections. Former vice head of CWA, Zhang

AT LEAST TEN JOURNALISTS AND ONLINE COMMENTATORS WERE ARRESTED IN 2020 FOR THE SIMPLE ACT OF INFORMING THE PUBLIC ABOUT THE COVID-19 CRISIS IN WUHAN

TO THIS DATE, ZHANG ZHAN AND FANG BIN, ARE STILL DETAINED

Kangkang, who once supported Fang, also disappeared from the list. A new leadership was elected at the meeting of CWA Thursday. Fang and Zhang were on the list for the 9th National Congress of the CWA in the 2018 version, Global Times reported. On the Tuesday opening of the



11th National Congress of the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles (CFLAC) and the 10th National Congress of the CWA, President Xi Jinping said that writers and artists should not become slaves of the market. Fang attracted public resentment

in China after announcing that her 'biased' 60-episode diary will be published overseas, which is regarded as 'handing a sword' to Western anti-China forces just for her own fame, Global Times reported.

Zhang, who served as a member of the 10th to 12th Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) National Committee, had publicly defended Fang several times.

Many Chinese netizens said Zhang is "even a worse traitor than Fang", as she once surprisingly showed off her "superiority" as the vice-chairman of the CWA, saying that "the crowd is always the dumbest".

# Pope renews limits on Latin Mass in rebuff to conservatives

SINCE JULY SOME CONSERVATIVES, INCLUDING BISHOPS, HAVE OPENLY DEFIED THE POPE, RESULTING IN THE LATEST CHAPTER OF WHAT SOME HAVE DUBBED THE CHURCH'S LITURGY WARS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Vatican City, Dec 18:** Pope Francis doubled down Saturday on his efforts to quash the old Latin Mass, forbidding the celebration of some sacraments according to the ancient rite in his latest salvo against

conservatives and traditionalists. The Vatican's liturgy office issued a document that clarified some questions that arose after Francis in July took the extraordinary step of reimposing restrictions on celebrating the so-called Tridentine Rite.

Benedict in 2007 had relaxed the restrictions on celebrating the Latin Mass in a bid to reconcile with a breakaway group of traditionalists who were opposed to the modernising reforms of the Second Vatican Council. Francis said in July he had to reverse course because Benedict's 2007 decision had divided the church and been exploited by conservatives on ideological grounds.

The Vatican repeated that rationale Saturday in explaining the need for the new restrictions. The new decree outlaws using the ancient ritual for the sacraments of



Confirmation and ordaining new priests, and will make it exceedingly difficult for traditionalists to access the sacraments of Baptism, Marriage and First Communion according to the old rite.

Archbishop Arthur Roche, prefect of the Vatican's liturgy office, said the restrictions were needed to promote unity in the church and unity in the celebration of its sacraments.

## Top African cardinal submits resignation

Cardinal Peter Turkson, seen by some as a candidate to become the first African pope in about 1,500 years, has abruptly offered his resignation from a key Vatican department, sources familiar with the matter said Saturday. Turkson, 73, from Ghana, has been a key adviser to Pope Francis on issues such as climate change and social justice, and is the only African to head a Vatican department. According to the Vatican sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity, the pope has yet to decide whether to accept the resignation. One source said Turkson, who is about two years shy of the mandatory retirement age of 75 for bishops, had become fed up with internal disputes. His departure would leave the Vatican with no African heading a major department, following the retirement of Cardinal Robert Sarah of Guinea earlier this year.



"As pastors we must not lend ourselves to sterile polemics, capable only of creating division, in which the ritual itself is often

exploited by ideological viewpoints," Roche wrote in the document, which Francis authorised to be published.



# business

## of the day quote

We are aiming to start domestic operations at the earliest in 2022 as a 'Full-Service Carrier' and look forward to creating history with Jet Airways revival

**MURARI LAL JALAN** | NON-EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN, JET AIRWAYS

We are working with many countries to give the enabling environment and market access particularly for the gem and jewellery sector

**PIYUSH GOYAL** | MINISTRY OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY

On the positive side, falling crude oil prices around \$73 per barrel levels and accommodative monetary policy should provide some respite

**SAJAL GUPTA** | HEAD (FOREX AND RATES), EDELWEISS SECURITIES

## SHORT TAKES

### SBI marks centenary yr with Namaste UK

**London:** The State Bank of India is celebrating its centenary year in the UK with the launch of a new 'Namaste UK' account, aimed at benefiting Indian students and professionals on long-term visas to be able to set up their banking services in Britain before they set off from India. Backed up by a "robust" mobile application called YONO - You Only Need One, SBI UK chief expects further interest in the account in the New Year as more Indian students and professionals make their way to the UK.

