



I never played football. These I have got from public

Gobinda Sahu dead in jail

Sahu was in judicial custody following his arrest on charges of kidnap and murder of Kalahandi teacher Mamita Meher in October last year but his death hours before his deposition in Kantabanji JMFC court has raised eyebrows

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar/Bolangir, Dec 20: Gobinda Sahu, the prime accused in the sensational kidnapping and murder of Kalahandi teacher Mamita Meher in October last year, died allegedly by suicide at Kantabanji sub-jail in Bolangir district Tuesday morning.

Authorities of Kantabanji sub-jail said Sahu was found hanging from a tree on the prison's premises with a thin cotton towel and was rushed to the sub-divisional hospital where doctors declared him dead. He was scheduled to be produced before the court of the Judicial Magistrate First Class (JMFC) Tuesday afternoon.

Director General of Police (DGP) Sunil Kumar Bansal directed the Crime Branch (CB) to take over the investigation, while Opposition BJP and Congress demanded a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe, alleging conspiracy behind the unnatural death.

Taking suo motu cognisance of the custodial death, the Odisha Human Rights Commission (OHRC) asked the Special Director General of Prisons and DCS and Bolangir Superintendent of Police (SP) to submit their respective reports within 15 days.

DIG Prisons (Bhubaneswar) Subhakanta Mishra admitted that there were lapses on the part of the jail authorities at Kantabanji



Mamita Meher



Gobinda Sahu

DGP orders Crime Branch investigation

OHRC takes suo motu cognisance, seeks reports from special DG of Prisons and Bolangir SP

Opposition BJP & Congress demand CBI probe

DIG Prisons (Sambalpur) suspends Kantabanji sub-jail warden for dereliction of duty

WIFE ALLEGES MURDER

Bhawanipatna: Hours after Gobinda's death, his wife Sushama Sahu approached the Kegaon police alleging that her husband was murdered and that he was a victim of political conspiracy. "He (Gobinda) was absolutely normal when we had a telephonic conversation yesterday (Monday). He can't take such an extreme step. He was killed as part of a big conspiracy to shield high-profile leaders involved in the Mamita case," she said, demanding a CBI probe into the incident.

and said disciplinary action will be taken against those found guilty.

He said DIG Prisons (Sambalpur) will submit a report within 24 hours, and that all guidelines issued by National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) over custodial

death are being followed.

Bolangir SP Kusalkar Nitin Dagudu reached Kantabanji and spoke with senior police officers.

"DGP, Odisha has ordered CID-Crime Branch to take over enquiry into Kantabanji Police Station U.D.

AS IT HAPPENED

OCT 8, 2021: Mamita Meher, 24, a teacher at Sunshine English Medium School in Kalahandi's Mahaling goes missing

OCT 13: Police detain Gobinda Sahu, the promoter of the school, on the basis of complaint lodged by Mamita's family

OCT 17: Gobinda escapes from police barracks in Titlagarh

OCT 19: Following a high drama, Gobinda traced and arrested hours after Mamita's body parts were recovered from a pit near the school

OCT 20: Police claim Gobinda had confessed to have strangled Mamita to death October 8 in order to prevent her from revealing his extramarital affairs

DEC 20, 2022: Gobinda allegedly hangs himself to death on the premises of Kantabanji sub-jail in Bolangir

Case No. 15/2022. This case relates to unnatural death of Gobinda Sahu, prime accused of Sindhikela Police Station Case No. 97/21 inside Kantabanji Sub-Jail today (sic)," Odisha Police tweeted. Meanwhile, DIG Prisons (Sambalpur) suspended Kantabanji sub-jail warden Akshaya Mohanty for dereliction of duty.

Continued on P4 MORE P3

Covid surge in China sparks global concern

REUTERS

Beijing/Singapore, Dec 20: Cities across China scrambled to install hospital beds and build fever screening clinics Tuesday as authorities reported five more deaths and international concern grew about Beijing's surprise decision to let the virus run free.

China this month began dismantling its stringent 'zero-Covid' regime of lockdowns and testing after protests against curbs that had kept the virus at bay for three years but at a big cost to society and the world's second-largest economy.

