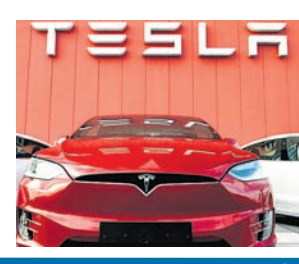




FITTING REPLY
Actor Samantha Ruth Prabhu has shut down a troll who accused her of 'robbing' ₹50 crore
LEISURE | P2



TESLA IN SOUP
The US launches a probe into Tesla allowing drivers to play video games on the move
INTERNATIONAL | P10



INDIA SECURE BRONZE
India settle for bronze medal at Asian Champions Trophy hockey after beating arch-rivals Pakistan 4-3 in a thriller
SPORTS | P12

CHRISTMAS ELEGANCE



Preparations for Christmas celebrations at Cantonment Road Catholic church in Cuttack in full swing, Wednesday, even as spread of the new variant of coronavirus, Omicron, has cast doubt over the yearend celebrations across the country

Rural polls to wait as state withdraws 'faulty' quota list

The state govt will come out with a fresh notification on reservation of seats December 27 and the final list will be submitted to SEC January 7

Cuttack, Dec 22: The Odisha government Wednesday informed the High Court it would withdraw a reservation notification issued for the panchayat elections, realising that it was "faulty". The court was hearing a petition challenging the October 1 notification for reservation of seats. It had asked the State Election Commission (SEC) to submit an affidavit, detailing the reservation policy to be adopted for the elections, scheduled to be held early next year. The government counsel informed the HC that a fresh notification for reservation of seats will be issued next Monday. "Objections will be accepted till January 3," said the counsel Sukanta Dalei.



Birendra Das, a sarpanch aspirant of Krushnaprasad block in Puri district, had moved the HC challenging the state govt's notification on reservation of seats for panchayat polls

Das had moved the HC challenging the state government's notification on reservation of seats for the upcoming three-tier panchayat polls. According to the law governing the panchayat polls, in case of sarpanch election, there should be reservation in accordance with the population. However, the notification issued by the Panchayati Raj Secretary defied it, Das had informed the HC. As per the November 16 notification, out of 853 Zilla Parishad seats in the upcoming panchayat election, only 104 have been reserved for backward classes. However, not a single seat has been reserved for backward classes in 14 districts—Deogarh, Gajapati, Sundargarh, Sambalpur, Rayagada, Nuapada, Nabarangpur, Mayurbhanj, Malkangiri, Koraput, Keonjhar, Kandhamal, Kalahandi and Jharsuguda, Das added. The petitioner had urged the HC to quash the notification and direct the state government for issuing a new one mentioning reservation of seats for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. The HC had directed the state to come up with an affidavit in this regard.

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Mission Shakti gets ₹200-crore boost

Bhubaneswar, Dec 22: The state government has sanctioned ₹200 crore to meet the expenses incurred on holding meetings of the Mission Shakti Federations and travel allowance for the executive members. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik announced this while launching a slew of programmes under Mission Shakti here Wednesday. Stating Mission Shakti Ghar is being constructed in all gram panchayats (GPs) and wards, Patnaik said that Mission Shakti Bhawans will also be constructed in all blocks and districts. A sum of ₹1 crore will be provided to each district for construction such infrastructure at district level, he said. He also announced allowance for the community support staff at GP level to buy uniforms. He hoped that these will further strengthen the Mission Shakti movement at the grassroots level. The Mission Shakti programme started 20 years back has now become a huge movement of 70 lakh women, said the CM. Patnaik said that now 21 departments are providing work to women SHGs.



I'm not bothered about marriageable age. Inform me if someone is tinkering with live-in age!

Ramp up vaccination, testing: CS to Collectors

Bhubaneswar, Dec 22: Following detection of two Omicron cases, the state government Wednesday directed all district Collectors, SPs and CDMOs to remain extremely vigilant, intensify testing, vaccination and enforcement activities to curb the spread of the new variant. Chief Secretary SC Mahapatra has given this direction to the officials while reviewing the Covid situation in the state through videoconferencing. Mahapatra also directed the district administrations to stay prepared for combating possible the spread of Omicron. The new variant is highly mutated with 32 mutations in spike protein for which it has high transmissibility. Each day new findings are coming about the virus, its behaviour and impact, he said. He also directed the staffers to stay prepared with necessary medicines, oxygen cylinders, beds, ICUs and ventilators in all government hospitals. The oxygen plants must be kept in good condition, he said. The Health and Family Welfare department was asked to intimate the private hospitals to remain in readiness for services at any time. It was decided to enhance per day testing to 70,000 and accordingly, the district targets were fixed. Covid testing teams were also asked to undertake random testing at public places. All primary health centers were asked to have a rapid antigen test facility along with the facility for RTPCR test sample collection so that people could take regular

THIRD CONTAINMENT ZONE IN CAPITAL CITY

The Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation Wednesday declared four flats of Cosmopolis apartment in Capital city as a containment zone. Some occupants of these flats have tested positive for Covid. Official sources claimed that all the new positive cases are local residents without having any travel history. "Samples of the affected have been sent for testing. The containment zones have been set up as the vicinity includes more than 1,000 apartments," said a BMC official.

tests as and when felt necessary. Mahapatra further directed the Collectors and SPs to strictly enforce Covid norms and the norms regarding marriage, cremation and other rituals. They were also asked to intensify strict compliance of Covid-appropriate behaviour at public places. He advised all above 18 years of age to get vaccinated by utilising the facilities extended by the government. Sources said that 88.2 per cent of the 18 above population were vaccinated with the first dose and around 86 per cent of them received the second dose. Around 99.8 per cent of the health care workers and front line workers have been vaccinated. The government has set the target to achieve 100 per cent inoculation by January 15, 2022 by holding Covid-19 vaccination camps in villages.

OMICRON SCARE

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VALUE	VIATION
SENSEX	56930.56	↑ 611.55
NIFTY	16955.50	↑ 184.70
DOLLAR	75.85	↓ ₹0.02
EURO	85.40	↑ ₹0.02
GOLD	₹48,050	↓ ₹17
SILVER	₹61,981	↑ ₹176

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP MAX	26.3°C	26.6°C
TEMP MIN	10.1°C	10.6°C
Humidity	71%	64%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

Forecast: Dry weather most likely

THE CEC ALSO ASKED THE PARTIES TO INFORM THE VOTERS AS TO WHY THEY COULD NOT FIND A CLEAN CANDIDATE

Tell voters why you pick the tainted: CEC to parties

Panaji, Dec 22: Political parties will have to publish the criminal antecedents of their candidates in newspapers, television channels and on their websites, the Election Commission of India (ECI) said Wednesday, while assuring that systems are in place to ensure free and fair elections for the Goa Legislative Assembly. "Political parties will also have to give reason why they have chosen him/her and why they could not find a clean candidate," Chief Election Commissioner Sushil Chandra told reporters here. The ECI's team is in Goa to review preparations for the forthcoming Legislative Assembly polls. Chandra said the ECI has introduced a facility to allow people of more than 80



years of age to vote from home. "The facility of casting vote at home for those aged 80 plus is optional, if they want to come to the polling booth, they can do," he said adding that around 30,000 people above the age of 80 years in Goa.

The voting at home would be video-graphed and the vote would be kept in a secret ballot, he added. The term of the present Goa Legislative Assembly is due to expire by March 15, 2022, Chandra said. "The ECI reiterates its commitment to conduct free, fair, peaceful, accessible, inducement-free and COVID-19-free elections so that it should be safe for all the voters," he said. Goa has always been reporting a high voting percentage. In 2017 (Assembly polls), it was 81.21 per cent and in 2012, it was 82.25 per cent, Chandra said. During a recent exercise, altogether 30,598 new voters were enrolled, of whom 16,807 are first time voters, he said. "There are 11.56 lakh total voters in the state," he said.

ଝରକାରଜ ହକରମାନଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ର କୋଭିଡ୍ ସହାୟତା

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ପଞ୍ଜିକୃତ ଝରକାରଜ ହକରମାନଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ୬ ହଜାର ଟଙ୍କା ଲେଖାଏଁ ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ର କୋଭିଡ୍ ସହାୟତା ।

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leisure



RYAN REYNOLDS GETS MISTAKEN FOR AFFLECK

Hollywood star Ryan Reynolds is a frequent visitor to a pizzeria in New York's East Village and though he's been a customer for several years, the staff who work there have never figured out who their famous customer really is. Reynolds admitted: "They believe I'm Ben Affleck and I've never corrected them."

NICOLE KIDMAN TOOK UP SMOKING FOR FILM ROLE

Actress Nicole Kidman plays the award-winning American star Lucille Ball in the new biographical drama film *Being The Ricardos*. Kidman has revealed that she turned to smoking in order to perfect her deep voice, reports femalefirst.co.uk.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
You may pick up the hammer and chisel today. No, you're not taking up sculpture; you're finally giving in to your spouse's demands to take some home improvement measures. It's in your interest to be speedy and focused, as you are the guilty party, says Ganesh.

TAURUS
There is a strong possibility of receptivity and sensitivity in your love life. On the down side, your negativity may lead to mediocre results. You are a fire-fighter when it comes to others' problems, but can forget digging a well for your own home, says Ganesh.

GEMINI
Emotional and material security will hold equal importance today. You want to be in love, but you know that love can't buy you dough. In academics, you will be able to solve whatever problems you set your mind on. Your spare time will be spent on devising methods of making the best use of your knowledge.

CANCER
In all likelihood, this is going to be a fairly easy day for you, says Ganesh. The only tough part of the day would be how to spend it. There will be hardly anything to do, anyone to talk to. Ideally, this is what you would call a perfect day.

LEO
The trader in you comes to the fore today. With an impeccable eye for recognising profitable avenues, you will quickly spot opportunities that arise from buying goods at cheaper prices, and selling them off at a rate that leaves you with a lump sum profit.

VIRGO
There is a strong indication that you will dabble in writing or performing arts, and emerge with excellent results. Since these are your passions, you may cultivate hobbies in these fields, if they are not already your profession. Enjoy the power you have over people today as you grip them with sweet words, swinging to your whims, says Ganesh.

LIBRA
Your family is the cornerstone of your success. And today is no different. Your auspicious day starts from your home, and you manage to carry this luck everywhere you go with the same tempo and gusto, predicts Ganesh. Your smile enables you to keep winning people to your side.

SCORPIO
You will spend most of the day in self-inspection and in testing your capabilities. You will take all the needed steps to improve your professional proficiency. Your rare insight and gifted understanding of human nature will prepare you for leadership in the near future, hopes Ganesh.

SAGITTARIUS
Today, you will most certainly put your heart and soul into your work. But it is rather unlikely that you will get the returns in proportion to the efforts you put in. Yet, at the end of the day, you will be more than satisfied that you have got the chance to display your innate talents, says Ganesh.

CAPRICORN
You'll have apparently no time for anything else, as partnerships and projects will keep you on your toes. Your communication skills and diplomacy will fetch you accolades in meetings, and also enable you to judge a person or a situation correctly, and form the right opinion.

AQUARIUS
You plot and plan well today! A lot of your time, energy and money may go into less productive activities. But the quality of your work will near perfection. Keep it up, says Ganesh, it is this creativity which gives you an edge over others.

PISCES
You can probably count your chickens before they hatch today, for it is likely that every nest-egg you expect to mint money will. A good day to trade in the stock markets as well, as long as you keep in mind that the horns of a rampaging Bull market can be every bit as deadly as the paws of a lumbering Bear market, says Ganesh.

Samantha shuts down troll over 'robbery' charge

Hyderabad: Actress Samantha Ruth Prabhu shut down a troll on social media who accused her of 'robbing' Rs 50 crore from ex-husband and actor Naga Chaitanya as alimony after their divorce.

Samantha has been trending on social media ever since her item song *Oo Antava* from *Pushpa* was released.

While a huge section of the Internet was busy lauding the actress for the newest hat she has worn, one section has been degrading her for her boldness in the song.

Tuesday, one troll commented on her marital status, as he also accused her of robbing Rs 50 crore from a 'gentleman'. His comment implies that the actress had taken alimony from Naga Chaitanya, related to their separation.

Samantha, who usually ignores her social

media trolls by simply blocking them, replied, "God bless your soul."

With this reply, the troll deleted his disrespectful comment soon. Samantha's subtle, yet hitting reply caught the attention of all. IANS



Shehnaaz's Lucifer poster creates tizzy

Mumbai: The poster of fantasy series *Lucifer* featuring former *Bigg Boss 13* contestant Shehnaaz Gill with lead actor Tom Ellis created a tizzy on social media.

However, the poster is not about her upcoming project but a crossover poster shared by Netflix on their social media handle.

However her fans got excited to see Shehnaaz active on social media once again.

She shared the poster on social media and wrote: "Asli Big Boss toh yahaan hai. #NetflixIndiaPlayback2021 #Playback2021"

Her fans started guessing about her future projects and in fact many congratulated her also. One fan wrote with a heart emoji: "Waiting waitin...congratulations."

While few wrote that they have to see *Lucifer* because of Shehnaaz.

The fan wrote: "Omg I'm damn excited for my baby new series on Netflix," commented one of her fans tagging the actress. IANS

Surveen Chawla finds Madhavan easy-breezy

Mumbai: Actress Surveen Chawla, who was recently seen in web show *Decoupled*, has called R Madhavan a dream co-star to work with.

Shedding light on the reason behind their impeccable on-screen chemistry and re-partees, Surveen said, "I remember when we were

doing the test shoot and the first scene of the show, it felt like Maddy (R. Madhavan) and I had known each other since forever. The moment I spoke to him on the first video call we

had, I found him to be really chill and easy-breezy."

Talking about how Madhavan approaches a scene holistically, she said, "One very important thing about him that I noticed very early on during our interactions was that as an actor he is not thinking about just himself, or just his character, he's very giving and generous. He's thinking about the show."

"So that process and that kind of camaraderie for a



show like this where you're playing partners, I think just worked beautifully. I couldn't have asked for a better partner to play Arya," she concluded. IANS

Early Oscars shortlists out

NO TIME TO DIE, DUNE LEAD MENTIONS; MAJOR NOMINATIONS YET TO BE RELEASED

The 25th James Bond film, *No Time to Die*, made a strong showing at the shortlists released Tuesday for the 94th Oscars, with mentions in five categories such as Song, Score, Sound, Visual Effects, Make-up and Hairstyling to lead all films.

Dune, with four mentions in the same categories except Song was

close behind, reports deadline.com.

The Oscars shortlists cover 10 categories overall, including Documentary Feature; International Film; Animated, Live Action, and Documentary Shorts; Make-up and Hairstyling; Music Score; Original Song; Sound; and Visual Effects.

Denmark's *Flee* made the cut for both Documentary Feature and International Film.

It is also eligible for Animated Feature (not a shortlisted category) this year, and should it eventually score final nominations in all three categories, it will set an Oscar record for that triple play,



adds deadline.com.

Although there weren't many surprises this morning, for some the most shocking omission will likely be in International Feature, where French entry and Cannes Film Festival Palme d'Or winner *Titane* from Director Julia Ducournau missed the cut after she became only the second woman ever (after Jane Campion) to win the Palme.

In terms of multiple mentions, *The Power of the Dog* has three, and such big blockbuster titles like *Spider-Man: No Way Home* and *The Matrix: Resurrections* are among those with two nomina-

tions.

It is a big day for Billie Eilish, who is the subject of a feature documentary that made the cut, as well as co-writer and singer of the shortlisted title song of *No Time to Die*.

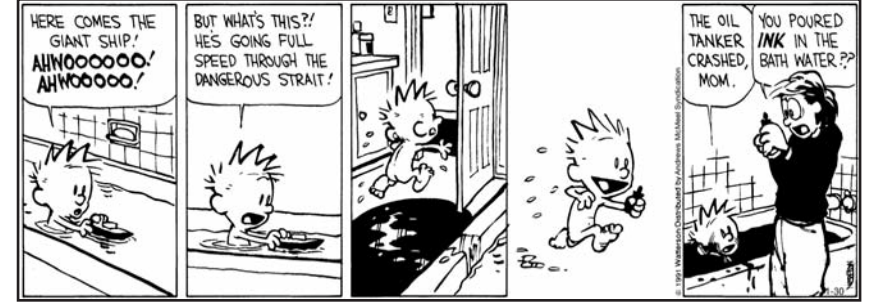
In the latter category there are some big names competing for one of the five eventual slots, including Brian Wilson, Beyonce, Jay-Z, Sparks, Ariana Grande, Bono, Lin-Manuel Miranda, Jennifer Hudson, and Carole King.

Final nominations will be announced February 8. The Oscars are scheduled to take place March 27 at the Dolby Theatre.