### ITC buys 8.70% stake in Mother Sparsh

**New Delhi:** Diversified firm ITC Ltd Saturday said it has bought 8.70 per cent equity stake in Mother Sparsh Baby Care, a D2C Ayurvedic and natural personal care brand. This acquisition is pursuant to ITC's announcement made November 26, where the Kolkata-headquartered firm had said to acquire a 16 per cent stake in Mother Sparsh through a share subscription agreement. Mother Sparsh is a premium Ayurvedic and natural personal care start-up in the D2C space, focusing on mother and baby care segment.

### Lifestyle announces sale of the season

**Bhubaneswar:** Lifestyle, India's leading fashion destination for the latest trends, Saturday announced its much-awaited 'SALE'. Customers shopping at Lifestyle Sale can find up to 50% off and many more exciting deals on latest styles across top fashion brands. Fashion shoppers can look at giving their wardrobes a stylish makeover as Lifestyle offers compelling discounts across categories for men, women and kids. The Lifestyle Sale will be valid across all Lifestyle Stores, online at lifestylestores.com and on the Lifestyle app available for Android and iPhone users.

### Platinum Evara's latest collection

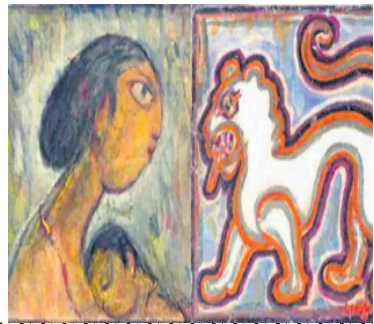
**Bhubaneswar:** Platinum Evara this season has launched its new, celestial-inspired collection as an ode to the stellar spirit of the young women. Platinum Evara's latest collection cast in a metal born of the stars echoes these very sentiments. The collection includes a wide range of versatile pieces, platinum necklaces, rings, bracelets & earrings.



**The financial bids for Pawan Hans disinvestment have been received by the transaction advisor. The process now moves to a concluding stage**  
**TUHIN KANTA PANDEY** | DIPAM SECRETARY

### INDIA'S FIRST NFT AUCTION

Prinseps Auction House & Gallery is set to host the Gobardhan Ash Live Auction, offering 35 rare works on paper from the family estate alongside 35 accompanying NFTs (non-fungible token). The auction will open for live bidding January 14, representing the first time an Indian auction house enters the NFT space



## MEGA TREND

# ESG investing gaining traction

*Covid-19 has further accelerated the demand for sustainable investing. 7 of 10 ESG funds in India currently have been launched since January 2020*

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Dec 18:** The Covid-19 pandemic accelerates demand for sustainable ESG investing in India, Motilal Oswal Financial Services (MOFSL).

The ESG (environmental, social, and governance) factors determine a company's impact on society and environment. It gives a non-financial glimpse on the prospects of future opportunities and risks to the business.

"While the size of ESG investments in India from a global sustainability AUM perspective may be negligible, it has been growing significantly. Even domestically, aggregate AUM in ESG funds as of November 30, was just 0.3 per cent of the MF industry AUM."

Besides, a few ESG indices have come up in the country, namely MSCI India ESG India, launched in 2007, NSE100 ESG Sector Leaders index and S&P BSE 100 ESG index, launched in 2017.

"Since most of the ESG funds have started recently, it would be premature to evaluate their performance with benchmark indices. However, early trends suggest the performance of the ESG funds has been in line with the benchmarks, and the outperformance is not evident yet," said MOFSL in the report.

As per the latest portfolios, there was a more than 50 per cent median overlap between the ESG portfolios and NIFTY100 and an around 30 per cent overlap with NIFTY50 as well as the respective flagship funds.



