



IN DIFFERENT LEAGUE

Actor Alia Bhatt has been named PETA's Person of the Year for supporting an animal-friendly fashion industry

LEISURE P2



VIENNA TALKS RESUME

Iran insisted on the US and its allies to allow Tehran to export its crude as the Vienna nuclear talks resume

INTERNATIONAL P10



OZ IN COMMAND

Australia in a commanding position to seal the Ashes series, after reducing England to 31/4 in the second innings

SPORTS P12



Chandigarh MC polls: BJP's sitting mayor loses

Chandigarh: Aam Aadmi Party has emerged as the leading outfit in the Chandigarh Municipal Corporation (MC) polls, winning 14 of 35 wards in the final results declared Monday. The BJP, which enjoyed a majority in the previous MC house, came a close second registering win in 12 wards while the Congress bagged eight seats and the Shiromani Akali Dal one. However, the Congress secured 29.79 per cent votes, highest of the three parties. The BJP got 29.30 per cent of votes while AAP got 27.08 per cent votes. BJP leader and current city mayor Ravi Kant Sharma was defeated by AAP's Damanpreet Singh from Ward No 17 by a margin of 828 votes. No party achieved a simple majority. A party needs 19 votes to have its councillor elected as mayor.



₹507cr Jawad package announced

Bhubaneswar: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Monday announced a special relief package of ₹507 crore for farmers affected by the remnants of cyclone Jawad that blew past Odisha coast in the first week of this month. Small and marginal farmers, who have sustained crop loss of 33% and above will receive input subsidy (cash assistance) of ₹6,800 per hectare for rain-fed areas while ₹13,500 will be provided per hectare of irrigated land. Similarly, ₹18,000 per hectare will be provided for perennial crops like mango, cashew, coconut and betel vine. Input subsidy not less than ₹2,000 will be given to any affected farmer.

MORE P3

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ONLY COVAXIN FOR 15-18

NO NEED FOR LOCKDOWN, NIGHT CURFEW IN STATE

Citizens irrespective of their incomes are entitled to free COVID-19 jabs at govt vaccination centres

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 27: The vaccine option against COVID-19 for children in the age group of 15-18 years, who will be inoculated from January 3, would be Covaxin only, according to new guidelines issued by the Union health ministry Monday.

The prioritisation and sequencing of the "precaution dose" (third dose) for healthcare workers (HCWs), frontline workers (FLWs) and citizens above 60 years of age with comorbidities, would be based on completion of nine months from the date of administration of second dose, which is 39 weeks, the guidelines, which will come into effect from January 3, stated.

HCWs, FLWs and citizens aged 60 years or above with comorbidities will be able to access vaccination

FRESH PROCEDURE
Third dose for healthcare workers, frontline workers and citizens above 60 would be based on completion of nine months from second dose
Beneficiaries can self-register online through an existing Co-WIN account or create a new account through a mobile phone number

tion for the precaution dose through their existing Co-WIN accounts.

Eligibility for the precaution dose will be based on the date of administration of the second dose as recorded in the Co-WIN system, which will send an SMS for availing the precaution dose when it becomes due, the ministry informed.

Registration and appointment services can be accessed through online and onsite modes, and details of administration of the precaution dose will reflect in vaccination certificates, according to the guidelines.

"Those aged 15 years or more will be able to register on Co-WIN. In other words, all those whose birth year is 2007 or before, shall be eligible," according to the 'Guidelines for COVID-19 vaccination of children between 15-18 years and precaution dose to HCWs, FLWs and 60+ population with comorbidities'.

Beneficiaries can self-register online through an existing Co-WIN account or create a new account through a mobile phone number. This facility is available for all eligible citizens only.

They can be also registered on

site by a verifier or vaccinator in the facilitated registration mode, the ministry stated.

On vaccination of children, the guidelines said, "For such beneficiaries, option for vaccination would only be available for Covaxin as this is the only vaccine with EUL (emergency use listing) for the age-group 15-17."

The ministry said that as a matter of abundant precaution, for those HCWs FLWs, who have received two doses, another dose of COVID-19 vaccine would be provided from January 10.

People aged 60 years and above with comorbidities, who have received two doses of COVID-19 vaccine, will on doctor's advice be provided with the precaution dose from January 10, it said.

Citizens irrespective of their income status are entitled to free COVID-19 vaccination at Government Vaccination Centres.

Those who have the ability to pay are encouraged to use private hospitals' vaccination centres, the ministry said.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 27: The State Public Health Director, Niranjan Mishra, Monday said there is no need for night curfew or lockdown in the present circumstances in Odisha. Speaking to media, Mishra said, "If we look at the rising Omicron cases across the country, Odisha is better placed compared to other states."

Among the foreign returnees, only 18 have tested Covid positive, of whom eight have tested positive for Omicron. While one of them has already recovered, the condition of others is stable, he said, adding, "There is no need for lockdown or night curfew in the current situation." As per Centre's guidelines, lockdown and night curfew can be imposed considering daily cases, test positivity rate and hospitalisation, said the director.

"It will be wrong if such curbs are imposed just because some Omicron cases have been detected here," he clarified. Meanwhile, the state government geared up for vaccination

FACT SHEET
25.53L
youths aged between 15 and 18 to receive Covid jabs
7L healthcare, frontline workers to receive precautionary dose
29L beneficiaries in the state have not taken their first doses
30L are yet to take the second dose of the Covid vaccine

tion of 15-18 category population following the Centre's approval. "We have about 25.53 lakh Covid-19 vaccine beneficiaries in the age group of 15 to 18 years. Their vaccination will start from January 3," said the director, health and family welfare, Bijay Panigrahi. Similarly, over 7 lakh healthcare and frontline workers will receive a precautionary dose of Covid vaccine in the state, he said.

There are about 52.37 lakh people who are above 60 in Odisha.

Of them, those with comorbidities like blood pressure, kidney problem and other health issues can get the jabs after consulting their doctors, the director said.

The vaccination programme for healthcare professionals, frontline workers and senior citizens with comorbidities will start from January 10. Till now vaccination programme is underway at 2,600 centres across Odisha.

Around eight mobile teams have been deployed in each block to speed up the process. If required, vaccination drive will be conducted for children at schools and colleges. Teachers will be present at schools and colleges and if necessary, parents of students will have to come along with them, officials said.

He said, 29 lakh beneficiaries in the state have not taken the first dose yet while about 30 lakh people are yet to take the second vaccine dose. The daily Covid load in Odisha continued to remain below 200 for over a fortnight. The state reported 123 cases over past 24 hours from 17 districts.

MRP of major edible oils cut by 10-15%

New Delhi: Major edible oil companies, including Adani Wilmar and Ruchi Soya, have reduced the maximum retail price (MRP) of their products by 10-15 per cent, industry body SEA said Monday. The prices have been reduced by Adani Wilmar (Fortune), Ruchi Soya (Mahakosh, Sunrich, Ruchi Gold and Nutrella), Emami (Healthy & Tasty), Bunge (Dalda, Gagan, Chambal) and Gemini (Freedom). COFCO (Nutrilive), Frigorifico Allana (Sunny), Gokul Agro (Vitalife, Mahek and Zaika) and others have also reduced prices, it added. P11

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Please don't talk about Omicron, mask, soap, caution, etc. People will ask for more money to attend your rallies!

Missionaries of Charity's bank accounts 'frozen'



Organisation itself sent a request to SBI to freeze its accounts, MHA counters Mamata's claim

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 27: The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) Monday said the Missionaries of Charity's application for renewal of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) registration was refused December 25 for not meeting eligibility conditions as some adverse inputs were received.

In a statement, the MHA also said that it did not freeze any account of the Missionaries of Charity but State Bank of India has informed that the organisation itself sent a request to the bank to freeze its accounts.

The MHA statement came hours after West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee claimed the

Centre had frozen all bank accounts of the organisation founded by Mother Teresa.

"Shocked to hear that on Christmas, Union Ministry FROZE ALL BANK ACCOUNTS of Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity in India! Their 22,000 patients & employees have been left without food & medicines. While the law is paramount, humanitarian efforts must not be compromised," Banerjee tweeted. The MHA said the application for the renewal of FCRA registration of MoC was refused December 25 for not meeting the eligibility conditions under the FCRA 2010 and the Foreign Contribution Regulation Rules (FCRR) 2011.

"No request or revision application has been received from Missionaries of Charity for review of this refusal of renewal," the statement said. The Missionaries of Charity's registration under the FCRA was valid up to October 31, 2021.

The MHA said the validity was extended up to December 31, 2021 along with other FCRA associations whose renewals were pending. "However, while considering the MoC's renewal application, some adverse inputs were noticed, the renewal application of MoC was not approved," the statement said.

LEGACY 'WARRIORS'



Paika martial artistes under the banner of 'Odisha Bira Mahasangha' hold up traditional weapons during a protest march demanding the 1st War of Independence tag for 'Paika Bidroha', in Bhubaneswar, Monday

State lost 1,356 jumbos in 20 yrs

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 27: Coming in the wake of the gruesome mowing down of two elephants by a goods train in Khurda Saturday night, an RTI response has revealed that, at least 1,356 elephants have died in the coastal state between 2001 and 2021.

With 93 jumbo deaths, the state witnessed maximum number of fatalities in 2018-19. As many as 82 and 77 pachyderms died for various reasons in 2019-20 and 2020-21 respectively. Meanwhile, 44 jumbos have already lost their lives till November 29 in the current financial year.

Most of the deaths took place in the forest regions of Dhenkanal, Athagarh, Keonjhar and Similipal during last two decades. As many as 178 elephants died in Dhenkanal while Athagarh forest division saw 133 jumbo deaths during this period. The Keonjhar and Keonjhar (wildlife) division registered 111 and 30 deaths respectively. Similarly, 94 deaths were registered in Similipal south while two deaths were reported in Similipal north.

Data revealed that diseases, electrocution, poaching and accident are the biggest threat to the jumbos in the state. Almost 29 per cent of jumbo deaths during the period were caused owing to diseases. As many as 392 pachyderms died due to diseases like Anthrax (51), Herpes (seven) between 2001 and 2021.



Research scholar Bismaya Kumar Tripathy said the big mammals suffer from various diseases caused by the change of habitats and food practices. The diseases spread fast among the mammals due to inter-community breeding caused by lack of connectivity with other herds. Sagging electric wires running through important elephant habitats were also death traps for the big mammals.

MARKET WATCH

| INDEX | VALUE | VARIATION |
|--------|----------|-----------|
| SENSEX | 57420.24 | ↑ 295.93 |
| NIFTY | 17086.30 | ↑ 82.50 |
| DOLLAR | 75.26 | ↓ ₹0.08 |
| EURO | 84.90 | ↑ ₹0.05 |
| GOLD | ₹48,184 | ↑ ₹65 |
| SILVER | ₹62,511 | ↑ ₹213 |

WEATHER

| | BHUB | CTK |
|----------|--------|--------|
| TEMP MAX | 29.0°C | 28.4°C |
| TEMP MIN | 18.4°C | 17.6°C |
| Humidity | 89% | 91% |
| Rainfall | Trace | Nil |

Forecast: Light to moderate rain

Odisha among least improved in NITI health index

The state, however, is termed as an achiever in terms of Maternal Mortality Ratio with a drop of 18 from 2018-19 to 2019-20

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Dec 27: With an incremental growth of 0.13 points, Odisha has ranked among the least improved states in the NITI Aayog's fourth edition of the State Health Index for 2019-20, released Monday. The state also saw the steepest decline of two positions. Odisha slipped to 14th position in the fourth



edition while it was ranked 12 in the base year, 2018-19.

Odisha has been ranked as the least improved state among the aspirants along with Bihar, Uttarakhand, Pondicherry and Andaman & Nicobar while Rajasthan, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh recorded negative incremental performance. UP and Assam

were placed as the most improved states among the aspirants.

In the report titled "Healthy States, Progressive India", Odisha recorded a decline in the sex ratio at birth from 953 in 2014 to 933 in 2018. The state also witnessed the lowest average occupancy of the District Chief Medical Officer of 5.2 months for a three-year period be-

tween 2017 and 2020. It also registered the highest decline of -47.9 per cent in average occupancy of district CMO positions.

With the decline of 1 and 3 in the Neonatal Mortality Rate and Under-Five Mortality Rate respectively, Odisha was placed in the category of aspirants in the NITI Aayog's health index. Odisha was ranked an achiever in terms of Maternal Mortality Ratio with the decline of 18 from 2018-19 to 2019-20. Significantly, the State Health Index is an annual tool to assess the performance of states and UTs. It is a weighted composite index based on 24 indicators grouped under the domains of 'Health Outcomes', 'Governance and Information', and 'Key Inputs/Processes'.

KERALA ON TOP, UP AT BOTTOM

New Delhi: Kerala has again emerged as the top performer in terms of overall health performance among larger states, while Uttar Pradesh is the worst, according to the fourth Health Index launched by Niti Aayog. The fourth round of the Health Index took into account the period 2019-20 (reference year). The report by the government think tank said Tamil Nadu and Telangana have emerged as the second and third best performers, respectively, on health parameters. Bihar and Madhya Pradesh were the second and third worst performers, respectively, on health parameters.

leisure

FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
You will be up and about today. Your actions will lead to progress, and progress to success. But later in the day, you may want to be alone. Honour your current mood – soften the lights and snuggle into your favourite corner. It's normal, says Ganesh, to talk to your dog about your problems.

TAURUS
Ganesh promises you a bright, eventful day ahead. The day is likely to commence with a series of important meetings and conferences. Later, you will be motivated to take up something extraordinary, something challenging and rewarding. You are assured of success in whatever you take up this day.

GEMINI
You face a hectic and challenging day ahead. You will be busy trying to complete long pending projects at the office and in trying to fulfill all your responsibilities. This will leave you feeling tired and listless. You will feel at ease during the later half of the day and will be able to indulge in some fun and frolic.

CANCER
A very hectic day for you! Today, you may have too much work to do, and taking even a coffee break may not remain an option. You will be forthright in dealing with issues and nothing will escape your sharp observation. You will be able to manage your work well, and finish it on time.

LEO
You may want to carry some aspirin with you today, suggests Ganesh. For, there are strong indications that you may encounter a plenty of stress and road-blocks at work. This headache-inducing factor aside, you'll be blessed with the uncanny knack of beating your opponents at their own game.

VIRGO
Work like a thrill to have your contribution noticed, says Ganesh. However, do not expect appreciation in the same degree. Unwind at the end of a long day with the solace of putting in your best.

LIBRA
Does money really matter when compared to your loved ones? You might be asking yourself this question at some point in time during the day, foresees Ganesh. Chances are high that today, you may be at the receiving end of some sort of financial loss accelerated by someone close to you. Arguments with your siblings over property issues might take centre-stage, but you need to be belligerent towards them in the afternoon.

SCORPIO
Flaunt your sunny side up as the day begins on a cheerful note. Ganesh says, you will enjoy cordial relations with people around you. Overall, the day seems to be good. You spend quality time with your beloved. Passion and love may rejuvenate your love life.

SAGITTARIUS
A mixed bag of fortunes in store today, says Ganesh. At work, expect the unexpected and overlook the expected. Don't you worry if you stumble there, says Ganesh, for the evening promises to be ecstatic and a fitting finale to a rather muddled day.

CAPRICORN
Don't be surprised if you are suddenly showered with attention at work. Ganesh says it's your lucky day today, for you will leave no room for complacency and rewards for this may come by way of special treatment from your colleagues and even your boss. Seniors, who may have bullied you and taken you for a ride in the past, will admire your efforts and potential to achieve great things.

AQUARIUS
As the day begins, you will be irritated and troubled by the most trivial of matters. But you won't let it hamper your pace and sincerely pursue your goals. Evening promises some kind of monetary wind-fall. Make full use of opportunities on the career front, if any, says Ganesh.

PISCES
A day wherein you will be busy socialising in the company of your near and dear ones, or childhood buddies. Refurbishing and refurbishing your home is also likely to be on the agenda. You may find yourself visiting a holy place as well, says Ganesh.



BIG LITTLE LIES DIRECTOR JEAN-MARC VALLEE DIES

Jean-Marc Vallee, the Quebecois director of films, including *Dallas Buyers Club* and TV projects such as *Big Little Lies*, died at his cabin in Canada. He was 58. The cause of death was not immediately known, reports *variety.com*.

DORNAN HOPES PANDEMIC CAN UNITE THE WORLD

Jamie Dornan hopes the coronavirus pandemic can heal divides and bring people together. The *Belfast* actor – whose dad tragically passed away after contracting the virus – expects that the global health crisis will have the long-term impact of unifying divided communities.



Alia named PETA's Person of the Year

The actress had recently invested in a company which makes vegan leather out of discarded temple flowers

Mumbai: Actress Alia Bhatt has been named PETA's 2021 Person of the Year for her work in support of an animal-friendly fashion industry.

The actress had recently invested in Phool, the company behind Fleather, which makes vegan leather out of discarded temple flowers. In addition, her vegan kidswear line, Ed-a-Mamma, also won a 2021 PETA India fashion award for helping to nurture kids' love for animals and nature.

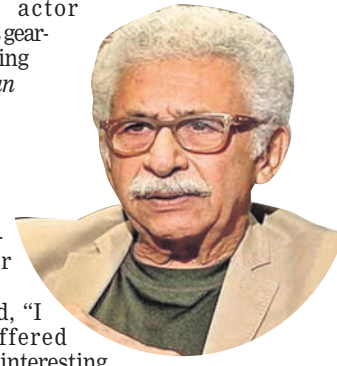
Alia is known to advocate support for cats and dogs and often uses her voice to call for stronger animal protection laws. The actress has also starred in a pro-adoption People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) India campaign to help felines and canines. PETA India Director of Celebrity and Public Relations, Sachin Bangera said, "Alia Bhatt is not only helping to advance vegan fashion but also encouraging the next generation to be kind to animals."

Past recipients of PETA India's Person of the Year Award include Lok Sabha MP Shashi Tharoor; cricketer Virat Kohli, comedian Kapil Sharma, actors John Abraham, Anushka Sharma, Sunny Leone, R Madhavan, Jacqueline Fernandez, Hema Malini, and Sonam Kapoor Ahuja, for helping animals in different ways. IANS



I get more interesting work on OTT than in movies: Naseer

Mumbai: Veteran actor Naseeruddin Shah, who is gearing up for his upcoming web series titled *Kaun Banega Shikharwati*, says he gets more interesting offers of roles on OTT platforms rather than in films.



Naseer said, "I am being offered much more interesting work on OTT than in the movies, but since things opened up I have done cameos in several films made by friends. In any case these days it's either the Rs 5,000 crore monsters or the very tiny films being made in Mumbai and I don't fit into the former but have done several of the latter which are probably destined to have a very limited audience if they ever see the light of day." The upcoming web series is a comedy-drama which revolves around a dysfunctional royal family. The show also features Lara Dutta, Soha Ali Khan, Kritika Kamra, Anya Singh Raghuraj Yadav, Cyrus Sahukar, and Varun Thakur, among others.

Asked about the reason behind taking up this project and Naseer said, "I said 'yes' to KBS because I've been itching to do comedy and this fell into my lap! What's probably unique about it is that the characters are all eccentric in various degrees and with the majority of the content on OTT being expletive-filled blood-soaked revenge dramas or steamy love stories there might be space for a little light-heartedness as well." *Kaun Banega Shikharwati* is releasing on ZEE5 January 7. IANS

SALMAN ON HIS 56TH B'DAY

'I love it when the nation calls me 'BHAI'

The 'Tiger Zinda Hai' actor wants to set good example by doing right things on screen and in real life as well

New Delhi: As he celebrates his 56th birthday Monday and is showered with love from the entire country which he calls his family, showbiz's dapper dude Salman Khan feels very loved and appreciated when his fans call him 'bhai' or 'bhai-jaan'.

The superstar, who according to the Forbes 2018 list of Top-Paid 100 Celebrity Entertainers in world, was the highest-ranked Indian, enjoys a massive fandom. He currently has 48.1 million Instagram followers and on Twitter he has over 43.4 million.

The actor, who has been feted with two National Film Awards as a film producer, feels over the moon when his fans call him 'bhai' (brother).