PEANUTS



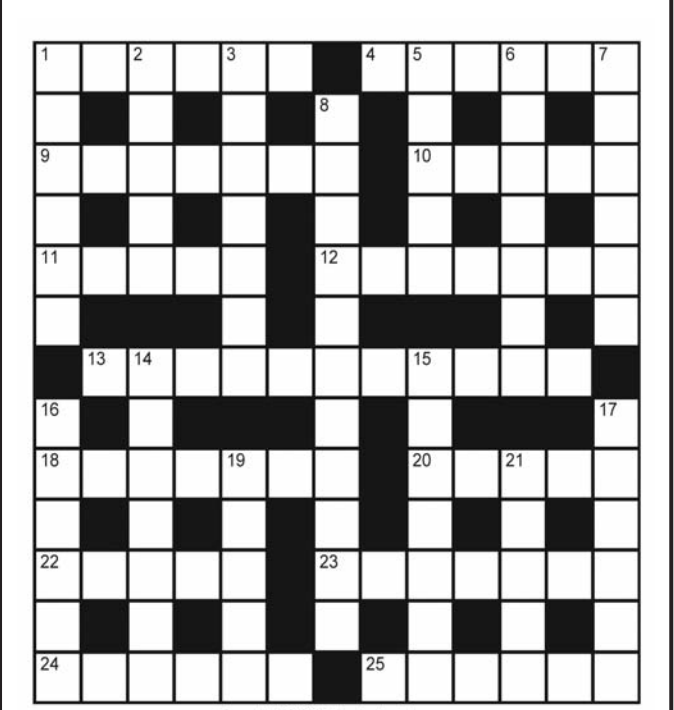
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



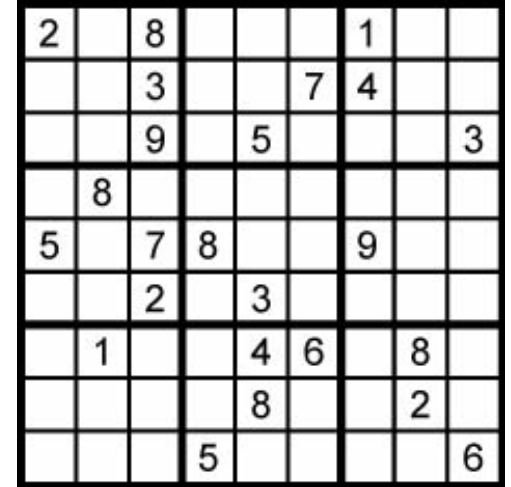
FUN post CROSSWORD



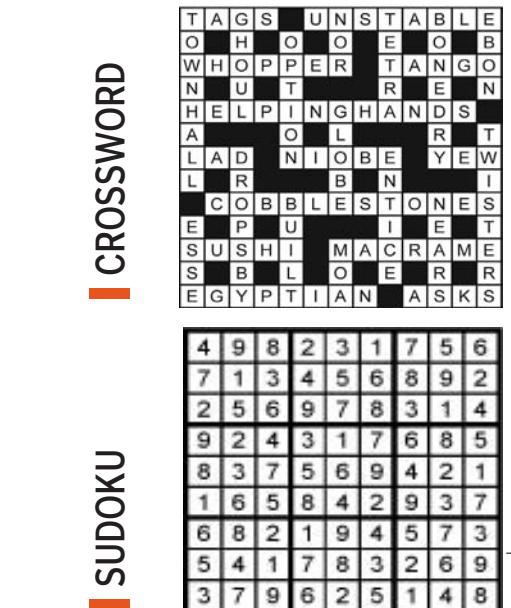
- Across**
- 1 Loathsome
 - 4 Printer type
 - 9 Mode of transportation
 - 10 Title holder
 - 11 Mid-afternoon
 - 12 Migrant
 - 13 It got better
 - 18 Radiator adjunct (3,4)
 - 20 Ridiculous
 - 22 It's a plus
 - 23 Address
 - 24 Yield
 - 25 Building material
 - Down**
 - 1 Goes around and around
 - 2 Sustain
 - 3 Ill-defined
 - 5 Plant life
 - 6 Largest city of Puerto Rico (3,4)
 - 7 Soup serving dish
 - 8 Restaurant booking
 - 14 Way of thinking (4-3)
 - 15 Like some lakes (3-4)
 - 16 Fling
 - 17 Young swan
 - 19 "The door's open!"
 - 21 Strong string

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

DELTA DEMON

Just as life was limping back to normal after the doom and gloom of 2020, the second wave of Covid-19, spearheaded by the Delta variant of the Sars-CoV-2, hit us. It not only left the country battered, but shattered all hopes of an early recuperation killing lakhs of people. As the year draws to an end, **Orissa POST** takes a close look at the emergence of the deadly strain and its devastating surge in India



It was the third week of April. Social media was awash with desperate requests for medical aid. People gasping for breath were being turned away from overwhelmed hospitals, sometimes just for they do not have laboratory reports confirming Covid-19 infection. The acrid smell of burning bodies filled the air as ceaseless fires burnt at crematoria and makeshift funeral pyres, where families were forced to forgo traditional ceremonies to make space for more dead.

Such heartbreaking scenes would have been hard to imagine just a few months ago.

FALSE SENSE OF NORMALCY

As daily infections in January fell to fewer than 20,000 from a peak of over 90,000 in September last year, the nation ignored warnings of a second wave, despite the fact that new variants had already been identified.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi declared Covid beaten, and all places of public gathering reopened.

By mid-February, India was counting an average of 11,000 cases a day. The seven-day rolling average of daily deaths from the disease had slid to below 100.

People were not adhering to Covid safety protocols, thanks in part to confused messaging from the top. Large gatherings, including political rallies, religious festivals and cricket matches, resumed and drew lakhs of people.

A false sense of normalcy crept in. And that gave the virus the chance to spread its tentacles yet again.

FROM CALM TO CHAOS

In less than a month, things began to unravel. The surge in infections began around mid-March. For nine days starting April 21, India set new global records for daily Covid-19 infections, repeatedly surpassing the 3,00,000 tally previously set by the United States. India was in the throes of the pandemic and cities were facing fresh lockdowns.

April 30, the country recorded 4,00,000 single-day infections. Over the subsequent days, the numbers fell, with just under 3,60,000 May 3, leading to a speculation that a peak had been reached. India, however, recorded its biggest-ever single-day surge of 4,14,000 Covid cases May 6,

that's when the second wave finally peaked.

On fatalities, if data shared by the Health authorities is to be believed, the country recorded its biggest ever single-day Covid deaths May 16 when 4,040 people succumbed to the infection. The daily death toll went up from an average of 1,000 in the first wave to a numbing 4,000 daily during the second wave. India, which had seen around 1.57 lakh people losing battle to Covid during the first wave, lost another 2.5 lakh lives during the second wave if March 1, 2021 is considered to be the start of the lethal wave.

The true daily deaths are at least two times higher, according to Bhramar

them to 'see the light at the end of the tunnel this time'.

Social media became a devastating catalogue of hundreds of thousands of urgent pleas for help finding hospital beds, oxygen, plasma and Remdesivir which remained in short supply in hospitals across the country.

The fact that even those in the upper echelons of power struggled to find beds for their loved ones was evident when Union Minister of State for Road Transport & Highways and Civil Aviation General Vijay Kumar Singh took to Twitter to request a hospital bed for his Covid-hit brother in Ghaziabad.



Gasping for air, two men wearing oxygen masks shared a bed at the casualty ward of Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Narayan Hospital in Delhi April 15, 2021 (REUTERS)

Mukherjee, an epidemiologist at the University of Michigan, from a caseload likely at least 10 times higher based on a modelling of data from the first wave.

CRUMBLING HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

The sudden spike in cases brought the nation's healthcare system to its knees. Hospitals across the country were filled to capacity but this time it was predominately the young taking up the beds. Oxygen supplies were dwindling and even doctors said it was hard for

Overwhelmed crematoria were working round-the-clock to keep up with the pace of bodies; furnaces melted down from overuse and additional funeral platforms were being built outside. People waited for days to cremate their loved ones.

Meanwhile, dozens of patients, mostly of Covid, perished in hospital fires across the country. Experts blamed the infernos on a high patient load and arrangements for the pandemic that stressed the hospital system.

» AND THEN THE VARIANTS

A study by Indian SARS-CoV-2 Consortium on Genomics (INSACOG) has concluded that the Delta variant, first found in India, is the 'primary cause' behind the second Covid-19 wave that ravaged the country. The Delta variant or the B.1.617.2 strain is 'more infectious' than the Alpha variant which was first detected in Kent, UK, stated the study carried out by scientists of INSACOG and National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC).

» BLACK FUNGUS

During the second wave, many cases of mucormycosis, also known as the black fungus, were reported in patients with diabetes and those with Covid-19, as well as patients who were recovering from infection. According to data presented by Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya, as of last week of July, India had witnessed 45,374 black fungus cases and 4,332 deaths due to the disease.

» MIGRANT EXODUS 2.0

Migrant workers swarmed rail stations to go to their home villages as virus-control measures dried up available work. The Maharashtra government, for instance, imposed a 15-day lockdown-like curb April 14 to check the spread of the virus. It closed most industries, businesses, and public places and limited the movement of people, but it didn't stop the bus, train, and air services. An exodus ensued, and panicked day laborers hauled backpacks onto overcrowded trains leaving Mumbai, travel that raised fears of infection spreading to rural areas.

» JOB LOSS

According to the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy, over 10 million or 1 crore people lost their jobs owing to the second wave of coronavirus. Around 97 per cent of households' incomes have declined since the beginning of the pandemic last year.

» THE BOTTOM LINE

India has paid dearly in the second Covid wave. With the daily case count gradually dipping, many states kick-started their unlock process. Some experts have emphasised that a third wave is inevitable, thanks to the Omicron variant of Covid. As on December 22, India has detected at least 213 Omicron cases. The only way we can keep ourselves safe and the virus at bay is by not repeating the mistakes we made.

Oxygen crisis left India gasping

The second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic laid bare how grossly unequipped India's healthcare system was to handle the spike in the number of daily cases. While several factors were responsible for the damage, an easily preventable dimension of the disaster was deaths caused due to shortage of oxygen in hospitals, which officials might have had averted by heeding to early warnings and taking prompt action to address an imminent oxygen crisis.

As cases rose, hospitals, big and small, counted in hours and sometimes minutes how much oxygen supply they had been left with, changing the timeframe depending on erratic supply. It was April 23 when at least 25 Covid patients in Delhi's elite Sir Ganga Ram Hospital died in a span of 24 hours due to lack of oxygen. The crisis of oxygen shortage in the national capital resulted in the deaths of 25 more Covid-19 patients as the critical care unit of the Jaipur Golden Hospital in Rohini ran dry, resulting in low oxygen pressure to these patients.

Alarmed, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal apprised Prime Minister Narendra Modi about the acute shortage of oxygen supply across the city. He appealed to the PM to take strict action to contain the situation else 'there'll be a tragedy'. With the Covid-ravaged city still in the grip of an oxygen scarcity, Kejriwal sent an SOS to all the states, requesting them for any spare gas they had. Delhi was not alone. As the caseload mounted, state after state found themselves clueless in handling the crisis. This entire supply chain was severely disrupted at multiple levels due to the steep and sudden rise in demand across the country—from 3,842 MT per day April 12, 2021 to 8,400 MT per day by April 25, and further up to 11,000 MT per day by the beginning of May—before gradually reducing as the number of fresh cases declined.

As states were gasping for breath, Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik dialled Modi and extended all support to the Centre in fighting the

Odisha played the messiah

As states were gasping for breath, Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik dialled Modi and extended all support to the Centre in fighting the

As states were gasping for breath, Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik dialled Modi and extended all support to the Centre in fighting the pandemic at the national level including ramping up of oxygen production to assist the needy states. "It is a war-like situation and Odisha will extend all cooperation in the fight against Covid at the national level including ramping up oxygen production to assist other states in this emergency," the Biju Janata Dal supreme said. Naveen's noble gesture was lauded by many, including prestigious medical journal The Lancet. For months since, Odisha sent medical oxygen to many needy states.



LARGEST VACCINATION PROGRAMME

India had begun its domestic vaccination programme January 16 following which it started sending out doses of vaccines as grants and commercial exports to 95 countries between January and April. In all, India had sent out more than 66 million vaccine doses when the country was hit by a brutal second wave of Covid-19 infections. Even as the country ramped up the drive at home and administered more than 100 million doses by last week of May, vaccine shortages were being reported from across the country. However, in subsequent months, things fell in place and it was October 21 when the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare said it has crossed inoculation of 100 crore vaccine doses. December 22, the country claimed to have administered around 139 crore vaccine doses. It aims at fully vaccinating the country's entire eligible population by December end.

EMINENT PERSONALITIES WHO LOST BATTLE TO COVID 2.0

April 23

Music composer Shrawan Rathod



April 25

Hindustani classical vocalist Pt Rajan Mishra



April 30

Journalist Rohit Sardana



April 30

Bodybuilder & Mr India famed Jagdish Lad



May 6

Former Union Minister Ajit Singh



May 21

Environmental activist Sundaral Bahuguna



June 19

'Flying Sikh' Milkha Singh



Dec 4

Veteran journalist Vinod Dua



Bodies dotting the sand on the banks of the river Ganga during the second wave of Covid, at Prayagraj May 15, 2021 (PTI)

Ganga swollen with bodies

Hundreds of corpses were found floating in Ganga river or buried in the sand of its banks. Those who live close to where the bodies were washed up, in Uttar Pradesh, fear they were Covid-19 victims. The horror in Uttar Pradesh first came to light May 10 when 71 corpses washed up on the river bank in Bihar's Chausa village, near the state border. A day later, 10km from Chausa, dozens of heavily decomposed bodies were found strewn on the river bank in Gahmar village in Uttar Pradesh's Ghazipur district, with feral dogs and crows feasting on them. Local people said the bodies had been washing up on embankments for several days, but authorities had ignored their complaints about the stench until the news about the corpses found downstream in Bihar hit the headlines. The mystery surrounding the bodies has not been solved, nor is it known how many were infected with the coronavirus. But many believe that families resorted to extreme measures because they could not afford to have their dear ones cremated — a rite whose cost skyrocketed since late April when a second wave of the virus wreaked havoc in India.

CM launches distribution of ₹1K livelihood assistance

Bhubaneswar, Dec 22: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Wednesday launched the distribution of livelihood assistance of Rs 1,000 to the beneficiaries of Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana (BSKY) in state.

The assistance will also be distributed among the beneficiaries of National Food Security Act (NFSA) and State Food Security Scheme (SFSS), sources said.

"All BSKY beneficiaries will get this assistance. About 96 lakh families in the state will be benefited from it. The state government will spend Rs 960 crore from its own resources for the purpose," said the Chief Minister. He directed the officials to complete the distribution process in seven days.

"You are aware that the Covid-19 pandemic has affected the whole world including Odisha since last year. Fortunately, we have been able to tackle the pandemic in Odisha with your help. However, the pandemic has affected the economic and social wellbeing of our people,



Stating the Covid-19 pandemic is still there, the Chief Minister advised the people to follow Covid appropriate behaviour such as wearing of masks, social distancing and hand sanitisation

especially the poor ones. The state government has announced the assistance to mitigate the plight of the people," said the Chief Minister.

Patnaik claimed that the state government has successfully countered the first and second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic with the cooperation from the people.

Stating the Covid-19 pandemic is still there, the Chief Minister advised the people to follow Covid appropriate behaviour such as wearing of masks, social distancing and hand sanitisation. He also advised the people not to visit outdoors unless it is necessary.

Notably, the Chief Minister Tuesday announced house repairing assistance of Rs 3,000 for people who have availed houses under the state government's housing schemes and Rs 5,000 for those who are waiting to get a house under PMAY of the Centre. Around 30 lakh families will get the assistance and the state government will bear an additional expenditure of Rs 1,444 crore for the purpose.

Opposition BJP and Congress have alleged that the BJD government is announcing these financial aids to woo voters ahead of the panchayat elections in Odisha.

STUDENTS' DEMO



Students of Institute of Management and Information Technology in Cuttack stage a sit-in in front of the institution Wednesday to press for fulfilment of the demands, including library upgradation

India successfully tests 'Pralay' missile

Balalore/Delhi, Dec 22: India Wednesday successfully test-fired short-range surface-to-surface guided ballistic missile 'Pralay' off the Odisha coast, DRDO sources said.

The solid-fuel, battlefield missile developed by the Defence Research Development Organisation (DRDO) is based on Prithvi Defence Vehicle from the Indian ballistic missile programme.

The missile, launched from the APJ Abdul Kalam Island around 10.30am, met all the mission objectives, the sources said.

A battery of tracking instruments monitored its trajectory along the coast line, they said. 'Pralay' is a 350-500 km short-range surface-to-surface missile with a payload capacity of 500-1,000 kg.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Twitter, "Congratulations to the DRDO and associated teams for the maiden development flight trial."

"My compliments to them for the fast-track development and successful launch of modern surface-to-surface quasi ballistic missile. It is a significant milestone achieved today," he added.

Home tutor detained for 'abducting' minor girls

Bhubaneswar/Sambalpur, Dec 22: Two minor girls, who had allegedly been abducted by their home tutor from Badagada area in Bhubaneswar, were rescued from Ainthapali area of Sambalpur, police said Wednesday.

Sources said the police were tipped off about the presence of the accused—Gopalkrushna Badatya—in Ainthapali area following which a raid was conducted. Badatya was detained and the minor girls were rescued.

"The two minor girls were rescued from a place under Ainthapali police limits in Sambalpur and shifted to a Sakhi centre there. The accused has also been detained," said Sambalpur superintendent of police (SP) B Gangadhar.

According to sources, Badatya had allegedly abducted the two minor students Sunday when their parents were away.

The girls' father lodged a complaint with the Badagada police alleging Badatya of kidnapping his daughters.

LS Secretariat cancels Spouse Identity Card of Varsha Priyadarshini

New Delhi, Dec 22: The Lok Sabha Secretariat Wednesday cancelled the Spouse Identity Card of Varsha Priyadarshini, issued to her in capacity of spouse of Biju Janata Dal (BJD) MP Anubhav Mohanty.

The Lok Sabha Secretariat requested Varsha to surrender her Spouse Identity Card.

"The Spouse Identity Card issued in your favour in the capacity of Spouse of Anubhav Mohanty MP (Lok Sabha) has been cancelled with immediate effect. In view of the above, you are requested to surrender/deposit your above mentioned Spouse Identity Card in the office of CPIC, Lok Sabha Secretariat, Parliament House at the earliest," read the letter.

Earlier, Anubhav Mohanty had written to the Secretary General of LS to suspend all privileges provided to Varsha in the capacity of spouse of an MP. "It comes to my notice that she had acted in a dubious manner by furnishing fake and wrong information for obtaining passport (general/diplomatic) and other identification documents like PAN Card," Mohanty's letter read.

Cold wave grips state; Phulbani coldest at 3.6° C

Bhubaneswar, Dec 22: Normal life was affected as parts of Odisha continued to reel under a cold wave condition Wednesday, with 17 places recording minimum temperatures below 10 degrees Celsius, the MeT department said.

Kandhamal district experienced biting cold as district headquarters Phulbani registered 3.6 degrees Celsius, the lowest minimum temperature in the state, and Daringbadi recorded 4.5 degrees Celsius. The mercury at Semiliguda in Koraput district plunged to 3.9 degrees Celsius, said a bulletin of the MeT department.

The minimum temperature in Jharsuguda came down to 6 degrees Celsius, as the temperature saw a steep drop of over 4.5 degrees Celsius from the normal in eight places, including Bhawanipanta in Kalahandi district.

Cold wave conditions prevailed



over 12 weather stations, including Angul, Keonjhar, Sonapur, Titilagarh, Sundargarh and Gopalpur, the Meteorological Centre said.

The Capital city of Bhubaneswar recorded minimum temperature of 10.1 degrees Celsius, which was

Bhubaneswar recorded minimum temperature of 10.1 degrees Celsius, which was 4.9 notches below normal, while the temperature dropped by 3.4 notches to settle at 10.6 degrees in Cuttack

due to the cold wave condition. Dense fog prevailed in Malkangiri, while there was shallow to moderate fog at some places in Gajapati, Kalahandi, Koraput and Kandhamal districts.

A cold wave is when the mercury dips to at least 4 degrees Celsius in the plains, or below 10 degrees Celsius with at least 4.5 notches less than normal. For coastal stations, the minimum should be 15 degrees Celsius or less, or the departure is less than or equal to

4.5 degrees Celsius. The India Meteorological department warned of cold wave conditions in many districts in the next two days. The temperature will be below normal by 4-5 degrees Celsius in several places in western and southern Odisha, and by 2-3 degrees Celsius in coastal Odisha during the next 48 hours, the MeT department said.