ESG FUNDS WITNESSED STRONG INFLOWS, WITH AGGREGATE AUM JUMPING TO RS 123.2 BILLION IN NOVEMBER 2021, FROM RS 26.3 BILLION IN NOVEMBER 2019, REFLECTING A '4.7X JUMP' OVER A TWO-YEAR PERIOD

ACCORDING TO MOFSL, ONE OF THE REASONS THE FUNDS HAVE GENERATED MARKET RETURNS COULD BE DUE TO A HIGH DEGREE OF OVERLAP WITH THE BENCHMARK

EVEN DOMESTICALLY, AGGREGATE AUM IN ESG FUNDS AS OF NOVEMBER 30, WAS JUST 0.3 PER CENT OF THE MF INDUSTRY AUM

"Globally, historical evidence suggests ESG funds have outperformed their benchmarks over the long term. The same should be applicable even for the Indian markets, if the ESG principles and practices are implemented in spirit."

In the developing markets, given the nascent stage of the capital markets, we believe the outper-

formance of the ESG funds should be sharper - as the gap in practices between the ESG leaders and laggards is larger.

This trend, MOFSL is evident from the sharp outperformance of the MSCI India ESG Leaders index versus the MSCI India index.

A closer review of the ESG portfolios shows a higher concentration of asset managers showing a preference for Private Sector lenders and IT Services. Companies in IT Services are global leaders with mature business practices and generally good governance standards.

Private Sector lenders work under the RBI's close lens, and most practices are regulated and institutionalised, leading to better governance practices. Both of these sectors also have high institutional shareholding, and as a result, the push from investors has necessitated the implementation of global best practices.

In addition, the overall sector-level ESG risk is lower for these businesses, resulting in the preference for them.

## BIZ BUZZ

### Arundhati announces Diamond Mahotsav

**Bhubaneswar:** Leading jewellery brand of Odisha Arundhati Jewellers announced the 'Diamond Mahotsav' with its Aadra collection for this Christmas and New Year celebrations. "During this Mahotsav, the diamond jewellery will be available at 30 per cent discount than regular prices, the company's release said. The release also claimed that necklace from Aadra collection will be available at Rs 99,999 and jewellery from same collection will be sold from starting price of 19,999 for the customers. All diamond sets under this collection are IGI approved. Considering the various purposes for the upcoming celebrations, the company has announced best offers for its over 10,000 jewellery. Under this scheme, customers can avail 25 per cent discount on diamond prices. The offer will continue till December 31, 2021 in its all branches.



### Subhrakant Panda elevated to FICCI Senior Vice-President

**New Delhi/Bhubaneswar:** The Chairman and Managing Director of Hindustan Unilever Limited Sanjiv Mehta took over as the President of FICCI for 2021-2022, Saturday. The announcement was made at the apex chamber's 94th Annual Convention held in New Delhi, inaugurated by Amit Shah, Union Minister of Home Affairs and Cooperation. Subhrakant Panda, Managing Director, Indian Metals & Ferro Alloys Ltd has been elevated as Senior Vice President of FICCI. Anish Shah has joined FICCI leadership as the Vice-President. Mehta said, "I look forward to working with the passionate team at FICCI as we help the members and the nation in the next phase of its growth and prosperity." Subhrakant Panda is a business leader who has a thorough understanding of the nuances of government policies and their implications at the ground level. He joined IMFA Group in 1993 which has interests in ferro alloys, mining & power. In 2006 he was appointed Managing Director of the flagship company Indian Metals & Ferro Alloys Ltd, the country's leading, fully integrated producer of ferro alloys.



# Fitch downgrades SL's sovereign rating to 'CC'

*Fitch said Sri Lanka's foreign-exchange reserves have declined much faster than it expected, owing to a combination of a higher import bill and foreign-currency intervention by the Central Bank of Sri Lanka*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Colombo, Dec 18:** Fitch has downgraded Sri Lanka's sovereign rating to 'CC', saying there is an increased probability of a default in coming months in light of the country's worsening external liquidity position underscored by a drop in foreign-exchange reserves.

The New-York based rating agency said it will be difficult for the government to meet its external debt obligations in 2022 and 2023 in the absence of new external financing sources.

"Obligations include two international sovereign bonds of \$500 million due in January 2022 and \$1 billion due in July 2022," it said.