"The fact that they call me 'bhai', 'bhai-jaan'... it is just feels amazing. It just feels that the whole country is like family. I love that feeling. No matter who, no matter what sect, what caste or religion... they all call me 'bhai' and I love that fact," said the eldest son of veteran screenwriter Salim Khan.

Cinema has the power to influence, and Salman wants to set a good example.

"When I used to go out to watch a movie, I used to get very influenced by the heroes of my time and do the right thing. So, this has been my endeavour to keep on doing this all the time and not play negative and say the right things and doing the right thing on screen and in real life as well," he said.

Salman will be seen in Tiger 3, Kabhi Eid Kabhi Diwali, Bajrangi Bhaijaan 2 and the second instalment of No Entry. IANS



6TH PANCHADHWANI NATAK UTSAV

2-day theatre fest kicks off in City

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar: A play titled *Iswara Ama Sapakhyare* was staged Monday at Biju Natya Kendra here at Nayapalli to mark the inaugural day of two-day drama festival organised by city-based theatre troupe Panchadhwani Natya Parishad.

The play was written by Panchanan Dash and directed by Prakash Maharana.

There is a common belief that whenever evil forces flourish, god takes human forms to destroy them. At a time when the entire world battles to defeat coronavirus, god comes to world in disguise and helps the physicians to eliminate the virus. Besides, he also asks people to change their lifestyle to come out of this situation.

This was the theme that formed the crux of the play.

Santosh Kumar Patnaik, Karunakara Samal, Manas Kumar Parida, Jitendra Patnaik, Prakash Maharana, Raghunath Behera, Jasmine Ray, Jyotiranjan Ray, Pradip Kumar Das,



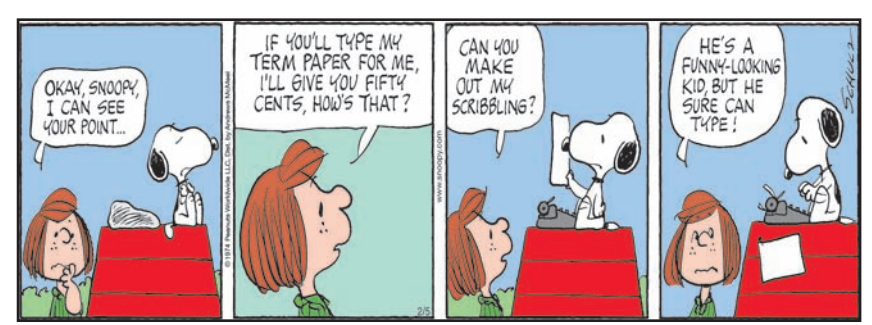
Play *Iswara Ama Sapakhyare* underway at Biju Natya Kendra, Bhubaneswar, Monday

Chandrasekar Subudhi, Trilochan Rath, Surendranath Gauda, Sumitra and Subhalakshmi of the troupe were seen in pivotal roles.

Among dignitaries, veteran theatre director Dolgovind Rath, playwright Upendra

Prasad Nayak, coordinator of Odisha Writers' Association Bhubanananda Tripathy and Odisha Natya Sangh president Haren Sahoo were present and lighted the lamp to inaugurate the event. IANS

PEANUTS



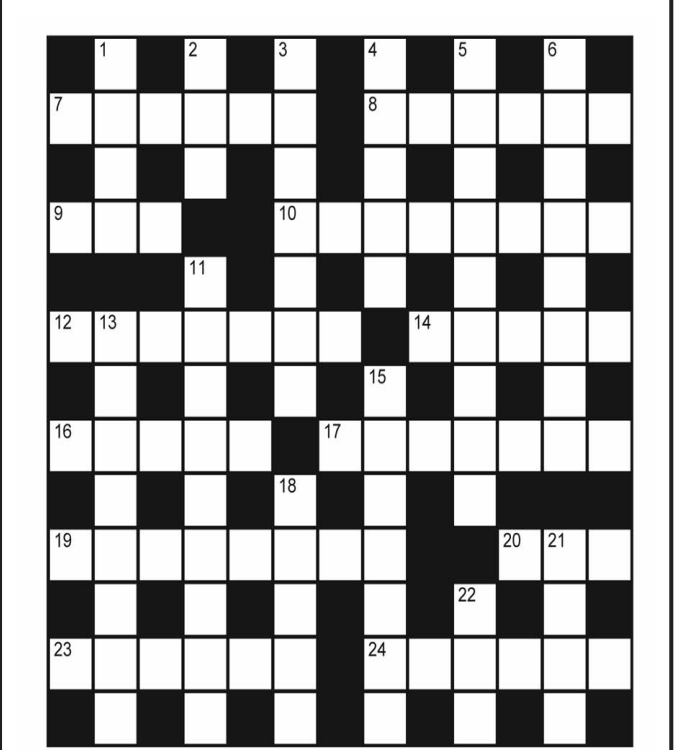
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



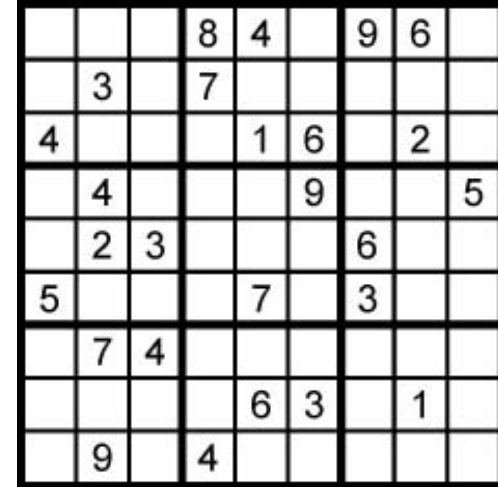
FUN post CROSSWORD



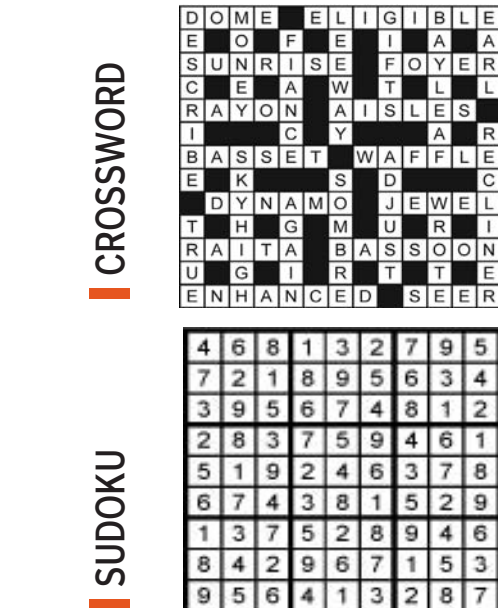
- Across**
- 7 Look out
 - 8 On the train
 - 9 Aardvark's tidbit
 - 10 Doctor's clues
 - 12 In a genial manner
 - 14 Ouzo flavouring
 - 16 Dish
 - 17 Chums
 - 19 Collarbone
 - 20 Fire remnant
 - 23 Loud speaker
 - 24 Type of monkey
 - Down**
 - 1 Small slender
 - 2 Portly plus
 - 3 Ships
 - 4 Hot rock
 - 5 Satisfied
 - 6 Took an oath
 - 11 Enchant
 - 13 Traditional knowledge
 - 15 Indebtedness
 - 18 Close call
 - 21 Urban blight
 - 22 Gunpowder holder

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

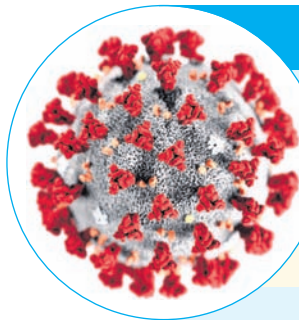
downtown

COVID-19 TRACKER

| | INFECTED | RECOVERED | DEAD |
|--------|--------------|--------------|-----------|
| World | 28,04,65,050 | 25,05,69,479 | 54,19,178 |
| India | 3,47,93,333 | 3,42,37,495 | 4,79,997 |
| Odisha | 10,54,004 | 10,44,093 | 8,453 |

PROTEST IN CITY

OSSTET qualified teacher aspirants stage a unique protest in Bhubaneswar, Monday, demanding more posts for Unreserved category candidates



City to have EV charging stations by April

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 27: If things go as per plan, electric vehicle (EV) charging stations of Bhubaneswar Smart City Limited (BSCL) will come up at seven places in the state capital by April-end next year. As per sources, the BSCL, which had invited tenders in September for installation of EV stations during the first phase, has chosen Tata Power for the same.

"An agreement will be signed between BSCL and Tata Power this week after which the contract will be awarded to the firm," said a BSCL official. The company will be required to make the charging stations operational within three months of the agreement, he said adding, "The stations are likely to be operational by April in 2022." It can be mentioned here that as per BSCL's proposal, charging stations in the first phase will come up

EV charging stations will come up near Krishna Plaza at CRP Square, DN Regalia Mall in Patrapada, Esplanade Mall in Rasulgarh, near Sum Hospital and KIIT area. Both KIIT area and Esplanade Mall will have two charging stations - one normal and one fast - each



Seven more EV charging stations are likely to come up in the city in next phase

near Krishna Plaza at CRP Square, DN Regalia Mall in Patrapada, Esplanade Mall in Rasulgarh, near Sum Hospital and KIIT area.

Both KIIT area and Esplanade Mall will have two charging stations - one normal and one fast - each. The remaining three locations will have normal charging stations. This apart, Krishna Plaza and Esplanade Mall charging stations will have three EV chargers each, while the remaining will have one EV charger each. Seven more EV charging stations are likely to come up in the City in next phase.

Sluggish probe, rise in riots mark 2021

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 27: The Capital city witnessed a significant rise in robbery, burglary and cheating cases while probe into murder and rape incidents went at snail's pace in 2021, as per the annual crime data released by the office of Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Bhubaneswar.

As many as 547 robbery cases were registered at different police stations of Bhubaneswar between January 1 and November 30, as compared to 388 cases the previous year. Incidents of burglary also increased to 426 in 2021 as compared to 350 in 2020. The City also recorded a rise in number of theft cases in 2021. The police registered 1,880 theft cases this year as compared to 1,862 such cases in 2020.

Similarly, there is more than 50 per cent rise in registration of various cheating cases. In 2020, the City police had recorded 518 swindling cases, the tally for which was already at 791 by November 30 this year. As many as 73 rioting cases were recorded in 2021 against 67 cases in 2020. This apart, Bhubaneswar witnessed a slight increase in motor vehicle accidents cases this year: Police had recorded 517 road accident cases in 2020 which rose to 532 this year.

On the other hand, the number of murder, rape and armed robbery cases declined in 2021. As many as 32 murder cases were registered in 2021 against 49 in 2020. Jatni police station registered four murder cases while Infocity, Chandrasekharpur, Mancheswar and Bharatpur reported three murder cases each till the end of November 2021. City police lodged 108 rape cases as compared to 113 cases in 2020. As many as nine armed robberies took place in City in 2021 while 34 such cases were registered in 2020. However, the data indicated at

CAPITAL CRIME

In 2021, charge-sheets were filed only in 9 out of 32 murder cases against 39 out of 49 in 2020

Charge-sheets in only 77 out of 108 rape cases were submitted before courts this year against 111 out of 113 in 2020

As many as 73 rioting cases were recorded in 2021 against 67 cases in 2020

277 suicides in City

A staggering 277 people committed suicide in the Capital city between January 1 and November 30 this year.

Out of that, 190 victims were male while 87 were female. Maximum number of suicides (68) occurred under Khandagiri police limits. As many as 135 people including 41 females committed suicide by hanging while 119 ended their lives by poison. Similarly, 23 people committed suicide by jumping into various water bodies.

City police registered 1,513 unnatural death cases till November 30. Out of that, investigations were completed in 559 cases during the above period. Police had managed to finish probe in 1,100 out of the total 1,583 UD cases registered in 2020.

tardy probe into murder cases in 2021. While police filed charge-sheets in nine out of the 32 murder cases in 2021, charge-sheets in 39 out of the 49 murder cases were filed in the previous year.

Similarly, charge-sheets in 77 out of 108 rape cases were submitted before the court in 2021 against 111 out of the total 113 rape cases in 2020.

Now, kite string hurts man in Puri

PNN/AGENCIES

Cuttack/Puri, Dec 27: A day after a dangling kite string slashed the throat of a man leading to his death in Cuttack, a motorcyclist in Puri suffered a serious injury on his neck under similar circumstances Monday, police said.

The injured man, Bhanjabihari Patra of Kundhaibenta Sahi of Puri town, is undergoing treatment at Puri district headquarters hospital (DHH), and he is stated to be out of danger.

The incident took place on Badadanda in front of the Srimandir when Patra was going to fetch medicine for his ailing son. He was injured when a kite string got entangled around his neck. Patra was immediately taken to the hospital where doctors stitched the wound, the police said. Meanwhile, Commissionerate Police Monday arrested a local trader on charges of selling glass-coated thread used exclusively for kite flying in connection with the Cuttack incident.

Sheik Anwar has been arrested on charges of selling banned manja (glass-coated thread), while two locals of Pirbazar area, who were found flying kites, have been interrogated in connection with the Sunday's incident, a senior Jagatpur police official said.

Man gets 14 yrs in jail for raping minor

Cuttack: The special POCOS court here Monday sentenced a 36-year-old man to 14 years in jail after convicting him for outraging the modesty of a minor girl in Choudwar area in 2015. The court also slapped a penalty of Rs 10,000 on the convict, Surendra Pingua. Failure to pay the fine would entail an additional six-month jail term, the court ruled. According to the case diary, the incident dates back to June 26, 2015 when the victim was on her way to a shop. "Pingua found the girl alone and forced upon her. The girl narrated her ordeal before her family which lodged a complaint with the Choudwar police the next day—June 27," it added.

Muskaan to promote literature, heritage

Bhubaneswar: Project 'Muskaan', an initiative of Prabha Khaitan Foundation and Education for All Trust supported by Shree Cement, will reach out to thousands of students across India to popularise heritage, literature and culture of India by engaging them in cultural programmes like story-telling, dance, music, puppetry, theatre and art.

WASSUP TODAY CUTTACK

71st national basketball championship, Jawaharlal Nehru Indoor Stadium, 9am

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₹507cr relief for Jawad-hit framers

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 27: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Monday announced a special relief package of Rs 507 crore for farmers affected due to remnants of cyclone Jawad that reached near Odisha coast in the first week December.

As per the package, small and marginal farmers, who have suffered crop loss of 33 per cent and above, will receive agricultural input subsidy (cash assistance) of Rs 6,800 per hectare of land in rain-fed and non-irrigated areas while Rs 13,500 per hectare of land will be provided for areas under assured irrigation.

Similarly, the assistance to be provided for perennial crops like mango, cashew, coconut and betel vines is Rs 18,000 per hectare.

Agricultural input subsidy not less than Rs 2,000 will be given to any affected farmer for perennial crops and Rs 1,000 for other crops, officials said.

Farmers in the affected 12 districts will be provided with 12,000 quintals of high-quality certified paddy seeds with a 25 per cent rebate from the current rebate for 2021-22 Rabi season.

The rebate will be credited directly to the farmers' accounts



Govt announces cash assistance of Rs 6,800 per hectare of land in rain-fed and non-irrigated areas while Rs 13,500 per hectare will be given to areas under assured irrigation

Assistance for perennial crops like mango, cashew, coconut and betel vines is Rs 18,000 per hectare

A subsidy of Rs 50 crore will be provided to the cyclone-affected farmers through DBT for procurement of technical farm equipment

SHORT-TERM LOANS OF FARMERS WITH 33 PER CENT AND ABOVE CROP DAMAGE IN AFFECTED AREAS WILL BE CONVERTED INTO MEDIUM-TERM LOANS

through direct benefit transfer (DBT). The state government will also provide 50,000 mini kits of pulse seeds and 4 lakh packets of vegetable seeds to the farmers free of cost. About 1 lakh farmers will get aid at the rate of Rs 4,000 per 0.20 hectare for cultivation of hybrid vegetable crops.

Similarly, a subsidy of Rs 50 crore will be provided to the cyclone-affected farmers through DBT for procurement of techni-

cal farm equipment. About 5,000 pump sets with 50 per cent subsidy (maximum Rs 10,000 per farmer) will be distributed in the cyclone-affected districts. The government will also distribute 5,000 sprayers with rebates to the farmers in the affected areas.

Affected Mission Shakti members, who are engaged in vegetable cultivation, will get five crates each at 90 per cent dis-

count. About 1 lakh such members will get the benefit.

Steps will be taken to expedite the preparation of crop harvest reports for settlement of claims of the affected farmers covered under Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana.

Short-term loans of farmers with 33 per cent and above crop damage in affected areas will be converted into medium-term loans, the officials said.

NGT chairman lauds OSPCB achievements



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 27: The Chairman of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel had an interactive session with state government officials led by Chief Secretary Suresh Chandra Mahapatra at the Odisha State Pollution Control Board (OSPCB) office here, Monday.

In the session, Member Secretary K Murugesan presented the current pollution scenario in the state along with measures taken to control and mitigate the impact of pollution generated from different sources. Housing and Urban Development Principal Secretary G Mathi Vathanan also apprised the NGT about management of different types of wastes in the urban local bodies (ULBs).

While terming the state's accomplishments in management pollution as 'remarkable achievements', Justice Goel advised the officials to continue the efforts. He also appreciated the performances of Odisha in monitoring of industrial effluents and urban wastes. He said, "The issue of environment is very complex; and it has direct bearing on health and life of the present as well as future generation." Mentioning about different Acts, Rules, stipulations of the Indian Penal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code, he said that legal provisions and enforcing authorities had been put in place. Continued efforts for their en-

forcement throughout the country would curtail devastating effects of the pollution.

Chief Secretary Mahapatra said, "Odisha is taking all possible measures for complying with the environmental norms, and the government under the leadership of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik is constantly taking direct feedback from people through the innovative approach of Mo Sarkar."

Discussions in the meeting showed that in recent years, OSPCB expanded its activities both in terms of quality and quantum through 14 regional offices, 11 regional laboratories and one central laboratory for enforcement and compliance. The board has also set up a center at Paradeep for management of coastal ecosystem. The board is constantly monitoring the water quality of 11 major river basins in 129 locations with respect to 36 parameters, ambient air quality of 17 major towns with 11 CAAQMS stations, biological health of 8 major river systems with 29 stations, ground water quality in 30 districts with 91 monitoring stations, and coastal environment monitoring at 73 locations from Paradeep to Dhamara.

The Board has also rolled out online service delivery of 6 important services i.e. consent to establish, consent to operate, authorisation under hazardous, biomedical and e-waste management, and registration under plastic waste management with decided timelines and payment gateway for approvals. Because of its transformative measures, OSPCB has also been ranked first in transparency index conducted by the Center for Science and Environment.

STELLAR PERFORMANCE



Alka Sahu and group from Ganjam perform at the second day of International Odissi Dance Festival at Guru Kelu Charan Mohapatra Odissi Research Centre in Bhubaneswar, Monday

'Odisha home to engineering marvels'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 27: Engineering education in local languages and mother tongue would be an instrument of empowerment, said Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan at the valedictory session of 36th India Engineering Congress in New Delhi, Monday.

Pradhan said that in Odisha many ancient structures like Srimandir, Lingaraj Temple, Sun Temple and others are marvelous examples of engineering masterpieces and they show that the state has great engineering background. Speaking on the occasion, Pradhan said that India has been

"We must collectively work towards removing language barriers in the learning process and building capacity of our engineering community. To make India a 5 trillion dollar economy engineering will play a key role"

DHARMENDRA PRADHAN | UNION EDUCATION MINISTER



a land of people with scientific temper and robust engineering capabilities and our civilisational history has scientific evidence of structural engineering, water management, maritime engineering among others. He complimented Institution of Engineers India (IEI) for furthering India's engineering

traditions and role of IEI in building an Aatmanirbhar Bharat.

The minister said, "With the implementation of the visionary National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, we are integrating education with skills, taking a multidisciplinary approach and making skilling and apprenticeship a part

of the main curriculum to prepare our youth for the 21st century."

He further said that introduction of engineering education in local languages and mother tongue in line with the NEP would be an instrument of empowerment of our youth and will further strengthen our engineering prowess.

Pradhan stressed that engineering education should not be restricted to awarding of degrees. "We must collectively work towards removing language barriers in the learning process and building capacity of our engineering community. To make India a 5 trillion dollar economy engineering will play a key role."