It issued a yellow warning of a cold wave over Sonepur, Bolangir, Kalahandi, Nuapada and Nabarangpur districts till Friday morning. Such conditions may prevail in some places over Jharsuguda, Sundargarh, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Angul, Dhenkanal, Boudh and Kandhamal till Thursday morning.

There will be no significant change in the minimum temperature during the next 48 hours and it will gradually rise by 2-4 degrees Celsius subsequently, the weather office added.

3rd containment zone comes up in City

Bhubaneswar, Dec 22: Amid Omicron scare, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) Wednesday declared four flats in an apartment here as a containment zone.

The civic authorities stated that four flats in Cosmopolis apartment have been declared as a containment zone. Some occupants of the four flats have tested positive for Covid-19. However, all the new positive cases are local residents having no travel history.

"Samples of the affected persons have been sent for testing. The containment zone has been

The civic authorities stated that four flats in Cosmopolis apartment have been declared as a containment zone

Some occupants of the four flats have tested positive for Covid-19. However, all the new positive cases are local residents having no travel history

set up as there are several apartments in the vicinity. However restrictions have been imposed on the flats from where Covid positive cases were found," said a BMC official.

The BMC said no one shall be allowed to move into the contain-

ment zone and the inhabitants within the containment zone shall not come out. "All the inhabitants within the containment zone have been asked to remain in home," BMC sources said.

The BMC has so far set up three containment zones in the Capital city. The civic authorities had declared three houses in Bomikhal and VSS Nagar areas as containment zones to restrict public movement in a bid to contain the virus spread.

While two persons of a family at Jayadurga Nagar in Bomikhal area contracted the virus recently, several positive cases have been detected from two families in VSS Nagar area, sources said.

Odisha MPs pose 549 questions during Winter Session of Parl

New Delhi, Dec 22: The MPs from Odisha posed as many as 549 questions in both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha during the Winter Session of Parliament which concluded Wednesday, a day before its scheduled date.

While the Lok Sabha MPs asked 329 questions, the Rajya Sabha MPs posed 220 starred and unstarred questions on various national and state-specific issues.

The MPs from Odisha also raised several issues during the Zero Hour and put forth their views while speaking on various Bills introduced and passed during the session.

It seems that the Winter Session turned out as a setback for the Biju Janta Dal (BJD) as several demands of the party were rejected by the Centre. The Union government had refused to declare Paika Rebellion as the first war of Independence. The Centre also expressed its inability to lift surplus parboiled rice from Odisha. Later, the BJD MPs submitted a memorandum to the Centre reiterating their demand of declaring Paika Rebellion as the first war of Independence.

BJD MPs Prasanna Acharya and Sasmit Patra urged the Union government to direct the Food Corporation of India (FCI) to lift surplus parboiled rice from Odisha. The MPs also urged the government to open Awas plus portal to include around 6 lakh houses of

ODISHA IN PARLIAMENT

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BJD MPs Prasanna Acharya and Sasmit Patra urged the Centre to direct the FCI to lift surplus parboiled rice from Odisha

Congress MP Saptagiri Ulaka and BJP MP Suresh Pujari drew the attention of the Lok Sabha towards the law and order situation in the state

BJD MP Pramila Bisoyi urged the government to take steps for providing employment to women, who lost their jobs due to the Covid-19 pandemic

Odisha under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G)

Congress MP Saptagiri Ulaka and BJP MP Suresh Pujari drew the attention of the Lok Sabha towards the law and order situation

in the state. Pujari also sought CBI probe into several high-profile cases in the state. BJD Lok Sabha MP Pramila Bisoyi urged the government to take steps for providing employment to women, who lost their jobs due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Notably, the session which commenced November 29 had 18 sittings. As many as 11 bills were passed and 13 bills were introduced in both Houses during the session.

The Rajya Sabha witnessed frequent disruptions in proceedings due to the Opposition's protest over suspension of 12 MPs from the House. The MPs were suspended for their 'unprecedented acts of misconduct', 'unruly and violent behaviour' and 'intentional attacks on security personnel' August 11, the last day of the Monsoon Session.

The suspended MPs are Phulo Devi Netam, Ripun Bora, Rajamani Patel, Syed Nasir Hussain and Akhilesh Pratap Singh from Congress; Dola Sen and Shanta Chhetri from Trinamool Congress; Anil Desai and Priyanka Chaturvedi from Shiv Sena; Elamaram Kareem from CPM and Binoy Viswam from CPI.

The Opposition parties also held protests in both Houses after a SIT report termed the Lakhimpur Khari incident as a pre-planned conspiracy. The Opposition members sought the resignation of Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Ajay Misra as his son is the prime accused in the case.

State govt fails to manage mandis: BJP

New Delhi, Dec 22: A delegation of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MPs from Odisha Wednesday met Union Food and Public Distribution Minister Piyush Goyal and sought his intervention in ensuring seamless procurement of farm produce and timely payment of compensation.

The BJP MPs submitted a memorandum to the Union Minister and alleged that the state government has failed to manage mandis. They also highlighted the state government's high dependence on private millers which has led to non-realisation of fair price to the farmers.

"This has led to mass distress sale by the farmers and would have dire consequences for them while coping with the pandemic related issues," said the memorandum.

The BJP delegation also re-



quested the Union Minister to instruct the state government to implement the recommendations of fact finding committee of the Union government. The committee had suggested for making the district paddy procurement committees more powerful to resolve issues faced by farmers. The committee also pointed out that the infrastructure at market yards was inadequate and there was no proper

The BJP MPs submitted a memo to Union Minister Piyush Goyal alleging the state government's high dependence on private millers which has led to non-realisation of fair price to the farmers

mechanism to check the quality. The committee also said that the actual paddy procurement window is severely curtailed in comparison to the official window, creating panic among small and marginal farmers. Against the official 151-day window, actual procurement windows varied from 40 to 43 days, the committee said in its report.

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LEADING FROM THE FRONT

As the year 2021 comes to an end amid Covid-19 pandemic and its latest variant Omicron, it's time to recap the contributions of some who left their mark on our daily life in the outgoing year. OP takes a look at some of these worthies who made it to the list of OP newsmakers- 2021



Archana Soreng

A native of Sundargarh became a member of UN SG's youth advisory group. Her advocacy for nature-based solutions and giving indigenous people their rights to combat climate change impressed US Prez Biden



Mrutyunjay Mohapatra

Known as the 'Cyclone Man of India', DG of the IMD shot to fame for his accurate predictions on movements of cyclones such as Yaas and Jawad in 2021



Satya Narayan Pradhan

Former NDRF chief, a 1988-batch IPS officer, was appointed as DG of Narcotics Control Bureau



Saumendra Priyadrashi

Known as a specialist in tactical operations in police circles, he took over the baton of Twin City Police Commissioner in March, 2021



Pradeep Panigrahy

Gopalpur MLA was held in a DA case. Vigilance raided his houses while ED grilled him & his daughter in a money laundering case



Dibya Shankar Mishra

Oppn seeking ouster of the Minister of State for Home for his alleged role in the teacher Mamita Meher murder case



NAVEEN PATNAIK

The Chief Minister's popularity went many notches up thanks to his multiple pro-poor initiatives



Dharmendra Pradhan

He got education and skill development & entrepreneurship portfolio in the Modi cabinet's rejig in July, 2021



Pramod Bhagat

Reigning world champion Pramod Bhagat claimed a historic gold medal in men's singles SL3 class at the Tokyo Paralympics in Japan, September 4



Birendra Lakra

Vice captain of the Tokyo Olympics bronze medal-winning Indian hockey team announced his retirement from the game with immediate effect



Ashwini Vaishnaw

Rajya Sabha MP from Odisha took charge as Union Minister for Railways and IT



S Muralidhar

Justice S Muralidhar took oath as the 32nd Chief Justice of High Court, January 4. Governor Ganeshi Lal administered the oath of office to the new CJ



SK Bansal

Special Director of IB was appointed Director General of Odisha Police December 15. He will take charge January 1, replacing the incumbent DGP, Abhay



Chandhi Prasad Mohanty

A General Officer in the Indian Army and a native of Jagatsinghpur district assumed charge as the Vice Army Chief in 2021



Pradeep Kumar Jena

Special Relief Commissioner played a key role in relief and rescue works post natural calamities that struck the state in 2021



Bishweswar Tudu

First-time MP from Mayurbhanj was inducted as Union Minister of State for Tribal Affairs and Jal Shakti



Amit Rohidas

A defender for the Indian national hockey team shot to fame after the Indian team won the bronze medal at 2020 Summer Olympics.

OBITUARY



Manoj Das

Legendary writer passed away at age of 87 at Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry April 28, leaving a void in literary world



Raghunath Mohapatra

The sculptor-turned Rajya Sabha MP, who dreamt of building a second Sun Temple, succumbed to Covid-19 May 9



Nanda Sir

The 104-year-old received Padma Shri for his contribution to the field of education. He passed away December 7

FOCUS BYGONE YEAR

THE FAILURES OF 2021



At the end of last year, effective collective action on the major challenges confronting the world – including the pandemic, climate change, and geopolitical tensions – seemed to be a real possibility. And yet, over the course of 2021, those challenges merely escalated and multiplied

generating more headwinds. And, amid rising financial risks and inflationary pressures, policymakers and international financial institutions are being forced to perform a delicate balancing act.

The lack of effective multilateral action during the pandemic, exemplified by huge discrepancies in vaccine access, has further highlighted the global system's inadequate capacity to address shared challenges. A disappointing United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow put the finishing touches on a bleak picture.

Declining confidence in international cooperation could not come at a worse time. Russia is now amassing troops near its border with Ukraine. And, with China behaving ever-more assertively, the risk of conflict in the Western Pacific continues to rise.

A succession of virtual summits has failed to ease tensions. And new security mechanisms – notably, the Quad, a loose coalition of the Indo-Pacific region's four major democracies, and the AUKUS defence agreement between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the US – lack the clarity of vision and comprehensive approach that is needed to ensure stability.

Against this backdrop, even more asymmetric warfare and geopolitical tumult can be expected

in 2022. As the Communist Party of China prepares for its 20th National Congress in October, its leaders will probably continue to offer cooperation on shared challenges like climate change, while vigorously resisting any Western effort to counter their country's growing influence.

To negotiate from a position of strength, shoring up the frayed transatlantic relationship must be a high priority for the West. That was the point of Biden's oft-repeated slogan, "America is back," which was supposed to be a repudiation of his predecessor Donald Trump's "America First" doctrine.

Yet the transatlantic relationship is nowhere near back on track. For example, it was not until last month that the Biden administration announced that it would roll back the tariffs Trump had imposed on European steel and aluminum. And according to the most recent Trans-Atlantic Scorecard, produced by the Brookings Institution, US-European relations dropped from an average of 6.6 (on a 1-10 scale) at the end of June to 5.3 at the end of September.

It is up to Biden to demonstrate his administration's resolve to restore the transatlantic relationship. But that is unlikely to happen soon. American political tradition dictates that presidents focus more on foreign policy in their second

term, when they no longer face re-election. For now, Biden is preoccupied with his low approval rating, November's midterm congressional elections, and Trump's possible return as the Republican Party's 2024 presidential nominee.

That is why, in 2022, Europe must reinvigorate its push to secure greater strategic independence from the US. Although growing sense of vulnerability could help to focus European minds, success will not come easily, not least because, after 16 years, Europe's foreign policy is no longer being de facto steered by the steady hand of long-time German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

To be sure, Merkel's successor, Olaf Scholz, recently met with French President Emmanuel Macron in Paris, and the two formally affirmed their shared ambition to strengthen the European Union's "strategic sovereignty." But the gulf between word and deed is often wide in Europe, and France and Germany may no longer be the EU's prime movers. In post-Brexit Europe, Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi has been deftly maneuvering to position his country toward center stage.

As important as it is for Europe to strengthen its strategic independence, it must not turn its back on the US. It certainly should not attempt to chart a middle path between China and the US. Europeans cannot forget that our common construction is the most important example of the paradigm of ensuring peace through prosperity, and prosperity through open exchange. But that paradigm is grounded in resilience, and here there is little room for ambiguity or passivity.

The US and Europe have always had their disagreements; that will not change. But they are bound by shared values and similar institutions, and the challenges they face are more complex than ever. Honest introspection – including admission of the West's own democratic failures – is necessary to move forward together. And realism dictates that they should.

The writer is a former minister of foreign affairs of Spain
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What is God after all? An eternal child playing an eternal game in an eternal garden.

SRI AUROBINDO



Digitalisation Danger

Digital systems are critical to development and humanitarian activities, but they can expose some of the world's most vulnerable communities to unforeseen risks. Recent examples from Afghanistan highlight these dangers.

In September, it was reported that the UK Ministry of Defence had been involved in two separate data breaches, potentially compromising the safety of participants in the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy programme, which is intended to protect people who had worked for British forces. These breaches followed revelations that the Taliban now control systems for digital identification that were built using international aid. As a former official with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) put it, "The Taliban have been given the keys to the server room." Moreover, information in the Tazkira, the digital identity cards used in Afghanistan, reportedly can be used to target ethnic groups.

Organisations and governments tasked with providing cash assistance during humanitarian crises recognise the need for legislation to strengthen data protection, but finding staff with both data protection expertise and knowledge of social protection systems is challenging and expensive. As data-driven systems are introduced into aid work, there is the potential for a significant power imbalance between technology providers, governments, and vulnerable populations. And the commercial incentives that drive the involvement of private-sector companies in this domain often are at odds with humanitarian principles – including that the collection and sharing of personal data should not put people at risk.

But aid groups also are guilty of exposing sensitive data. Four years ago, the UNHCR collected personal information – including biometric data – from ethnic Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh and, in contravention of its own policies, shared it with the government of Myanmar to verify people for possible repatriation.

Similarly, a recently released internal audit of the World Food Programme's (WFP) provision of digital assistance services in Iraq, Namibia, and Nigeria found that none of the projects had processes in place to ensure data protection and privacy. And research from the non-profit Somali Public Agenda revealed that while huge amounts of data are being collected in Somalia by aid groups and the government, the country has no policies in place to ensure that this information is properly handled.

Proponents of digitalisation argue that it will reduce costs. But that may not be true. Unwanted Witness showed that the procurement process for the digital ID scheme in Uganda was conducted with limited public access to tender or contract documents through a "classified procurement" programme, contrary to Uganda's Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Act, 2003.

Likewise, an internal audit of the WFP's SCOPE programme, released in May, found that a system had only recently been put in place that could "rigorously account for the costs and benefits accrued from IT projects and investments." The WFP has been using SCOPE, one of the largest systems in the world for beneficiary and transfer management, since the mid-2010s.

Moreover, this was not an isolated case. In 2019, a group of civil-society organisations signed an open letter in response to the controversial agreement between the data analytics company Palantir and the WFP warning of a lack of transparency in procurement processes between humanitarian organisations and technology companies. The letter suggested that no third-party audits are possible under the current arrangements, making it impossible to do a future cost analysis of this kind of collaboration.

As private-public partnerships continue to grow in the development and aid sector, more research must be done to map the activities of corporate actors to ensure that these relationships are open to scrutiny. Increased transparency will enable donors and policymakers to verify that collaborations are delivering the financial benefits that drive enthusiasm for digitalisation.

The pressure the humanitarian aid sector faces from powerful donors and others to innovate and adopt digital technologies reflects the urgent need to make such assistance more effective. Digital systems can reduce transaction costs and improve the efficiency of aid, for example by providing funds to communities in remote areas via remote electronic cash transfers. But we must guarantee that the world's most vulnerable communities are not forced to make themselves visible to governments that may not have their best interests at heart.

The writer, a research fellow and Leader of the Digital and Technology Cluster at the Institute of Development Studies, works on the Better Assistance in Crises (BASIC) Research programme at IDS.
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WISDOM CORNER

- Let your life lightly dance on the edges of Time like dew on the tip of a leaf. **RABINDRANATH TAGORE**
- Only two things are infinite, the universe and human stupidity, and I'm not sure about the former. **ALBERT EINSTEIN**
- We keep moving forward, opening new doors, and doing new things, because we're curious and curiosity keeps leading us down new paths. **WALT DISNEY**

WORDSWORTH

Quillon

Early in the history of sword-fighting it was realised that a guard between the blade and the hilt was essential to stop the blade of your opponent from sliding down yours and cutting into your hand. The quillons are the cross-pieces at right angles to the blade and hilt that serve this purpose. Though swords have had them for many centuries, this word for them isn't recorded in English until R F Burton's *The Book of the Sword* in 1884: "The quillons may be either straight – that is disposed at right angles – or curved." (Before then, they seem simply to have been called cross-guards or just guards, as they often still are.) The origin is said to be the French quille, a ninepin, though that makes more sense when you learn the French also used it as a colloquial term for a leg, and so figuratively for the two legs represented by the jutting quillons. You may prefer to write the word as quillon instead, though this is less common. In modern times, such technical terms have become useful in giving a sense of place and time in sword-and-sorcery fantasy tales, as here in a 1970 story by Fritz Leiber that was republished in 1995 in *Ill Met in Lankhmar*: "He took a few shuffling steps, tapping the cobbles ahead with wrapped sword, gripping it by the quillons, or cross guard, so that the grip and pommel were up his sleeve – and groping ahead with his other hand." The other spelling appeared in *Oathbreakers* by Mercedes Lackey (1989): "The sheath looked as if it had once had metal fittings; there were gaping sockets in the pommel and at the ends of the quillons of the sword that had undoubtedly once held gemstones."

LOL

I am going to shop

"Cash, check or charge?" a shopkeeper asked after folding items the woman wished to purchase. As she fumbled for her wallet the shopkeeper noticed a remote control for a television set in her

purse. "Do you always carry your TV remote?" he asked. "No," she replied. "But my husband refused to come shopping with me, so I figured this was the most evil thing I could do to him."



Ana Palacio

IT DOES NOT HELP THAT EVEN IN COUNTRIES WHERE LIBERAL DEMOCRACY IS FIRMLY ESTABLISHED, GOVERNMENTS HAVE ASSUMED EXCEPTIONAL POWERS



Becky Faith

As data-driven systems are introduced into aid work, there is the potential for a significant power imbalance between technology providers, governments, and vulnerable populations

SPECTRUM CITIZENSHIP

Why's the UK's nationality Bill controversial



Asad Mirza

CRITICS SAY THIS WILL GIVE THE GOVERNMENT ENORMOUS POWER OVER BRITISH CITIZENS WHO HAVE ANOTHER NATIONALITY OR WHO MAY HAVE BEEN BORN ELSEWHERE

The controversial Nationality and Borders Bill was introduced by the ruling Conservative Party in the House of Commons July 6, 2021. The Bill has now progressed to the House of Lords, and if passed it would impact the current UK immigration system as it relates to asylum-seekers and refugees; and does this primarily by introducing a two-tier system for asylum-seekers arriving in the country, based on method of arrival.