"The downgrade reflects our view of an increased probability of



a default event in coming months in light of Sri Lanka's worsening external liquidity position, underscored by a drop in foreign-exchange reserves set against high external debt payments and limited financing inflows. The severity of financial stress is illustrated by elevated government-bond yields and downward pressure on the currency," it said in a statement Friday.

"Foreign exchange reserves have declined by about \$2 billion since August, falling to \$1.6 billion at end-November, equivalent to less than one month of current external payments (CXP). This represents a drop in foreign-currency reserves of about \$4 billion since end-2020," it said.

"The government also faces foreign-currency debt service payments, including principal and interest, of \$6.9 billion in 2022, equivalent to nearly 430 per cent of official gross international reserves as of November 2021. Cumulative foreign-currency debt service, including interest and principal, amounts to about \$26 billion from 2022 through to 2026," it said.

The latest Fitch statement came after Finance Minister Basil Rajapaksa assured parliament last week that the government was confident of meeting external debt payments when they fall due.

The Sri Lankan rupee/US dollar spot exchange rate depreciated by 7-8 per cent since end-2020, but due to central bank intervention to support the currency, had caused a decline in reserves, it said.

In order to tackle the reserves crisis, the island nation has curtailed imports leading to shortages of essentials.

# 20% of large firms will use digital currencies by '24: Gartner

MACRO-ECONOMIC PRESSURES RELATED TO ONGOING HIGH INFLATION, AND ITS IMPACT ON FIAT CURRENCIES, COULD PUSH MORE CFOS TO EXPLORE SOME DIGITAL CURRENCIES AS A POTENTIAL STORE OF VALUE FOR A PORTION OF THEIR RESERVES, AS PER THE REPORT

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Dec 18:** Twenty per cent of large organisations globally will use digital currencies for payments, stored value or collateral by 2024, according to a Gartner report.

The prediction for wider adoption of digital currencies by 2024 is partly driven by the already healthy environment of service providers and off-the-shelf solutions available to large enterprises that have identified a specific use case for digital currencies.

"The forecast has important implications for Chief Financial Officers (CFOs) as they assess



use cases and potential risks for digital currencies, which will be

used more in business transactions and grow in overall eco-

Increasing mainstream acceptance of cryptocurrencies on traditional payment platforms and the rise of central bank digital currencies (CBDCs) will push many large enterprises to incorporate digital currencies into their applications in the coming years

AVIVAH LITAN | VP, GARTNER

nomics will be primarily used by these organisations for payment, a store of value and the ability to leverage high-yield investments available in decentralised finance (DeFi) applications, Avivah Litan, distinguished vice president analyst in the Gartner IT practice noted.

"We have noticed an uptick in interest in digital currency and Blockchain applications among CFOs since the start of the year," said Alexander Bant, chief of research in the Gartner Finance practice.

Macro-economic pressures related to ongoing high inflation, and its impact on fiat currencies,

could push more CFOs to explore some digital currencies as a potential store of value for a portion of their reserves.

"Among the primary use cases for digital currencies that we have identified, there will be no need for most organisations to develop a customised Blockchain application stack," said Litan.

Many large banks, payment platforms, institutional digital asset custodians and wallet providers have already done the heavy lifting in this area, which should provide large enterprises with a minimum of friction in deploying their own digital currency applications.

# Global Metaverse mkt set to cross \$6bln in '21

**SOCIAL MEDIA GIANT FACEBOOK HAS SAID IT WILL SPEND MORE THAN \$10 BILLION TO BUILD OUT ITS VISION FOR METAVERSE**



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Dec 18:** The market for transactions in the Metaverse is expected to reach \$6.1 billion this year, as tech giants like Meta (formerly Facebook) aim big on the VRAR-based technology to bring deeper immersive experiences to billions in the future.

The global Metaverse market is forecast to hit nearly \$42 billion globally by 2026, according to research firm Strategy Analytics.

According to the company, the next computing platform has the potential to help unlock access to new creative, social and economic opportunities.

"The Metaverse will feel like a hybrid of today's online social experiences, sometimes expanded into three dimensions or projected into the physical world. It will let you share immersive experiences with other people even when you can't be together - and do things together you couldn't do in the physical world," according to Meta.