Now, as the virus sweeps through

States told to increase genome sequencing

NEW DELHI: Amid a sudden spurt in Covid-19 cases in Japan, South Korea, Brazil, China and the US, the Centre Tuesday urged all states and Union Territories to gear up the whole genome sequencing of positive samples to keep track of emerging variants. **MORE P7**

a country of 1.4 billion people who lack natural immunity having been shielded for so long, there is growing concern about possible deaths, virus mutations and the impact on the economy and trade. **Continued on P4**

Job seekers made to count trains, duped of ₹2.5 crore

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 20: At least 28 people from Tamil Nadu were made to stand at different platforms of the New Delhi railway station every day for eight hours for a month to count the arrival and departure of trains and their coaches, unaware they were victims of an employment scam.

They had been told that this was part of their training for positions of travelling ticket examiner (TTE), traffic assistants and clerks, and



each of them paid amounts ranging between ₹2 lakh and ₹24 lakh to get the jobs in the railways, according to a complaint filed with the Delhi Police's Economic Offences Wing (EOW). **Continued on P4**

Vig lens on IDCOL deputy manager with crores in a/c

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 20: Vigilance sleuths Tuesday carried out simultaneous raids at seven places related to Gaya Santara, a deputy manager of IDCOL at Ampavalli Limestone Mine in Koraput district, for allegedly amassing disproportionate assets.

The Vigilance claimed to have traced at least ₹4.19 crore deposits in four accounts, 13 plots in Bhubaneswar, Jajpur and Nayagarh, 16 bank accounts and two multi-storey buildings in Bhubaneswar belonging to Santara and his family, till filing of this report.

"Deposits in other bank accounts are under verification," revealed a senior Vigilance official.

State Level Programme on Drink From Tap

DSPL-377

Dedication

Drink from Tap facility in 19 cities benefitting 5.5 lakh population.

Commencement of works

Drink from Tap in Khurda, Jatni & Hinjilicut ULBs benefitting 1.5 lakh population.

The 2nd City in India to achieve 24 x 7 Drink From Tap

Gopalpur the 2nd city in India to achieve 24x7 drink from tap facility in the entire ULB.

ULBs	Wards	Population to be benefitted
BHUBANESWAR	18	3 Lakh
CUTTACK	3	38 Thousand
NIMAPARA	3	6 Thousand
BERHAMPUR	16	1.5 Lakh
GOPALPUR	11	11 Thousand
ROURKELA	4	20 Thousand
SUNDARGARH	1	5 Thousand
BIRAMITRAPUR	1	3 Thousand
RAJGANGPUR	4	7 Thousand
KEONJHAR	4	13 Thousand
JODA	2	6 Thousand
BARBIL	2	6 Thousand
CHAMPUA	7	9 Thousand
ANANDAPUR	3	6 Thousand
BARIPADA	2	7 Thousand
RAIRANGPUR	2	5 Thousand
UDALA	3	6 Thousand
KARANJIA	2	6 Thousand
VYASANAGAR	1	3 Thousand

Dedication by

Shri Naveen Patnaik

Hon'ble Chief Minister, Odisha

21st December, 2022 || 11:30 AM

Convention Centre, Lok Seva Bhawan
Bhubaneswar

ODISHA

The 1st Drink from Tap State in the Country

Housing & Urban Development Department

OIPR-13194/13/0065/2223

leisure



JAMES CAMERON: I TAKE PRESSURE FOR BREAKFAST

With *Avatar: The Way of Water* creating a tizzy at the box-office, its director James Cameron has spoken about the pressures a filmmaker has to go through. "There is budgetary pressure, there is deadline pressure, all those things and I joke around that 'I eat pressure for breakfast bring it on'," quipped Cameron.

DI CAPRIO'S FORMER CO-STAR CALLS HIM 'VERY STUPID'

British-Australian actress Miriam Margolyes, 81, labels her *Romeo + Juliet* co-star, 'quite smelly', 'very stupid' for notoriously never dating anyone over the age of 25 and speculated the 48-year-old star avoids older females because he doesn't want to be a father, reports *aceshowbiz.com*.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES

You are deeply interested in the occult and the paranormal and today, you may indulge in something to do with it. So, you may buy a full colour 15x10 glossy on shamanic rites or the tantra! Ganesh suggests using such knowledge for peaceful ends.

TAURUS

Your enthusiasm will be as contagious as your smile today, predicts Ganesh. People will stand charmed by your high spirits. There will be stressful moments, but things will look up later in the day. Take some time off if things get too hectic for you.

GEMINI

You will keep your emotions aside and concentrate solely on your work today. You will have to waste a lot of time in fulfilling the demands made by those around you. However, the more demands you fulfill, the more their expectations will rise, says Ganesh.