In addition, as per other measures recommended if voted to a Law, the Bill would put at risk the future of six million minorities living in Britain. Most British citizens who have dual passports fear that they would become victims of discrimination in a legal manner. The government earlier had the power to withdraw nationality but after notifying the affected person.

The Bill also includes clauses to allow the UK to be able to send asylum-seekers, particularly boat refugees from various Muslim countries to a 'safe third country' and to submit claims at a 'designated place' determined by the Secretary of State. The Indian-origin British Home Secretary Priti Patel said the Bill would tackle illegal im-

migration and the 'underlying pull factors into the UK's asylum system'. The government in its defence asserts that the Bill looks to alter the current system for asylum claims and appeals, as well as looks to stop the flow of people-smuggling and modern slavery.

The Bill has been criticised by the opposition Labour Party and also some members of the Conservative Party. Former Conservative minister David Davis described the plans to strip people of British citizenship as 'uncivilised' and 'legally disputable.' As reported by newspapers in November, Patel surreptitiously introduced a provision that would allow the government to strip people of their British citizenship without notice.

The British Nationality Act 1981 requires the Secretary of State to give a person written notice of a decision to deprive them of their British citizenship before a deprivation order can be made. But Clause 9 of the new Bill exempts the government from giving notice if it is not 'reasonably practicable' to do so, or in the interests of national security, diplomatic relations or is otherwise in public interest. Critics say this will give the government enormous power over

British citizens who have another nationality or who may have been born elsewhere. Effectively, naturalised citizens can be made stateless without notice. The government, however, claims that it will not make anyone stateless and will not affect their right to appeal.

The UK has had a recent, significant rise in citizenship deprivation. Most have taken place when the British citizen is already overseas, so they would be unlikely to know about cancellation orders and would find it difficult to appeal. The British Law Society giving its take on the Bill says: "We're concerned that allowing differential treatment of refugees depending on how they arrive in the UK would penalise those arriving via irregular means; this is incompatible with the UK's obligations under the Refugee Convention 1951."

Devyani Prabhat, Professor in Law at University of Bristol, says that currently, no other country can make its own citizens stateless by depriving them of citizenship. In the article on Conversation.com, Prabhat further says that the UK's citizenship deprivation practice affects minorities and those of migrant heritage much more than it

does white British nationals born in Britain. Taking away notification requirements will make appeals even harder. Even without this change, deprivation laws risk alienating minority communities, but with it, potential challenges in courts will be eliminated at source.

Amnesty International says, if passed, the Bill "will create significant obstacles and harms to people seeking asylum in the UK's asylum system" and that the legislation undermines the Refugee Convention and the UK's obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on Reduction of Statelessness.

It seems as if the Conservative government of PM Boris Johnson is keen to move away from the liberal policy that Britain had adopted since the 1940s, motivating the talented to join its workforce. This had slowly resulted in making UK a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-religious society. Though racial prejudice still persisted it was possible to protest in the name of the British law and jurisprudence. But now it may not be possible in future.

The writer is a political commentator based in New Delhi. IANS

Kim's raw power

Sir, After North Korean supreme leader Kim Jong-il passed away 10 years ago, there was a studied silence. Citizens spoke in hushed murmurs about his son's capabilities as a leader to succeed him. No one believed the young Kim Jong-un would last long as the next supreme leader considering the complexities of the country's politics. But Kim Jong-un proved the sceptics wrong. North Korean economy is in devastation, starvation and sufferings abound, international sanctions show no signs of being lifted any time soon, but Kim's brute ability to navigate the administration with power and panache became pronounced. One thing the all-powerful leader abhors is to usher in at least a semblance of a demilitarised North Korea because that would considerably weaken his position both domestically and globally. The legendary cat fight between Kim and the then US President Donald Trump that astonishingly translated into a meeting between the two leaders has done well to push Kim's image but has done little to reduce Pyongyang's military power because Kim's burning ambition to power North Korea to dizzy heights as the world's leading nuclear country has not wavered by an inch. His ultimate mission, unlike his personality, is not enigmatic: diminish Washington's clout and, thereby eclipse South Korea's position in the eyes of the world to gain an upper hand among the two Koreas' battle for supremacy in the region. The COVID-19 pandemic piled on their agony. North Korea's border with China was shut, and people were forced to stay put. Deaths due to starvation and disease have become common. All along, Kim's advice to his people was to "eat less till 2025." This advice is in line with the regime's order banning laughing, drinking and shopping for 11 days from December 17 to mark the 10th death anniversary of Kim Jong-il.

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

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

It pays to stay safe!

Sir, In the wake of the continued threat of the Omicron variant, the Karnataka government has done well to ban public celebrations and mass gatherings to mark the New Year. The authorities will enforce the restrictions from December 30 to January 2. Restaurants, pubs, clubs, and hotels have been barred from holding parties or events involving mass gatherings. However, they have been allowed to function with COVID-19 protocols. Double vaccinations will be mandatory for entry to clubs, and the staff must undergo an RT-PCR test. It pays to stay safe!

NJ Ravi Chander, BANGALORE

national

of the day quote

Samajwadis are not scared of anything 'jo dar gaya woh mar gaya' (one who's afraid is dead)

AKHILESH YADAV
SAMAJWADI PARTY PRESIDENT

See the kind of politics AAP is doing, they apologised a person who was facing the heat of drug accusations in pushing our youth to drugs

CHARANJIT CHANNI | PUNJAB CHIEF MINISTER

From January 1 people who have not got the second dose of Covid-19 vaccine would not be permitted to congested public places like restaurants, malls, banks and offices

ANIL VUJ | HARYANA HEALTH MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Senior Cong MLA P T Thomas dies

Kochi: Senior Congress leader and MLA P T Thomas, a bold and very popular voice of the party in Kerala for his uncompromising stand on various issues like implementing the Gadgil committee report on Western Ghats and taking on the Catholic church over the matter, died at a hospital in Tamil Nadu Wednesday, party sources said here. Thomas, 71, is survived by his wife and two children. His end came at 10.15 am while he was undergoing treatment for cancer at Christian Medical College in Vellore, they said. Thomas, who was elected as MLA from Thrikkakara Assembly seat in April this year for the second consecutive term, represented Idukki in Lok Sabha during 2009-2014.

3 of a family commit suicide

Bangalore: Three members of a family including two women have committed suicide Wednesday in Karnataka's Ramnagar district by jumping into a lake, the police said. The incident has taken place in Dammanakatte village. The deceased have been identified as Siddamma, 55, her daughter Sumithra, 33, and son-in-law Hanumantha Raju, 35.

Congress leader Harish Rawat targets own party



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

A voice from within sometimes tells me it is enough Harish Rawat, you have swam long. It is time to rest," the former Uttarakhand chief minister said. "I am in a dilemma. The new year may show me the way," he added.

Asked about the tweet at a conclave organised by Times Now Navbharat, Rawat did not reveal who had turned their faces away from him, but explained what he meant by "crocodiles".

"It is clear. When (Union) Home Minister Amit Shah visited Uttarakhand, he reminded me of a sting operation done by someone. No one from the journalistic fraternity would like to own up today. It was a veiled threat from the home minister to cause harm to me if I dared speak too much," he said. "The CBI, the Enforcement Directorate, the Income Tax (department) are the crocodiles unleashed by the Centre for its political opponents," Rawat added. However, he did not disclose the names of those in his party who are turning their faces away from him.

"I am invaded by thoughts.



On one side we are making progress, on the other side, some of our elected representatives are making a mockery of the institution of democracy

M VENKAIAH NAIDU | VICE PRESIDENT

OMICRON CONCERN

States enhance surveillance

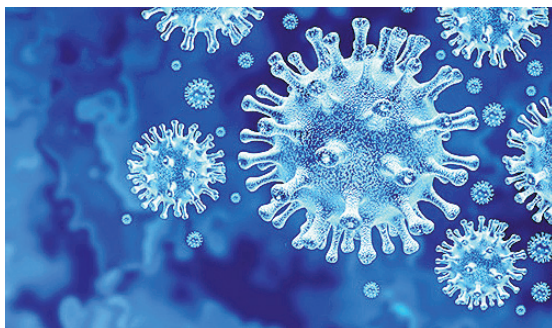
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 22: With the Omicron variant of coronavirus slowly spreading its tentacles in the country, a number of states enhanced surveillance to trace, track and quarantine contacts of COVID-19 positive persons while Delhi began genome sequencing of samples of all infected people and has prohibited Christmas and New Year gatherings.

Haryana also imposed some curbs in public places from January 1 India has so far recorded close to 250 cases of Omicron across 15 states and union territories even though at least 90 of the infected people have either recovered or migrated.

Amid fresh concerns caused by the Omicron variant, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will hold a meeting on the Covid-19 situation in the country Thursday. Official sources said Modi will take stock of the pandemic situation across the country.

With the national capital recording over 50 cases of Omicron, Delhi Chief



Minister Arvind Kejriwal will also hold a review meeting Thursday to assess the preparedness and management of the new variant of the virus. During the day, nine cases were recorded in Kerala, four in Rajasthan and two in Andhra Pradesh among others.

The Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), on the other hand, directed district magistrates to ensure no Christmas and New Year gathering takes place in the national capital. However, restaurants and bars will continue to operate with up to 50 per cent of the seating capacity. Marriage-related gatherings are permitted with a maximum of 200 people in

attendance. "All social/political/cultural/religious/festival related gatherings are prohibited throughout NCT of Delhi... All district magistrates and DCPs shall ensure that no cultural event/gatherings/congregation takes place for celebrating Christmas or New Year in the NCT of Delhi," the DDMA order stated.

The national capital logged 125 cases on Wednesday, the highest since June 22, when it had reported 134 cases of the infection. In the wake of 19 Omicron cases being detected in the state, the Karnataka government has directed district authorities and health officials to enhance surveillance and

designate contact tracers and quarantine observers to curb the spread. In a circular principal secretary, health and family welfare, T K Anil Kumar said primary and secondary contacts should be identified within 24 hours of reporting of Covid positive case.

The primary contacts should be tested on the first day and again on the eighth day and home quarantined for seven days from the date of Covid positive reporting. Similarly the international travellers from high risk countries need to be quarantined for seven days from the date of their arrival, until the follow-up and repeat RT-PCR test on the eighth day, according to the circular.

COVID RISK

Docs' plea to stop Jallikattu

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, Dec 22: With the year coming to a close paving way for the Jallikattu traditional sport for Pongal (mid-January), about 80 medical doctors on Wednesday appealed to the Tamil Nadu government not to give its nod to the conduct of the popular bull taming sport this time due to Covid-19 risk and Omicron variant concerns.

The doctors have appealed to Chief Minister M K Stalin and Health and Family Welfare Minister Ma Subramanian not to allow Jallikattu events as the Coronavirus and the emerging variant could turn out to be a super spreader causing grave health risk to the public. People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals

(PETA) said. "We urge the Tamil Nadu government to refuse to grant permission for Jallikattu events in the State in 2022," a release said.

Further the Central government continues to recognise Covid-19 as a serious risk, postponing the full resumption of international flights until January 31, next year, the healthcare professionals said. Allowing the sport to take place would be contrary to public health precautions, they asserted. "Prohibiting non-essential activities such as Jallikattu events, which lead to unnecessary mass gatherings, is essential to prevent the rapid spread of Covid-19 and to protect public health as well as to ease the pressure on healthcare professionals," said Dr Deepshikha



PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given to all concerned that, Ramchandra Putel, S/o Dasratha Putel, R/o Nuappali, Ward No. 12, P.O./PS- Binka, Dist. Subarnapur has sworn an affidavit on dt.9.12.2021 and has reported to OIC, Binka on 9.12.2021 regarding loss of original Regd. Sale Deed No. 11681400362/14 Dt.6.9.2014 of Sub-Registrar, Binka.

Ramchandra Putel, S/o- Dasratha Putel has applied to the LIC HOUSING FINANCE LTD., Samablapur to avail loan for purchase of the above property by mortgaging the said property documents.

All concerned therefore, having any claim over the property purchased under the said document Regd. Sale Deed No. 11681400362/14 Dt.06.09.2014 of Sub Registrar, Binka is required to file their claim with the undersigned within 15 (Fifteen) days from the date of publication of this notice failing which it will be presumed that, the property having link with the said document/s is/are free from encumbrances and any claim in respect thereof against the applicant as a mortgager and the company as the mortgagee shall be void and ineffective after the lapse of 15 (Fifteen) days of publication of this notice.

Sambalpur Dt. 13.12.2021

Sd./- (A.K. Debta)
Advocate, LIC Housing Finance Ltd.
At/P.O.- Modipara, Sambalpur, Odisha
Mobile No. 9437158519

OFFICE OF THE MUNICIPALITY, NABARANGPUR (ODISHA), PIN - 764059

E-mail ID: municipalitynpr@gmail.com, Tel.: (06858) 222031

INVTATIONS FOR BIDS (IFB) Dt.21.12.2021

"e" PROCUREMENT NOTICE
Bid Identification No. 05/2021-22

The Executive Officer, Nabarangpur Municipality invites percentage rate bids in Double Cover System in ONLINE MODE only, for Construction of Smart Crematorium & Smart Park, Nabarangpur Municipality out of Smart Park grant as detailed below.

1	Nature of work	: Smart Crematorium & Smart Park Works
2	No. of Work	: 02 Nos.
3	Bid Cost	: Rs.10,000/-
4	Class of Contractor	: "B" and "A"
5	Availability of Bid Documents in the website	: From Dt.22.12.21 to 17.00 hours of Dt.05.01.22
6	Date of Opening of Bid	: Dt.06.01.22 at 11.00 A.M.
7	The bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website: https://tendersodisha.gov.in .	
8	Any addendum/corrigendum/cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website only.	

Sd./- Executive Officer, Nabarangpur Municipality

Karur Vysya Bank
Smart way to bank

THE KARUR VYSYA BANK LTD.,
Asset Recovery Branch-Kolkata
15 Bondel Road First Floor, Ballygunge Kolkata,
West Bengal 700019
Contact No: 033-22900752, Email: arbkolkata@kvbmail.com

SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES E-AUCTION ON 29.01.2022

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction and Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower (s) and Guarantor (s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, The Karur Vysya Bank Ltd, the constructive possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of The Karur Vysya Bank Ltd., Secured Creditor, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" on **29.01.2022**, for recovery of **Rs. 7,58,06,112.50** (Rupees Seven Crore Fifty Eight Lakh Six Thousand One Hundred Twelve and Paise Fifty Only) due to the Karur Vysya Bank Ltd, Secured Creditor from **1). M/s. L.P. Electronics (Orissa) Private Limited (Borrower) College Square, Cuttack-753003, Odisha 2). Mr. Rajendra Prasad Ram (Director cum Guarantor) 3). Mr. Deepak Kumar Ram (Director cum Guarantor) 4). Mr. Ashok Kumar Ram (Guarantor) 5). Mr. Niranjan Prasad Ram (Guarantor) 6). Mr. Om Prakash Ram (Guarantor)**, No. 2 to No. 6 are S/o- Late Ganesh Ram, all are residing at College Square, PS-Malgodown, Cuttack-753003

Description of the Immovable Properties		
Item No.1. All that piece and parcel of residential land and three storied building at New Khata No.758/479 (Previous Khata No-758/31), New Khata No.758/480(Previous Khata No.758/31), New Khata No.340/465 (Previous Khata No.340/19), New Khata No-340/466 (Previous Khata No.340/19), New Plot No.1227/3287, area A.010dec, (Previous Plot No.1227/1773), New Plot No.1238/3288, area A.0055dec, (Previous Plot No.1238/1774), New Plot No.1227/3289, area A.013dec, (Previous Plot No.1227/1773), New Plot No.1238/3290, area A.0055dec, (Previous Plot No.1238/1774), New Plot No.1228/3291, area A.0144dec, (Previous Plot No.1228/1775), New Plot No.1228/3292, area A.011dec, (Previous Plot No.1228/1775), total area A.058DEC, Mouza-Cuttack Sahar Unit No.24, College Chhak, Taluka-Cuttack, No.237, PS-Malgodown, No.3, Collage Road, District- Cuttack, Odisha-753003, standing in the name of Mr. Rajendra Prasad Ram and Mr. Deepak Kumar Ram.	Reserve Price	EMD (10% of Reserve Price)
	Rs.3,96,00,000/-	Rs.39,60,000/-
		Rs.50,000/-

Item No.2. All that piece and parcel of residential land and three storied building at New Khata No-373/351 (Previous Khata No.373/30), Plot No.732, area A.040DEC Mouza-Cuttack Sahar Unit No.24, College Chhak, PS-Malgodown, No.3, Collage Road, Taluka- Cuttack, No.237, Cuttack, Odisha-753003, standing in the name of Mr. Ashok Kumar Ram.	Reserve Price	EMD (10% of Reserve Price)
	Rs.3,19,00,000/-	Rs.31,90,000/-
		Rs.50,000/-

Inspection of the Asset	All working Days - From 23.12.2021 to 28.01.2021 between 11.00 am to 5.00 pm
Last date and time for submitting online Tender & Application Forms	Date: 28.01.2022 Time: 5:00PM
Date and Time of E-Auction	The E-Auction will take place through portal https://www.indianbankauction.com on 29/01/2022 between 11:00am to 12:00 Noon with unlimited extensions of 10 minutes each till sale is concluded.
Nodal Bank account Name (EMD by RTGS/NEFT)	Account No: 110135100000973 IFSC Code: KVB0001101. Name of account: BID COLLECTION A/c of SARFAESI E-auction Proceed: L.P Electronics (Orissa) Pvt. Ltd.
Contact Person & Phone No: Mr. Shibaji Das Mahapatra (9439499914), Email: shibaji@kvbmail.com	

For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided in our Bank's Secured Creditor's website www.kvb.co.in/Property Under Auction also at the web portal <https://www.indianbankauction.com> of the service provider, M/s. Canbank Computer Service Ltd., Bengaluru 080-23469661/62/64/65/68

Statutory 30 days' Notice under Rule 8(6) of the SARFAESI Act, 2002

The borrower/s and guarantor/s are hereby notified to pay the dues as mentioned above along with up to date interest and ancillary expenses before the date of E-Auction, failing which the Schedule property will be auctioned/sold and balance dues, if any, will be recovered with interest and cost.