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Be grateful for all ordeals, they are the shortest way to the Divine.

THE MOTHER



In the Dock

Perception has been sought to be created in a crafty, clever way that an elected government that has got the popular mandate to rule must be allowed to do whatever it chooses without any scrutiny of its actions by either its critics or the judiciary. Different political parties and their top leaders have been subtly propagating a new theory of democratic governance which requires the people only to cast their votes so that political parties winning the majority can form a government and then the people can go back home to sleep in peace without worrying what the government does. Any criticism of the government's actions either by Opposition parties, the civil society or the judiciary, according to this theory, is unwarranted and construed as undue interference in the work of an elected government. The fundamental mistake of such a flawed thinking is that democracy is not alive only for one day when the people go to the polling stations to elect their representatives. Elections are but a small part of democracy, while the vigilance of the people should be round the clock - 365 x 24 hours - to ensure a government does only that which is for the wellbeing of the citizens. The government must not behave in an autocratic manner whereby it can do whatever it likes and the people have no right to call its actions into question. The present government at the Centre has been systematically branding its critics as anti-nationals and collaborators of terrorists and invoking colonial-era laws of sedition or other draconian laws to silence them.

Even the Election Commission of India has deplorably succumbed to the pressure of the government recently to abdicate its role as an independent constitutional body. The Chief Justice of India NV Ramana admirably exposed December 26 the mischief that the executive has been trying to do to harm the democratic fabric of the country. He expressed grave concern over the executive's "growing tendency to disregard and disrespect court orders" and sought to counter the myth being created that a popular majority is justification enough for arbitrary actions taken by a government. Like a wise man of law, Justice Ramana asserted every government action is mandatorily required to comply with the Constitution. "If the judiciary does not have the power of judicial review, then the functioning of democracy in this country would be unthinkable," he said, cogently explaining the basic principle of democracy in no uncertain terms.

Being the head of the country's judiciary, Justice Ramana reminded the executive that the higher courts have the mandate to ensure that executive decisions and legislations were in conformity with the Constitution. The constitutional courts cannot show any slackness while testing the validity of a decision by a government, however much enjoying popular support, on the touchstone of the country's Constitution.

Of late, the government blatantly showed scant regard for the Constitution, bypassed the Parliament and enacted laws trampling down parliamentary procedures framed to defend the Constitution. This was done knowing well that the action would invite judicial scrutiny. The three controversial farm laws, that now stand repealed after marathon protests, pain and death of farmers, are a glaring example of such behaviour. The device of Select Committee, the CJI explained, has been created as a system of checks and balance to forestall arbitrary government actions. But, in the case of the farm laws, the Bills were not sent to the Select Committee despite the Opposition's demand made on the basis of rules of business. These laws were also liable to judicial challenge as they encroached on powers constitutionally granted to the states. But, the government was under such delusion that the mandate it has got authorises it to throw to the wind constitutional principles. It had eventually to bow to the wishes of the farmers seemingly because of electoral compulsions and not for fear of judicial scrutiny. This has even cast doubts in the minds of many that if the ruling party retains power in the crucial UP elections to be held in a few months from now, it may again attempt to introduce the farm laws in a different garb.

Quite rightly did the CJI point out that ensuring justice is not the responsibility of the judiciary alone. Unless the executive and the legislature make sincere efforts to make laws with a clear foresight, fill judicial vacancies, appoint prosecutors, strengthen infrastructure, the judiciary alone cannot be held responsible for the collapse of democracy.

The CJI has also laid bare two other infirmities affecting true democratic functioning of a government - biased work of public prosecutors and functioning of the investigating agencies. People's faith in public prosecutors has eroded because of their marked tendency to present cases in a weak manner, suppress evidence that may exonerate the accused and oppose bail automatically without applying their mind to suit government interests. For this, the CJI's suggestion to form an independent body to recruit public prosecutors is laudable.

Last but not the least is the CJI's criticism of the functioning of a section of the media which indulges in trials parallel to court trials without apparently being able to "distinguish between right and wrong, good and bad and the real and fake. Such media outlets act as the government's echo chambers to mould public opinion in favour of the government so that the latter can escape public scrutiny."

The CJI's concerns and prescriptions are timely and, if implemented, will do a world of good to strengthen democracy.

WISDOM CORNER

Half the world is composed of people who have something to say and can't, and the other half who have nothing to say and keep on saying it.

ROBERT FROST

Be content with what you have; rejoice in the way things are. When you realize there is nothing lacking, the whole world belongs to you.

LAO TZU

Whether one believes in a religion or not, and whether one believes in rebirth or not, there isn't anyone who doesn't appreciate kindness and compassion.

THE DALAI LAMA

WORDSWORTH

Quodlibet

What a shift of meaning this humble if slightly exotic term has undergone. It started life in the sense of a topic for philosophical or theological discussion. It has since transformed its meaning to refer to a light-hearted medley of well-known tunes. Though the first sense has fallen out of day-to-day use, it is given in dictionaries because philosophers at times have cause to refer to some medieval quodlibet, as here in The Review of Metaphysics of June 2003: "In his Quodlibet III, disputed in 1288, Giles of Rome asked ex professo whether the will could move itself." These disputations, frequently on subtle points of logic or religious doctrine, were often exercises or improvised oral examinations for students, in the same spirit as moots (mock court cases) are for the legal fraternity. This may be why this Latin word was given to them, as it derives from quod, what, plus libet, it pleases, so roughly "what pleases you" or "as you like". It seems to have had much the same idea behind it as the modern hand-waving waltzer - argue away, the word seems to be saying, the result is of little consequence. How it got from philosophy to music is intriguing, not least because it didn't happen in English. In the late Middle Ages in Germany, quodlibet started to be applied to a type of humour that featured daft lists of items loosely combined under an absurd theme - one example was objects forgotten by women fleeing from a harem. Something similar happened in France, where a quodlibet became a witty riddle - even today, avoid de quolibet means to produce clever repartee on demand. The German idea of the humorous conglomeration was first applied to a musical composition by Wolfgang Schmetzl in 1544 and the name later became the usual term in that language for facetious combinations of tunes haphazardly combined. Famous examples exist in works by Bach and Mozart in the eighteenth century. In this connection it certainly lives up to the idea behind the Latin word, since the aim is to produce a humorous amalgam of tunes to please the audience.



Mabel van Oranje

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO SAY EVERYTHING THERE IS TO SAY ABOUT THIS TOUGH, FUNNY, BRILLIANT GIANT OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

With the passing of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the world has lost an unstoppable force for good who taught compassion and forgiveness, and pursued his mission with a will of iron.

"Arch" will be rightly remembered as the international voice of the anti-apartheid movement and for his place beside Nelson Mandela in the decades-long fight for racial equality and justice in South Africa. But he touched people's lives in so many other ways.

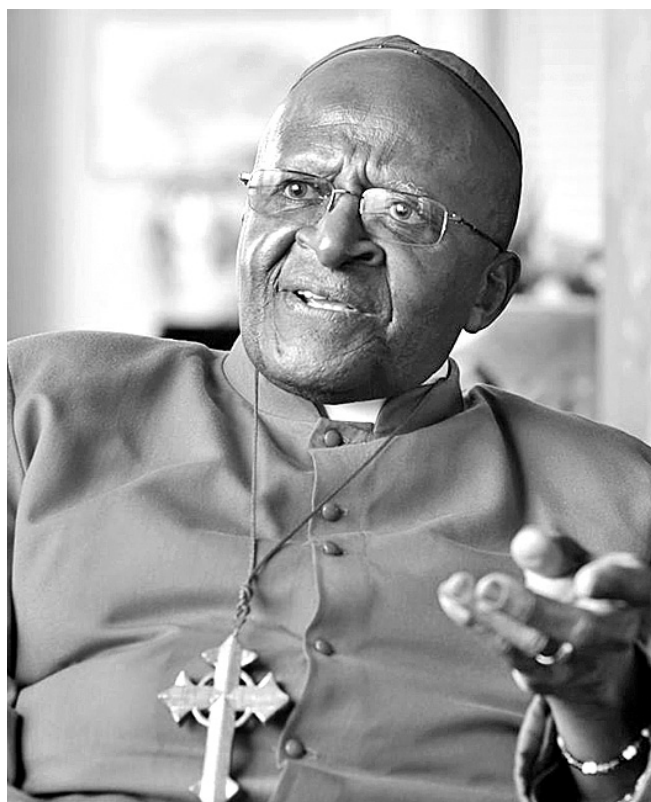
In particular, I want to acknowledge his contribution to global efforts to end child marriage. His involvement began with another of his great qualities: the humility to admit what he did not know. I remember the moment when he learned that child marriage rates in Sub-Saharan Africa were as high or higher than in South Asia or the Middle East. "I didn't think this was an African thing," he said to me frankly.

But once he knew, he became fully committed to the cause. Already almost 80 years old, he willingly travelled to remote villages in Ethiopia, India, and Zambia to meet and listen to adolescent girls who were married or under pressure to marry. He met their fathers, faith leaders, village elders, and politicians to learn why this was happening and tried to convince them that marriage was not in the girls' best interests.

He was never afraid to take on the establishment - religious, cultural, or political. He was a brilliant communicator and wily campaigner who could make audiences laugh and cry within minutes. He knew how to press the right emotional buttons and convey difficult messages, often using stories to get his point across. While traveling with him, it was not unusual to see leaders, in-

FOCUS OBITUARY

TUTU'S TRUE SELF



Anti-apartheid leader will be rightly remembered for his place beside Nelson Mandela in the decades-long fight for racial equality and justice in South Africa. But he touched people's lives in so many other ways, not least by speaking out against child marriage

cluding presidents and prime ministers, listening like children to one of his stories, then realising that the point of the tale was directed squarely at them.

If he bore witness to injustice, he made sure those in power knew about it. He spoke not only about the suffering of girls forced into marriage, but also about men's role in ending this harmful practice. He spoke of the changes he had witnessed when men started treat-

ing their wives as equals: "They actually told me they liked doing housework and taking care of their children!" But he tempered harsh truths with such compassion and good humor that he was welcomed by leaders of all faiths and none. He was very hard to resist when he set his mind to something.

But while Arch was a man of steely determination, he always made people feel valued. He would

stop to speak to those who served tea or opened doors for him, more than once making a president wait. I am sure he was making a point to the great men (they were almost always men): everyone deserves respect and equal treatment. He loved meeting young people and gave them enormous encouragement and hope. He often used to say that creating big change requires a big wave. Each of us can be a drop of water constituting that wave, and by working together we can achieve great things.

Forgiveness of others, and of ourselves, was one of his most-repeated messages. As Chair of The Elders, a group of global leaders that he, together with Mandela and Graça Machel, established in 2007, he reminded his distinguished peers of our shared humanity and interconnectedness - ensuring that the work of the group remained focused on justice and those most in need of help.

As a friend, he was deeply loyal. I will always be grateful for the comfort and counsel he gave me when my husband was severely injured. Arch called me every day in the long months while Friso was unconscious. Sometimes we spoke for hours, and sometimes just for a few minutes. But he made it clear that he was always there for me.

It is impossible to say everything there is to say about this tough, funny, brilliant giant of social justice. I will try to remember him by taking small actions every day to make a difference, and by upholding his belief that goodness will ultimately triumph in this troubled world.

The writer was the first CEO of The Elders, which Desmond Tutu chaired from 2007 to 2013, and co-founded Girls Not Brides with him and other Elders.

PROJECT SYNDICATE

SPECTRUM SOCIETY

Old stories, new lessons to welcome 2022

This holiday season there is little to cheer and a lot to worry, what with Omicron doing the rounds and lockdowns being announced. It is a time for good wishes and lots of prayers as we prepare to welcome 2022. In his Christmas day message, Prime Minister Modi recalled the teachings of Jesus Christ, "which placed the top-most emphasis on service, kindness and humility."

This then is a good time to reflect on how the nation has understood and lived by these teachings and messages that have been around so long and told so plainly that we may forget there is much to learn from them every day. Consider that simple one, love thy neighbour as thyself, the toughest message to live by because it is one thing to love the Lord you don't see but quite another to love the neighbour who you do see, and worse, the neighbour who has a perspective or an attitude that can be irritating, burdensome, or the neighbour who may be from a different place, colour, religion or caste! This is not to consider the even bigger question: Who really is my neighbour? Is there a physical boundary, a distance metric, beyond which people are not neighbours, and therefore who qualifies to be in and who is to be considered out of bounds?

And consider the image of that question from the Bible in the song that Gandhi loved, 'Vaishnava jana to', which explains that only the one

who can understand the pain of another is the one who can be a true devotee of the Lord, the one who serves without pride, without claim, without greed. And then the simple teaching of the late Swami Dayananda Saraswati: "If you have the riches with you, you are just rich. When you do seva, you become richer because your heart has expanded to accommodate more people."

In India today, the significance of these messages is that they need to be retold because they are less heard, and have taken a back-seat, almost banished and replaced by strife, conflict and anger as we negotiate our destinies and chart our course. There is more of hitting back, getting even, settling scores as the language of force comes to fore and the language of love is lost in the battles, some of which are given and many of which are created.

In India, one would imagine we think we are getting stronger; muscular, powerful, dominating, forceful, at least that is the imagery sought to be created and made visible for the world to capture, but we are losing out on peace, harmony, togetherness, understanding and commitment that we learn from our traditions as the true reserves of strength. That is why performances of stand-up comics are stopped, as Munawar Faruqui's was in Bangalore, and the State becomes the one providing the comedy show, as Justice GR

Swaminathan of the Madurai bench of Madras High Court wrote in a judgement. The Justice laid out the duties of citizens under article 51-A of the Constitution, to which he added one more fundamental duty - the duty to laugh. But how do we laugh in a nation where, he pointed out, "we have holy cows grazing all over from Varanasi to Vadipattay. One dare not poke fun at them."

To understand this approach in its fullness requires learning, and an education system that can help our young citizens explore their life purpose, interrogate the concept of the world they want to live in and nurture ideas of good living that go beyond the job role, the technical problem-solving or the pay packages. Our first set of universities, the ones we held aloft in free India, focused on technical competence, creating world-class engineers and scientists who can dive deeper into the problem, so deep that a lot else can fade out of vision. Without the idea of service in which these skills are to be anchored, they can become the tools that can take India to the moon but cannot understand the pain of the neighbour in distress.

Consider the case of The Good Samaritan - the parable that Jesus narrates to answer the question: "And who is my neighbour?" The priest and the Levite pass the road from Jerusalem to Jericho where lies a man in need of urgent help;

neither stops to help. But the Samaritan who follows on the road stops, shows compassion, dresses the injured man's wounds and takes him to an inn to rest and recuperate.

The story was recreated as part of an experiment. A set of students who studied Divinity at the Princeton Theological Seminary and knew the parable and went to teach it, no less, were made to pass by a man who was slumped, looking hurt and visibly in need of help, placed deliberately in the path of the students to see if the students would live by the role of the Good Samaritan or pass-by. Some of the students were told they needed to rush for the lecture. Of those placed in a situation of what was called "high hurry", 90% did not stop to help. Some even stepped over the man in need of help to get to their task on time! That study was done almost half a century ago by professors at the department of psychology at Princeton University.

Today, India is in a hurry to reach a mythical place of stardom and power, and in that rush, we may not have time to see the pain and the suffering caused by us in our midst. That is a worry probably bigger than any other as we step into the New Year.

The writer is a journalist and a faculty member at SPJIMR. Views are personal.

THE BILLION PRESS



Jagdish Rattanan

TODAY, INDIA IS IN A HURRY TO REACH A MYTHICAL PLACE OF STARDOM AND POWER, AND IN THAT RUSH, WE MAY NOT HAVE TIME TO SEE THE PAIN AND THE SUFFERING CAUSED BY US IN OUR MIDST

Vaccination boost

Sir, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced COVID-19 vaccination for those in the 15-18 year age group from January 3 and booster doses for healthcare and frontline workers and senior citizens with comorbidities from January 10. In his address to the nation, instead of saying 'booster dose', PM Modi said 'precautionary dose' because more information needs to be passed on to people in this regard. While the Prime Minister's announcement has been welcomed with relief, it is not clear yet which vaccine will be used for the booster dose in India. PM Modi's announcement came after the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) granted emergency use authorisation (EUA) to indigenously developed Bharat Biotech's Covaxin for children above 12 years. COVID-19 vaccination is effective in preventing the disease. On the other hand, vaccine may become less effective over time. In the wake of the emergence of the highly transmissible Omicron variant, many unvaccinated, vaccinated with one dose, and fully vaccinated people are susceptible to be infected. As children below 18 have not yet been vaccinated, they are likely to be infected. Schools and other educational institutions are open and children are not protected against the disease. This is a matter of concern. Hence, there is an urgent need to vaccinate children. The governments must undertake rigorous vaccination campaign and build up capacity for emergency response. As a major section of the population is at the risk of infection or reinfection, we need to keep our life-saving tools ready.

Venu GS, KOLLAM (KERALA)

Taliban's true colour

Sir, The Taliban authorities in Afghanistan enforcing fresh curbs on women is a blow to gender equality and empowerment. Saturday, the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice sought to ban Afghan women's trips without male chaperones. Besides, they called on all vehicle owners to offer rides only to those wearing Islamic hijabs and urged female TV journalists to wear hijabs while presenting news. The guidance, circulated on the social media networks, comes weeks after the ministry asked Afghanistan's television channels to stop showing dramas and soap operas featuring women actors. The Taliban demonstrated their true colour once again despite pledging a softer rule compared to their first stint in power in the 1990s.

NJ Ravi Chander, BANGALORE

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

Orissa POST

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SHORT TAKES

6 Naxals killed on Chh'garh border

Malkangiri: At least six Naxals were killed in an encounter with security forces in Chhattisgarh-Telangana border area Monday morning, police said. The skirmish took place between 6 am and 7 am in a forest in Kistaram area of Chhattisgarh's Sukma district, located over 400 km from the state capital Raipur, they said. Six ultras, including four women, were killed in the gun-battle with the special anti-Naxal Greyhounds unit of the Telangana Police, a senior police official posted in Bastar said. A joint team of the District Reserve Guard and the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) from Sukma was also out on the operation in the area as an auxiliary support to the Greyhounds team, he said.

Two-year-old boy drowns in pond

Balikuda: In a tragic incident, a two-year-old boy accidentally drowned in a pond at Chanpur village under this police limits in Jagatsinghpur district. The deceased was identified Rakesh Das, son of Rabindra Das of the village. According to sources, the kid was playing near a pond in the village when he accidentally fell into it and drowned. Family members searched for him when he failed to return home after long hours. Later, the family members rescued him and rushed him to a nearby health centre where doctors declared him 'brought dead'. The body was handed over to the family members after post-mortem. A pal of gloom descended in the village as news of the boy's death spread.

Man gets lifer for raping minor

Balasure: A special court in Odisha Monday awarded life imprisonment to a 52-year-old man after convicting him for raping a minor Dalit girl in 2018. The Special Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO) court judge charged the accused guilty of committing the crime in Soro area of Balasure district and awarded the sentence. Judge Jagdish Prasad Mohanty also imposed a fine of ₹15,000 on the convict and ordered additional four more months of imprisonment in case of default. The incident happened April 14, 2018, when the 12-year-old girl had gone to a temple on the occasion of 'Maha Vishuva Sankranti'.

Delhi man arrested for defrauding wife of ₹20L

Berhampur, Dec 27: Police arrested a man from Punjab on charges of siphoning off ₹20 lakh from his wife whom he had married after developing a relationship through social networking site Facebook, police said Monday. The accused was identified as Ajay Kumar, 35, of Delhi. Gosaninuaogan police in Berhampur arrested the accused from Baghapurana police station area in Moga district of Punjab. IIC Sumit Soren said. A case has been registered in this connection and the accused was produced in court, the IIC added. Police said the accused and the woman came in contact through social networking site Facebook in 2019. Their initial friendship developed into a relationship as Ajay visited Berhampur and met the woman. Later, the two went to Punjab and tied the knot. Subsequently, Ajay took his wife to Delhi where she lived with him for few months and the two visited various places together. Later, Ajay dropped the woman back at her house in Berhampur and returned to Delhi. While in Delhi, Ajay feigned illness and took lakhs of rupees from his father-in-law. He then claimed to have got a job in a foreign land and siphoned off around ₹20 lakh in phases from his father-in-law. After a while, the woman's family members realised the fraud when Ajay did not pick up phone calls from his wife. Left with no option, she visited the Gosaninuaogan police station and lodged a complaint against Ajay alleging mental and physical torture, in addition to monetary fraud. Police registered a case and launched an investigation. During the investigation, police tracked the mobile phone of Ajay and traced him to Moga district in Punjab. Later, a special team of Berhampur police left for Punjab and arrested him.