CANCER

The day is very favourable, says Ganesh. You will feel a sense of joy and happiness with your valuable possessions. You may fall into love or have a strong romantic ties with someone. A great time for lovers. Ganesh foresees chance of having new contacts and ties.

LEO

You will be busy on the work front today. It is a good day for those who are self-employed. Housewives will remain extremely busy with household matters. You will be able to work according to your desire though, says Ganesh.

VIRGO

Close members of your family and friends will take up most of your time today. Students will have to pay more attention to studies as exams are upcoming, and they will have to learn to balance study and free time. Ganesh says today is a good time to buy property. All in all, it is a day when you can afford to relax and let your mind pursue its interests.

LIBRA

Ganesh says today will be a wonderful day and bring forth a breakthrough for you. You shall get to know and learn a lot from top most officials and elderly people. The higher ups in your office will give you good support today. Ganesh warns you to stay away from judicial proceedings or pleadings, as today is not a good day for fighting court battles.

SCORPIO

"It's a dream come true," you may utter these words in surprise today, feels Ganesh. Your palatial home is ready or you may just get the keys of your much desired vehicle. You may have an extended celebration by receiving or giving gifts to your closed ones. However, make sure you do not make a hole in your pocket.

SAGITTARIUS

You are like a new hope for your company and you are assigned with many challenging projects, today. And your hard work and efforts are appreciated when you handle the projects successfully. If you are fortunate enough, you may also gain incentives very soon, predicts Ganesh.

CAPRICORN

Practical and creative, you are able to utilise your talents in the best possible manner. You will smartly solve family issues, without favouring or hurting anybody, says Ganesh. You'll like to play the role of a peace maker, as it gives you satisfaction from within. Also, you will love to help others as much as you can.

AQUARIUS

Sometimes it feels like you are stuck in a quagmire, and there is none out there to pull you out. But, the independent Aquarius is capable of dealing with adversities alone. And, that tendency shall hold you in a good stead even today. Dilemmas dissolved and problems resolved, you shall spend a quiet, romantic evening with your sweetheart, foresees Ganesh.

PISCES

The mundane routine of daily life will finally catch up with you, and you will feel the urge to take a break and travel somewhere. And a break is well deserved considering the number of hours you have slaved over your current projects. A picnic or a short journey with your partner is very much on the cards, says Ganesh.

KATRINA

most searched Asian worldwide in 2022

Mumbai: Actor and entrepreneur Katrina Kaif has been named as the Most Searched Asian Worldwide in 2022 by Google. Kaif features on the fourth spot on the list; and has the distinction of topping among Indian actors making it to the list this year.

Known as Hindi film industry's leading actress, Kaif made a significant expansion of her personal brand, with the launch of her guilt free (every product is infused with natural ingredients that cares for the skin) makeup range and India's first celebrity beauty brand. Her endeavour was to ensure inclusivity in skin tone, skin type, gender, age and sexual orientation. Inclusivity is a key pillar for all product development, as the brand continues to deliver to over 1600 cities. She was recognised as Entrepreneur of the Year for pioneering work in the conscious makeup space in India. She got married to actor Vicky Kaushal in December 2021 at Six Senses Fort Barwara in Sawari Madhopur in Rajasthan. Her upcoming films are *Jee Le Zaaara* and *Merry Christmas*. IANS

Kaushal in December 2021 at Six Senses Fort Barwara in Sawari Madhopur in Rajasthan. Her upcoming films are *Jee Le Zaaara* and *Merry Christmas*. IANS

'I might not be as good as Tiger or Hrithik but I will try my best'

Mumbai: As Shah Rukh Khan gears up for the release of the highly anticipated *Pathaan*, the actor recently shared that he had to convince YRF's head Aditya Chopra and *Pathaan* director Siddharth Anand to make this action film with him at 57. In a conversation with cricketer Robin Uthappa, Shah Rukh opened up on why he wanted to do an action film, despite knowing he might not be 'as good as Tiger Shroff or Hrithik Roshan.'

Siddharth were less than enthusiastic about making an action film with him.

He said, "Four years ago, I was feeling a little weak, injuries were there, surgeries were there, but I thought I should do something that I haven't done before. I should get physically very fit. I told my friend Aditya Chopra and Siddharth Anand, 'Ek action picture banao (make an action film)'. So, they told me, 'sir, ye aap kya keh rahe ho, aap thak jaaoge (You will get tired)'. I asked them to at least try I told them, 'I might not be as good as Tiger (Shroff) or Duggu (Hrithik Roshan), but I will try my best'".