Date : 22.12.2021
Place: Kolkata

Authorized Officer
The Karur Vysya Bank Limited

FRESH TROUBLE FOR NORA & JACQUELINE

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) will soon seize the gifts given to Bollywood actors Jacqueline Fernandez and Nora Fatehi by multimillionaire conman Sukesh Chandrashekhar



'DEAD' WOMAN GIVEN SECOND DOSE OF COVID-19 VACCINE

Patna: In a major goof-up, a woman, who died two months ago, has been sent the message of successful administration of second dose of corona vaccine. Her husband saw the message. Lalo Devi's husband Ram Udgar Thakur said: "My wife died due to illness in village Kharmauli under Veerpur block September 19. The Planning and Development Department of Bihar has also issued death certificate on the same date. Now, we have received Corona vaccination certificate from health department, two months after her death," Thakur said. The vaccination certificate issued to a dead person was uploaded on social media and is a talking point in the Begusarai district.

रजिस्ट्री सं० डी०एल०-33004/99

REGD.NO.D.L.-33004/99

भारत का राजपत्र
The Gazette of India

सी.जी.-डी.एल.-अ.-07122021-231684
CG-DL-E-07122021-231684

असाधारण
EXTRAORDINARY
भाग II - खण्ड 3-उप-खण्ड (ii)
PART II-Section 3-Sub-section (ii)
प्राधिकार से प्रकाशित
PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY

सं. 4666] नई दिल्ली, मंगलवार, दिसम्बर 7, 2021/अग्रहायण 16, 1943
No.4666] NEW DELHI, TUESDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2021/AGRAHAYANA 16, 1943

MINISTRY OF ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS
NOTIFICATION
New Delhi, the 7th December, 2021

S.O. 5040(E).— Whereas by the notification of the Government of India in the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, published in the Gazette of India, Extraordinary, Part II, Section 3, Sub-section (ii) issued under subsection (1) of section 3A of the National Highway Act, 1956 (48 of 1956) (hereinafter referred to as the said Act), the Central Government declared its intention to acquire the land specified in the Schedule annexed to the said notification for building (widening/four-laning, etc.), maintenance, management and operation of NH16 on the stretch of land from Km. 98 to Km. 111 (Office of the Tahasildar, Bhandaripokhari, At/Po/PS-Bhandaripokhari, Dist- Bhadrak, Pin-756120, Odisha) in the district of BHADRAK in the state of ODISHA.

And whereas the substance of the said notification has been published in "Sambad" and "Prameya" both dated 22.10.2021; under sub-section (3) of section 3A of the said Act;

And whereas objections have not been received from any person/quarter.

And whereas, in pursuance of sub-section (1) of section 3D of the said Act, the competent authority has submitted its report to the Central Government;

Now, therefore, upon receipt of the said report of the competent authority and in exercise of the powers conferred by the sub-section (1) of section 3D of the said Act, the Central Government hereby declares that the land specified in the said Schedule should be acquired for the aforesaid purpose;

And further, in pursuance of sub-section (2) of section 3D of the said Act, the Central Government hereby declares that on publication of this notification in the Official Gazette, the land specified in the said Schedule shall vest absolutely in the Central Government, free from all encumbrances.

SCHEDULE

Brief description of the land to be acquired, with or without structure, falling within the NH16 in the stretch of land from km. 98 to km. 111 (Office of the Tahasildar, Bhandaripokhari, At/Po/PS- Bhandaripokhari, Dist- Bhadrak, Pin-756120, Odisha) in the district of BHADRAK in the State of ODISHA.

State: ODISHA		District: BHADRAK			
Sr. No.	Survey Number	Type of Land	Nature of Land	Area in Hectare	Name of the Land Owner/Interested Person/Part Survey No.
1	2	3	4	5	6
Taluk: Bhandaripokhari					
Village: Chingudipur-2/1					
1	1511	Private	Gharabari	0.0101174	Niranjan Samal, S/O- Sindhu Samal, Malati Samal, W/O- Niranjan Samal, Caste- Khandayat 1511
2	203	Private	Gharabari	0.0202347	Priya Ranjan Mohapatra, S/O Binod Bihari Mohapatra, Caste- Karan 203
3	204	Private	Gharabari	0.0202347	Priya Ranjan Mohapatra, S/O Binod Bihari Mohapatra, Caste- Karan 204
4	205	Private	Gharabari	0.0202347	Priya Ranjan Mohapatra, S/O Binod Bihari Mohapatra, Caste- Karan 205
5	206	Private	Gharabari	0.0060704	Priya Ranjan Mohapatra, S/O Binod Bihari Mohapatra, Caste- Karan 206
6	207	Private	Saradajala-1	0.0364225	Bikrambir Khemaka, S/O Raj Kumar Khemaka, Caste- Baisya 207
7	216	Private	Saradajala-1	0.0161878	Jaganath Nayak, S/O Daitari Nayak, Biswanath Nayak, S/O Mayadhar Nayak, Caste- Khandayat 216
8	218	Private	Saradajala-1	0.0040469	Biswanath Nayak, S/O- Mayadhar Nayak, Caste- Khandayat 218
9	219	Private	Gharabari	0.0161878	Umakanta Nayak, Narayan Nayak, Abhimanyu Nayak, S/O- Sudarsan Nayak, Caste- Niari 219
10	250	Private	Saradajala-1	0.0040469	Priya Ranjan Mohapatra, S/O Binod Bihari Mohapatra, Caste- Karan 250
11	393	Government	Jalasaya-II	0.0040469	Government 393
12	394	Government	Sarbasadharana Jogy	0.0161878	Government, Sarbasadharana Jogy 394
13	395	Private	Gharabari	0.0040469	Bidyadhar Majhi, Gangadhar Majhi, S/O- Krishna Chandra Majhi, Caste- Niari 395
14	396	Private	Gharabari	0.0040469	Bidyadhar Majhi, Gangadhar Majhi, S/O- Krishna Chandra Majhi, Caste- Niari 396
15	399	Government	Huda	0.0020235	Government, Rakhta 399
16	400	Government	Jalasaya	0.0080939	Government, Jalasaya 400
17	401	Government	Jalasaya-II	0.0242817	Government, Jalasaya-II 401
18	403	Private	Patita	0.0080939	Bharat Chandra Nayak, S/O- Nilamani Nayak, Caste- Niari 403
19	405	Private	Gharabari	0.0060704	Manamohan Samal, Mohini Mohan Samal, S/O- Kumbhapani Samal, Caste- Khandayat 405
20	406	Private	Patita	0.0040469	Anushaya Mohalik, W/O- Ratnakar Mohalik, Pravarak Mohalik, S/O Baishnaba Mohalik, Bhaba Mohalik, W/O- Raghu Mohalik, Caste- Niari 406
21	407	Private	Gharabari	0.0040469	Dukhishyama Samal, S/O- Sanatan Samal, Pati Samal, W/O- Anama Samal, Giridhari Samal, Benudhar Samal, Panchanan Samal, S/O-Anama Samal, Caste- Khandayat 407
22	408	Private	Gharabari	0.0040469	Biswanath Samal, S/O- Kumbhapani Samal, Caste- Niari 408
23	409	Private	Gharabari	0.0040469	Pravarak Mohalik, S/O- Baishnaba Mohalik, Caste- Niari 409
24	410	Private	Patita	0.0161878	Khageswar Behera, S/O- Sidheswar Behera, Caste- Niari 410
25	411	Government	Bastijogya	0.0242817	Government, Bastijogya 411
26	411/1604	Private	Gharabari	0.0101174	Harekrushna Samal, S/O- Ratnakar Samal, Caste- Khandayat 411/1604
27	776	Private	Gharabari	0.0060704	Khirod Kumar Panda, Ananda Panda, Managobinda Panda, S/O- Narayan Panda, Caste- Brahmin 776
				TOTAL	0.3035206

[F. No. NHA/BOT/11012/58/2005/PL/LA/NH-16/3D]
RAJESH GUPTA, Director

'Delimitation Commission proposals fulfil BJP agenda'

The NC, PDP and other political parties largely based in the Kashmir region have vociferously opposed the draft proposals which will increase the number of assembly seats in Jammu division from 37 to 43 and Kashmir from 46 to 47

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar/New Delhi, Dec 22: Lashing out at the Delimitation Commission over its draft recommendations, former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah Wednesday accused the panel of fulfilling the BJP's agenda of 'disempowering' people of Kashmir, and said his National Conference (NC) will fight the move through democratic means.

The commission's proposal to increase the number of assembly seats in Jammu division by six and in Kashmir division by just one ignored the 'overwhelming criteria' of population, the NC vice-president said.

"By increasing the seats in this proportion, you are actually disenfranchising people in Kashmir because the ratio of seat-to-population changes drastically," Abdullah told PTI in his first detailed reaction to the commission's draft recommendations.

The draft recommendations were presented in a meeting of the commission in New Delhi two days



ago, attended by three MPs of the NC and two of the BJP. The commission has sought comments of the MPs who are its associate members by December 31.

The NC, PDP and other political parties largely based in the Kashmir region have vociferously opposed the draft proposals which will increase the number of assembly seats in Jammu division from 37 to

43 and Kashmir from 46 to 47. Abdullah made it clear that the NC will not endorse the recommendations and if the commission doesn't amend the proposals, "we will make sure our dissent is part of the record".

Ruling out moving the Supreme Court because, "rightly or wrongly, you cannot challenge recommendations of a Delimitation

By increasing the seats in this proportion, you are actually disenfranchising people in Kashmir because the ratio of seat-to-population changes drastically

OMAR ABDULLAH | FORMER J&K CHIEF MINISTER

Commission in a court," he said, "We have to try and build pressure through other democratic means."

He said the concerted plan of the Centre since 2018 has been to disempower people in Kashmir and the proposals of the Delimitation Commission "is just another step in that direction."

"We have time and again questioned the rationale for this delimitation... Their justification for August 5, 2019 (decisions) was that you can't have one country with two systems and that Jammu and

Kashmir had to be brought at par with the rest of the country, then why were we singled out for delimitation," he said.

Abdullah pointed out that many BJP leaders in Jammu were not happy with the 2011 census and said the government could have waited for a couple of years and then had a delimitation based on the census of 2021.

"Then we would have seen what the ratio is. So, they can't have it all their way. They want delimitation, but then they want to ignore 2011 census data. They can't do that and that's why we have said that the commission has not taken an objective view of this distribution of seats," he said.

He countered the argument in a section of media that the seats were being distributed because of geographical areas and said if that is the consideration, then why do Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra not have more seats than Uttar Pradesh. All these three states have larger territory than Uttar Pradesh which is the most populous state.

Cop, civilian shot dead in separate incidents



Uncle of civilian Rouf Ahmad Khan, who was shot dead by militants outside his home, waits for his body, in Mirjanpora area of Srinagar, Wednesday evening.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, Dec 22: Militants Wednesday shot dead a police officer and a civilian within minutes of each other in two separate incidents in Kashmir Valley, officials said.

While the police assistant sub-inspector (ASI) was shot dead in Bijbehara area of south Kashmir's Anantnag district, the civilian was gunned down in Nawakadal near Eidgah locality of the city, they said.

"At about 6 pm, terrorists fired at and critically injured a civilian namely Rouf Ahmad near his residence in Nawakadal area of

Srinagar," a police official said.

He said the injured person was shifted to SMHS Hospital here, where he succumbed to the injuries. In another incident shortly afterwards, militants fired at and injured police ASI Mohammad Ashraf outside Bijbehara hospital, the official said.

The injured ASI was taken to the same hospital, from where he was referred to a medical facility in Srinagar, the official said.

Ashraf succumbed to the injuries, the official added. The areas have been cordoned off and searches launched to nab the attackers, he said.

A pic that has seared the winter chill in Lucknow



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, Dec 22: A photograph has seared the winter chill and spun the political scenario in Uttar Pradesh almost out of control.

The photograph in question is that of Samajwadi Party patriarch Mulayam Singh Yadav with RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat, which has created a major controversy.

Mulayam Singh Yadav and Mohan Bhagwat met Monday at the wedding reception of Vice President Venkaiah Naidu's granddaughter in Delhi.

Mulayam Singh and the RSS chief were seen sitting together in a photo tweeted by Union

Minister Arjun Meghwal. Hours later, the Congress shot off a tweet taking aim at the Samajwadi Party.

"Is the S in the 'new SP' meant to be Sanghavad?" the Uttar Pradesh Congress said in its post in Hindi.

The BJP gleefully replied, "Photograph says a lot."

The Samajwadi Party, meanwhile, has maintained a studied silence on the issue while rival parties are said to be preparing to carry forward the controversy by dishing out earlier photographs of Mulayam Singh with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other top BJP leaders.

Akhilesh promises caste census within 3 months if voted to power

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mainpuri, Dec 22: Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav has promised a caste census to give people their rights in accordance with their share in the population.

He said that the census would be held within three months if his party is voted in power in the state.

Akhilesh, who was addressing people during his Vijay Yatra in Mainpuri, which is also his father Mulayam Singh Yadav's parliamentary constituency, on Tuesday evening, said, "We all are accused of snatching someone's else's rights, but things will become clear once the caste census is done."

He said that his party would fulfil all its promises as it had done earlier. "Netaji (Mulayam Singh Yadav) is known for mincing no words; his actions speak," said Akhilesh.

Mounting a blistering attack on Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, he said the chief minister is good only in changing colours and names of institutions, for laying foundation stones and inaugurating already inaugurated projects. "Do you need Yogi or 'yogya' (deserving) government?" he asked.

Talking about his recent poll alliance with his estranged uncle Shivpal Yadav of Pragatisheel



Samajwadi Party Lohia (PSPL), Akhilesh said, "Since I took 'chacha wali' (uncle's) party along, BJP's I-T, CBI and ED cells have become active from Delhi. As elections near, these agencies will become more active because the fear of defeat haunts BJP."

Referring to the recent income tax department's raids at the premises of some SP leaders, he said, "Samajwadis are not scared of anything 'jo dar gaya woh mar gaya' (one who's afraid is dead)".

Interestingly, while Shivpal's pictures were back on the hoarding and banners with his nephew at the rally site, Shivpal himself was not present though his supporters attended the Yatra in

Mainpuri. Akhilesh also took a swipe at the BJP for starting "Jan Vishwas Yatra" from multiple locations in the state. "BJP is nervous, which is evident from their yatras from six different locations in the state against one SP Rath," he said.

Talking about the BJP's dig at red colour, Akhilesh said the ruling party fears it as it symbolises "revolution and emotions".

Akhilesh further said Yogi Adityanath is the first chief minister who himself had withdrawn cases lodged against him.

"BJP is the only party giving protection to criminals, and the majority of criminals are in this party," he added.

WHITHER SOCIAL DISTANCING!



Tourists visit the Taj Mahal amid possible spread of Omicron variant of COVID-19, in Agra, Wednesday.

PTI PHOTO

125-year-old church reopens in Srinagar after 3 decades

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, Dec 22: The bells started ringing and the faithful gathered for mass prayer as the Saint Lukes church here - one of the oldest in Kashmir - came alive after three decades Wednesday just ahead of Christmas.

It was closed after the eruption of militancy in the Valley in the 1990s. The Church located near the Chest Diseases Hospital on the foothills of the Shankaracharya hillock in Dalgate area of the city here will officially be thrown open for the public Thursday, but the prayer was held Wednesday, officials said. The renovation of the Church - which is about 125 years old - was undertaken by the J-K Tourism Department under the "Smart City Project".

The Church has been thrown open after 30 years after it was renovated and restored to its old glory, they said.

The renovated Church will be inaugurated Thursday by J-K Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, Church official Kennedy David Rajan said.

He said the Christian community is happy to see the Church being re-opened after its renovation.

Grace Paljor, principal of a private school here, said the community was glad that a 125-year-old Church was restored to its old glory, and prayers were held there after three decades.

The minuscule Christian popu-



People walk in front of the St. Lukes Church, which was reopened for worshippers after more than 30 years, at Dalgate in Srinagar, Wednesday.

lation in the Valley usually visits the Holy Family Catholic Church, a Roman Catholic Church, at M A Road, and the one at Church Lane

here for Sunday mass and Christmas mass. There are churches in Baramulla and Gulmarg as well in the Valley.

Life of all school buses in UP to be capped at 15 yrs

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, Dec 22: The Yogi Adityanath government is mulling a proposal to cap the life of all school buses in Uttar Pradesh at 15 years. This is being done to provide a level playing field to transporters, other than school management, who operate these buses.

The present rules cap life of buses, owned and operated by schools (educational institutions), at 15 years and those that are owned by individuals/private operators and used to transport school children on a contract permit, at 10 years. According to a senior transport official: "The idea behind keeping lower age limit for school buses owned by those other than school managements was that such buses become unfit sooner because they ply more than school-owned buses that operate only for the limited purpose of ferrying children."

The state government, according to official sources, is all set to make an amendment in this regard, besides making some other amendments to the School Bus Rules, 2019 very soon for greater safety of school children who travel by buses. "The proposed amendments will be put before the Cabinet within a week or two," sources said. One of the amendment proposals seeks to fix the age limit for all school buses at 15 years after which they would not be deemed fit to ply on the road. "However, transporters had been demanding an increase in the school bus age limit for long," he added.

Mehbooba likens Gen Zia's rule in Pak to 'today's India'



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, Dec 22: PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti Wednesday made veiled statements equating the BJP's rule with that of former Pakistani military dictator General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq and accused the saffron party of "poisoning" people's minds.

She appealed to the people, especially the youth of both Jammu and Kashmir divisions, to come together and fight for the "lost honour".

The former chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir was referring to working towards the restoration of Article 370 of the Constitution that provided special status to Jammu and Kashmir. It

Today, there are hundreds of Jinnahs polarizing Indians. They belong to the party that did not play any role in the freedom struggle

MEHBOOBA MUFTI | FORMER J&K CHIEF MINISTER

animosity against Pakistani founder Muhammad Ali Jinnah for dividing India and the Muslims. "Today, there are hundreds of Jinnahs polarizing Indians. They belong to the party that did not play any role in the freedom struggle."

"Today, they claim to be nationalists and dub their opponents as traitors and anti-nationals. None of them went to jail during the freedom struggle. They were not even hoisting the national flag on their headquarters until a few years ago," she said.

However, the former chief minister said this is a place of 'Ganga-Jamuni Tehzeeb' (Ganga-Yamuna culture) and the politics of "Godse" (the assassin of Mahatma Gandhi) will not work.

Slamming the BJP for allegedly using the Army to disperse employees of the Jammu and Kashmir Power Development Department, who went on a strike against privatization last week, Mehbooba said, "They will repeat the practice outside Jammu and Kashmir, too, as they want to get things done by training guns on army men's shoulders."