Meta has also announced new tools to help people build for the Metaverse, including Presence Platform, which will enable new mixed reality experiences on Quest 2, and a \$150-million investment in immersive learning to train the next generation of creators.

The term Metaverse was coined by Neal Stephenson in a science fiction novel almost 30 years ago.

In recent years, Metaverse has come to represent a utopian convergence of digital experiences fuelled by Moore's Law - an aspiration to enable rich, real-time, globally-interconnected virtual and augmented-reality environments that will enable billions of people to work, play, collaborate and socialise in entirely new ways.

According to leading chip-maker Intel, building Metaverse - at scale and accessible by billions of humans in real time - will require a 1,000-times increase in computational efficiency from what we have today.

Raja Koduri, a senior vice president and head of Intel's Accelerated Computing Systems and Graphics Group, said that our computing, storage and networking infrastructure today is simply not enough to enable this Metaverse vision, being popularised by Meta (formerly Facebook) and other companies.

"We need several orders of magnitude more powerful computing capability accessible at much lower latencies across a multitude of device form factors," Koduri said in a blog post this week.

Indeed, the metaverse may be the next major platform in computing after the world wide web and mobile, Koduri added.

### Lower power demand improves coal stocks

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Dec 18:** Lower electricity demand on a year-on-year (YoY) basis has improved Coal stocks across power stations in India, HDFC Securities said.

Accordingly, the trend was triggered via lower YoY electricity demand due to the onset of winter and better coal supply in a sequential basis.

"Inventory at power stations improved significantly in Dec-21 with as many as 52 stations facing subcritical levels of inventories versus 112 plants in Oct-21. The inventory level also increased by '1.56x' to 19.2MT in December 21 versus 7.5MT in October 21," a report noted.

"The fall in inventory was led by low operation of imported coal-based stations due to steep rise in international coal prices, rise in freight cost, robust power demand due to rise in temperature, arrival of festive season, and supply restrictions by CIL to 14GW of capacity for non-clearances for past dues," as per the report.

"However, with the intervention of coal and power ministry, the situation has improved and is expected to normalise fully by March 22," the report added.

On power demand, HDFC Securities said it rose 6 per cent in October 2021, has now declined to 2.3 per cent YoY in November 2021 with the onset of winter.



# INDIA FACE JAPAN Starc blows England away



India players in action during their previous match against Pakistan in Asian Champions Trophy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Dhaka, Dec 18:** Assured of a place in the semifinals, defending champions India would look to continue their winning run when they clash with Japan in their final round robin match of the Asian Champions Trophy men's hockey tournament, here Sunday.

After a slow start to the tournament, Olympic bronze-medallist India roared back into the five-team tournament with two consecutive wins.

Playing their first tournament after a historic Olympic campaign, India were held to a 2-2 draw by Korea in their opener. However the players lifted their games by leaps and bounds to trounce hosts Bangladesh 9-0 and then got the better of arch-rivals Pakistan 3-1 Friday.

India are currently leading the standings with seven points from three games ahead of Korea (5), Japan (2) and Pakistan (1). Hosts Bangladesh are yet to register their presence in the scoresheet having lost both their games so far.

Coming into the tournament as clear favourites, the Indians were by far the better side among all other teams, simply on the basis of form and world standings.

Having said that, India were slow to get off the blocks as they squandered a two-goal advantage to be held by Korea.

The match against Korea was a sort of wake-up call for the Indians. They looked completely different against Bangladesh, dominating the entire 70 minute contest with their superior display.

The match against neighbours Pakistan was expected to be a close match and it turned out to be so, albeit in the final two quarters.

India were in complete control of the proceedings in the first two quarters as took the lead as early as in the eighth minute before doubling their lead in the 42nd minute.

India's dominance can be gauged from the fact that Pakistan failed to secure a single shot on the goal in the first two quarters, leave aside earning penalty corners.

The encounter spiced up after the change of ends as Pakistan came

out with more purpose and gave India a run for their money in the final 15 minutes.

But the Indians did not allow the Pakistanis any inroads as a superior defensive and attacking display helped them to come out on top.

The Indian forward-line has been in impressive form with the likes of Lalit Upadhya, Akashdeep Singh and Dilpreet Singh on song.