TUSKER TRAMPLES MAN TO DEATH

Kutra: A tusker trampled a man to death and pulled down houses at Nuagaon Churchakha village under this block in Sundargarh district, late Sunday night. The deceased was identified as Kiran Dzungung, 50, of the village. The animal strayed into the village at around 11pm and went on a rampage pulling down two houses of villagers. Dzungung was trying to flee from the place after the animal pulled down his house, but it caught hold of him and battered him to the ground. Later, it trampled him under its feet and pulled down the house of another villager. Later, forest officials and villagers drove the animal to a nearby jungle. The incident has sparked panic among the villagers. Forest officials gave ₹5000 to the bereaved family for performing his last rites. Elephant menace has become a regular affair in Kutra where pachyderms frequently stray into villages and unleash terror by destroying crops, pulling down houses and killing the villagers.

PRAWN GHERIES IN ECO-SENSITIVE ZONES

Lokayukta directs Fisheries director, Rajnagar DFO to appear in person



POST NEWS NETWORK

Kendrapara, Dec 27: The state Lokayukta has sought clarifications from the Fisheries department and Rajnagar Wildlife Division in Kendrapara for granting permission to establish prawn gheries inside the Bhitarkanika wildlife sanctuary eco-sensitive zone.

According to reports, the Lokayukta has asked the director of the state Fisheries department at Cuttack and the divisional forest officer (DFO) of Rajnagar Wildlife Division to personally appear before it at Bhubaneswar, February 7, 2022, and submit their respective reports in this connection.

It is reported that permission was given to M/s Falcon Marine Exports Ltd and M/s Odisha Aqua Traders and Marine Exports Pvt Ltd for establishing prawn gheries in Jagatjor and Banapada areas under Mahakalapara block of the district. Incidentally, these areas are eco-sensitive zones.

Meanwhile, M/s Falcon Marine had withdrawn its project at Jagatjor, while M/s Odisha Aqua Traders working on establishing a prawn gheri at Banapada area. The move by Lokayukta has landed the state Fisheries department, Rajnagar DFO and the two firms in soup.

Sources said that the state government granted separate 15-year leases to the two firms to establish prawn gheries at Jagatjor and Banapada, September 2016.

Speaking in the Assembly, the then state Agriculture Minister Pradipta Maharathi had said that the two prawn gheries would be established over 433 hectares and the state government will earn revenues to the tune of ₹13 crore from them annually.

At that time, many environmentalists objected to the establishment of the two prawn gheries, as both Jagatjor and Banapada areas under Mahakalapara blocks come under the eco-sensitive zone of Bhitarkanika wildlife sanctu-

ary. They alleged that effluents to be discharged from these two prawn gheries would destroy the environment as well as the sea water.

Objecting to the establishment of prawn gheries, rights activist late Ranjan Kumar Das of Kendrapara had filed a petition (LY 170/2020) with the Lokayukta. Das was former district convener of the rights body named Odisha Suchana Adhikar Aain Abhiyan.

The Lokayukta heard the matter December 21 this year and questioned the grant of permission to Odisha Aqua Traders for establishment of prawn a gheri. Earlier, the state Fisheries department at Cuttack had submitted a report, October 4.

The report says that the lease deed of M/s Falcon Marine has been cancelled as it was in Jagatjor, which is an eco-sensitive zone. However, the report is silent on the prawn gheri established by M/S Odisha Aqua Traders. The Lokayukta has directed the state Fisheries director to issue a fresh notice to Odisha M/s Odisha Aqua Traders.

Moreover, the Lokayukta has also questioned the Rajnagar DFO for granting permission to establish prawn gheries in areas marked as eco-sensitive zones. Notably, both Jagatjor and Banapada are around 500 metres from the sea coast.

MEDICS' STIR



Junior doctors demanding expediting the NEET PG counseling stage a demonstration in front of the main gate of MKCG Medical College and Hospital in Behampur, Monday. Later, the agitating students submitted a memorandum to MKCG Principal-cum-Dean Dr Abanikanta Mishra in support of their demand

Infant sleeping with mother's body for days rescued by cops

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bolangir, Dec 27: Bolangir Town police rescued a three-year-old girl Monday morning from a rented house near Shiva temple in Sagarpada locality of this district. The infant was found sitting beside the body of her mother for days.

During preliminary investigation, it was revealed that the toddler's mother might have died two-three days ago. The deceased woman worked as a domestic help in nearby localities and lived with her only

daughter in a one-room house. The baby girl was sleeping next to her mother for the last couple of days without realising that the woman was no more alive, an official in Bolangir Town police informed. "The baby was starving since the death of her mother. After her rescue, the girl was immediately provided food and water by some neighbours," the senior police official said.

According to sources, the woman came to Sagarpada about one-and-half years ago along with her baby girl. She had been reportedly by her

parents and in-laws. Talking about the deceased, her landlord said, "She asked me to allow her to live in a single room located on the premises of my house, which was then vacant. Narrating her plight, the woman also said that she had to earn and bring up her only child. I allowed her to stay and she worked as domestic help to eke out her living." Meanwhile, Bolangir Town police have launched a probe to ascertain the actual reason behind death of the woman.

Mining at Parabhadi hill opposed

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, Dec 27: More than a month ago the state government had decided to undertake mining operations at Parabhadi hill in Bandaeswar and Kesaraipur areas under Darpan tehsil in Jajpur for stones required for Puri beautification work.

However, local residents vehemently opposed the government's decision in this regard Monday, saying that Parabhadi hill is a historic site and has an ancient Buddhist stupa. It is on the verge of disappearance due to lack of conservation and proper upkeep, they alleged.

Hundreds of villagers from Bandaeswar, Kesaraipur, Sukhuapada, Palai, Lalitgiri, Chandia and Teligarh assembled at Languli Mutt to ventilate their strong resentment against the state government's move.

Destroying the historic Parabhadi hill for the beautification of Puri town is unjust and illogical. A memorandum in this regard will soon be submitted to the government to revoke its decision, villagers said. The villagers would take to the streets and stage agitations, if their demands are not addressed, locals warned.

PURI BEAUTIFICATION

"The historical stupa built in the third century AD is the oldest among the ancient Buddhist stupas located in the Diamond Triangle of Jajpur district. The Archeological Survey of India (ASI) has not spent a single pie on its maintenance since its discovery. As a result, it is in a state of complete neglect and slowly inching towards destruction," convener of Buddhayan Pradipta Kumar Bhuyan said.

According to the sources, Odisha Mining Corporation (OMC) Limited will undertake mining activities and arrange to send the excavated stones to Puri town for its beautification under the Abadha yojana.

It has been decided that a portion of the hill area of around 114 acres at Sukhuapada under Bandaeswar mouza and around 47 acres under Kesaraipur mouza will be mined in the first phase. The OMC has already applied for environment clearance to conduct the mining activities.

When contacted, local tehsildar Pradeep Sethi said, "Necessary steps

are being taken after the government decided to undertake mining of khandelite stones from the Parabhadi hill. The mining activities will be undertaken ensuring that the Buddhist stupa is not affected."

In 2005, the Parabhadi hill was partly leased out, which was opposed by a local outfit named Buddhayan. The outfit had filed two public interest litigations (PILs) in the Orissa High Court, February 23, 2005 and September 29, 2005 seeking directive to the government to cancel of the lease. Following a favourable court order, erstwhile District Jajpur

Collector Saswat Mishra along with a team inspected the Parabhadi hill and suggested in his report that no mining activity should be undertaken in the area under any circumstance. Subsequently, the lease was cancelled.

Parabhadi Buddhist stupa was discovered at the same time when historians discovered the world famous Lalitgiri shrine and undertook its excavation between 1975 and 1982. The ASI had then asserted the need to excavate and conserve the Buddhist stupa. However, the issue was forgotten soon.

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER RURAL WORKS DIVISION, BALLIGUDA
rw_balliguda@yahoo.com, Tel.- 06846-243114
Government of Odisha e-Procurement Notice
Bid Identification No. Online Tender / 15/SERWD BLG/2021-22
Letter No. 6705/RWDBLG Date: 24.12.2021
No.O-1553-

| | | |
|---|------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Name of the work | : Road & Bridge Works |
| 2 | Estimated cost | : Rs. 1.95 lakh to Rs.47.00 lakh |
| 3 | Period of completion | : 1 (One) & 2 (Two) calendar months as per Annexure |
| 4 | Date & time of availability of bid documents in the portal | : From 30.12.2021 at 10.00 A.M. to 05.01.2022 upto 5.00 P.M. |
| 5 | Last date / time for receipt of bids in the portal | : 05.01.2022 upto 5.00 P.M. |
| 6 | Name and address of the Officer Inviting Bid | : Superintending Engineer, Rural Works Division, Balliguda |

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal website <https://www.tendersodisha.gov.in>

Sd./- Superintending Engineer
Rural Works Division, Balliguda
OIPR-25150/11/0012/2122

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER RURAL WORKS DIVISION, SUNDARGARH
No.O-1556 E-Mail- rw_sundargarh@yahoo.co.in

SHORT TENDER CALL NOTICE
BID IDENTIFICATION NO. ONLINE-SESG-22 OF 2021-22

| | | |
|----|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1. | Name of the Work | - Building Works |
| 2. | Total No. of works | - 01 No. |
| 3. | Estimated cost | - Rs.78.51 Lakhs |
| 4. | Class of contractor | - 'B' & 'A' |
| 5. | Period of completion | - 06 calendar months |
| 6. | Type of Tender | - Double Cover |
| 7. | Other details | |

| | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| Procurement Officer | Bid Identification No. | Availability of Tender On-line for bidding |
| 1 | 2 | From To |
| Superintending Engineer, Rural Works Division, Sundargarh | Online-SESG-22 of 2021-22 | 27.12.2021 from 10.00 A.M. to 03.01.2022 upto 5.30 P.M. |

Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersorissa.gov.in

Sd./- Superintending Engineer,
Rural Works Division, Sundargarh
OIPR-25046/11/0033/2122

ODISHA POLICE DISTRICT HEAD QUARTER, GANJAM, CHATRAPUR
No. 3151 (I) Date: 27.12.21

OFFICE ORDER

The advertisement for tender call notice for hiring of vehicles for NH patrolling made vide office Letter No. 3151/R.O. Dt.26.12.2021 which was published in daily Newspaper Dharitri, Samaj & OrissaPOST on 27.12.2021 is hereby cancelled due to unavoidable circumstances.

Sd./- Superintendent of Police
Ganjam, Chatrapur

ODISHA POLICE DISTRICT HEAD QUARTER, GANJAM, CHATRAPUR
Address: Superintendent of Police, Ganjam, Chatrapur
Contact No. 06811263366
E-mail: spgjm.orpol@nic.in
No. 3151/R.O. Date: 26.12.21

TENDER CALL NOTICE FOR HIRING OF VEHICLES FOR NH PATROLLING

Sealed tenders are invited from reputed travel agencies/ tour operators or private individuals for hiring of commercial light vehicles on monthly basis. Details regarding eligibility criteria, terms & conditions and the formats of submission of tender (Technical & Financial Bid) are mentioned in the tender document which may be downloaded from the ganjam.nic.in website. Interested agencies may submit their tenders in a sealed envelope with superscribing on the top of the sealed envelopes as "Tender for Hiring of Vehicles for NH patrol on monthly basis to Supdt. of Police, Ganjam". The tender should reach the office of the undersigned by 02.01.2022 (till 5.30 P.M.). The tenders will be opened on 04.01.2022 at DPO, Ganjam for finalization of Technical Bid. The Financial bid will be opened on 05.01.2022 at DPO, Ganjam. The undersigned reserves the right to reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reason thereof.

Sd./- Superintendent of Police
Ganjam, Chatrapur

The Odisha Small Industries Corporation Ltd.
(A Government of Odisha Undertaking)
(An ISO:9001:2008 certified Govt. Company)

Industrial Estate, Madhupatna, CUTTACK - 753 010, Odisha.
Tel No. : 0671-2341204, 2342816 Fax : 0671-2341875/2342861
e-mail: osicld@gmail.com, osicm@gmail.com, website: osicld.in
No. CAD-2523 OSIC GST No. 21AAC0210M1M21

e-Procurement Notice for Building works

Tender Notice No.5492 Date: 27.12.2021
Identification No. On line Building OSIC/Constr/2021-2022/005

(I) **Name of the work**

- Construction of boundary wall of "Odisha Rajya Talgur Samabaya Sangha Ltd. at Bahugram, Cuttack.
- Construction of Boundary Wall of "Odisha Rajya Talgur Samabaya Sangha Ltd at Bahipur, Cuttack.

2.Total No of works : 02 Nos.
3.Estimated cost : a) Rs. 32,57,834/-(approx)
b) Rs. 13,53,409/-(approx)

4.Class of Contractor : D or C class as per eligibility criteria online.
5.Period of completion : 06 Calendar months.

(II) **Name of the work**

- Proposed Girl's Hostel (2nd floor) IED, Bhubaneswar, Odisha.

2.Total No of works : 01 No.
3.Estimated cost : Rs. 88,37,312/-(approx)
4.Class of Contractor : B or C class as per eligibility criteria online.
5.Period of completion : 12 Calendar months. (II)

(III) **Name of the work**

- Construction of Boundary wall of S.C.S. college, Talabania, Puri.

2.Total No of works : 01 No.
3.Estimated cost : Rs. 1,75,00,000/-(approx)
4.Class of Contractor : A or B class as per eligibility criteria online.
5.Period of completion : 09 Calendar months.

(IV) **Other details**

| Procurement on line | Bid Identification No | Availability of tender on-line for bidding | Date & time of opening of Tender in O/O MD OSIC Ltd., Cuttack |
|------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| MD OSIC Ltd., Cuttack. | 005 of 2021-2022 | 31.12.21 21.01.22 | 22.01.22 |

Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in/www.osicld.in. Any amendment corrigendum, cancellation or re-tender may please be referred to the website.

Sd./-
MANAGING DIRECTOR
OSIC Ltd., Cuttack.
OIPR-14073/11/0086/2122

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA e-PROCUREMENT NOTICE WORKS DEPARTMENT
Bid Identification No.S.E. CBT (R&B) 26/2021-22
No.B-904 charbatiaadivision1@gmail.com

| | | |
|------|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| i. | Name of the work | : Road Works - 03 Nos., Buildings work- 01 No. & Electric Pole Shifting work- 1 No. |
| | Estimated cost | : Rs.13,22,905/- to Rs.52,80,372/- |
| ii. | Period of completion | : 01 month to 04 months (30 days to 120 days) |
| iii. | Date & time of availability of Bid documents in the portal: | From 10.00 AM of 28.12.2021 to 11.01.2022 upto 5.00 PM for 'online' bidding |
| iv. | Last date/time for receipt of Bids in the portal: | 11.01.2022 upto 5.00 PM |
| v. | Name and address of the officer inviting Bid: | Superintending Engineer, Charbatia (R&B) Division, Choudwar |

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

Sd./- Superintending Engineer
Charbatia (R&B) Division, Choudwar
OIPR-34092/11/0011/2122

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER RURAL WORKS DIVISION-I, GANJAM, BERHAMPUR
Phone- 0680-2291405; E-Mail: eerw_gm1@yahoo.co.in

Government of Odisha e-Procurement Notice
Bid Identification No. Online Tender // 09 // SERWDG-I // 2021-22
Letter No. 4935/RWDG-I/BIAM/Date:24.12.2021
No.O-1547

| | | |
|---|------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Name of the Work | : Road Works |
| 2 | Estimated Cost | : Rs.55.54 Lakh |
| 3 | Period of Completion | : 03 (Three) Calendar Months as shown in Column No.05 of Annexure |
| 4 | Date & Time of availability of Bid Documents in the Portal | : From 28.12.2021 at 10.30 AM to 03.01.2022 upto 3.00 PM |
| 5 | Last Date/Time for Receipt of Bids in the Portal | : 01.01.2022 upto 3.00 PM |
| 6 | Name and Address of the Officer Inviting Bid | : Superintending Engineer, Rural Works Division-I, Ganjam, Berhampur |

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal website <https://www.tendersodisha.gov.in>

Sd./- Superintending Engineer,
R.W. Division-I, Ganjam, Berhampur
OIPR-25085/11/0012/2122

ON TOP OF THE WORLD



Argentina won the **FIH JUNIOR MEN'S HOCKEY WORLD CUP**, played at the Kalinga Stadium, beating Germany in the final. India finished fourth after losing to France in the third-fourth place playoff.

KEEPING FUTURE IN MIND: Keeping 2023 Men's Hockey World Cup in mind, Odisha government began preparation of the Birsam Munda International Hockey Stadium in Rourkela. The 20,000-capacity stadium, which will host the mega event along with Bhubaneswar's Kalinga Stadium, will be India's largest hockey stadium once it is completed by July 2022.

NOT SO IMPRESSIVE: Indian men's hockey team ended their Asian Champions Trophy campaign with a disappointing third-place finish after beating arch-rivals Pakistan, second time in this edition. South Korea clinched the title beating Japan in the final in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

INTO THE HISTORY BOOKS

The date - December 19, 2021 - turned out to be a historic one for Indian badminton as Kidambi Srikanth became the first male player to appear in a BWF World Championships final, took place in Huelva, Spain. Although the result was a heartbreaking one for the Padma Shri awardee as he settled for a silver medal after losing to a lower-ranked player from Singapore.

The event was also special as the 20-year old Lakshya Sen became the youngest male shuttler to win a World medal - a bronze. He also became the first from India to secure a World medal on debut. Before this, India got two bronze medals in the men's singles at the Worlds with Prakash Padukone in 1983 and B Sai Praneeth in 2019.

This is the first time that India won two medals in the men's singles competition in the same edition of the Worlds.

This was the first time a Singaporean man - Loah Kean Yew - won gold in the Badminton Worlds.

PV Sindhu failed to defend his title after losing to World No.1 Tai Tzu Ying of Chinese Taipei, who eventually settled for silver after losing to gold winner Akane Yamaguchi of Japan, in the quarterfinals. He Gijajao and Zhang Yiman, both from China, secured bronze medals.

WORLD TOUR FINALS

PV Sindhu settled for silver medal in the BWF World Tour Finals after losing to Korean team sensation An Seyoung in the summit clash. Notably, She had won gold in the inaugural edition in 2018.

CYCLING TO GLORY

Slovenia's TADEJ POGACAR of Team UAE Team Emirates won the Tour de France, ahead of Denmark's Jonas Vingegaard (Team Jumbo-Visma) and Ecuador's Richard Carapaz (Team Ineos Grenadiers).

Colombia's EGAN BERNAL (Team Ineos Grenadiers) reign supreme in the Giro d'Italia ahead of Italian Damiano Caruso (Team Bahrain Victorious) and British rider Simon Yates (Team BikeExchange).

Another Slovenian rider Przemysl Spruz of Team Jumbo-Visma won the Vuelta a Espana ahead of Spaniard Enric Mas (Movistar Team) and Australian Jack Haig (Team Bahrain Victorious).

NATIONAL SPORTS AWARDS

The renamed Khel Ratna Award - Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award instead of Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Award - witnessed a record number - 12 - of winners. Odisha's para shuttler Pramod Bhagat, Neeraj Chopra (javelin), Ravi Kumar (wrestling), Lovlina Borgohain (boxing), PR Sreejesh, Manpreet Singh (both hockey), Avani Lekhara, Manish Narwal (both para shooting), Sumit Antil (para athletics), Krishna Nagar (para badminton), Mihali Raj (cricket) and Sunil Chhetri (football) were the winners.

As many as 35 athletes, including Odisha's Amit Rohidas and Birendra Lakra and their Olympic bronze-winning teammates, won the Arjuna Award.