Mehbooba said while there was

national



The approach of the Congress, the BJP, etc. towards women empowerment is almost the same and mostly publicity oriented (dikhavati), whereas under the BSP government a lot of efforts were made for the social, economic and educational self-reliance of women, which rival parties are now trying to cash in on

MAYAWATI | BSP PRESIDENT

X-MAS SPIRIT GRIPS NE

With Christmas approaching, pre-celebrations, shopping, decorations of churches and important places has begun with great enthusiasm in the northeastern states



of the day quote

The BJP government has protected the country's legacy of art and craftsmanship while providing new energy, market and opportunities to indigenous products through initiatives such as the Hunar Haat

MUKHTAR ABBAS NAQVI | UNION MINISTER

The Delhi government-run labs at the Lok Nayak Hospital and the Institute of Liver and Biliary Sciences can sequence 100 samples each day. Two Centre-run labs in Delhi can sequence 200-300 samples a day. So, 400-500 samples can be analysed in a day

SATYENDAR JAIN | DELHI HEALTH MINISTER

The current generation of students need the power of knowledge to face challenges with confidence and courage. The NEP (New Education Policy) will empower them with the necessary knowledge

BASAVARAJ BOMMAI | KARNATAKA CHIEF MINISTER

Parl adjourned sine die a day before schedule

The session, which started November 29, was scheduled to conclude December 23

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 22: The tumultuous Winter session of Parliament ended Wednesday a day before schedule with proceedings in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha marred by repeated disruptions by the opposition over which the government and the Congress traded charges and the presiding officers expressed their anguish at the conduct of some MPs.

While Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi said the opposition seems to be "unable to digest" the mandate of 2019 when the BJP-led NDA retained power, the Congress and the Trinamool Congress (TMC) accused the government of "manufacturing majority" in the Rajya Sabha by suspending opposition members in contravention of the rules to get key legislations passed in the din and without a discussion.

Joshi said that despite the opposition disruptions the Lok Sabha registered a productivity of around 82 per cent and for the Rajya Sabha it was around 48 per cent. The session began on November 29 and was due to end December 23.

"It is unfortunate that despite our efforts and reaching out to the opposition, they created ruckus in the House. It seems that Congress and other opposition parties are unable to digest the mandate of 2019 given by the people," he told reporters after the two Houses of

Parliament were adjourned sine die. The suspension of 12 opposition MPs in the Rajya Sabha for their "unruly" conduct in the previous session in August and the Lakhimpur Kheri violence in Uttar Pradesh in which Union minister Ajay Mishra's son Ashish Mishra is a key accused were among the major issues over which the opposition protested relentlessly. Opposition members trooped into the Well of the House in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha carrying placards on multiple occasions.

Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu lamented that the Upper House functioned "much below its potential" due to repeated disruptions and urged all members to reflect and introspect if this session could have been different and better. "I don't want to speak elaborately on the course of the session that would lead me to make a very critical view."

He stressed that rulings, regulations and procedures have to be followed and that precedents, decency and decorum have to be maintained by members in the House. Naidu also called on members for "realisation of what has happened is wrong" and said "we should all work towards a constructive and positive atmosphere for the larger interest of the country". Later, Naidu, who is the Vice President, said there is a need to inculcate legislative temper in our politicians.

Over 1.16 lakh road mishaps on national highways in 2020: Govt



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 22: A total of 1,16,496 road accidents occurred on national highways (NHs), including expressways, in 2020, causing 47,984 deaths, Parliament was informed on Wednesday.

In 2019, a total of 1,37,191 accidents had taken place on NHs, including expressways, which resulted in 53,872 deaths, according to a written reply to the Rajya Sabha by Minister of Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari.

The minister said that advanced traffic management systems are an integral part of the concession agreement and have been revised recently to include advanced technology-based solutions like incidence detection smart cameras, emergency telephone boxes, CCTV cameras to improve safety of commuters as well as improve the surveillance network for security purposes.

In addition, he said the ministry is developing way side amenities along the highways to provide users with hospitals for medical services and also help aids for emergency evacuation in case of medical emergencies. Replying to a separate question, Gadkari said a total 1,640 permissions have been granted by the ministry for access to private properties from NHs in the last three years. Replying to another question, he said user fee notification for collection of user fee on Delhi-Meerut Expressway (NE-3) is likely to commence soon.

DAREDEVIL SKILLS



Indian Navy personnel demonstrate their skill on the occasion of the President Ram Nath Kovind's visit, at the Southern Naval Command in Kochi

PTI PHOTO

OMICRON SCORE

Year-end celebrations banned in Delhi

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 22: In view of the rising cases of Omicron in Delhi, the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) has put a ban on all kinds of gatherings on Christmas and New Year in the national capital.

"As per the DDMA order, all social, political, sports, entertainment, cultural, religious, and festival related gathering and congregations are completely prohibited in Delhi," the DDMA order read. The DDMA has directed all the district magistrates and DCPs to ensure that no cultural events, gatherings or congregations take place for celebrating Christmas or New Year in the National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi.

Also, capacity at public places like restaurants, auditoriums and assembly halls has again been reduced to 50 per cent, while gatherings at wedding functions have been capped at 200 persons to curb the spread of the new Covid variant. "All district magistrates as well as DCPs shall conduct surprise checks and raids in their respective areas and shall take strict penal action against the defaulters," the DDMA stated. The order has



further asked the district magistrates to survey the areas falling within their jurisdiction and identify the places, which have the potential of becoming Covid hotspots and tighten the enforcement machinery by deploying sufficient number of enforcement teams on field for keeping vigil at public places and for enforcing Covid appropriate behaviour.

"The district magistrates shall convene meetings with the office-bearers of Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs) and Market Traders Associations (MTAs) and

inform them about the increasing trend of Covid-19 as well as the emergence of Omicron variant in Delhi, so that they may further sensitise their members, residents and shopkeepers etc.," the DDMA said, adding, "RWAs and MTAs should be advised not to allow their residents, shopkeepers and customers without mask in their respective areas."

As many as 213 cases of Omicron have been detected across India so far, with Delhi recording 57 cases, the highest among all states and UTs, followed by Maharashtra (54), Telangana (24), Karnataka (19), Rajasthan (18), Kerala (15) and Gujarat (14).

In an order, the DDMA said the currently permitted and restricted activities in Delhi will continue up to the intervening night of December 31 and January 1.

In an order, the DDMA said the currently permitted and restricted activities in Delhi will continue up to the intervening night of December 31 and January 1.

SHORT TAKES

Dimple Yadav tests Covid +ve

Lucknow: Former Samajwadi Party MP Dimple Yadav Wednesday said she has tested positive for Covid-19. "I am full vaccinated and not showing any symptoms yet. I have isolated myself. I request all those who met me recently to get themselves tested," she tweeted. Dimple Yadav's husband and SP chief Akhilesh Yadav is currently on a two-day campaign yatra from Mainpuri to Etah. Assembly polls in Uttar Pradesh are due early next year.

Mild quakes hit Chikkaballapura

Bangalore: Two back-to-back mild earthquakes hit parts of Chikkaballapura district bordering Bangalore Wednesday morning, official reports said. Epicentre of the quakes with magnitude of 2.9 and three on Richter scale that happened around 7.10 am and 7.15 am was close to Mandikal and Bhogaparthi villages, according to the Karnataka State Natural Disaster Monitoring Centre (KSNDMC).

Kangana fails to appear before police

Mumbai: Hindi film actor Kangana Ranaut failed to appear before the Mumbai Police Wednesday in connection with an FIR registered against her for a post that allegedly linked farmers' protests to a separatist group, an official said. An FIR was registered against Ranaut at Khar police station last month following a complaint by a Sikh organisation. The police earlier this month issued a notice to her for questioning.



'Govt dismantling democracy'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 22: A day after being suspended from the Rajya Sabha for the remaining part of the Winter Session, Trinamool Congress floor leader in the House Derek O'Brien Wednesday accused the BJP-led government at the Centre of "mocking at and dismantling democracy" and "slow-poisoning Parliament".

He, Wednesday, joined the dharna of the 12 suspended opposition MPs at the Gandhi statue in the Parliament complex. These MPs were suspended for the entire session November 29 for their "unruly" conduct in the previous session in August.

They have been holding day-long protests in front of the Mahatma Gandhi statue inside the Parliament complex and decided to continue to do so every day till their suspension is revoked.

These 12 MPs also carried out a 'Jan Sansad' at the spot as a mark of protest against their suspension. Joining the dharna, the TMC MP said, "This government has tried to manufacture a majority in the Upper House by suspending 12 MPs. Under this dispensation,



O'Brien was suspended from the Rajya Sabha Tuesday for the remaining part of the session for the 'grave misconduct' of hurling a Rajya Sabha rule book at the Chair during a discussion on the electoral reforms bill

democracy is being mocked and dismantled every day. They are giving slow-poison to Parliament." About the Bill proposing linking

electoral roll data with the Aadhaar ecosystem, O'Brien said it will expose the mobile phone numbers of voters through which their social media profiling can easily be done. The Parliament Tuesday passed the bill in Rajya Sabha in a voice vote, amid a walkout by the opposition. It was passed in the Lok Sabha Monday.

Rajya Sabha was adjourned sine die Wednesday, a day ahead of the scheduled end of the Winter Session of Parliament, with Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu lamenting that the Upper House functioned much below its potential due to repeated disruptions.

ROHINI COURT SHOOTOUT CASE

DELHI POLICE FILES CHARGE SHEET

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 22: Delhi Police has filed a charge sheet in a case related to the shootout in the Rohini court in which jailed gangster Jitender Gogi and two assailants dressed as lawyers were killed, unearthing the "deep conspiracy" behind the incident.

The assailants, who were from the rival gang, opened fire at undertrial prisoner Gogi inside a courtroom where an attempt to murder case was being heard against him September 24. The duo was then killed in a swift police counter-fire. The charge sheet, filed December 17, named Umang Yadav, Vinay Yadav, Ashish Kumar, and two gangsters Sunil Baliyan alias Tilla and Naveen Dabas alias Balli as accused. Abated charge sheet has also been filed against deceased assailants Rahul and Jai Deep alias Jaggu.

The police filed the final report for offences under sections 302 (murder), 353 (assault), 186 (obstructing public servant in discharge of public functions) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), and various sections under the Arms Act.

Indians ordered 115 biryanis per minute in 2021: Report

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 22: The country's love for biryani only seems to be growing as online food delivery platform Swiggy said on Tuesday that Indians ordered 115 plates of biryani per minute in 2021.

The report mentioned that over 4.25 lakh new users made their Swiggy debut by ordering a chicken biryani, while the most binged snack of the year was samosa with about 5 million orders on Swiggy, equal to the population of New Zealand.

"Swiggy's sixth annual StateATstics report reveals how Indians ordered 115 plates of biryani per minute, samosas equal to the population of New Zealand, and enough



tomatoes to play the Spanish Tomatina festival for eleven years," the company said in a statement.

"In 2020, 90 biryanis were ordered per minute, which has gone up to 115 in 2021, which comes to 1.91 per sec-

The report mentioned that over 4.25 lakh new users made their Swiggy debut by ordering a chicken biryani, while the most binged snack of the year was samosa with about 5 million orders on Swiggy, equal to the population of New Zealand

ond," the statement said. While samosa was ordered six times more than Chicken Wings, pav bhaji was India's second favourite

snack with 2.1 million orders. With a total of 2.1 million orders, gulab jamun was the most ordered dessert on Swiggy followed by rasamalai with 1.27 million orders.

The search for healthy food on Swiggy doubled in 2021, and health-focused restaurants on Swiggy HealthHub witnessed a 200 per cent increase in orders. Bengaluru emerged as the most health-conscious city, followed by Hyderabad and Mumbai.

Instamart delivered over 28 million packs of fruits and vegetables alone in 2021. Tomatoes, bananas, onions, potatoes, and green chilies were the top five fruits and veggies delivered in under 30 minutes. The total bananas ordered on Instamart outweighed the Statue of Liberty by 2.6 times.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA No.L-115
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER (AGRI.),
NORTHERN ZONE, AT/PO-REMED, SAMBALPUR-768006
e-mail : senzambalpur@gmail.com
Notice No. 2444 dt.21.12.2021

NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH e-Procurement
Identification No. 04 /Agril. / NZ / 2021-22 Dt.21.12.2021

01	Nos. of work	: 20 nos.
02	Tendered amount in Rs.	: Rs. 6,15,770/- to Rs. 13,16,274/-
03	Period of completion	: 90 days to 120 days
04	Date & Time of availability of bid document in the portal	: From 11.00 Hrs. of 24.12.2021 to 17.30 Hrs. of 10.01.2022
05	Last date/time of receipt of bids in the portal	: 17.30 Hrs. of 10.01.2022
06	Date & Time of opening of bids	: 11.30 Hrs. of 18.01.2022
07	Name and Address of the officer inviting bid	: Superintending Engineer (Agril.), Northern Zone, At/PO-Remed, Sambalpur, Pin-768006.

Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in
Sd./ Superintending Engineer (Agril.),
OIPR-01033/11/0012/2122 Northern Zone, Sambalpur

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER,
R&B DIVISION-V, BHUBANESWAR
No. B-869 E-mail ID: eerb5bbsr@gmail.com, Tel.: (0674) 2392424
No. 6881 Dtd. 17.12.2021

NOTICE FOR BUILDING WORK
E-Procurement Tender Call Notice No. 12 of 2021-22

Number of the work : 01 (One) Electrical
Period of Completion : As mentioned in DTCN
Date & time of sale & receipt of bid document in the office of : From 22.12.2021 at 11.00 A.M. to 03.01.2022 at 5.30 P.M.
Inviting Authority
Date & time of Opening of bids : 04.01.2022 at 11.30 A.M.
Name and address of Inviting Officer : Executive Engineer, R&B Officer Division-V, Bhubaneswar

Further details can be seen from the State Govt. portal <https://odisha.gov.in>. Any amendment/cancellation/retenders will be available in the website.

Sd./ Executive Engineer
R&B Division-V, Bhubaneswar
OIPR-34090/11/0025/2122

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
CUTTACK (R&B) DIVISION NO.-I, CUTTACK
E-mail ID: eeppwcuttack@gmail.com, Tel./Fax No. (0671) 2304128
No. B-860 GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
(e' PROCUREMENT NOTICE)
Bid Identification No. S.E. CTC (R&B) - 15 of 2021-22

1. The Superintending Engineer, Cuttack (R&B) Division No. I, Cuttack on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites on Percentage rate basis bid in Double Cover System in ONLINE MODE from eligible contractor for building work as mentioned below.

2. No. of Work	: 01 No.
3. Nature of work	: Building work
4. Class of Contractor	: "B" and "A" Class
5. Tender Paper Cost	: Rs.10000/- (Online)
6. Availability of bid documents in the website	: From 24.12.2021 to 5 P.M. of 10.01.2022
7. Date of Opening of Bid	: 11 A.M. of 11.01.2022

8. The bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>. Any addendum/corrigendum/cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website.

Sd./ (Er. P.K. Majhi)
Superintending Engineer
Cuttack (R&B) Division No.-I
OIPR-34091/11/0023/2122

international

of the day quote

What happens in Vienna has profound ramifications for the stability of the Middle East and the security of Israel for the upcoming years



NAFTALI BENNETT | ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER

Many women who wrestle with themselves on the question of an abortion look for advice on the internet. It cannot be that, of all people, the doctors who are professionally best qualified to inform them aren't allowed to provide information there



MARCO BUSCHMANN | JUSTICE MINISTER, GERMANY

My message is to stay calm, get your booster, follow the commonsense behavioral measures as you're going into christmas and we look forward to that



SCOTT MORRISON | PRIME MINISTER, AUSTRALIA

SHORT TAKES

EU-UK reach fisheries deal

London: The European Union said Wednesday that it reached a fisheries deal with the United Kingdom on their shared stocks, but environmentalists insisted that even after Brexit takes hold, fish will continue to be overexploited. The agreement stood apart from the spat between France and Britain over licenses for French fishermen to operate off the UK's crown dependencies of Jersey and Guernsey, which hug the French coast.

Migrant boat sinks killing 1

Athens: Greece's coast guard says one migrant has died and dozens are feared missing after a boat sank off the coast of the island of Folegandros. The body of the unidentified man was recovered during an ongoing search and rescue operation launched early Wednesday after the boat sank some 180 kilometers (112 miles) southeast of Athens. The coast guard said 12 people, all believed to be from Iraq, had been rescued and transported to the nearby island of Santorini.

Israeli fire kills Palestine man

Ramallah: Israeli troops Tuesday killed a Palestinian man who allegedly tried to ram his vehicle into a military checkpoint in the occupied West Bank, army officials said. According to Palestinian media, the soldiers opened fire at the vehicle, killing the man and causing his car to veer off course, crash into a military vehicle and burst into flames near the northern West Bank town of Jenin. The identity of the slain Palestinian was not immediately announced, and there were no reports of injuries to the Israeli forces.

Poland sees 775 COVID-19 deaths

Warsaw: Poland Wednesday reported 775 deaths from COVID-19 over the past day, the highest death toll in this latest wave of infection. The last time the nation in central Europe recorded such a high number was in the spring, while vaccines were still being rolled out and when the region was a global hot spot for infection and death. A spokesman for the Health Ministry said that most of those who died in the past 24 hours were not vaccinated.

SA case drop may indicate omicron peak has passed

The drop in new cases nationally combined with the sustained drop in new cases seen here in Gauteng province, which for weeks has been the center of this wave, indicates that we are past the peak. It was a short wave ... And the good news is that it was not very severe in terms of hospitalisations and deaths

MARTA NUNES | SENIOR RESEARCHER, UNIVERSITY OF WITWATERSRAND

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Johannesburg, Dec 22: South Africa's noticeable drop in new COVID-19 cases in recent days may signal that the country's dramatic omicron-driven surge has passed its peak, medical experts say.

Daily virus case counts are notoriously unreliable, as they can be affected by uneven testing, reporting delays and other fluctuations. But they are offering one tantalising hint — far from conclusive yet — that omicron infections may recede quickly after a ferocious spike.

South Africa has been at the forefront of the omicron wave and the world is watching for any signs of how it may play out there to try to understand what may be in store.

After hitting a high of nearly 27,000 new cases nationwide Thursday, the numbers dropped to about 15,424 Tuesday. In Gauteng province — South Africa's most populous with 16 million people, including the largest city, Johannesburg, and the capital, Pretoria — the decrease started earlier and has continued.

Gauteng province saw its num-

bers start sharply rising in mid-November. Scientists doing genetic sequencing quickly identified the new, highly mutated omicron variant that was announced to the world Nov 25.

Significantly more transmissible, omicron quickly achieved dominance in South Africa. An estimated 90 per cent of COVID-19 cases in Gauteng province since mid-November have been omicron, according to tests.

And the world seems to be quickly following, with omicron already surpassing the delta variant as the dominant coronavirus strain in some countries.

In the US, omicron accounted for 73 per cent of new infections last week, health officials said — and the variant is responsible for an estimated 90 per cent or more of new infections in the New York area, the Southeast, the industrial Midwest and the Pacific Northwest.