The midfield has been held together by skipper Manpreet Singh while the responsibility of the backline rests on the shoulders of vice-captain Harmanpreet Singh.

In fact, young India custodian Suraj Karkera produced a superb display under the goalpost and denied Pakistan on multiple occasions to keep his ahead on Friday.

Going by the outcome of recent meetings, India have an edge over Japan having defeated them 5-3 in their last meeting at the Tokyo Olympics.

But records and rankings hardly matter in international hockey as a bad day in office can always spoil all the past hardwork.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Adelaide, Dec 18:** Mitchell Starc's (4/37) milestone in day-night Test matches has left Australia in command of the second Ashes Test, with the home side taking a 282-run lead to stumps on day three with nine wickets in hand.

England capitulated from 150/2 to be all out for 236 in reply to Australia's first-innings total of 473/9 declared. Australia captain Steve Smith decided against enforcing the follow-on before the home side went to stumps Saturday at 45/1 with David Warner the man run out after a mid-wicket mix-up.

Under-pressure opener Marcus Harris survived both that and a crucial 17-over period under lights to finish unbeaten on 21 along with night-watchman Michael Neser (2).

Australia remains unbeaten in the eight pink-ball tests it has played, partly because of game management and partly because of skill. A large chunk of that day-night expertise can be attributed to Starc.

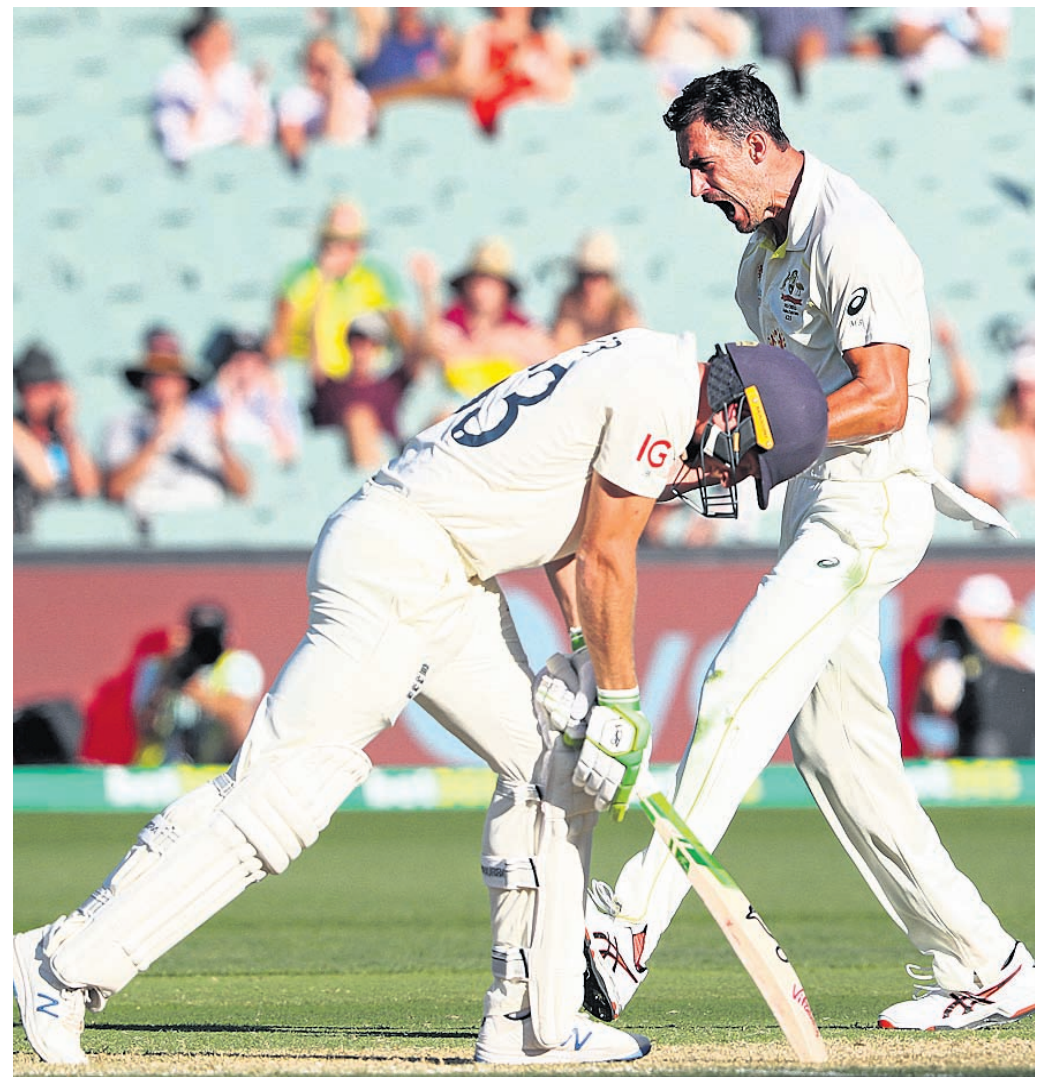
No bowler enjoys using the pink ball as much as the left-hander. His record now stands at 50 wickets — 18 ahead of next-best Josh Hazlewood — at an average of 18.10 in day-night Tests.