MAX IN THE MIX

Red Bull's Max Verstappen clinched the Formula One (F1) championship, denying Lewis Hamilton a record eighth, with a last-lap overtake in a season-ending Abu Dhabi Grand Prix amid controversy and high drama. Two post-race protests, which might have overturned the outcome, were dismissed but Mercedes refused to drop the matter and said they had filed notice of intention to appeal. The safety car had been deployed after Canadian Nicholas Latifi crashed his Williams with five laps to go and race director Michael Masi then decided not to demand all lapped cars pass it before resuming racing. That allowed Verstappen - on fresher, faster tyres after strategic stops - to close and go wheel-to-wheel with Hamilton for the lead. Just when it seemed the race would be finishing behind the safety car, which would have handed Hamilton the title, it turned into a sprint finish. Both Verstappen and Hamilton were equal on points before the final race.

HAMILTON REACHES HIS CENTURY OF POLE POSITIONS, ACHIEVING THE FEAT IN THE SPANISH GP

HE BRIT ALSO BECAME THE FIRST DRIVER TO REACH 100 RACE WINS, WHEN HE CLAIMED RUSSIAN GP TITLE

SPORTS THIS YEAR

AFTER AN AGONISING AND MISERABLE 2020, WHICH GAVE EVERYONE NOTHING BUT SORROWS AND MENTAL BREAKDOWNS DUE TO CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC, THE FOLLOWING YEAR PROVIDED NOT ONLY A MUCH-NEEDED RELIEF BUT ALSO MANY REASONS TO SMILE FOR, CHEER FOR AND MOMENTS THAT WENT INTO HISTORY BOOKS. TO MARK AN END TO THIS AMAZING YEAR, **Orissa POST** REMINISCES ABOUT SOME OF THE MAJOR TALKING POINTS OF 2021...

BEATING ALL ODDS

Even though they are physically challenged, they have a platform - Paralympics - where they can make names for themselves. And this time, it was the Indians, who surprised many with historic feats - bagging a total of 19 medals (5 gold, 8 silver & 6 bronze). Prior to this edition, India only had 12 medals (4 of each colour) despite being a regular participant since 1984 after making their debut in the 1968 edition.

Putting Odisha in world map

PRAMOD BHAGAT - the para shuttler had nothing to prove for his abilities prior to the Paralympics. However, when the announcement of badminton's addition in the Paralympics for the first time came in, he found a new goal. And then his medals galore, which already had three singles gold and a couple of doubles gold at the World Championships among others, included the Paralympics yellow metal.

AVANI LEKHARA (R2 10M AIR RIFLE) SCRIPTED HISTORY AS SHE BECAME THE FIRST INDIAN TO WIN A MEDAL IN SHOOTING IN THE PARALYMPICS. SHE ALSO BECAME THE FIRST INDIAN WOMAN TO WIN A GOLD MEDAL AND BECOME MULTIPLE MEDALLIST IN PARALYMPICS, AFTER BAGGING A BRONZE IN R8 50M RIFLE 3 POSITIONS.

19-year-old shooter - Manish Narwal - won gold in Mixed 50m Pistol SH1 event, smashing the Paralympics record shooting 218.2 points. Pic

Krishna Nagar secured India's second gold medal in badminton, after Pramod Bhagat, at the Paralympics. He bagged the yellow metal in the men's singles S4-C class.

Javelin thrower SUMIT ANTIL followed the footsteps of Neeraj Chopra to clinch a gold at the Paralympics, shattering the men's F4 category world record multiple times in a stunning Games debut performance. The 23-year-old, who like Neeraj, from Sonapat in Haryana, sent the spear to 68.55m in his fifth attempt, which was the best of the day by quite a distance and a new world record.

Archery at the Olympics (Paralympics).

Arjun won India's first Olympic (Paralympics) medal (a silver) in table tennis. Shooter Singhraj Adhana won two medals - silver in Mixed 50m pistol SH1 category and bronze in Men's 10m air rifle SH1 category.

Archer Harvinder Singh became the first Indian to win a medal (bronze in Men's Recurve Individual) in Archery at the Olympics (Paralympics).

Mariyappan Thangavelu bagged his second Paralympics medal (a silver in men's high jump in T53 class) following his Rio 2016 gold medal feat.

Javelin thrower Devendra Jharia joined the legendary Paralympian Jiginder Singh Bedi with three medals after securing a silver in the F46 class.

OTHER MEDAL WINNERS

| NAME | DISCIPLINE | MEDAL |
|---------------------|-------------------|--------|
| Nishad Kumar | High Jump T47 | Silver |
| Yogesh Khatunliya | Discus Throw F56 | Silver |
| Praveen Kumar | High Jump T64 | Silver |
| Suhas Yathiraj | Badminton SL4 | Silver |
| Sundar Singh Gurjar | Javelin Throw F46 | Bronze |
| Sharad Kumar | High Jump T63 | Bronze |
| Manoj Sarkar | Badminton SL3 | Bronze |

'THE GAME' OF GAMES

The most-followed and most-talked event of 2021 was the Tokyo Summer Olympics. The hopes, especially for the Indians, were greater than ever considering the number talents representing the country. The pandemic had pushed the quadrennial event by a year. And the fruits of the wait could hardly be better when Indian participants stunned the world.

END OF 41-YEAR HIATUS

With just seven seconds left in the third-place play-off, custodian PR Sreejesh parried away a goal-bound shot. And with that one flick of his hand, India exorcised the ghosts of 41 years of barren ignominy, ensuring a 5-4 win against Germany and a bronze medal in the Olympics. The last time India won a hockey medal at the Olympics was in 1980. It was a miraculous triumph considering Manpreet Singh-led side were 1-3 behind at one point of time. India's hockey team had once again captured the imagination of the country.

EYES STEAL HEARTS

Despite returning medal-less - a fourth-place finish, the women's hockey team members were greeted like never before. And why not, it was a historic feat - the nation's joint-best finish in women's field hockey. The eyes had last achieved the feat in 1980. It was a moment to cherish forever for Rani Rampal & co.

Double delight

PV Sindhu wrote her name into the history books with a bronze medal in Tokyo. The ace shuttler became the first Indian woman to win bag two Olympic medals, with her latest effort being a follow-up to the silver at the previous Games in Rio de Janeiro in 2016.

SPEAR OF ECSTASY

NEERAJ CHOPRA - the name, that echoed around the world after he became the first ever Indian to bag a medal in athletics at the Olympics. And the lad from Haryana, who had hogged the limelight by scripting the world record in the 2016 IAAF World U-20 Championships, secured gold medal with a throw of 87.58m. His second-best throw of 87.03m was even higher than silver winner Jakeb Vadlejch (86.67m) of Czech Republic.

OTHER MEDALLISTS

| NAME | DISCIPLINE | MEDAL |
|-----------------------|---------------|--------|
| Saikhom Mirabai Chanu | Weightlifting | Silver |
| Ravi Kumar Dahiya | Wrestling | Silver |
| Lovlina Borgohain | Boxing | Bronze |
| Bajrang Punia | Wrestling | Bronze |

STUNNING THE CRICKET WORLD



January 19, 2021 - the date became history, for the Indians, for the Australians and for the entire cricketing world. From 36 all out and 0-1 down after the first Test at the Adelaide, the Indians won the series 2-1 on the final day of the Tour Down Under. And the triumph was anything but simple... as it giving a net bowler (T Natarajan) his Test cap, be it without regular Test skipper Virat Kohli, or without some the regulars due to injuries or even without a single experienced bowler for the final Test. The series witnessed quite a handful of heroics, overcoming humiliation (in the first Test), racism, sledging and the one of the most deadliest pace attacks on their home soil. Ajinkya Rahane's century in Melbourne (2nd Test), Hanuma Vihari and R Ashwin's play with injuries ensuring a draw in the 3rd Test, or crucial knocks by Washington Sundar and Shradul Thakur in the first innings of the 4th Test. Mohammed Siraj's lifer. Cheteshwar Pujara standing firm despite body blows. Shubman Gill's matured knock in the second innings. But undoubtedly, the deciding factor was only one man - Rishabh Pant. And he was the man who finished off the match for India as well as the term 'Gabbatoli' for the Aussies.

Chennai Super Kings won the title for the fourth time, beating Kolkata Knight Riders in the final. The first half was played in India, before covid outbreak postponed the tourney to later dates. The second half was played in the UAE. Ruturaj Gaikwad won the Orange Cap for most runs and RCB's Harshal Patel won the Purple Cap for most wickets.

INDI 2022 will see two new franchises - Lucknow and Ahmedabad.

WORLD TEST CHAMPIONSHIP India lost to New Zealand in the final at Southampton, England

T20 WORLD CUP: Australia beat New Zealand for their maiden crown. Pakistan ended India jinx in ICC World Cups, as the ended a 5-match losing run at the T20 World Cups. However, they are still 0-7 in 50-over World Cups.

India were on cusp of a fourth Test... became the third cricketer, after England and 2007. They were leading 2-1 after the 4th Test before the final match was postponed to 2022 due to covid.

WORLD TEST CHAMPIONSHIP India lost to New Zealand in the final at Southampton, England

New Zealand's left-arm spinner Ajaiz Patel became the third cricketer, after England and 2007. They were leading 2-1 after the 4th Test before the final match was postponed to 2022 due to covid.

WORLD TEST CHAMPIONSHIP India lost to New Zealand in the final at Southampton, England

New Zealand's left-arm spinner Ajaiz Patel became the third cricketer, after England and 2007. They were leading 2-1 after the 4th Test before the final match was postponed to 2022 due to covid.

UEFA EURO 2020

Italy won the Euro 2020 beating England via penalty shootout in the final. Cristiano Ronaldo (Portugal) and Patrik Schick (Czech Republic) shared the top scorers' honours with 5 goals each, while Donnarumma and Pedri won the Best Goalie and Best Young Player of the tournament, respectively.

MAJOR FOOTBALL LEAGUES

| LEAGUE | COUNTRY | WINNERS |
|------------------|---------|-----------------|
| Champions League | Europe | Chelsea |
| Europa League | Europe | Villarreal |
| Premier League | England | Manchester City |
| La Liga | Spain | Atletico Madrid |
| Serie A | Italy | Inter Milan |
| Bundesliga | Germany | Bayern Munich |
| Ligue 1 | France | Lille |

MUMBAI CITY FC won the INDIAN SUPER LEAGUE 2021-22 season, beating ATK Mohun Bagan in the final. Odisha FC finished at the bottom of the table in the league stage with only 12 points in their bag.

Joining the elites-cum-rivals

The World No.1 Novak Djokovic joined his long-time rivals Rafa Nadal and Roger Federer as the most number of Grand Slam titles among men. Three of them have 20 titles each. Djoko began the season with 17 titles, before winning the Australian Open, French Open and the Wimbledon to level the tally.

ALEXANDER ZVEREV WON THE SEASON-ENDING ATP WORLD TOUR FINALS TITLE WHILE GABRIELE MUGURIZU CLAIMED THE WTA WORLD TOUR FINALS CROWN.

THE WORLD NO.2 DANIL MEDVEDEV, WHO DENIED DJOKOVIC HIS RECORD 21ST TITLE, WON THE US OPEN.

NAOMI OSAKA Australia Open

BARBORA KREJCIKOVA French Open

ASHLEIGH BARTY Wimbledon

EMMA RADUCANU US Open

MAJOR TRANSFERS: Messi and Ronaldo grabbed the headlines yet again. The Argentine left Barcelona, ending his 21-year relationship with the Catalan giants, to PSG, where he forged arguably the most deadly front-three with Neymar and Kylian Mbappe. Ronaldo, on the other hand, joined his former club Manchester United.

IN 7TH HEAVEN

Lionel Messi won a record extending seventh Ballon d'Or award beating Robert Lewandowski for the prize. And his 'COPA AMERICA' show was quite decisive. He not only bagged his first major trophy with his national team - Argentina, but also ended up with most goals and most assists in the tournament. They defeated Brazil in the final.

BARCELONA'S SPANISH MIDFIELDER ALEXIA PUTELLAS WON THE FEMALE BALLON D'OR AWARD. ANOTHER BARCELONA STAR - PEDRI - WON THE KOPA TROPHY (YOUNGESTER OF THE YEAR), WHILE LEWANDOWSKI AND GIANLUIGI DONNARUMMA WON THE BEST STRIKER AND YASHIN TROPHY (BEST GOALKEEPER) RESPECTIVELY.

national

of the day quote

Let's face the truth even if the government is unwilling to do so. Not all 94 crore adults will receive the first dose of vaccination before December 31. We will not achieve 100 per cent coverage. A very, very large number will not receive the second dose of vaccination

P CHIDAMBARAM | CONGRESS LEADER

The way Maha Vikas Aghadi government has "insulted" governor BS Koshiyari over the issue of Assembly Speaker's election, it could invite imposition of the President's rule in the state

CHANDRAKANT PATIL | MAHARASHTRA BJP PRESIDENT

The BJP is going to register a bigger victory this time than 2017. In 2022, it will win over 300 seats with more than 60 per cent votes

KESHAV PRASAD MAURYA | UP DEPUTY CM

SHORT TAKES

Two terrorist associates held

Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir police along with security forces have arrested two terrorist associates linked with proscribed terror outfit JeM and recovered incriminating materials from their possession, officials said here Monday. "Acting on specific input, Pulwama Police along with 44RR and 182BN CRPF apprehended two terrorist associates linked with proscribed terror outfit JeM," police said. They have been identified as Adil Ali, resident of Achhan and Asif Gulzar, resident of Hajidarpura. Incriminating materials of the proscribed terror outfit JeM were recovered from their possession.

Over 50 injured

Patna: More than 50 ward secretaries were injured after police resorted to a lathicharge to disperse them in Patna Monday. Around 5,000 ward secretaries who were staging a dharna for the last 13 days, assembled at the state BJP headquarters on Veerchand Patel Path in the city to press their demand for salaries and permanent jobs. As they were assembled in large numbers outside the BJP office, Patna police reached at the spot and tried to disperse them using mild force. The protesters refused to vacate the place leading to a scuffle between them and the police. The protesters pelted stones at the police party, smashing police vehicles, breaking glasses. The vehicles were parked on both sides of the road.

Gold seized

Hyderabad: Customs officials at Hyderabad's Rajiv Gandhi International Airport on Monday recovered 1.19 kg gold from a passenger who had concealed it in his rectum. The male passenger arrived from Dubai to Hyderabad by Flight No 6E-25. According to officials, the passengers had concealed the gold in paste form inside his rectum. The gold weighing 1.19 kg and valued at Rs 59.23 lakh was recovered and seized. A case of gold smuggling has been booked against the passenger.

Leopard captured

Lucknow: The leopard that had been on the prowl in Lucknow since the past three days and also attacked several people, was finally captured by a team of forest officials on Monday. The big cat was captured and put into a cage in Janakipuram area after he attacked a policeman and another resident. A forest official said that the leopard was rather aggressive.



The BJP has nothing left to showcase as their achievement and have, therefore, resorted to mudslinging and levelling baseless personal attacks

AKHILESH YADAV | SP PRESIDENT

HC ALLOWS 12-YR-OLD TO ABORT FOETUS

The Bombay High Court Monday permitted a 12-year-old victim of rape and sexual assault to undergo medical termination of her pregnancy, which was a result of this assault, despite the pregnancy being beyond the permissible 20-week limit and the foetus having only minor abnormalities



State polls unlikely to be postponed

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 27: The Election Commission of India is unlikely to postpone the state polls due early next year, sources said. The health Secretary Monday briefed the Commission about the Omicron threat in the country specially in the poll bound states.

The commission has asked the government to vaccinate all those on election duty ahead of the polls. Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan submitted a report to the commission according to which the assembly polls in Manipur, Goa, Punjab, Uttarakhand and UP are likely to be held at the scheduled time as mandated by the Constitution. The assembly tenure of UP is due to end in May.

Former CEC S.Y. Qureshi said, "Postponement of elections is out of question and it will be violation of the Constitution and the Commission



will take into account all the factors while it may ban rallies."

A source with the ministry said that the Election Commission and Union Health Ministry discussed the rising number of cases of new Covid variant Omicron across the country with special attention on the states going to polls. Rajesh Bhushan presented a detailed report on the transmissibility of

Omicron to the Election Commission.

According to a source, on being asked about the Omicron spread in the next three months, the Union Health Secretary said that this time nothing can be said exactly at the moment. The daily Covid case-load can see around 25 per cent jump in next few months as per the present rate of infections, he

THE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS ARE SCHEDULED FOR FIVE STATES - UTTAR PRADESH, MANIPUR, UTTARAKHAND, GOA, AND PUNJAB IN 2022

THE DATES COULD BE ANNOUNCED IN THE FIRST WEEK OF JANUARY, SAID A SOURCE

said in the meeting. The health officials also detailed the districts where R value has increased, said the source.

The Assembly elections are scheduled for five states - Uttar Pradesh, Manipur, Uttarakhand, Goa, and Punjab in 2022. The dates could be announced in the first week of January, said the source. The Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and other officials are scheduled to visit Uttar Pradesh to take stock of the poll preparedness on Tuesday.

India reports over 150 fresh Omicron cases

With the surge in cases, the Centre issued a fresh advisory to all states and union territories, asking them not to let the guard down



Health workers prepare beds at Thane Civil Hospital as cases of Omicron rise in Thane

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 27: India reported over 150 fresh Omicron infections with Goa and Manipur Monday registering their first cases as the total tally of this latest variant of COVID-19 touched nearly 600.

With the surge in cases, the Centre issued a fresh advisory to all states and union territories, asking them not to let the guard down. According to Union Health Ministry data updated in the morning, 156 fresh cases of Omicron were logged, taking the tally of such cases to 578. However, 151 out of the 578 people, who contracted the infection, have recovered or migrated.

The 578 cases have been detected across 19 states and union territories with Delhi recording the maximum number of 142 cases followed by Maharashtra at 141, Kerala 57, Gujarat 49, Rajasthan 43 and Telangana 41.

India's total tally of COVID-19 cases rose to 3,47,93,333, while the active cases declined to 75,841, according to the data updated at 8 am. The death toll has climbed to 4,79,997 with 315 fresh fatalities,

the data stated.

Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla said states and union territories may consider imposing need based, local curbs and restrictions, to control the crowd during the festive season. A number of states have already imposed curbs on congregation of people besides night curfew.

A 48-year-old returnee from Tanzania tested positive for Omicron variant in Manipur, making him the first patient of the strain in the northeastern state. The Directorate of Health Services in Imphal said the man, a resident of Imphal West district, recently returned via Delhi. He tested positive on the eighth day of his return to India.

He has been placed under isolation at the state-run Jawaharlal Nehru Institute of Medical Sciences in Imphal, and he has not exhibited any severe symptoms, officials said.

Three other family members of the man have also tested positive for COVID-19, but their genome sequencing results are yet to come.

In Panaji, an eight-year-old boy, who arrived from the UK, was confirmed to be infected with Omicron.

Dead lizard found in sambar, 80 fall sick

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Haveri, (Karnataka) Dec 27: As many as 80 schoolchildren fell sick on Monday after consuming sambar in which a dead lizard was found in Venkatapura Tanda village near Ranibennur in Haveri district of Karnataka.

The incident took place in the Government Primary school of Venkatapura Tanda. The children fell sick after consuming midday meal. All of them have been rushed to the government hospital in Ranibennur town.

According to sources in the education department, the condition of two of the children is stated to be "critical". The rest 78 students have recovered after initial treatment. Eye witnesses have told authorities that when midday meal was being served to the students at the school, one of the boys was served sambar with a dead lizard.

EXPRESSING WRATH



Farmers burn an effigy as they block railway tracks to protest against the state government for their various demands in Jalandhar

PTI PHOTO

Modi slams 'selfish' parties

Underscoring the advantages of a "double-engine" government with less than a year to go for the 2022 Himachal Pradesh Assembly polls, Modi said the people of the hill state have benefitted a lot over the last four years

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mandi (HP), Dec 27: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Monday tweaked his own party's inclusive development slogan, "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas", to coin a motto for the "selfish" Opposition -- "Khud ka Swarth, Parivar ka Swarth".

Addressing a rally here to mark the fourth anniversary of the Jai Ram Thakur government in Himachal Pradesh, Modi said there are now models in operation for running a government. One of them, he said, is "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vishwas, Sabka Prayas" (everyone's development, everyone's trust, everyone's effort).