Meanwhile, speaking of *Pathaan*, the film also stars Deepika Padukone and John Abraham in pivotal roles. The film is all set to hit the theatres January 25, 2023. AGENCIES

Sakshi spills beans on her fight with Sunny

New Delhi: *Splitsville X4* contestant and social media star Sakshi Dwivedi opened up about her recent fight with show's host Sunny Leone in which the latter got furious and asked Sakshi to take her place.

Sunny held Sakshi's hand and dragged the contestant forcing her to take her place. Sakshi got candid about the incident and said: "We all were in the dumping zone and there was a fight between two contestants. Everybody was speaking up and trying to prove their point. I was one of those contestants who was trying to put my point across and I was just saying something, and, in the flow, I didn't hear that she said something. Though my point was not complete, I interrupted her and said sorry about it. Unfortunately, Sunny got really furious and she just crossed the line."

She added: "Sunny is beautiful, but just from outside. If I get a chance to host a show, I will never disrespect other people by getting physical and by using foul language." Sunny's behaviour was completely inappropriate and rude, concluded Sakshi. IANS

Mumbai: Film producer and author Twinkle Khanna recently got a chance to speak to Google CEO Sundar Pichai at an event, where she was seen interviewing him. Twinkle shared a slew of pictures with him on Instagram and shared the three things she had learnt from him. She spoke to Pichai about the advantages of being brought up in India and how he manages to stay grounded.

Twinkle wrote on Instagram, "Santa got me an amazing early Christmas gift - an interview with @sundarpichai the iconic CEO of @google and here are 3 things I have learned from him. 1. What are the

global advantages of being brought up in India? 2. What does he do to stay grounded and keep his inner werewolf at bay? 3. What the advent of AI means to the world at large. Look out for an in-depth interview coming up soon with our global Icon. #GoogleForIndia @googleindia."

A day before, Twinkle had shared a video of getting a hair makeover ahead of the event. Twinkle is an actor-turned-writer, film producer and owns a digital content platform, Tweak India. She is married to actor Akshay Kumar, with whom she has two children Aarav and Nitarra. IANS

Three things that Twinkle learnt from Sundar Pichai

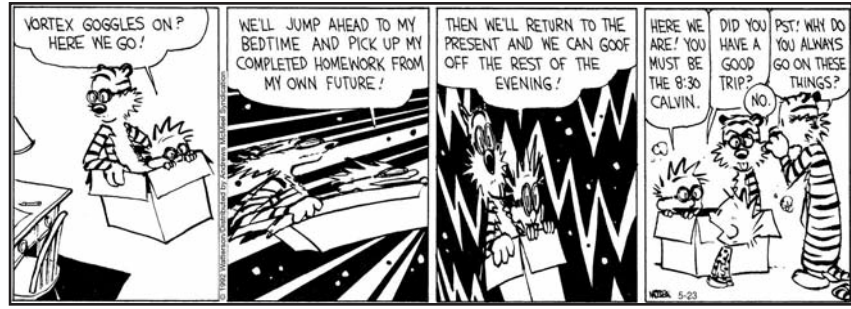


FUN post

PEANUTS



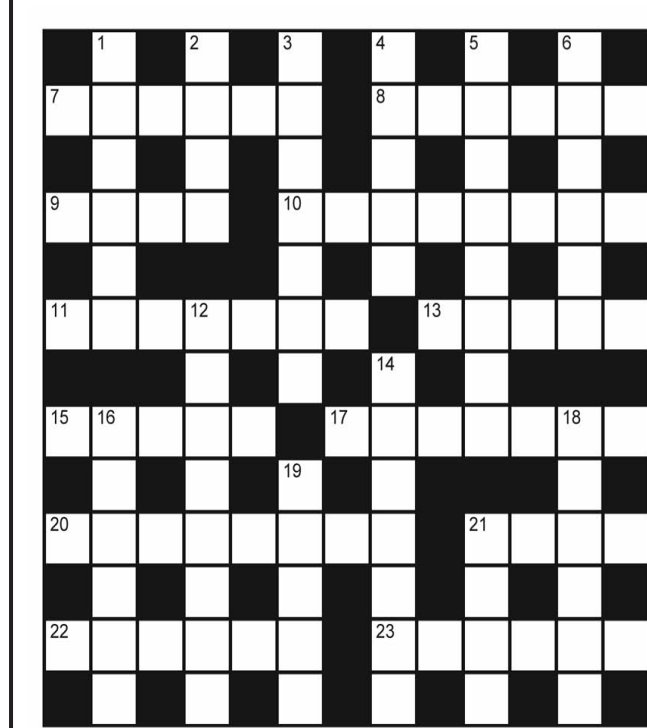
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