Confirmed coronavirus cases in the UK have surged by 60 per cent in a week as omicron overtook delta as the dominant variant there. Worldwide, the variant has been detected in at least 89 countries, according to the WHO.



Dozens missing post Myanmar landslide

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Bangkok, Dec 22: A landslide at a remote jade mine in northern Myanmar's Kachin state killed one person and left at least 70 missing Wednesday and a search and rescue operation was underway, rescue officials said.

Reports were scant from the area in Hpakant, which is the center of the world's biggest and most lucrative jade mining industry. It's a region where sporadic fighting has broken out between the Myanmar army and ethnic guerrilla forces.

Gayunar Rescue Team official Nyo Chaw, who was coordinating the effort, said more than 70 miners who were digging for jade were swept into a lake a couple of hours before dawn when the landslide hit. Earth and waste from several mines around Lonekhin village slid 60 meters (about 200 feet) down a cliff and struck the miners, he said.

At least five young women and three small shops were also buried in Wednesday's landslide. The body



of a jade worker was unearthed from heavy mud by midday, Nyo Chaw said.

"About 150 rescue workers and firefighters are searching for the area and we have found the body of a jade miner so far and keep finding others," Nyo Chaw told the Associated Press.

Hpakant is a mountainous and remote area in Kachin state, 950 kilometers north of Myanmar's biggest city, Yangon. A ceasefire in the region has been disrupted since a Feb 1 coup ousted Aung San Suu Kyi and her elected government.

Whirling dervish ritual honours Sufi mystic poet Rumi

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Konya, Dec 22: Each year, thousands of people travel to the Turkish city of Konya to attend a week-long series of events and ceremonies that mark the death of the 13th-century Islamic poet, scholar and Sufi mystic Jalaladdin Rumi.

Instead of mourning his death, however, the ceremonies celebrate what his followers believe is his union with God.

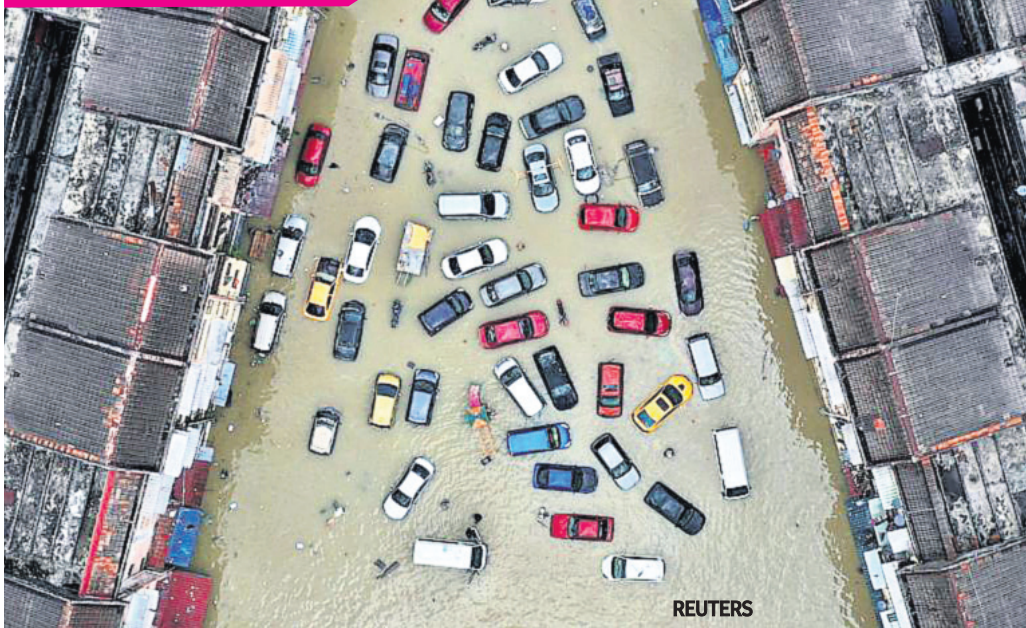
The main feature of the "Shebi Arus" or "night of the union," is an enchanting ritual performed by the dervishes of the Mevlevi order — more commonly known as the whirling dervishes.

The rite begins with a recital of

prayers and verses from the Quran. The dervishes, dressed in long white robes symbolising shrouds, black cloaks symbolising tombs and long headgear symbolising tombstones, then rise from the ground to salute each other.

Leaving their cloaks on the ground, they take their places around the circular floor and begin to spin to reach a trance-like state that they believe unites them with God. The ritual is performed to the sound of chanting and music from a reed flute and other instruments. As they whirl, the dervishes' right hands are symbolically turned upward toward God, while their left hands are turned downward to Earth.

INUNDATED



Aerial view shows vehicles and buildings inundated by floods in Shah Alam's Taman Sri Muda, one of the worst hit neighbourhoods in Selangor state, Malaysia

Xi endorses Hong Kong 'patriots only' election

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Beijing, Dec 22: Chinese leader Xi Jinping Wednesday endorsed Hong Kong's first legislative elections held under new laws ensuring that only "patriots" who have shown loyalty to Beijing could run as candidates.

Sunday's elections for the 90-seat Legislative Council were swept by politicians backed by China's ruling Communist Party. Just 20 seats were directly elected, and the turnout of 30.2% was the lowest since the British handed Hong Kong over to China in 1997.

All candidates were vetted by a largely pro-Beijing committee before they could be nominated.

Xi told Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie in Beijing Wednesday that after the elections, he is certain Hong Kongers will join in "realising the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation".

"The execution of the new election system adheres to the 'one country, two systems' principle," Xi said, referring to the increasingly threadbare framework under which



Our fellow Hong Kong citizens will promote the glorious tradition of loving their country and Hong Kong

XI JINPING | PRESIDENT, CHINA

Hong Kong was to retain its own political, social and financial institutions for 50 years after being transferred from British rule.

"Our fellow Hong Kong citizens will promote the glorious tradition of loving their country and Hong Kong," Xi said.

UKRAINE TENSIONS

Security talks with NATO, US next month: Russia FM

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Moscow, Dec 22: Russian and US negotiators will sit down for talks early next year to discuss Moscow's demand for Western guarantees precluding NATO's expansion to Ukraine, Russia's top diplomat said Wednesday.

Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said that Russia in January will also start separate talks with NATO to discuss the issue, adding that separate negotiations under the auspices of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe will also be held.

Last week, Moscow submitted draft security documents demanding that NATO deny membership to Ukraine and other former Soviet countries and roll back the alliance's military deployments in Central and Eastern Europe. Washington and its allies have re-

VAX FOR MYANMAR

India Wednesday handed over 10 lakh doses of 'Made in India' vaccines to the representatives of the Myanmar Red Cross Society to support the people of Myanmar in their fight against COVID-19



US starts probe into Tesla letting drivers play games on road

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Athens (US), Dec 22: The US has opened a formal investigation into Tesla allowing drivers to play video games on a centre touch screen while its vehicles are moving.

The probe by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration covers about 580,000 electric cars and SUVs from model years 2017 through 2022.

It comes after the agency received a complaint that Teslas equipped with "gameplay functionality" allow gaming to be enabled on the screens while vehicles are being driven.

In a document posted Wednesday on its website, the agency says the feature called "Passenger Play" may distract the driver and increase the risk of a crash.

The agency's Office of Defects Investigation said in the document that the game capability has been available since December of 2020.

Before that date, the games could only be played while the Teslas were in park.

The probe, which covers all four Tesla models, the S, X, Y and 3, was opened "to evaluate the driver distraction potential of Tesla 'Passenger Play' while the vehicle is being driven."

Investigators will evaluate aspects of the feature, including the frequency and use scenarios of Tesla 'Passenger Play'.

An investigation can lead to a recall.

Lanka sacks agri secy day after he warned of looming food crisis

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Colombo, Dec 22: The Sri Lankan government Wednesday sacked the country's top bureaucrat handling the crucial agriculture sector, a day after he warned of an impending food shortage due to the ongoing economic and social crisis in the country.

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has removed agriculture secretary Prof Udith Jayasinghe and appointed DMLD Bandaranayake in his position, a statement from the President's Office said.

Though no official reason was given for Jayasinghe's removal, observers opine that it might be due to his warning of a possible food crisis and the measures suggested to mitigate the situation.

In an interaction with journalists on Tuesday, Jayasinghe said, "There is a possibility of food shortages happening due to the current economic and social problems we are facing".

"People must be prepared to make sacrifices in order to face the shortages of food. We have to stop importing apples and oranges, priority has to be given to the needy such as the elderly, the expectant mothers and the sick," he said.

Jayasinghe asserted that it was important to address the issue rather than criticising what caused it.

According to a report in news website hirunews.lk, Jayasinghe pointed out that if the Sri Lankan economy is able to restrict the import of non-essential food and beverages and focus only on essential imports such as milk powder, it will be of great assistance to future development.

He further stated that there is no need for the authorities or officials to create a food shortage in the country, the report said.



The ceremony ends as it started, with the recital of prayers.

Rumi, who is known as Mevlana in Turkey, was born in Balkh — which is now in Afghanistan — in

1207, but settled in Konya, where he died Dec 17, 1273. His son, Sultan Veled, established the Mevlevi order of the mystical form of Islam, Sufism, after his death.

In 2005, the United Nations' cultural body, UNESCO, proclaimed the dervishes' ritual a masterpiece of 'the oral and intangible heritage of humanity'

Although religious orders were banned in Turkey in the early 1920s with the establishment of the secular republic, the dervishes' rituals were regarded as a cultural heritage and the order was largely tolerated. There are now many

Sufi dervish orders around the world, including in the United States. Women have been allowed to join some lodges, although an overwhelming number of dervishes are men.

In 2005, the United Nations' cultural body UNESCO, proclaimed the dervishes' ritual a masterpiece of "the oral and intangible heritage of humanity."

The structure holding Rumi's tomb in Konya is now a museum as well as a pilgrimage site.

This year, visitors were able to return to the ceremonies honoring Rumi, after the coronavirus pandemic forced last year's commemorations to be held without spectators.

business

of the day quote

Typically, the new-age tech companies are loss-making at the time of listing and the extant regulatory framework acknowledges that. Going forward, based on experience gained and stakeholders' feedback, there would be learnings and the need for appropriate tweaking of regulations

This year, we had a lot of production loss due to shortage of semiconductors. I think the situation will be much better in 2022

We have designated India as one of our top three priority markets in the world along with the US and China. It is one of our top three markets, for growth and for investment. We believe that the potential of India is huge

SHORT TAKES

Foxconn's Bharat FIH files ₹5,000 crore IPO

New Delhi: Bharat FIH, a subsidiary of FIH Mobiles and a Foxconn Technology Group company, has filed preliminary documents with markets regulator Sebi to raise over ₹5,000 crore through an initial public offering (IPO). The public issue comprises fresh issue of shares worth ₹2,502 crore and an offer for sale of shares worth up to ₹2,502 crore by promoter group and Foxconn unit Wonderful Stars, according to the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP).

Sebi imposes fine of ₹1.5cr on KFin

New Delhi: Sebi Wednesday imposed a penalty of ₹1.5 crore on KFin Technologies for redeeming its units in Taurus Mutual Fund on the basis of privilege information, pertaining to Ballarpur Industries default, available to it as RTA. "By redeeming all units in Taurus Liquid Fund and Taurus Ultra Short Term Bond Fund in February 2017, KFin Technologies made unlawful gain of about ₹1.2 crore," Sebi said. KFin Technologies misused its privileged position as RTA (Registrars to Issue and Share Transfer Agents) of Taurus Asset Management Company.

Good Day unveils new identity

Bhubaneswar: Britannia Good Day, urban India's largest biscuit brand revealed its new identity. The all-new Good Day biscuit design will sport different kinds of smiles- from the dimpled smile to the small smile, from the big smile to the double dimpled smiles. A high intensity launch is underway with the new packs reaching more than 4.8 million retail outlets across the length and breadth of India. The brand has rolled out a high decibel media plan to announce its new identity.

Godrej Interio aims 40% growth

Bhubaneswar: Godrej & Boyce, the flagship company of the Godrej Group, announced that its business Godrej Interio is targeting a growth of 40% in its e-comm sales. In a press release, the company said, "Using a mix of technology and processes, the brand will increase the involvement of channel partners as a part of its Omni-channel strategy. By increasing its delivery points to over 300 cities, Godrej Interio is targeting a growth of 40% in its e-comm sales."



The government has gone a step further and made further concessions to promote trans-shipment and coastal shipping. The royalty payable for trans-shipment cargo will now be 1.0 times (from 1.5 times earlier) the normal container

SARBANANDA SONOWAL | UNION MINISTER

AKASA AIR UNVEILS BRAND LOGO

Rakesh Jhunjhunwala-backed low-cost airline Akasa Air Wednesday unveiled its brand logo 'inspired by elements of the sky'. The airline is wearing a 'Rising A' symbol to represent "the spirit of flying, the aim of height and the pursuit of dreams", said a company official



India overtakes UK to come 3rd in unicorn race

Indian unicorns list is led by edtech start-up Byju's with a valuation of \$21 billion and followed by Inmobi (\$12 billion), Oyo (\$9.5 billion) and Razorpay (\$7.5 billion)

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 22: Adding 33 'unicorns' in a single year has helped

India displace the United Kingdom to be third in the list of countries that are home to such enterprises valued at over \$1 billion each, ac-

ording to a report released Wednesday.

India was placed fourth when it comes to the number of unicorns last year. However, the US and northern neighbour China, who occupy the first two ranks, are way ahead, according to the data compiled by Hurun Research Institute.

The US added 254 unicorns and now totals 487 companies in the cov-



eted list, while China added 74 to take its tally to 301 start-ups hav-

ing a valuation of over \$1 billion, it said. The top-two occupants are home to 74 per cent of the unicorn universe, it said, adding that the overall list saw 673 'new faces' and 201 drop-offs.

The UK added only 15 unicorns to take its total to 39, and hence got displaced by India, it said.

"India is in the midst of a start-up boom, more than doubling its unicorns to take the country's of-

ficial tally of unicorns to 54, and overtake the UK to third place in the world," Hurun Report India's Managing Director and Chief Researcher Anas Rahman Junaid said.

Bangalore is home to the highest number of unicorns among Indian cities, it said, adding that the financial capital, nearby cities of Pune and Thane, and Gurugram also have candidates.

INFLATION TO EASE RBI Guv for continued policy support

The Dec 6-8 MPC meeting where all rates were held steady was conducted soon after the latest Omicron variant of coronavirus started spreading across the globe

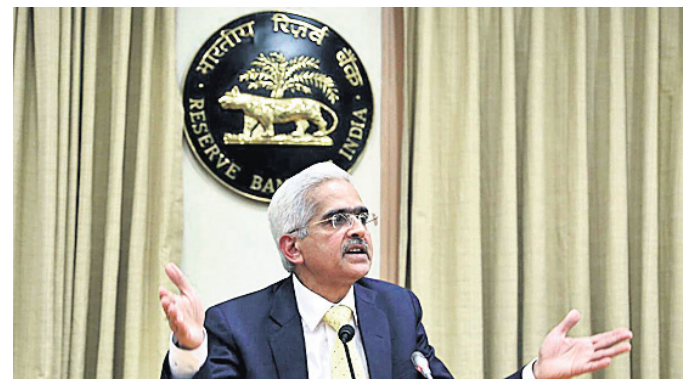
AGENCIES

Mumbai, Dec 22: India's retail inflation may rise in the near-term but is likely to moderate, while slack in some of the key areas of growth warrant continued policy support, members of the monetary policy committee wrote in the December meeting minutes.

"There is growing uncertainty regarding the evolving global macro-economic outlook," wrote Shaktikanta Das, governor at the Reserve Bank of India, which published the minutes Wednesday.

"On the domestic front, even as the prospects for economic activity are improving, there is still a slack with key drivers like private consumption remaining well below their pre-pandemic levels," he said.

The Dec 6-8 MPC meeting where all rates were held steady was con-



ducted soon after the latest Omicron variant of coronavirus started spreading across the globe and most members said they would prefer to wait and see how the situation unfolds before deciding on the future course of monetary policy.

India's retail inflation accelerated in November, led by a rise in food

prices, but remained within the medium-term target of the RBI, strengthening views that it could keep interest rates on hold at its next meeting in February.

Elevated levels of inflation will persist until second half of 2022 as also predicted by the IMF, whether we like it or not, but not longer,

wrote deputy governor, Michael Patra.

"By the projections, inflation in India will peak in the last quarter of this year and from there, it will moderate," he said.

Most members raised concerns with regards to the high core inflation in recent months but executive director and member Mridul Sagar wrote that one month's data suggesting strong growth and inflation momentum is not sufficient to change rate cycles or policy stance.

"This, however, does not mean status quo. Central bank has an armoury of tools to calibrate monetary and financial conditions. The Pascal's principle for transmission of fluid pressures very much holds and appropriate liquidity levels are key to monetary adjustment at this stage," he added.

Govt hikes MSP of milling copra

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 22: The government Wednesday decided to increase the minimum support price (MSP) of milling copra by ₹255 per quintal and ball copra by ₹400 per quintal.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has given its approval for the minimum support prices (MSPs) for copra for 2022 season.

The MSP for Fair Average Quality (FAQ) of milling copra has been increased to ₹10,590 per quintal for 2022 season from ₹10,335 per quintal in 2021 and the MSP for ball copra has been increased to ₹11,000- per quintal for 2022 season from ₹10,600 per quintal in 2021, an official statement said. The MSP has been hiked to ensure a return of 51.85 per cent for milling copra and 57.73 per cent for ball copra over the all India weighted average cost of production.

The increase in MSP for copra for 2022 season is in line with the principle of fixing the MSP at a level of at least 1.5 times the all India weighted average cost of production as announced by the Government in the Budget 2018-19, the statement said.

The decision is based on recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices.

Amazon sues ED over Future probe

The filing is the latest twist in the long-running dispute between Amazon and Future

REUTERS

New Delhi, Dec 22: Amazon.com Inc is taking India's financial crime fighting agency to court, seeking to quash an investigation into one of its 2019 deals, a court filing seen by Reuters shows.

India's enforcement Directorate (ED) has for months been probing Amazon's \$200 million investment in India's Future Group for suspected violations of foreign investment laws.

The investment is at the centre of protracted legal battles, as



Amazon has used the terms of that deal - and cited contract breaches by Future - to stall the \$3.4 billion sale of the Indian company's retail assets to a rival.

In an 816-page filing, seen by Reuters, Amazon calls the investigation a "fishing and roving" inquiry, saying the ED had sought privileged legal advice and opinions from Amazon and other information not connected to the

Future Group deal.