Cameron Green was also influential for Australia Saturday with 2/24, claiming the key wicket of Joe Root (62, 116b, 7x4) and ending a 138-run stand between the England skipper and Dawid Malan (80, 157b, 10x4).

Green beat Root twice in the over in the lead-up to catching his edge on 62 before Starc had Malan caught in the slips six overs later.

After claiming Rory Burns' wicket under lights on Friday night, Starc also had Jos Buttler out for a duck as part of an 18-over period of 4/19 for England.

It continued a poor game for



THE PINK KING: Mitchell Starc is ecstatic after dismissing Jos Buttler in Adelaide, Saturday

wicketkeeper Buttler, who dropped century-maker Marnus Labuschagne twice, including on 21 before he went on to post 103.

Australia's Nathan Lyon also had a big influence, taking 3/58 on a pitch where England opted against playing a specialist spinner. Ben Stokes (34) ran out of partners and got out in search of quick runs. He found some support

from Chris Woakes (24). Australia will now likely try to bat through until the twilight session Sunday before leaving England with the best part of four sessions to save the match.

A loss for England in Adelaide would leave the visitors 2-0 down in the series and needing to win all three remaining tests to regain the Ashes.

## BRIEF SCORES

**Australia 473/9d & 45/1** (Marcus Harris 21 batting); **England 236** (Dawid Malan 80, Joe Root 62, Ben Stokes 34, Chris Woakes 24; Mitchell Starc 4/37, Nathan Lyon 3/58, Cameron Green 2/24). Match to continue.

## Odisha FC go down against Chennaiyin

AGENCIES

**Goa, Dec 18:** Former champions Chennaiyin FC returned to winning ways with a 2-1 win over Odisha FC in the Indian Super League at the Tilak Maidan Stadium here Saturday.

Germanpreet Singh opened the scoring with his first-ever goal in the ISL. Mirlan Murzaev made it 2-0 in the second half with a brilliant strike from distance as the Bozidar Bandovi-coached side moved to third in the points table, level on points with second-placed Jamshedpur FC and four off league leaders Mumbai City FC.

Odisha succumbed to their second straight defeat and dropped a rung to fifth place with nine points from six matches. Chennaiyin have 11 points from six games. Javi Hernandez scored a superb goal but it wasn't enough in the end.

Both teams looked to suss each other out in the opening exchanges and it was a cagey affair before Chennaiyin nosed ahead riding an unlikely source.

Germanpreet scored a goal after six years when he smashed home a rebound after Odisha keeper Kamaljit Singh blocked a cross from the right flank which fell to Germanpreet.

It was the first goal for the 25-year old since 2015 when he had netted for Dempo against Royal Wahingdoh. Despite being 1-0 down, Odisha continued to give Chennaiyin a tough time but failed to find the back of the net, also adding teeth upfront.

It was end to end stuff from the



start of the second period. Lallianzuala Chhangte got a golden opportunity to double Chennaiyin's lead when he was one-on-one with Kamaljit was narrowed the angle and smothered Chhangte's effort.

Five minutes later, Aridai Suarez fired a ferocious long-ranger which cannoned off the post and went out for a goalkick. Aridai came close again but his attempt flew over the bar.