The other model is "Khud ka Swarth, Parivar ka Swarth aur vikas bhi khud ke parivar ka" (own interest, family's interest and family's development), Modi added. He did not name any party, but the main Opposition to the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the state is the Congress.

The prime minister said the "first model" is in operation in Himachal Pradesh and also claimed that the state is benefitting from the



Prime Minister Narendra Modi receives a memento from Himachal Pradesh CM Jai Ram Thakur during a rally in Mandi

PTI PHOTO

"double-engine" government, a reference to the BJP being in power in the state as well as at the Centre.

He also mentioned the "two kinds of thinking", one of "vilamb" (delay) and the other of "vikas" (development). The first "vichardhara" had made Himachal Pradesh wait for decades for infrastructure and basic amenities, Modi said.

Underscoring the advantages of a "double-engine" government with less than a year to go for the 2022 Himachal Pradesh Assembly polls, he said the people of the hill state have benefitted a lot over the last four years as various welfare schemes launched by the Centre were implemented in a more efficient manner by the Thakur government.

Shah chairs meet to check narcotics abuse

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 27: Union Home Minister Amit Shah Monday chaired a meeting of the national coordination centre on narcotics and directed the creation of a pan-India portal, a canine unit, free call centre and specialised task forces in states to curb the menace of drugs, according to an official statement.

The minister reviewed the drugs abuse scenario and the mechanism to counter it in the country during the third apex-level meeting of the narcotics coordination mechanism NCORD, which has a theme of eradicating drugs from the country with the objective of 'nashamukt Bharat abhiyan' or drug-free India movement.

The meeting was organised by the federal anti-narcotics agency, Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), and it was attended by the secretaries and police chiefs of various states and the Centre.

"As per survey reports, the number of drug abusers has increased approximately 7 folds in the last two decades, which is alarming. To protect, especially our children and youth, the home minister emphasised that there is a need to create awareness against drugs

Amit Shah reviewed the prevailing drug trafficking and abuse scenario and expressed his concerns over its emergence as national threat

and its ill-effects from a young age by incorporating it in academic curriculum," the statement said.

Shah reviewed the prevailing drug trafficking and abuse scenario in the country and expressed his concerns over its emergence as national threat.

"He stressed upon the need for close coordination between the states and central government agencies to tackle this problem that transcends boundaries. The minister underscored the importance of organising NCORD meetings regularly at all the levels with participation of senior officers," the statement said.

For strengthening the coordination mechanism, the minister asked all states to form and notify a dedicated anti-narcotics task force (ANTF) which can also function as the NCORD secretariat at the state level, the statement said.

Majithia moves HC for anticipatory bail

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, Dec 27: Shiromani Akali Dal leader Bikram Singh Majithia, booked under the NDPS Act, on Monday moved the Punjab and Haryana High Court seeking anticipatory bail.

The plea, moved by Majithia's counsels Damanbir Singh Sobti and Arshdeep Singh Cheema, submitted that "to target the applicant/petitioner is one of the major election planks of the current government" led by the Congress in Punjab.

A Mohali court on December 24 had dismissed the anticipatory bail plea of Majithia. Last week, Majithia, 46, was booked under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act on the basis of a 2018 report of a probe into a drug racket in Punjab.

Majithia is the brother-in-law of Shiromani Akali Dal chief Sukhbir Singh Badal and brother of former Union minister Harsimrat Kaur Badal. Majithia had earlier denied all charges against him.

The Shiromani Akali Dal had called the registration of the FIR against Majithia as "political vendetta". The 49-page FIR was registered by the state Crime Branch at its Mohali police station.

ISI providing winter clothes, navigation app to terrorists

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 27: With an aim to sneak more terrorists in J&K from Pak occupied Kashmir, Pakistan's notorious intelligence wing, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), has been providing them with winter gears and navigation app, sources in the security set up have said.

The sources also said that these terrorists have been trained to use GPS-based navigational system and also trained in camouflaging and other tactics to survive in the forest areas of J&K to evade the Indian security forces' vigil. Quoting the latest intelligence

inputs, the sources said that there has been a confirmed report of the presence of around 250 terrorists at various launch pads across the Line of Control (LoC) in the Pakistan occupied Kashmir areas and around 90 ultras have been trying to sneak into the Indian territory.

The security agencies have been given the input by the intelligence agencies. These launch pads are humming with the activities close to Machhal, Tangdhar and Keran sectors in J&K and the terrorists are trying to infiltrate the LoC.

The officials in the security network in the union territory said that the ISI has directed them to find out



Representative image

new routes to infiltrate and this was also corroborated by the interrogations of the arrested Over Ground Workers (OGW).

The interrogation of the arrested terrorists have also confirmed that the probable new routes have been provided by the Pakistan Army officials and they have been instructed to continue their efforts despite the heavy snowfall in Kashmir.

The arrested OGWs have also admitted that five new routes like Kalakot, Manjot, Kashnala, etc., in PoK are on the terrorist map, the officials said, adding that the patrolling on the Indian side has been increased despite the hostile terrain.

An official in the security grid in J&K said that usually during the winter the attempts of infiltration used to be less in recent years, but this year the trend has seen an increase which is a matter of concern for all the security agencies deployed on the border and LoC with Pakistan.

The use of drones by these terrorist groups for sending arms and explosives has been also a major concern for the security forces in J&K and they are keeping eyes on these aerial carriers, the source further said, adding that the Indian Army has installed anti-drone mechanism at vulnerable points on the LoC and International Borders.

national

of the day quote

An expert group of academicians and agri-entrepreneurs must draw up a report on the feasibility of organic and natural farming in the Northeast that can serve as a roadmap for future policymaking

Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari studies a lot. So much study is not good in a democracy. What matters is listening to the voice of the people

By abusing Babu (Mahatma Gandhi) and spreading venom in society, if a hypocrite thinks that he will be successful in his intention, then it is his illusion. Their bosses should also listen...Whoever tries to hurt the soul of both India and Sanatan culture...Neither the Constitution will spare them, nor the people will accept them

SHORT TAKES

Girl raped, killed

Hoshangabad: A 5-year-old girl was allegedly raped and strangled to death in Madhya Pradesh's Hoshangabad district, police said Monday. The girl's body was Saturday found wrapped in a cloth on the roof of her house in Sohagpur area, located about 50 km from the district headquarters, Sohagpur police station's inspector Vikram Rajak said. A preliminary autopsy report released on Sunday night suggested she was raped and then strangled to death, he said. The police have picked up a person living in the victim's neighbourhood and he is being questioned, the official said.

Woman killed

Hazaribag (Jharkhand): A 24-year-old woman, mother of two minor boys, has been burnt to death here allegedly by her husband and in-laws for failing to meet their dowry demands, a senior police officer said. An FIR has been registered in the matter based on the statement of the deceased woman's brother, Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO) Nazir Akhtar said. The SDPO also said that a team of police officers, on learning about the incident from local sources, had rushed to Khilli village on Sunday only to find the burnt remains of Basanti Devi.

Seven booked

Muzaffarpur: An FIR has been lodged in connection with Sunday's boiler blast in Bihar's Muzaffarpur that claimed seven lives, an official said Monday. Town Deputy Superintendent of Police Ram Naresh Paswan, who is heading the investigation, said seven persons have been named as accused in the FIR. These include Vikas Modi, owner of the noodles factory which got destroyed in the blast, his wife Shweta, manager Uday Shankar and other employees entrusted with the upkeep of the boiler. The accused have been booked under various IPC sections, including those relating to culpable homicide not amounting to murder. Efforts were on to nab them, police said.

Cop arrested

Thane: A police constable was arrested from the Thane district court premises on Monday afternoon for allegedly demanding and accepting a bribe, a Maharashtra Anti Corruption Bureau official said. Constable Milind Ganesh Joshi (41), who is attached to Wagle Estate police station and was assigned court duty, had demanded Rs 2,000 from a man whose son was booked in a case, the official said.



There is coordination between the BJP and the government in Karnataka and the party will face 2023 assembly polls united with its good work

DENGUE DEATH TOLL RISES TO 23

Six minors, including an eight-month-old boy, have succumbed to dengue in the past two months, taking the total number of fatalities due to the vector-borne disease reported in Delhi this year to 23



Chandigarh civic polls: AAP scores big on debut

In the last MC elections, the BJP had won 20 seats and its erstwhile ally SAD one



Aam Aadmi Party supporters celebrate on counting day of Chandigarh Municipal Corporation elections in Chandigarh, Monday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 27: New entrant Aam Aadmi Party has emerged as the leading outfit in the Chandigarh Municipal Corporation polls, winning 14 of 35 wards in the final results declared Monday.

The BJP, which enjoyed a majority in the previous MC House, came a close second registering win in 12 wards while the Congress bagged eight seats and the Shiromani Akali Dal one. However, the Congress secured 29.79 per cent votes, highest of the three parties. The BJP got 29.30 per cent of votes while AAP got 27.08 per cent votes. BJP leader and current city mayor Ravi Kant Sharma was defeated by AAP's Damanpreet Singh from Ward No.17 by a margin of 828 votes. No party achieved simple

majority. A party need 19 votes to have its councillor elected as mayor. Delhi CM and AAP's national convener termed the party's success an indicative of coming change in Punjab, which is going to polls early next year.

On the election of mayor, AAP leader Manish Sisodia said they are ready to "welcome good persons of every party". AAP leader Raghav Chadha called his party's performance a "trailer" before the Punjab Assembly polls. Chandigarh is the joint capital of Punjab and Haryana.

This time, the number of wards in the city was increased from 26 to 35. In the last MC elections, the BJP had won 20 seats and its erstwhile ally SAD one. The Congress had managed to win only four seats. Traditionally, the municipal elections, held every five years, see a

locking of horns between the BJP and the Congress, but the AAP's entry made the contest this time triangular.

In the results declared on Monday, former mayor and BJP candidate Daves Moudgil lost to AAP's Jasbir by 939 votes from Ward No. 21. In Ward No. 25, BJP Yuva Morcha leader Vijay Kaushal Rana was defeated by Yogesh Dhingra of AAP by a margin of 315 votes. The ward was earlier represented by Chandigarh BJP president Arun Sood. Among the prominent winners, Harpreet Kaur Babla of the Congress, wife of party senior leader Devinder Singh Babla, won with a margin of 3,103 votes, defeating Rashi Bhasin of the BJP in Ward No.10.

Kuljeet Singh Sandhu of the BJP registered a win from Ward Number 14, defeating AAP's Kuldeep Singh by a margin of 255 votes. From this ward, Chandigarh Congress chief Subhash Chawla's son Sumit Chawla had also entered the fray.

Reacting to his party's performance, AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal said the party's victory is a sign of coming change in Punjab. Congratulating his party's candidates and workers, he said people of Chandigarh have chosen "honest politics" of AAP, rejecting the "corrupt politics" of its rival parties.

Addressing the media here, Delhi Deputy Chief Minister and AAP leader Manish Sisodia said people of Chandigarh have given a message that they want only politics of work. He asserted there would be AAP's mayor, adding that people have given a mandate for this

Tejasvi withdraws 'Hindu revival' remarks

During his talk on Saturday, Surya said that mere stopping conversion of Hindus will not be enough and reconverting those who left Hinduism should become a priority

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, Dec 27: With some remarks of his talk on Hindu revival in which he called for reconversion sparking controversy, Lok Sabha member from Bangalore South Tejasvi Surya Monday unconditionally withdrew statements without specifying them.

The BJP Yuva Morcha's National President said certain statements from his speech has regrettably created an avoidable controversy. "At a program held in Udupi Sri Krishna Mutt two days ago, I spoke on the subject of 'Hindu Revival in Bharat'. Certain statements from my speech has regrettably created an avoidable controversy. I therefore unconditionally withdraw the statements," Surya said in a tweet.

The MP has however not specified which statements he was referring to from his nearly one-and-half hour long speech. During his talk on Saturday, Surya said that mere stopping conversion of Hindus will not be enough, and reconverting those who left Hinduism should become a priority.

Calling on to ensure that no Hindu ever walks out of the fold to prevent further erosion of "Hindu base", he had said, "this addresses half the problem, the other half is those who have already converted....Numerical strength decides political power in a democracy and demography decides destiny



in a democracy....The only option left for Hindus is to reconvert all those people who have gone out of the Hindu fold."

"There is only one solution... Those people who have left their mother religion for various socio, political and economic reasons over the course of India's history, those who have gone out of the Hindu fold, must be brought back to Hindu faith in whole," he said, adding that every temple and mutt should set yearly targets to undertake the reconversion to ensure that Hinduism is rejuvenated.

Further stating that it's not just re-converting those Muslims or Christians near our homes, Surya said, "converting Muslims in today's Pakistan as Hindus should also be our priority. That is when we will have Pakistan back in geography."

Urging that Hindus should exercise political power, he said, "From Panchayat to Parliament vote only for those who are in favour of Hindu interests..."

He also says that Hindu control on state power is non-negotiable for the survival of Hindu race. Surya also said that those religions, cultures and civilisations that existed before Christianity and before the entry of Islam to those lands, "they were completely vanquished and Sanatana Hindu Dharma is the only exception." He also goes on to call Christianity and Islam as "predatory faiths" and says they are not mere religions, but "political imperial ideologies".

Decide if priority is poll rallies or curbing Covid: Varun Gandhi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 27: BJP MP Varun Gandhi Monday cited a Centre's note to criticise the decision of several states, including Uttar Pradesh, to impose night curfew to curb Covid, and said it should be decided if our priority is to contain the disease or to indulge in a show of strength during elections.

Policymakers should lead from the front so as inspire the common public to stay at home, he said. Criticising the night curfew decision, he said, "Imposing curfew in night after assembling lakhs of people for rallies in the day defies the common man's wisdom".

Keeping in mind Uttar Pradesh's limited health infrastructure, it has to be decided honestly if our priority is to contain the dangerous Omicron variant of coronavirus or to indulge in a show of power during polls, he said.

Varun Gandhi noted that maximum transmission typically happens during the day as there are lesser people on the road during the night, and called for strongly cutting down on social gatherings which could emerge as Covid clusters.

He cited a Centre's note to the Maharashtra government in March 2021 which, he highlighted, had said that measures such as night curfews, weekend lockdowns have very limited impact on containing or suppressing the transmission. "Hence the administration should focus on strict and effective containment strategy," it had said. Varun Gandhi called for a holistic strategy.

India's former envoy to China appointed Deputy NSA

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 27: Vikram Misri, a 1989 batch Indian Foreign Service officer, who served as envoy in China amid the border dispute, has been appointed as Deputy National Security Advisor in the National Security Council secretariat.

Misri was succeeded as Ambassador to China by Pradeep Kumar Rawat, a 1990 batch IFS officer, earlier this month.

The appointment of Rawat, who was serving as the Indian envoy to the Netherlands before being given this sensitive post, comes in the midst of the lingering eastern Ladakh border standoff.

For Rawat, who speaks fluent Mandarin and had earlier served in Hong Kong and Beijing, resolving the dispute that India and China have been engaged in for the last 20 months, will be the top priority.

The last Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs meeting took place in November this year. After the meeting, both the countries agreed on the need to find an early resolution to the remaining disputes along the Line of Actual Control in eastern Ladakh, while fully abiding by bilateral agreements and protocols so as to restore peace and tranquility.

"The two sides agreed that both sides should, in the interim, continue to ensure a stable ground situation and avoid any untoward incident," the External Affairs Ministry had said.

76 lawyers write to CJI, seek action



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 27: Seventy-six lawyers have written to Chief Justice N V Ramana, requesting him to take suo motu cognisance of hate speeches allegedly made at separate events organised in Delhi and Haridwar.

The letter alleged that the speeches delivered during the events were not mere hate speeches but amounted to an open call for murder of an entire community. "The said speeches thus, pose a grave threat not just to the unity and integrity of our country but also endanger the lives of millions of Muslim citizens," the letter said.

"It is also pointed out that the recent speeches are a part of a series

of similar speeches that we have come across in the past... Thus, urgent judicial intervention is required to prevent such events that seem to have become the order of the day," it read.

The letter has been signed by senior advocates Salman Khurshid, Dushyant Dave, and Meenakshi Arora among others. An FIR was lodged in Uttarakhand's Haridwar district against Jitendra Narayan Tyagi and others in connection with alleged hate speeches delivered at a "Dharma Sansad" to incite violence against the minorities.

The second event was organised by the Hindu Yuva Vahini in Delhi. Tyagi, who changed his name from Waseem Rizvi after converting to Hinduism earlier this month, and other speakers at last week's event have been accused of making extremely provocative speeches, and some video clips of the same are doing the rounds on social media.

The FIR was registered under IPC section 153A (promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language), and the matter is under investigation, the police said.



Doctors stage a protest outside Maulana Azad Medical College over postponement of National Eligibility Entrance Test postgraduate (NEET PG) counselling 2021 in New Delhi

Punjab polls: BJP, Amarinder, Dhindsa form alliance

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 27: The BJP is likely to play the role of senior partner in its alliance with Amarinder Singh's Punjab Lok Congress and Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa's SAD (Sanyukt) in Punjab, and the coalition is unlikely to project any chief ministerial face in the run-up to the election, sources said Monday.

Former Punjab chief minister Singh and former Union Minister Dhindsa on Monday met the BJP top leadership, including Union Home Minister Amit Shah and party president JP Nadda here.

After the meeting at Shah's residence, the BJP's Punjab incharge and Union Minister Gajendra Shekhawat formally announced that all three parties will contest

elections and will come up with a common manifesto. "A meeting attended by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, BJP president J P Nadda, Amarinder Singh and Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa was held here. And it was decided that the BJP, Singh's party and Dhindsa's party will jointly contest upcoming assembly polls in Punjab," Shekhawat told the media.

Traders in Delhi fear closure of shops amid rise in Covid cases

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 27: With the COVID-19 positivity rate going beyond 0.5 per cent in Delhi on Sunday and a steady rise in the number of Omicron cases, the traders of the city are worried as they fear that their establishments may be shut under a "yellow" alert, if announced by the government in the coming days.

The business fraternity of the national capital is in a state of panic as it urged the Delhi government on Monday to consider two other indicators as well - the number of fresh coronavirus cases and that of the oxygen beds occupied - before announcing a "yellow" alert.

Under the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) prepared by the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) in July, a "yellow" (level-1) alert will be sounded if when the Covid positivity rate

crosses 0.5 per cent for two consecutive days or the number of fresh cases goes up to 1,500 for seven days or the oxygenated bed occupancy reaches 500 for seven days.

Brijesh Goyal, the chairman of the Chamber of Trade and Industries (CTI), an umbrella body of traders from different industries, said if the positivity rate goes beyond 0.5 per cent on Monday too, then the GRAP is likely to kick in, under which many restrictions will be imposed in Delhi's markets and business establishments.

"Many activities and businesses will stop as soon as the yellow alert is issued. We have written a letter to the DDMA and requested it that the GRAP yellow alert should be applicable only when 1,500 coronavirus cases are reported in Delhi.

"We have also requested the DDMA to consider the condition of traders before imposing any re-



strictions under the GRAP" Goyal said. He said according to medical experts, though the number of Covid cases is increasing in the city, it is in a controlled condition currently. "Delhi has not recorded 1,500 Covid cases for seven consecutive

days and neither the average occupancy of beds is 500. In such a situation, the restrictions under the first phase of the GRAP should not be imposed," Goyal said. If a "yellow" alert is sounded, then cinema halls, theatres, banquet halls, gymnasiums,

spas and entertainment parks will remain closed and markets will function on an odd-even basis.

A night curfew, closure of schools and colleges, halved seating capacity in metro trains and buses, closure of non-essential shops and shopping malls are also among the measures that will kick in with a "yellow" alert. Delhi reported 290 fresh COVID-19 cases on Sunday with a positivity rate of 0.55 per cent.

The DDMA has already announced that a night curfew will be imposed in Delhi from 11 pm on Monday, restricting the movement of individuals except those falling in the exempted categories due to a rising number of coronavirus cases and the threat posed by the Omicron variant of the virus. The night curfew will be in place from 11 pm to 5 am till further orders.

The Delhi Gym Association has also written to Lieutenant Governor

Anil Bajjal and Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal regarding the impending "yellow" alert and the subsequent closure of gymnasiums and spas. There are around 5,500 gymnasiums and fitness centres across the national capital. Delhi Gym Association vice-president Chirag Sethi said gymnasiums will be closed first whereas parks, restaurants and bars will function with a 50-per cent occupancy under a "yellow" alert.