Multiple Amazon executives, including its India head, had been summoned by the ED in recent weeks and the investigation had caused "unnecessary harassment," the US e-commerce giant said in its filing to the Delhi High Court December 21.

"The directions by the ED asking for disclosure of legally privileged documents and litigation privilege information is derogatory of the principles laid out in Indian constitution," Amazon said in the filing, which is not public.

Though India's antitrust body suspended their 2019 deal last week, saying Amazon had suppressed information when seeking approvals for it, the ED's probe is independent of that.

ITC to sell frozen snacks through Havmor carts

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 22: Diversified business entity ITC on Wednesday said its Master Chef frozen snacks has entered into a strategic partnership with Havmor Ice Cream, owned by South Korean conglomerate Lotte group, to enhance distribution reach.

The partnership will enable ITC Master Chef to leverage 100 Havmor Ice Cream carts to make

available its range of 15 easy-to-cook snacks, the company said in a statement.

This allows ITC Master Chef to use Havmor Ice Cream's pushcart distribution network during peak season for frozen snacks, November to March, which is generally the non-peak season for ice cream in markets where winter is dominant, it added.

Usually, the frozen foods industry registers a 30 per cent in-

crease in sales in winter as compared to summer months.

ITC Vice President and Business Head (Frozen Foods) Ashu Phakey said, "With a strong distribution model in the ice cream space, we are confident that Havmor Ice Creams consumer-centricity and extensive reach will complement our capabilities in creating innovative products to enhance the overall value offering for the customers."

Sony arm inks deal to merge with Zee



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 22: Sony Pictures Networks India Pvt Ltd (SPNI) and Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd (ZEEL) Wednesday said they have signed definitive agreements for their merger following conclusion of an exclusive negotiation period during which both parties conducted mutual due diligence.

In a joint statement, the two companies said they have "signed definitive agreements to merge ZEEL with and into SPNI and combine their linear networks, digital assets, production operations and program libraries".

The agreements follow the conclusion of an exclusive negotiation period during which ZEEL and SPNI conducted mutual due diligence, it added.

When the merger deal was announced in September, the two networks had stated that Sony would invest \$1.575 billion and hold 52.93 per cent stake in the merged entity and Zee the remaining 47.07 per cent.

Under the terms of the definitive agreements, the statement said SPNI will have a cash balance of \$1.5 billion at closing, including through infusion by the current shareholders of SPNI and the promoter

ZEEL's chief executive Punit Goenka will lead the combined company as its MD and CEO

founders of ZEEL.

This is aimed at enabling the combined company "to drive sharper content creation across platforms, strengthen its footprint in the rapidly evolving digital ecosystem, bid for media rights in the fast-growing sports landscape and pursue other growth opportunities", it added.

After closing, the new combined company will be publicly listed in India. The closing of the transaction is subject to certain customary closing conditions, including regulatory, shareholder, and third-party approvals, the statement said.

Under the definitive agreement, the promoter founders of ZEEL have agreed to limit the equity that they may own in the combined company to 20 per cent of its outstanding shares. This construct does not provide them any pre-emptive or other rights to acquire equity of the combined company from the Sony Group, the combined company or any other party, the statement said.

BIZ BUZZ

PPL bags safety excellence platinum award

Bhubaneswar: Paradeep Phosphates Limited (PPL) was once again recognised for its overall effort in maintaining industrial safety at its plant site. PPL was conferred with Kalinga Safety Excellence Award (Platinum) in Chemical & Fertilizer category. Ranjit Singh Chugh, chief operating officer and Nihar Kanti Rout, joint general manager (fire & safety) received the award from Surjya Narayan Patra, speaker Odisha legislative assembly at Odisha State Safety Conclave-2021, Wednesday. Adding to the delight Sachitra Kumar Rout, manager (fire & safety) received the 'Best Safety Officer' of the state. N Thirumala Naik, labour commissioner and director, factories & boilers, government of Odisha was also present.

MAKE IN INDIA

HP announces local manufacturing of PC products

HP SAID IT WAS FOR THE FIRST TIME THE COMPANY WAS MANUFACTURING SUCH A WIDE RANGE OF LAPTOPS IN INDIA, WITH PRODUCTS SUCH AS HP ELITEBOOKS, HP PROBOOKS AND HP G8 SERIES NOTEBOOKS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, Dec 22: Technology major HP was expanding its Make in India product portfolio with the commencement of manufacturing laptops, desktops and monitors at its facility near here, the company said Wednesday.

"HP today announced local manufacturing of multiple PC products including laptops in India. Powering the Make in India initiative of the Centre, HP has started manufacturing multiple models of laptops, desktop towers and mini desktops at the Flex facility in Sriperumbudur near Chennai," the company said in a statement here.

"Some of the products qualify under public procurement order of the Government and would be available on the Government eMarketplace (GeM) portal to meet the demands of the government departments and other customers," the statement said.

HP India Market managing director Ketan Patel said, "HP has partnered closely with India since

it began its operations in the country. As India made significant progress and emphasis on digital transformation, we have worked with the Government of India and state governments in their mission



Today's announcement marks a significant step for HP India towards local manufacturing in line with the 'Make in India' program. We hope to play a meaningful role in fulfilling the dream of Atmanirbar Bharat, by expanding the scale and reach of our manufacturing operations

KETAN PATEL | MD, HP INDIA

to empower lives of millions of citizens and enhance the communities' quality of life." HP also expanded locally manufactured commercial desktops by adding various models of desktop mini towers, mini desktops, small form factor desktops and all-in-one personal computers. The company said

by partnering with Flex to manufacture commercial desktops, it has significantly expanded operations to reaffirm its commitment to Make in India initiative.

The proximity of the Flex facility to the Chennai port improves operational efficiency and ease of sourcing of raw materials for manufacturing laptops and other PC products, the statement added.

IN LOVING MEMORY OF

Late NEELAMBER PANDA
21.11.1932 | 12.12.2021
(Krushna Pakhya Sasthi Tithi)
Soul has infinity,
there is no
beginning & there is
no ending.

Fondly rembered by:
Lingaraj & Kritimayee, Jagannath & Pranati, Gouranga & Jyoshna, Raghunath & Manisha, **Nate:** Bhawani, Kaivalya, Swastik Reyansh, **Natuni:** Bharati, Anjali, Somayashree

BRONZE TO SHOW FOR

NOT-SO-IMPRESSIVE INDIA END ASIAN CHAMPIONS TROPHY CAMPAIGN IN THIRD POSITION AFTER BEATING ARCH-RIVALS PAKISTAN 4-3 IN A THRILLING CONTEST



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dhaka, Dec 22: A misfiring India were made to toil hard before getting the better of arch-rivals Pakistan 4-3 in a pulsating third-fourth place contest to clinch the bronze medal at the Asian Champions Trophy men's hockey tournament here Wednesday.

After having topped the round-robin stages, the Tokyo Olympics bronze medallists were far from impressive in their last two games, and the Manpreet Singh-led side had to play out of its skin to outwit Pakistan and finish on the podium.

After being stunned by Japan 3-5 in the semifinal Tuesday, much was expected from India against Pakistan. They did press

hard and created numerous chances, including 11 penalty corners, out of which they made use of just two.

India, who were the defending champions along with Pakistan in the last edition of the tournament in Muscat, will thus return with a consolation prize.

The Indian team took the lead in the very first minute through vice-captain Harmanpreet Singh before Sumit (45th), Varun Kumar (53rd) and Akashdeep Singh (57th) struck a goal each. Pakistan's goals were scored by Afraz (10th), Abdul Rana (33rd) and Ahmed Nadeem (57th).

It was India's second win over Pakistan in the tournament after having beaten them 3-1 in the round-

robin stages.

Unlike against Japan, India came out attacking and secured as many as four penalty corners straight-away, the last of which was converted by Harmanpreet with a powerful low flick in the first minute.

The Indians kept up the pressure with numerous raids inside the Pakistan circle but failed to create a clear-cut chance.

Pakistan grew in confidence as time passed by and drew level in the 10th minute courtesy some sloppy defending by the Indians, in particular Harmanpreet, as he failed to clear a loose ball inside the circle, and Afraz did enough to get past onrushing goalkeeper Krishan Bahadur Pathak.

The Indians responded after con-

ceding the goal and earned their fifth penalty corner soon, but Harmanpreet's flick was saved by the Pakistani defence.

It was a fighting contest in the second quarter as Pakistan defended in numbers to deny their neighbours.

Three minutes after the change of ends, it was Pakistan who surged ahead when Abdul Rana scored from a rebound from the team's second penalty corner. India were lucky not to concede another, in the 43rd minute, as Abdul Rana's attempt from Ali Shan's pass hit the near post.

But three seconds from the third quarter, Gursahibjit Singh created a chance from nowhere and Sumit found himself at the perfect posi-

tion inside the Pakistan circle to tap the ball in and draw level.

With the scores tied at 2-2, the fourth and final quarter produced end-to-end hockey from both the teams. India secured two more penalty corners soon and this time, Varun was bang on target to make it 3-2 in his side's favour.

Pakistan responded immediately by earning two penalty corners in succession but India skipper Manpreet defended brilliantly as first rusher.

Three minutes from the final hooter, Akashdeep scored with a reverse hit from a pass off Lalit, but Pakistan responded within no time when Nadeem deflected in a long ball to reduce the margin, from the next move.

IND-SA TESTS: COVID positive cases will be isolated, says CSA medical officer Series to 'go on' no matter what

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 22: The BCCI and Cricket South Africa (CSA) have mutually agreed that the upcoming Test and ODI series between the two teams will continue even if there is any COVID-19 case among players or support staff and close contacts will not be forced into isolation, the host board's medical officer Shuaib Manjra has said.

India will start their three-match Test series against the Proteas December 26 at the Centurion followed by Tests in Johannesburg (January 3-7) and Cape Town (Jan 11-15). The Tests will be followed by three ODIs January 19, 21 and 23.

While there is a specific agreement that BCCI can pull out of the tour in case situation in South Africa, where the new variant Omicron was found, worsens, a senior official said that they are not contemplating any such move as of now.

"There is an agreed medical protocol between Cricket South Africa (CSA) and the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI)," Cricket South Africa provided Manjra's comments to this agency.

"Considering that everyone within the Bio-Secure Environments' (BSE) and the broader cricket ecosystem will be vaccinated, any positive case will isolate within their designated hotel room if clinically stable, or an alternate space within the hotel," he added.

Respective team doctors will take care of the players in case any of them test positive for the virus. "They will remain under the care of their respective team doctors. Any contacts (close or incidental) will continue playing and training with non-pharmaceutical interventions strictly observed. All team members will undergo symptom screening and COVID-19 testing daily, and the tour will proceed as planned," he added.

It is understood that Rapid Antigen Tests will be carried out daily and both teams are ready for

the eventuality that there will be positive cases. But as long as proper precautions are taken, the series will continue.

Even hotel staff were put in a bio-bubble one week before the Indian contingent's arrival. "Hotel staff have been living in their respective BSE's for at least seven days prior to the arrival of both teams and have tested on a daily basis prior to the arrival of the teams," Manjra further added.

Manjra informed that at all the venues, the Indian squad will be lodged at luxurious resorts with lot of open spaces to make their stay comfortable.

"In order to promote a happy and comfortable BSE for the teams, CSA has ensured that the hotels that the teams are staying in have large outdoor spaces that allow for safe recreational activities and have allowed teams to travel with their families," Manjra said.

As far as the BCCI is concerned, cancellation of the tour is not an option as of now. "The BCCI is very satisfied with the kind of bio-bubble that CSA has provided for the Indian team. Yes, we will definitely take a decision which is in best interests of our players and their families."

"As of now, everyone is in the bubble and being tested regularly," a senior BCCI official told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

"The bone of contention was what happens to close contacts. You can have one player or support staff testing positive but in earlier times, we have seen that close contacts, even if they return negative in RT-PCR, have to isolate themselves. When that happens, it becomes difficult to continue with the matches," the official said.

The tour by India is very important for Cricket South Africa from a commercial rights point of view besides the massive broadcast rights money to be earned from the series. The matches in this series will be played behind closed doors.

Misfiring Barca hold 10-man Sevilla

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Barcelona, Dec 22: Sevilla was held 1-1 at home by Barcelona in a match the hosts finished with 10 men after defender Jules Kounde was sent off with a direct red card for throwing the ball into an opponent's face.

Papu Gómez put Sevilla ahead in the 32nd minute as steady rain fell upon the Sánchez Pijuán field. Ronald Araújo headed in Ousmane Dembele's corner kick to equalize for Barcelona just before halftime.

The match was deadlocked in the 64th when Kounde, who last summer was rumored to be close to a move to Chelsea, lost his cool. After Barcelona defender Jordi Alba had twice bumped him in the back while disputing a ball going out of bounds, Kounde grabbed the ball and slung it into his face from close range. The referee did not hesitate to show him a red card.

Barcelona increased its control with an extra man and only the woodwork saved Sevilla when Dembele curled a shot off the far post with six minutes to play.

The stumble left second-place Sevilla five points behind leader Real Madrid, which visits Athletic Bilbao on Wednesday in a match to be



played without several players on both teams due to coronavirus infections.

Barcelona remained in seventh place, two points from fourth and the Champions League spots.

As both defenses held the attacks in open play, the goals came from well-executed corner kicks. Gómez ditched his mark by curling from the far post back to the heart of the area where he used one touch to drive Ivan Rakitic's pass through the crowded area and into the corner of the net.

Gómez also helped Karim Rekik

keep Dembele in check on his repeated attempts to dribble free on the right flank.

Dembele, however, turned passer to help get the equalizer seconds before halftime. Araújo outjumped Fernando to send Dembele's corner kick into the far corner with a slicing header.

After Kounde was sent off, striker Youssef En-Nesyri went on as a substitute for Sevilla after having missed 10 matches with a muscle injury.

Xavi again placed his trust in Barcelona's youngest players. With

both Memphis Depay and Ansu Fati injured, he started the match with Ferran Jutglà as striker and finished it with 17-year-old Gavi Páez as a "false nine." Gavi almost snatched a winner with a header that missed by inches.

Gerard Moreno and Villarreal Dia both scored braces to lead Villarreal to a 5-2 win over Alavés. Moreno's first goal to open the scoring culminated a superb team buildup. Alavés rallied to pull level at 2-2 from goals by Pere Pons and Joselu Mato, but Dia, Jeremy Pino and Moreno turned it into a rout.

League Cup: Nketiah hat-trick lifts Arsenal

ASSOCIATED PRESS

London, Dec 22: Even after scoring a hat-trick for Arsenal, Eddie Nketiah was momentarily upstaged by another academy graduate. It's not often a teenager scores on his debut.

Eleven minutes after coming off the bench, Charlie Patino completed a 5-1 victory over Sunderland to send Arsenal into the semifinals of the League Cup Tuesday.

The stoppage-time goal at Emirates Stadium saw the 18-year-old midfielder prod in a shot after Nicolas Pépé rolled the ball into the penalty area.

Pépé was also Arsenal's second scorer in the first half after Nketiah netted the opener from close range in the 17th minute against the third-tier side.

After Nathan Broadhead pulled one back, Nketiah's back-heeled flick restored Arsenal's two-goal advantage four minutes into the second half. Nketiah completed his treble in the 58th minute after



Star of the night: Eddie Nketiah reacts after scoring against Sunderland, Tuesday

getting on the end of Pépé's cross.

It's another encouraging result for Arsenal, which is fourth in the Premier League as it tries to end a five-season exile from the Champions League. Nketiah should expect to get

more playing time, Arsenal's manager said. The League Cup semifinal line-up will be completed Wednesday when Chelsea goes to Brentford, Liverpool plays Leicester and Tottenham hosts West Ham.

Latifi opens up on post-race scenes

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Grove (UK), Dec 22: Williams driver Nicholas Latifi has revealed that he received death threats after his late crash at the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix sparked a controversial ending to the Formula One title race.

The Canadian's crash with five laps remaining brought out the safety car and helped Max Verstappen beat Lewis Hamilton for the title.

The 26-year-old Latifi condemned the torrent of abuse he received on social media. "What shocked me was the extreme tone of the hate, abuse, and even the death threats I received," he said in a statement.

Hamilton, of Mercedes, had a nearly 12-second lead with Red Bull's Verstappen in second when the crash brought out the yellow flag.

Verstappen pitted for fresh tires while Hamilton stayed on track. The race director initially said lapped drivers could not pass the



safety car, then reversed the call in a decision that returned Verstappen to second when the race resumed with a lap remaining.

Verstappen then passed Hamilton to win his first world championship; Hamilton was denied a record eighth title and remained tied with Michael Schumacher. Mercedes immediately protested but last week withdrew its appeal.

Latifi had apologized earlier for playing such a huge role in the

December 12 race but said Tuesday that he'll always compete hard until the checkered flag, no matter what position he is in.

"To the people who don't understand or don't agree with that, that's fine with me. You can have your opinion. But to use those opinions to fuel hatred, abuse and threats of violence, not only to me, but to those closest to me as well, tells me these people are not true fans of the sport," he wrote.

Vaughan advises England to 'get nasty'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, Dec 22: England are being "too nice" and need to "get nasty" against Australia in the Boxing Day Test to fight back in the ongoing Ashes series, feels former skipper Michael Vaughan.

England suffered heavy defeats in the first two Tests to be down 0-2 in the five-match series. "It's too nice," Vaughan, who led England to 26 wins in 51 Tests, including the 2005 Ashes, said on Fox Cricket's Follow-On podcast.

"I see on the morning of the game they are all talking to Mitchell Starc and Nathan Lyon. I never had a conversation with Steve Waugh back in the day. I wouldn't have dared go and speak to Glenn McGrath on the morning of the game or Shane Warne. You just didn't."

"It's all a bit friendly. I'd get nasty with them. They somehow need



to find that on day one. Get into the scrap. Chirp, do whatever, just get into the scrap."

Vaughan wants England to bring a change in their attitude on the field. "They are at that stage now where

they have to change something," the 47-year-old Vaughan said.

"It might be that they all get nasty, get nasty with each other. They all fall out. Who cares, but then come out and show a bit of spirit

I actually want to see a bit of mongrel in the England side."

Former skipper Michael Atherton, meanwhile, said Joe Root may lose his Test captaincy if England doesn't arrest the slide and overturn the 0-2 deficit in the ongoing series.

Root (23) surpassed Alastair Cook (22) to become the England captain following their 275-run loss in the Pink-ball Test at the Adelaide Oval.

"If the tour continues to go this badly, it is hard to see how Root will remain as captain," Atherton, who captained England in 54 Tests, told 'The Times'.

"Ashes tours have often done for England captains and Root is nearer the end of his cycle than the beginning. There is not a rash of alternatives, but the notion that there is no one to take over is the worst rationale for keeping the job."