At the other end, Chennaiyin doubled their advantage courtesy of a scintillating solo effort from Murzaev. The 31-year old Kyrgyzstan footballer was unmarked and made the most of it with a long-range shot that arrowed past a diving Kamaljit and thudded into the back of the net.

It could have been 3-0 for Chennaiyin after Vladimir Koman was hacked down inside the box, but Lukasz Gikiewicz saw his effort saved by Kamaljit. Javi Hernandez scored a stunner in added time but it was too little too late and Chennaiyin bagged the all-important three points.

## India players warm up for SA Tests

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Centurion, Dec 18:** The Indian cricket team is gradually increasing its training intensity as it adapts to the higher altitude ahead of the first Test against South Africa, here from December 26.

India arrive here via a chartered flight Friday morning after three days of hard quarantine in Mumbai. The players had to isolate for a day in a resort here before they could have an outdoor session.

In a video tweeted by BCCI Saturday, the team members including head coach Rahul Dravid were seen enjoying a game of footvolley.

The series is taking place amid the rising threat of COVID-19 following the emergence of the Omicron variant in southern Africa.

India's tour was put in serious doubt because of the prevailing situation but both the boards agreed to go ahead with the tour.

The visitors are staying in a resort which is entirely booked for them by Cricket South Africa to ensure a strict bubble is maintained throughout the series. Since it is not the usual five-star hotel, the players have enough open space to move around the property.

The players have been vocal about tough life in the bio-bubbles. India's strength and conditioning coach Soham Desai gave an insight to what the players have been up to so far.

"We have had three days of hard quarantine in Mumbai and 10 hours of long flight and yesterday was again a hard quarantine here. So starting our skill sessions would have been high risk for the guys. "So they just went for a run,



stretched out and sweated it out and this game will help bridge the gap between inactivity and skill sessions which we start tomorrow.

"Also the schedule is such that we have to get going right away. We can only do so much. The elevation here is 1400 metres and we are coming from sea level so the guys will take two three days to adapt."

Talking about players' love for footvolley, Desai added, "This game can now be called the Indian cricket team game. We give them many other options but they end up choosing footvolley. They love it and they have their own battles within the team for years now. It helps them focus on the game and stay in a happy place."



## Nadal sets sights on record 21st Grand Slam title

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**London, Dec 18:** Spanish tennis stalwart Rafael Nadal has said that he is looking forward to the new season after recovering from a recurring foot injury that forced him to withdraw from the last Grand Slam of the year — The US Open.

Friday, Nadal, who has bagged 20 majors so far, was selected by fellow players as the winner of the prestigious Stefan Edberg Sportsmanship Award for the fourth straight year in the 2021 ATP Awards. The 35-year-old has now received the honour five times, first triumphing in 2010.

The award recognised the

Spaniard's fair-play, professionalism and integrity on and off the court. "I can't be happier to receive one more time the Sportsmanship Award from my colleagues on the Tour," Nadal was quoted as saying by atptour.com. "It means a lot to me, so thanks a lot to every player that thinks that I am the right one to receive this award."

"Honestly, it means a lot to me because I try to be always correct on court. Thanks for believing in me and I wish all the very best for the 2022 season to all my colleagues on the Tour and I hope to see you soon," added Nadal.

The Spaniard has won an ATP Award in each of the player-voted



**Rafael Nadal shares the record for most Grand Slam titles among men with Roger Federer and Novak Djokovic as the troika has 20 Majors each to their name**

categories — Newcomer (2003), Most Improved (2005), Comeback (2013) and Sportsmanship (2010, 2018-2021). He was also named Arthur Ashe Humanitarian of the Year in 2011 and crowned ATP No. 1 five times (2008, 2010, 2013, 2017, 2019).

Nadal has won titles on clay in Barcelona and Rome this year and reached the semifinals at the French Open, before concluding his season in August due to injury. The 35-year-old finished at No.6 in the ATP Rankings, his 17th straight season in the year-end top-10, breaking the record he previously shared with American legend Jimmy Connors.

Nadal and World No.1 Novak Djokovic headline the entry list for the 2022 Australian Open. The Spaniard, who is tied with Djokovic and Swiss ace Roger Federer for the most number of majors, would be keen to win his 21st title to break the tie.