He added that as the COVID-19 positivity rate has reached 0.55 per cent in Delhi, gym owners are in a state of panic. "The industry has already suffered a lot over the last few months. This decision will impact it badly and the entire industry might just collapse. We request the DDMA not to take into account only the positivity rate but also the total number of cases and the need for oxygen beds in Delhi," Sethi said.

international



It is inevitable that Omicron will spread in our community as it has in countries everywhere
LAWRENCE WONG | MINISTER FOR FINANCE OF SINGAPORE

BUSHFIRES THREAT

Amid an extreme summer heatwave, two raging bushfires in the state of Western Australia (WA) are threatening lives and properties



of the day quote

South Korea's rise to an advanced nation, despite its small territory and lack of natural resources, was thanks to our well-educated and excellent talent and abundant human resources
MOON JAE-IN | SOUTH KOREAN PRESIDENT

The US should not interfere in the Afghan affairs. It is capable of taking decisions independently
SHER MOHAMMAD ABBAS STANIKZAI | TALIBAN'S DY MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

It seems that a lot of people have lost the wish to have children. Lots of couples prefer to remain childless or to have one child only. It's a tragedy which runs counter to our families, our country and our future
POPE FRANCIS | HEAD OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

SHORT TAKES

B'desh police arrest owner of fire-hit ferry

Dhaka: Bangladesh's elite anti-crime Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) Monday arrested the owner of an overcrowded ferry that caught fire and killed at least 41 people last week, as investigators found the blaze was caused by the vessel's faulty engine. "We have arrested one of the owners of the launch (ferry), Mohammad Jalal Sheikh from Dhaka's Keraniganj area where he was hiding," a RAB spokesman said.

Record snowfall in Japan

Tokyo: A powerful cold air mass has triggered record snowfall in some parts of Japan, leading to the disruption of transportation systems, local media reported Monday. According to the Japan Meteorological Agency, 68 cm of snow fell in Hikone city, Shiga Prefecture, and 71 cm accumulated in Asago City, Hyogo Prefecture in a 24-hour period through early Monday, both hitting record highs, reports Xinhua news agency.

Eight killed in Pak shootings

Islamabad: At least eight people were killed while four others injured in two separate shooting incidents in Pakistan, local media reported Monday. According to the reports, at least five people were killed and two others injured in a clash between two groups in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, reports Xinhua news agency.

18 soldiers died in Marib battle

Sanaa: At least 18 Yemeni soldiers were killed in fighting between the army and Houthi militia in the oil-rich province of Marib, a government military source. "Eighteen soldiers were killed today in the battle in the desert area of al-Balak al-Sharki in southern Marib," the source told Xinhua news agency late Sunday.

Blizzard in China suspends schools

Beijing: Several cities in China's Hunan province have ordered schools to suspend classes due to blizzard conditions. The provincial weather station issued an orange alert for low temperatures and freezing rain and snow at 4 p.m. Sunday and a yellow alert for snowstorms, reports Xinhua news agency. The first snow of this winter season has hit many parts of the province since Saturday evening.

Masked man threatens to assassinate Queen in video

LONDON/NEW DELHI, Dec 27: A shocking video showing a crossbow-wielding man threatening to "assassinate the Queen in revenge for the 1919 Jallianwala Bagh massacre" has emerged, after a 19-year-old who scaled the Windsor Castle's spiked fence was sectioned, the Daily Mail reported. The footage which was obtained by The Sun shows the man, thought to be the arrested suspect, holding a black crossbow and using

a distorted voice as he makes threats down the camera. Jaswant Singh Chail uploaded the pre-recorded video to Snapchat on Christmas Day, 24 minutes before a man was arrested by police inside the grounds of Windsor Castle. Known to friends as Jas, he used a filter to distort his voice and wore a disturbing hoodie and mask - an outfit thought to be inspired by the 'Star Wars', the Daily Mail report said. "I'm sorry. I'm sorry for what



I've done and what I will do. I will attempt to assassinate Elizabeth, Queen of the Royal



Family. This is revenge for those who have died in the 1919 Jallianwala Bagh massacre.

"It is also revenge for those who have been killed, humiliated and discriminated on because of their race. I'm an Indian Sikh, a Sith. My name was Jaswant Singh Chail, my name is Darth Jones," he says in the video. Sith may be a reference to the leading villains in Star Wars while Darth Jones may relate to James Earl Jones who voiced Darth Vader. A framed picture of Star Wars character Darth Malgus was visible in the background of the clip, the Daily Mail report said.

The police confirmed that a crossbow was found after the intruder was detained December 25 in the castle grounds while the Queen was in residence. Police will be looking at how the intruder was able to scale the spiked perimeter fence surrounding the Berkshire castle's grounds in the first place. It is believed he had a makeshift ladder to gain access from the Long Walk, which royals frequently use because of its proximity to the Queen's private apartments, the report added.

Gloom over NY celebrations

BRUSSELS, Dec 27: After struggling with the coronavirus for far too long, the world understands all too well Belgium's word of the year, "knaldrang!" - the urge to party, the need to let loose. Yet as New Year celebrations approach, the omicron variant is casting more gloom. Monday was a case in point, with several governments considering more restrictions to add to a patchwork of measures and lockdowns already in place around Europe.

OMICRON SCARE



The French government and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson were assessing the latest data and the need to counter the record numbers of Covid-19 infections with more measures to keep people apart at a time when they so dearly want to be together. But with indications that omicron might be a milder variant despite its massive transmissibility, politicians were caught in a bind whether to further spoil yet another party or play safe to make sure health care systems don't collapse. Further complicating matters was the lack of full data over the Christmas weekend, making the chronicling of the rise of omicron more difficult. In Belgium, people faced their first real test with several new measures on Monday. Shopping was reduced to maximum two adults, possibly with kids in tow, and movie theatres and concert halls closed at a time when countless families are on vacation together. The calls to close theatres and arts centres came in for especially

heavy criticism. "We need it also for our mental health. It is the only way for people to live experiences, to tell stories. It is of paramount importance for us to be open in these complicated and complex times," said Michael De Kok, the artistic director of the Flemish Royal Theatre. Even communal celebrations like New Year's fireworks, that would usually see thousands thronging Brussels for the best views, are off. Nightclubs are already closed and restaurants and bars need to shut doors at 11 pm. In the United Kingdom, there are similar creeping moves. Scotland will close its nightclubs Monday after Northern Ireland and Wales already did so on Sunday, though they remain open in England. Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who has resisted ordering new restrictions but hasn't ruled them out, is expected to be briefed Monday on the latest data on the spread of omicron.

Even that staple of British holiday celebrations, the steady stream of English Premier League games, is under threat. The league has already called off 15 soccer matches in 2 1/2 weeks and more could well be upcoming. UK daily infection numbers reached a new high of 122,186 Friday, but there were no figures over the long Christmas weekend. France has recorded more than 100,000 virus infections in a single day for the first time in the pandemic and Covid-19 hospitalizations have doubled over the past month. President Emmanuel Macron's government is holding emergency meetings Monday to discuss the next steps in tackling the virus. It is hoping that stepped-up vaccinations will be enough. The government is pushing a draft law that would require vaccination to enter all restaurants and many public venues, instead of the cur-

VIENNA NUCLEAR TALKS RESUME

IRAN INSISTS ON CRUDE EXPORTS

TEHRAN, Dec 27: Iran insisted Monday that the United States and its allies promise to allow Tehran to export its crude as negotiations on restoring the tattered nuclear deal were to resume in Vienna. The remarks by Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian signal that Iran is pressing its position ahead of the negotiations over reviving the landmark 2015 nuclear deal. The talks have struggled to make headway and were adjourned earlier this month after a round marked by tensions over new demands from Tehran. Speaking to reporters in Tehran, Amirabdollahian said Iran wants the upcoming round of talks to focus on its sanctions-hit oil industry. The aim is to get to the "point where Iranian oil is being sold easily and without any barriers and its money arrives in Iran's bank accounts", he said. Tehran's landmark accord with world powers granted the nation sanctions relief in exchange for

curbs on its nuclear programme. But in 2018, then-President Donald Trump withdrew America from the deal and imposed sweeping sanctions on Iran, including against its oil sector - the lifeline of its economy. Iran's crude exports plummeted and international oil companies scrapped deals with Tehran, weakening its economy. As the parties to the atomic deal prepared to convene, Amirabdollahian said Iran wanted to "be able to enjoy full economic concessions under the nuclear deal". "Guarantee and verification (of the removal of sanctions) are among topics that we have focused on," he said. The new, conservative administration of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi has repeatedly demanded the removal of all economic sanctions before Iran reins in its nuclear advances. Separately Monday, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said it would be "intolerable" for the West to demand anything from Tehran beyond compliance with the original deal.

Iran insists that its nuclear program is peaceful. But the country's significant nuclear steps have alarmed regional rivals and world powers. Diplomats have warned that time is running out to restore the deal as Iran maintains a hard line in putting the onus on the US to lift sanctions

Afghans desperate; Taliban face economic devastation

KABUL, Dec 27: Since the chaotic August 15 Taliban takeover of Kabul, an already war-devastated economy once kept alive by international donations alone is now on the verge of collapse. There isn't enough money for hospitals. For millions living in camps for the displaced or sitting outside government ministries seeking help, the only source of warmth is to huddle around open wood-burning fires. Nearly 80% of Afghanistan's previous government's budget came from the international community. That money, now cut off, financed hospitals, schools, factories and government ministries. In the Taliban's Afghanistan there is no money. Sanctions have crippled banks while the UN, the United States and others struggle

The WHO is warning of millions of children suffering malnutrition, and the United Nations says 97% of Afghans will soon be living below the poverty line to figure out how to get hundreds of millions of dollars of humanitarian aid to Afghans while bypassing the Taliban, even as there are no immediate signs of the widespread corruption that characterised the previous administration. For many of Afghanistan's poorest, bread is their only staple. Women line up outside bakeries in the city, young children arrive before dawn to get bread. The majority scramble to find food, and fuel.

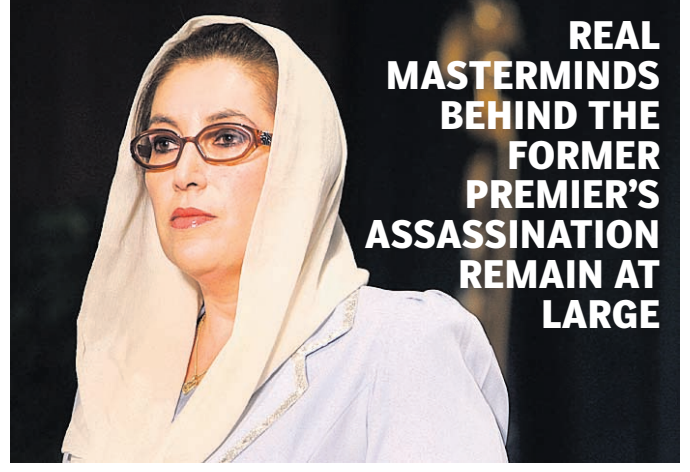


MASK A MUST

A woman wearing a face mask to guard against Covid-19 carries a bag of shopping along Oxford Street in London, Monday. In Britain, where the Omicron variant has been dominant for days, government requirements have been largely voluntary and milder than those on the continent, but the Conservative government said it could impose new restrictions after Christmas

14 yrs on, Benazir's assassination still a mystery

ISLAMABAD/NEW DELHI, Dec 27: Despite a lapse of 14 years, the mystery surrounding the assassination of former Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, who was murdered after addressing an election rally in Rawalpindi Liaquat Bagh, is yet to be solved, and the case is still pending in the Lahore High Courts (LHC) Rawalpindi bench, Express Tribune reported. Twenty party workers were killed and 71 others were seriously injured in the attack on the former Pakistan premier. In the aftermath of the incident, four inquiries were conducted into the high-profile case with the police joint investigation team (JIT), the Federal Investigation Agency



(FIA), the United Nations (UN) and Scotland Yard striving to solve the matter.

REAL MASTERMINDS BEHIND THE FORMER PREMIER'S ASSASSINATION REMAIN AT LARGE However, these inquiries and investigations yielded no results as the Bhutto family did not pursue

the case in the special anti-terrorism court (ATC), the report said. A total of 12 challans were filed in this case, 355 appearances were recorded, 10 judges were changed and 141 witnesses, including 68 prosecution witnesses, were testified. Sixteen people were accused in the case, but only eight of them were arrested. The main accused, Taliban commander Baitullah Mehsud, was killed in a drone strike. Five other accused - Nadir Khan alias Qari, Nasrullah, Abdullah alias Saddam, Ikramullah and Faiz Muhammad Kaskat - were also killed in encounters with intelligence agencies at different places. The suicide bomber who attacked the former Prime Minister was identified as Saeed Blakel,

who died in the blast. The police arrested five accused, Aitzaz Shah, Sher Zaman, Rashid Ahmed, Rafaqat and Hasnain Gul. The FIA also arrested then Pakistan President General Pervez Musharraf, former city police officer (CPO) Saud Aziz and superintendent of police (SP) Rawal Khurram Shehzad as accused in the case. However, they were later granted bail by the high court. On August 31, 2017, Judge Muhammad Asghar Khan of the special ATC pronounced the verdict after nine years, acquitting five accused, and declaring Musharraf as a fugitive on absenteeism, and issued permanent arrest warrants, besides confiscating his movable and immovable property, the report said.

EO Wilson, known as 'father of biodiversity,' dies at 92

BOSTON: Edward O Wilson, the pioneering Harvard biologist who advanced the provocative theory that human behavior such as war and altruism has a genetic basis and warned against the decline of ecosystems, has died. He was 92. Wilson was "called Darwin's natural heir," and was known affectionately as the ant man for his pioneering work as an entomologist," according to an announcement posted Monday on the E.O. Wilson Biodiversity Foundation's website. He died on Dec. 26 in Burlington, Massachusetts. The professor and two-time Pulitzer Prize-winning author first gained widespread attention for his 1975 book, "Sociobiology: The New Synthesis," suggesting a link between human behaviour and genetics.

business

of the day quote

It's a significant step towards simplifying remittances as a functionality, as individuals residing overseas will now be able to conveniently transfer money to a beneficiary by simply adding their UPI IDs, without having to remember their bank account details

SOUMITRA SEN | HEAD (CONSUMER BANKING AND MARKETING), INDUSIND BANK

We have now entered a D2C model to deliver the healthiest water to every Indian home through a water subscription model

AJAY CHANGANI | CO-FOUNDER AND CEO, OWO TECHNOLOGIES

Through the OEMs expertise of the commercial vehicle segment and our Phygital auctions platforms, which include over 100 Automall network strength spread across India, we aim to create all-inclusive mobility solutions for buyers and sellers

SAMEER MALHOTRA | CEO, SAMIL

SHORT TAKES

Mineral output up 20% in Oct

New Delhi: India's mineral production rose by 20.4 per cent in October over the same month a year ago, according to the mines ministry. As per the provisional figures of Indian Bureau of Mines (IBM), the index of mineral production of mining and quarrying sector for the month of October, 2021 at 109.7, was 20.4 per cent higher as compared to the level during the same month last year. The cumulative growth for the April-October period of 2020-21 over the corresponding period of previous year has increased 11.4 per cent, said the mines ministry.

HP Adhesives shares rise 22%

New Delhi: Shares of HP Adhesives Monday listed with a premium of over 16 per cent against the issue price of Rs 274 and settled with a gain of more than 22 per cent. The stock listed at Rs 319, a gain of 16.42 per cent from the issue price on BSE. During the day, it zoomed 22.24 per cent to Rs 334.95. It settled at Rs 334.95, a jump of 22.24 per cent. On NSE, it made its debut at Rs 315, reflecting a jump of 14.96 per cent. It settled at Rs 330.75, a rally of 20.71 per cent.

Indira IVF honours meritorious girls

Bhubaneswar: Indira IVF Bhubaneswar centre awarded girls who have performed exceptionally well in academics in the city under the aegis of 'Beti Bachao-Beti Padhao' campaign of the government. The event was held to commemorate 90,000 successful IVF pregnancies. Kshitiz Murdia, CEO & Co-Founder of Indira IVF said, "It is our mission to empower people with the knowledge of technologically-backed medical treatments for infertility in every nook of the country."

Skill Lync joined hands with AMTZ

New Delhi: Skill Lync joined hands with Andhra Pradesh MedTech Zone (AMTZ) - an enterprise under the Government of Andhra Pradesh to launch the country's first master's coursework in medical technology. The partnership addresses the skill gap in the medical device industry having a massive shortage of design engineers and researchers. The 'Executive Master in Medical Technology' programme by Skill-Lync will span 12 months including nine fundamental courses and a specialisation.



We have now advised the automobile manufacturers in India to start manufacturing flex fuel vehicles (FFV) and flex fuel strong hybrid electric vehicles (FFV-SHEV) complying with BS-6 Norms in a time bound manner within a period of six months

NITIN GADKARI | UNION MINISTER

AIR INDIA HANDOVER DELAYED

Tata Group's takeover of loss-making national carrier Air India is most likely delayed by a month till January as the completion of procedures taking longer than expected, an official said Monday. As per the conditions in SPA, all formalities of handover would have to be completed within 8 weeks, but this date can be mutually extended by the buyer and seller and is being done in this case



RBL Bank's financial health stable: RBI

Fearing that RBL Bank was going the Yes Bank and Lakshmi Vilas Bank way, AIBEA had urged the government to intervene immediately and consider merger of the bank with a public sector bank

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 27: Amid concerns over the health of RBL Bank, RBI Monday assured depositors and stakeholders that the private sector lender is "well capitalized" and that its financial position is satisfactory even as shares of the bank witnessed a sell off.

In a raft of developments in the past few days, Reserve Bank of India (RBI) appointed an additional director to RBL Bank's board while the lender's MD & CEO Vishwvir Ahuja was sent to leave.

Against this backdrop, newly-appointed chief Rajeev Ahuja, Sunday, said the financial position of the bank was strong and that the sudden change at the top level was not related to any concerns.

As concerns persisted, RBI Monday said there has been speculation related to RBL Bank in certain quarters which appears to be arising from recent events surrounding the bank.

"There is no need for depositors and other stakeholders to react to the speculative reports," the central bank said and emphasised that



RBI Bank has maintained a comfortable capital adequacy ratio of 16.33% and provision coverage ratio of 76.6%

- The liquidity coverage ratio of the bank was 153% 24 December as against regulatory requirement of 100%
- Shares of RBL took a beating on the bourses and tumbled 18.32 per cent to close at Rs 140.90 apiece on BSE. The scrip also hit its 52-week low of Rs 132.35

the lender's financial health remains stable.

"As per half yearly audited results as on September 30, 2021, the bank has maintained a comfortable Capital Adequacy Ratio of 16.33 per cent and Provision Coverage Ratio of 76.6 per cent," RBI said in

a statement. RBL Bank's Vishwvir Ahuja stepped down and Rajeev Ahuja was appointed as the interim MD & CEO, a day after RBI appointed its Chief General Manager Yogesh K Dayal as an additional director on the lender's board.

Dayal, whose appointment is effective from December 24, will stay for two years until December 23, 2023 or till further orders, whichever is earlier.

The bank made provisions for bad loans and contingencies of over Rs 651 crore in the second quarter ended September of this fiscal. In Q1FY22, the provisions stood at over Rs 1,384 crore.

RBL Bank had posted a net profit of Rs 31 crore in the second quarter ended September 2021 as against a net profit of Rs 144 crore in year-ago period. It had posted a net loss of Rs 459 crore in the first quarter ended June 2021.

Ahuja, Sunday, also ruled out any difference of opinion with RBI, stating the dialogue on risk management and compliances are the work in progress and continues on.

On December 25, bank unions' umbrella body AIBEA wrote to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman saying that the bank had high exposure to credit card business, retail credit and micro-financing which had weakened its financials.

Investment via P-notes dips in Nov

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 27: Investments in Indian capital market through participatory notes (P-notes) dropped to Rs 94,826 crore till November-end after hitting 43-month high in the preceding month.

P-notes are issued by registered foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) to overseas investors who wish to be a part of the Indian stock market without registering themselves directly. They, however, need to go through a due diligence process.