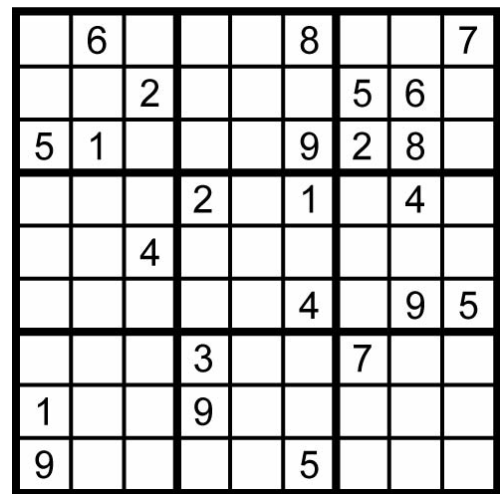
CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 7 Mum
 - 8 Begin a journey (3,3)
 - 9 Get better
 - 10 Heat source
 - 11 Footstool
 - 13 Tangle
 - 15 Alpenstock
 - 17 Yucatan discoverer
 - 20 Oust a monarch
 - 21 Declare openly
 - 22 Loathsome
 - 23 Full of vigour
 - 4 In reserve
 - 5 Reached
 - 6 Hearsay
 - 12 Branch
 - 14 Like the Kalahari (4-3)
 - 16 Chic
 - 18 Window-shop
 - 19 Roof support
 - 21 Pulverized gypsum
- Down**
- 1 Cut in half
 - 2 Big name in computers
 - 3 Everlasting

SUDOKU

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

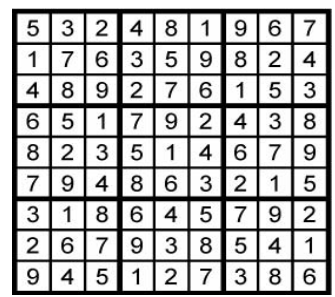


SOLUTIONS



CROSSWORD

SUDOKU

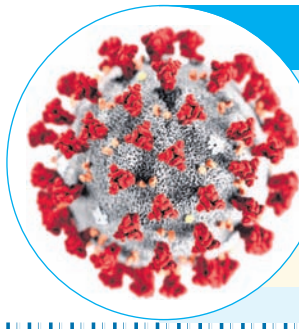


CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown

BOOK RELEASE

Guests released 'Pahili Pulaka', a compilation of poems, during an event organised by Kothaghara Ama Sahitya Parishad in Bhubaneswar, Tuesday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	65,85,43,701	63,21,08,009	66,74,392
India	44,677,346	44,142,032	5,30,677
Odisha	13,36,304	13,26,915	9,204

Oppn seeks CBI probe into Gobinda's death

BJP alleges 'Jungle Raj' in state while Congress says Gobinda Sahu was under tremendous mental pressure as his bail pleas were rejected by the Orissa High Court

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 20: Opposition BJP and Congress Tuesday grew skeptical about the alleged suicide by Mamita Meher murder case prime accused Gobinda Sahu in Kantabanji sub-jail and demanded a CBI probe into the incident.

Alleging 'Jungle Raj' in the state, Odisha BJP president Samir Mohanty said, "If the jails and police stations are unsafe, one can imagine how safe are the people of the state." He demanded a CBI probe to give justice to the family members of Sahu.

BJP MP Basanta Panda said the death of Sahu under mysterious circumstances has triggered suspicion as he was slated to be produced before a court later Tuesday. There is every possibility that



Sahu might have been eliminated as part of a big conspiracy to save high-profile leaders in the case, he claimed, demanding a high-level probe into the incident to ascertain whether it was a case of murder or suicide.

Demanding a CBI probe into the episode, Panda said Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik should immediately hand over the matter to the Central agency for a thorough investigation as "the state police cannot be trusted anymore".