According to Securities and

The month of October saw the highest level since March 2018, when P-notes had invested to the tune of ₹1,06,403 crore

Exchange Board of India data, the value of P-note investments in Indian markets - equity debt and hybrid securities - was at Rs 94,826 crore by November end as compared to Rs 1,02,553 crore by October end.

Abhay Agarwal, Founder and Fund Manager, Piper Serica, a Sebi-

registered PMS, said there was a net sale of more than Rs 8,000 crore in November in the equity segment by P-note holders reversing the October inflow of more than Rs 5,000 crore.

At the end of September this year, the investment level was at 97,751 crore, Rs 97,744 crore by August-end. The figure for July was revised to Rs 85,799 crore from Rs 1,01,798 crore posted earlier.

Prior to that, investment level was at Rs 92,261 crore by June-end, Rs 89,743 crore by May-end, Rs 88,447 crore at April-end and Rs 89,100 crore by March-end.

Adani to start coal export from Oz mine

REUTERS

Melbourne, Dec 27: India's Adani Group is preparing to ship the first coal cargo from Australia's most controversial mine, after battling a seven-year campaign by climate activists and defying a global push away from fossil fuels.

"The first shipment of high-quality coal from the Carmichael mine is being assembled at the North Queensland Export Terminal in Bowen ready for export as planned,"



a spokesperson for Adani's Australian subsidiary Bravus Mining & Resources said in a statement.

The statement did not say where the shipment was headed, except that we have already secured the market for the 10 million tonne per annum of coal that will be produced at the Carmichael Mine.

When Adani bought the project in 2010, it envisioned building a 60-million-tonne-a-year mine with a 400-km (250-mile) rail line for around A\$16 billion (\$11 billion), one of several projects planned in the then untapped Galilee Basin.

It shrank the mine plan in 2018 to 10 MT a year following a sustained 'Stop Adani' campaign by green groups which scared off lenders, insurers and major engineering firms.

Climate activists, concerned about carbon emissions and potential damage to Australia's Great Barrier Reef - both from global warming and dredging at Abbot Point port - brought several cases challenging government approvals for the mine.

Google moves K'taka HC against CCI

Indian developers and startups have raised concerns around Google's Play billing system, saying the tech giant cannot force Indian app developers/owners to sell digital services by compulsorily using its billing system

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 27: Tech titan Google has filed a writ in Karnataka High Court seeking more time to reply to Competition Commission's queries pertaining to a probe into Play Store rules. Google said it respects Competition Commission of India's (CCI) investigative process and "will continue to engage co-operatively and constructively in the interest of a fair investigation".

GOOGLE PLAY PROBE



Karnataka High Court regarding the interim relief application in the Google Play probe by the CCI, seeking to move forward in line with established due process principles," Google spokesperson said in an email Monday.

A source aware of the company's position on the matter noted that Google has extended the timeline for developers in India to integrate with Play's billing system to October 31, 2022. The source also said that Google believes this voluntary extension of the deadline extinguishes the need for the 'interim injunctive relief' sought by ADIF (Alliance

of Digital India Foundation). Hence, the insistence on extremely tight timelines is concerning as there is no cause for undue haste, the source added.

Earlier this month, Google said it was deferring the deadline for developers in India to integrate with its Play billing system from March 2022 to October next year. In October last year, the company announced March 31, 2022 as the deadline for developers in India to integrate with Play's billing system.

Announcing the extension of the deadline for developers in India to integrate with its Play billing system, Google, December 10, 2021, said the move was in view of the changes to India's recurring digital payments guidelines.

The tech giant has emphasised that its payments policy is not new and it has always required developers who distribute their apps on Play, to use Google Play's billing system if they offer in-app purchases of digital goods.

Inflation less likely to pinch consumer pocket next yr

THE GRADUAL PICK-UP IN THE ECONOMIC GROWTH AND GOOD CROP PROSPECTS DUE TO NORMAL MONSOON WILL HELP SOOTHE THE PRICES GOING FORWARD

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 27: Spiralling prices pinched the pocket of consumer as edible oil, fuel and many other commodities turned dearer this year amid pandemic-induced disruptions but the inflationary pressure is anticipated to ease, though marginally, in the coming months.

Looking back, 2021 was a bad year for consumers as they grappled with high prices and many also saw decline in incomes, job as well as business losses.

Whether it was manufactured or processed commodities, transport and cooking fuel, veg-



We expect that with normalisation of growth, commodity prices are likely to cool and this will be beneficial for India inflation. Global food prices are high but this may not have a direct impact on India as India has adequate buffer stock of grains

etables, fruits, pulses and others, prices sailed northwards, mainly due to high cost of raw materials. However, the gradual economic revival is the silver lining.

Reserve Bank of India (RBI), which takes into account retail inflation as one of the key components to review the repo rate, has projected Consumer Price Index (CPI) based retail inflation to ease to around 5 per cent by the first half of the next calendar year.

RBI expects CPI inflation to be at 5.3 per cent for the current fiscal ending in March 2022

Core inflation is expected to remain sticky as producers in many sectors are passing on higher input costs to output prices

RBI guru expressed hope that reduction in excise duty and VAT on petrol and diesel will bring about a durable reduction in inflation

Vegetable prices are expected to see a seasonal correction with winter arrivals in view of bright prospects for the rabi crop

favourable.

"Fuel inflation may ease, even as the absolute costs remain quite high across various products, eating into households' disposable incomes," Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist at ICRA, said.

Madhavi Arora, Lead Economist at Emkay Global Financial Services, said, we see FY22 inflation at 5.5 per cent (RBI 5.3 per cent) with risk largely balanced. Even with food inflation averaging around reasonable levels, core inflation will average nearly 6.2 per cent, outdoing headline. We remain watchful of inflation push-and-pull factors.

"We, as an association also urged our processor members to cut prices to provide some relief to consumers. India is likely to harvest bumper production of oilseeds during this rabi season. Kharif production has also been good."

'200mbps sufficient for startups to work'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 27: Considering the demand of seamless internet connection among small businesses or new startups, the experts said that 200 Mbps unlimited data plans can be sufficient for these small workspaces. Internet Service Providers (ISPs) in the country provide a lot of plans that are suitable just for this situation. But ISPs offer different speed plans. But 200 Mbps unlimited data plans can be sufficient for these entities, said the experts.

The Airtel Xstream Fiber offers the users a better, enhanced and faster daily broadband connection experience. Its 'Entertainment' pack is available at a monthly cost of Rs 999. The state-owned BSNL, under Bharat Fibre Broadband, provides Fibre Premium and Fibre Premium Plus plans for such works. The Fibre Premium comes at a cost of Rs 999 per month whereas Fibre Premium Plus is available at Rs 1277 per month.

ENGLAND IN BIG TROUBLE IN THIRD TEST AS HOSTS ALL BUT SURE TO SEAL THE SERIES TUESDAY WITH THE VISITORS HAVE AN EVEREST TO CLIMB

Ashes in sight of Oz James Anderson urges officials to continue series despite virus scare

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Melbourne, Dec 27: England was hit by COVID-19 dramas within its support staff Monday before their batsmen sustained another top-order collapse at the Melbourne Cricket Ground as Australia moved within sight of a series-clinching victory in the Ashes.

Before play even began Monday, Cricket Australia called for calm after a COVID-19 scare involving England's support staff resulted in a 30-minute delay to the start of the second day of play in the third Test.

Australia was bowled out for 267 as the home side grabbed a first-innings advantage of 82 runs, before England struggled to 31/4 in its second innings at stumps Monday.

England seamer James Anderson gave a masterful display, claiming the key wickets of Marcus Harris (76) and Steve Smith (16) in his tally of 4/33 off 23 overs.

But England's batters were soon under attack again. Mitchell Starc (2/11) dismissed Zak Crawley, caught behind for 5, and Dawid Malan, leg before without scoring, in consecutive deliveries.

Debutant Scott Boland (2/1) delighted his home crowd of 42,626 roaring fans by removing opener Haseeb Hameed for 7 and Jack Leach without scoring in the penultimate over of the day.

With Ben Stokes and Joe Root at the crease, England had lost four wickets after just 12 overs and still required another 51 runs to make Australia bat again.

Earlier, Cricket Australia's chief executive Nick Hockley said there was no need to change current plans, which include staging the fourth and fifth Tests in Sydney and Hobart, respectively.



ON A ROLL: Mitchell Starc reacts after dismissing Dawid Malan on the third day of the Ashes Test in Melbourne, Monday

In a day of early drama, Cricket Australia released a statement confirming the COVID-19 outbreak within the England camp, which delayed the team's arrival at the MCG and caused a 30-minute delay to the start of play.

"Cricket Australia has been informed that two members of the England cricket team's support staff and two of their family members have returned a positive COVID-19 Rapid Antigen Test,"

the statement said. Australia captain Pat Cummins was unable to play in the second test after becoming a close contact of a COVID-19 case. Since the start of the pandemic in 2020, England's tours of South Africa and Sri Lanka were abandoned mid-tour due to COVID concerns.

Australia leads the five-match series 2-0, which means England needs to win all three remaining matches to regain the Ashes.

BRIEF SCORES

England 185 & 31/4 (Joe Root 12 batting; Scott Boland 2/1, Mitchell Starc 2/11); Australia 267 (Marcus Harris 76, Travis Head 27, Mitchell Starc 24 n o, Pat Cummins 21; James Anderson 4/33, Ollie Robinson 2/64, Mark Wood 2/71). Match to continue.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Melbourne, Dec 27: England fast bowler James Anderson is urging officials to continue with the Ashes series against Australia despite a COVID-19 drama which unfolded at the team's hotel Monday and delayed the start of the second day of the third Test.

Like other sporting events around the world, this one could be at the mercy of COVID-19 test results. Before play even began Monday, Cricket Australia called for calm after a COVID-19 scare involving two members of England's support staff resulted in a 30-minute delay to the start of play.

"We actually got on the bus to come to the ground at the usual time and then got told to get off the bus because we found out about a couple of positives (cases)," Anderson said.

England's players were then tested and waited about 45 minutes before the scheduled 10.30 am. Start before heading to the ground.

"We're all having tests now," said Anderson. "We'll have to wait and see what the results are. As long as the group that is here at the ground today (Monday) are negative, I don't see why we can't carry on. As far as I'm aware, the whole playing group feels fine."

Australia's opening batter Marcus Harris said he was confident the show would go on. "There are going to be hiccups. It's the world we live in," Harris said.

"We can get games played. Issues arise but there are things in place and everyone is trying their hardest to make sure the games are played. I think we will find a way to get it done."

Earlier, Cricket Australia's chief executive Nick Hockley said there was no need to change current



James Anderson celebrates after getting a wicket, Monday

plans, which include staging the fourth and fifth Tests in Sydney and Hobart, respectively.

"We just need to remain calm and get the facts," Hockley said. "Everyone needs to follow the medical advice. On that basis, we keep going."

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the start of play. "Cricket Australia has been informed that two members of the England cricket team's support staff and two of their family members have returned a positive COVID-19 Rapid Antigen Test," the statement said. "The affected individuals are currently isolating."

Since the start of the pandemic in 2020, England's tours of South Africa and Sri Lanka were abandoned mid-tour due to COVID concerns.

Lukaku ends goal drought



RIGHT ON THE MONEY: Romelu Lukaku reacts after scoring against Crystal Palace, Sunday

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Birmingham, Dec 27: Jorginho scored two penalties and Romelu Lukaku netted his first Premier League goal since September to lead Chelsea's comeback for a 3-1 victory over Aston Villa.

Lukaku's first season back in England has been hampered by an ankle injury and the striker hadn't scored in the league since last facing Villa 106 days earlier.

After drawing their last two games, Chelsea avoided losing further ground on Manchester City, staying six points behind first place.

There was a huge slice of fortune for Villa's goal in the 28th minute Sunday when Chelsea defender Reece James rose to clear

page time. Ezri Konsa brought him down and Jorginho netted again from the spot. Villa, which stayed in 10th place, was without manager Steven Gerrard who is isolating with coronavirus.

Earlier, Lucas Moura scored one and set up two goals for Harry Kane and Son Heung-min as Tottenham thrashed a 10-man Crystal Palace 3-0.

Palace had failed to get the game called off after a coronavirus outbreak in the squad and manager Patrick Vieira was absent after testing positive himself.

Wilfried Zaha compounded Palace's woes with a needless red card in the 37th when the south London club was already trailing 0-2.

Tottenham remain unbeaten in six league games under Antonio Conte and is six points behind fourth-place Arsenal with three games in hand.

A decisive five-minute period swung the game in Tottenham's favor with two quickfire goals and Palace then reduced to 10 men.

Kane scored in the 32nd minute from Moura's center after he was set free by Emerson Royal. The Brazilian pair combined again two minutes later when Emerson's cross was headed in from close range by Moura.

Palace's capitulation was complete as, 11 minutes after picking up a first yellow card, Zaha foolishly flung his arms at Davinson Sanchez and was sent off by referee Jon Moss.

Tottenham had to wait until the 74th before extending their lead further. Moura again found space down the right and his cross was turned home at the near post by Son for his fourth goal in five games.

ward after dropping points in the last two encounters. Hyderabad were held to identical 1-1 draws against FC Goa and SC East Bengal in their last two games.

Odisha, on the other hand, have been winless in their last three games, losing two of them before playing out a 1-1 draw against FC Goa. They are seventh in the table with 10 points from seven games.

For Hyderabad, who have been one of the most balanced sides in the league so far, their performance against rock-bottom SC East Bengal left a lot to be desired. The

red and gold brigade had their chances and had Daniel Chima Chukwu converted his golden opportunity in the first half, things could have been different.

Hyderabad have been one of the best defenses this season. They have shipped the fewest goals (6) and have only kept one clean sheet but are yet to concede more than one goal in a match this season.

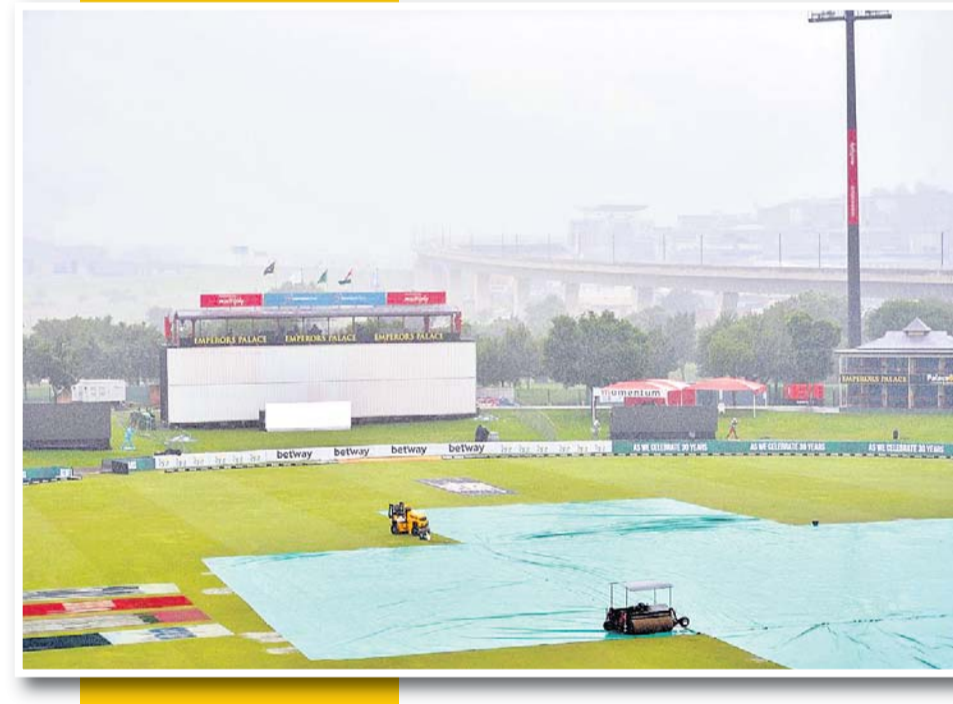
Odisha, meanwhile, have struggled to find the back of the net after scoring nine goals in their first two matches of the season. They have failed to score more

than one goal in their last five matches. The good part is that Jonathas Cristian is finding his feet, netting his second goal in the last game. He attempted five shots in that match.

"Hyderabad are a compact team. They are playing for a long time together. They have a good striker in Ogbeche. He is in fine form," Odisha head coach Kiko Ramirez said.

"We faced them in pre-season and they know how to create chances. We analysed them and we know how to counter-attack this team."

RAIN PLAYS SPOILSPORT



The covers are on due to heavy and persistent rain Monday, which eventually forced the officials to abandon the second day's play of the first Test between India and South Africa at the SuperSport Park in Centurion. The Indian team will now look to reset their first innings target. What started as a drizzle Monday morning became a steady downpour in the afternoon and with 90 overs lost in the game, Virat Kohli's men, sitting pretty at 272/3 after day one, will now have to quicken up the proceedings in the remaining three days with a high probability of winning the match. Twice, the rain stopped and umpires decided on inspection but on both occasions just before they were to step out, heavens opened up once again. There was too much water on the covers and with literally no sunshine, there was very little chance for the ground to dry up and some overs of play to be possible.

Odisha aim for better show after winless streak

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bambolim, Dec 27: Odisha FC will be eager to get back to winning ways and maintain pressure on the teams in the other top four when they take on Hyderabad FC in the Indian Super League here Tuesday.

Hyderabad FC are currently fourth in the points table with 12 points from seven matches. The Manolo Marquez-coached outfit are three points adrift of leaders Mumbai City FC and a win against Odisha will only propel them for-

ward after dropping points in the last two encounters. Hyderabad were held to identical 1-1 draws against FC Goa and SC East Bengal in their last two games.

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SHARDUL HOPES TO REPEAT SUCCESS India sail into U-19 Asia Cup semis

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Centurion, Dec 27: Shardul Thakur has had a good initiation into Test cricket and the India seam bowling all-rounder wants to replicate his impressive show in Australia and England in the on-going series against South Africa.

Thakur has been preferred by the Indian team management ahead of Ishant Sharma and Umesh Yadav because of his superior batting skills.

"I am looking forward to it. I hope it comes off in SA too as I have been successful in England and Australia, to contribute in South African conditions, I would be



more than happy," Shardul told teammate Ravichandran Ashwin during a chat on bcci.tv.

For Shardul, self belief is the key. "I do like to plan my game in terms of both bowling and batting. When I enter the ground, everything is about confidence and self-belief for me. If you are playing white ball cricket, you think of yorker. So to bowl that yorker, I go in with full confidence which stands out for me as player," Shardul said.

For the Mumbai cricketer, the aim is to remain a player who always makes winning contribution for the team and not just merely add up numbers.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dubai, Dec 27: A match-winning 65-run seventh wicket stand between Raj Bawa and Kaushal Tame ensured a fighting four-wicket victory for India over a gritty Afghanistan as they entered the semifinal of the U-19 Asia Cup tournament here Monday.

Bawa (43 n o) and Tame (35 n o) joined forces when India were in trouble at 197/6 but they kept calm to take the 'Boys in Blue' to their required 260-run target with 10 balls to spare.

This was after in-form opener Harnoor Pannu (65) and his partner Angkrish Raghuvanshi (35)

added 104 for the opening stand. However, the middle order caved in with skipper Yash Dull (26) and Nishant Sindhu (19) failing to convert starts. It was left to Bawa and Tame to take the team home.

With this win, India we placed second in the group behind Pakistan team, which won all their matches. India will face the winners between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, who are pitted against each other in the last group league encounter.

With India finishing second, they would meet the topper of the other group. It was a game where India returned to winning ways. Put into bat at the ICC Academy

— Oval 2 here, Afghanistan skipper Suliman Safi's patient 73 coupled with a blistering unbeaten 86 off 68 balls by Ijaz Ahmad Ahmadzai propelled Afghanistan to respectable 259/4.

Chasing 260, India were reeling at 162/4. Left-arm unorthodox spinner Noor Ahmad (4/43) bowled brilliantly for the Afghans.

BRIEF SCORES

Afghanistan U-19 259/4 (Ijaz Ahmad Ahmadzai 86 n o, Suliman Safi 73; Kaushal Tame 1/25) lost to India U-19 262/6 (Harnoor Singh 65, R Bawa 43 n o; Noor Ahmad 4/43) by four wickets.