BJP Mahila Morcha president Smruti Patnaik said it sounds

bizarre, but accused in high-profile murder cases in which ministers' involvement were alleged, are dying under mysterious circumstances.

Kantabanji MLA and Congress leader Santosh Singh Saluja alleged that he was said to be under tremendous mental pressure as his bail pleas were rejected by Orissa High Court. Trial of Sahu was continuing in Judicial Magistrate First Class (JMFC), Kantabanji in Bolangir district.

Saluja also demanded a CBI probe into the circumstances under which Sahu ended his life inside the

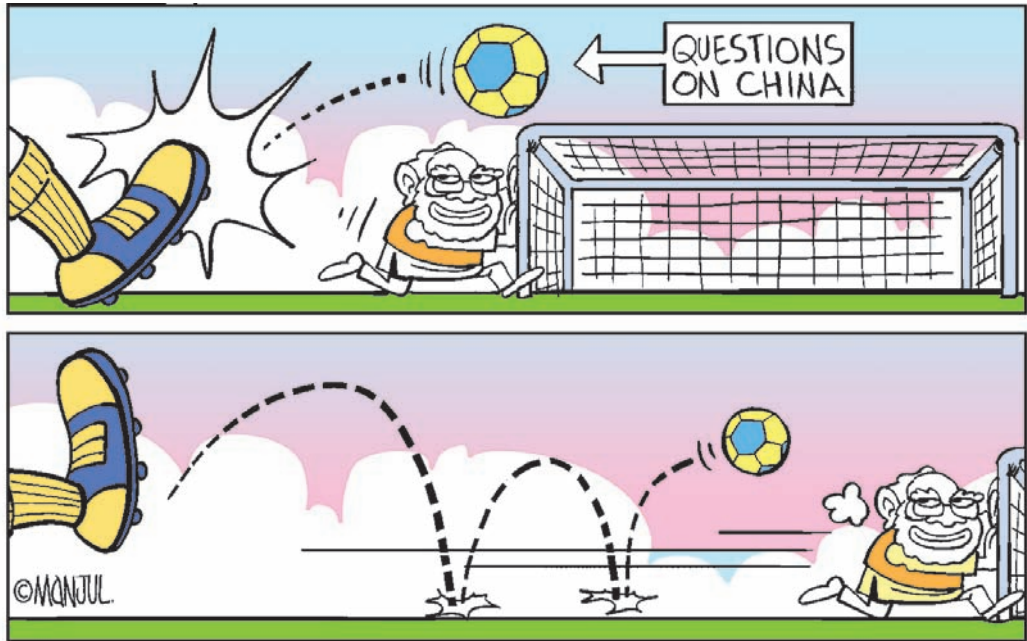
jail. From the beginning of the case, the Opposition had put the state government in the dock. During his questioning, Sahu had managed to give the police a slip from a police barrack.

Following the controversy, the Orissa HC had nominated ABS Naidu, a former district judge, to monitor the investigation. The state government had requested Orissa HC to nominate a sitting or retired judge of the high court or a district and sessions judge to monitor the investigation of Mamita murder case.

Mamita, a resident of Turekela block in Bolangir district, was serving as a teacher at an English medium school in Mahaling of Kalahandi district. She went missing October 8, 2021 and police had recovered her decomposed body October 19 from an under-construction stadium at Mahaling. She was allegedly strangled to death by Sahu, promoter of the school.

The murder had triggered massive political controversy as the Opposition political parties had alleged that former MoS for Home Diba Shankar Mishra, a close associate of Sahu, was involved in the case.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



HIGH COURT BENCH ISSUE

Pujari seeks probe into police assault on lawyers

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Dec 20: Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MP Suresh Pujari Tuesday sought an inquiry by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) over alleged assault of lawyers by police in lock-ups.

The BJP MP, while speaking during the Zero Hour in Lok Sabha, said that he learnt about the assault of lawyers by police while they were in lock-ups. He requested the Union Law minister to take up the matter with the state government, High Court and the Bar Council of India and resolve the deadlock. He also requested for direction to the NHRC to inquire into the alleged assault of lawyers by police.

The BJP MP slammed the Odisha government for the current law and order situation in the state. He alleged that the delay and lack of commitment of the state government in holding consultation either with the Chief Justice of Orissa High Court or with the Governor has led to a serious law

Coal crisis delayed TFL project: Mandaviya

New Delhi: Union Minister for Chemicals and Fertilisers Mansukh Mandaviya Tuesday informed the Rajya Sabha that the work on Talcher Fertiliser Plant (TFL) was delayed for over one-and-half years due to the coal crisis in the country. The minister, however, said the project would be completed by September 2024. The Union minister was responding to a question asked by Biju Janata Dal MP Sulata Deo during the Question Hour. Earlier, the minister had said the commissioning of TFL was scheduled in September 2023 but the project would be delayed due to the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic. It was further revealed that the estimated cost of the project is ₹13,277 crore and the project is expected to create direct employment of 510 and indirect employment of around 4,500. It is to be mentioned here that the TFL will improve availability of fertiliser to farmers thereby boosting development of eastern region and will save transport subsidy for supply of urea in eastern part of the country. It would assist in reducing urea imports to the tune of 12.7 LMT per annum leading to savings in foreign exchange, the ministry said.



ODISHA IN PARLIAMENT

and order situation, and arrest of dozens of lawyers who are already behind the bars.

"The Law Minister has written, again and again, to the state government to hold consultations with the Chief Justice of Orissa High Court, and the Governor and then, to send a composite proposal for new bench of High Court to the ministry including its location, its jurisdiction and its commitment to pro-

vide its infrastructure and bear the recurring expenses to enable the government to bring a legislation in both Houses of Parliament for the establishment of a permanent bench," Pujari said. Significantly, a number of lawyers have been booked for allegedly creating vandalism at the Sambalpur court while demanding establishment of a bench of the High Court in western Odisha.

NAVEEN'S 'SERVE PEOPLE' MANTRA FOR PARTY WORKERS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 20: Ahead of the regional party's silver jubilee foundation day December 26, BJD president and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has called upon the rank and file to engage themselves in serving the people.

Noting that the BJD has been dedicated to the service of people for the last 25 years, Patnaik in a letter to all party leaders asked them to celebrate the occasion in a phased manner in all 147 constituencies throughout the year.

"Keeping in view the ideology and policies of Biju Babu, the BJD is working to take the state to greater heights," the letter, written Monday, read. Patnaik mentioned in the letter that the party now has Zilla Parishad presidents in all 30 districts. It has also won 80 per cent of seats in urban local body polls.

Extending New Year wishes to the people, he said the BJD will reach out to everyone with its dedicated welfare activities in 2023. The foundation day celebration will begin at Puri December 26 and will continue throughout the year, he said.

BJD memo to Centre for ST list revision

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Dec 20: A delegation of Biju Janata Dal (BJD) MPs from Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha Tuesday submitted a memorandum to Union Tribal Affairs Minister Arjun Munda seeking consideration of over 160 proposals recommended by the state government for inclusion in Odisha's Scheduled Tribes list.

The BJD delegation said in the memorandum that there are several communities who have been recommended by the state government for inclusion in the Odisha ST list but these proposals have been pending before the ministry. The BJD informed the minister that Odisha is home to the largest number of Particularly Vulnerable Group Tribal and has a large population. It highlighted the state government's developmental programmes for tribals in nine districts covering over 18,000 villages and 14.05 lakh ST households.

The BJD also cited recommendations made by a task force under the Ministry of Tribal Affairs that

The BJD delegation said in the memorandum that there are several communities who have been recommended by the state government for inclusion in the Odisha ST list but these proposals have been pending before the ministry

The BJD cited recommendations made by a task force under the Ministry of Tribal Affairs that had recommended nine proposals from Odisha as priority cases for inclusion in the ST list of Odisha in 2014. But the same is yet to be notified in the Presidential order, the memorandum read.

Refuting media reports that the government has never sent any proposal to the Centre, the BJD stated that Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had written letters in this regard on various occasions. "The inclusion will lead to significant empowerment and opportunities for these communities, who have been deprived of ST status and its benefits for the last 75 years," the BJD said in the memorandum.

Archana: SFSL submits digital forensic reports

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 20: The State Forensic Science Laboratory (SFSL) Tuesday handed over the digital forensic reports of the gadgets seized from lady blackmailer Archana Nag involved in the high-profile sextortion case to the investigating officials. The forensic reports of the gadgets include four cellphones, two laptops and pen drives.

The SFSL has reportedly submitted one copy each to Khandagiri police and ED officials investigating the money laundering angle in the sextortion case.

Sources also revealed that a copy of the report has also been submitted before the court.

The SFSL has reportedly handed over the forensic reports of around 12 samples. Sources claimed vital pictures and other details deleted by Archana have been recovered from the gadgets.

Meanwhile, Archana's business partner and co-accused Khageswar Patra has moved Orissa High Court seeking bail. On the other hand, the nine-day remand period of lady blackmailer's husband's will end soon. He is on ED's remand since December 14. Odisha Police had arrested Archana October 6, 2022.

Potable water made from air at Hockey WC

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 20: Watergen, the atmospheric drinking water devices (AWG), Tuesday announced its partnership with Hockey India as a sustainability partner for providing 'drinking water from air' for FIH Odisha Hockey Men's World Cup 2023 Bhubaneswar-Rourkela from January 13 to 29, 2023.

Watergen will be providing fresh, high quality, mineralised and safe drinking water created from ambient air to everyone present at the grounds of Kalinga Stadium, Bhubaneswar and Birsu Munda International Hockey Stadium, Rourkela.

The company will be placing its

various products including GEN-L which creates up to 6,000 litre of water; GEN-M Pro which creates up to 900 litre of water & GENNY which can produce up to 30 litre in both stadia for general public use as well as in the VIP lounge and office areas. Together, these machines are estimated to generate over 2 lakh liters of water which will not only be fresh, clean and hygienic but also free of cost. Watergen's trained staff and technical team will also be present on the ground to address and assist with the usage of these machines.

Sharing his insights on the association, Hockey India president Padma Shri Dilip Tirkey said, "Water is an integral part of any

sport and as millions of people follow sports, we at Hockey India have an opportunity to inspire the world to adopt sustainable practices. Hockey India is proud to appoint Watergen as its official supplier of 'Water from Air' to everyone present at the stadia during the FIH Odisha Hockey Men's World Cup 2023 Bhubaneswar-Rourkela."

Commenting on the partnership, Maayan Mulla, CEO, Watergen India, said, "We would like to extend our gratitude to Hockey India for taking this visionary step with us to make an event of such capacity truly sustainable. This Hockey World Cup will be the world's 1st water sustainable World Cup across sports."



BUDDING DANCERS: Students of Ghadabazar Saraswati Sishu Mandir in Puri performed during a cultural programme to mark the foundation day of the school, Tuesday

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VALUE	VARIATION
SENSEX	61702.29	↓ -103.90
NIFTY	18385.30	↓ -35.20
DOLLAR	82.7550	↑ ₹0.05
EURO	87.9250	↑ ₹0.276
GOLD	₹54,913	↑ ₹653
SILVER	₹69,605	↑ ₹2,093

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP MAX	29.8°C	28.4°C
TEMP MIN	13.6°C	13.4°C
Humidity	73%	75%
Rainfall	nil	nil

Forecast: Fog very likely

BJP alleges malpractices in paddy procurement

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Dec 20: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MPs Tuesday met Union Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution Minister Piyush Goyal seeking his intervention in alleged malpractices in paddy procurement in Odisha which is causing huge losses to the farmers.

A delegation of saffron party MPs led by Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan met Goyal and submitted a memorandum alleging that unscrupulous traders and landless/proxy farmers, who do not cultivate, in collusion with the members of Primary Agriculture Credit Societies, have been siphoning off the MSP support of



the government by getting tokens for paddy sale.

"This Kharif Season about 5,54,679 acres of land have been identified as fake in the satellite survey for which proxy/non-farmers were eligible to receive MSP support to the tune of ₹1,715 crore," the BJP

stated in the memorandum.

The BJP also highlighted the issue of short tenure of paddy procurement window in Odisha. Officially Kharif marketing season commences from October to facilitate smooth paddy procurement thereby giving a 151-day official

A BJP delegation met Union Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution Minister Piyush Goyal alleging that unscrupulous traders and landless/proxy farmers are siphoning off MSP support

window, the BJP said, adding that in Odisha, except for a few districts, mandis have not opened till now even in 3rd week of December. "This is severely curtailing the actual procurement window to 40-

43 days against the official 151-day window creating panic among small and marginal farmers," the BJP said.

A nexus of millers and officials of the Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare department, the BJP said, has made the paddy procurement automation system (P-PAS) a mockery by allowing unscrupulous traders and landless farmers that snatches away the benefits from genuine registered farmers.

The BJP further alleged that the poor paddy farmers are forced to forgo 6-8 kg of paddy per quintal to the PPC brokers and agents - a practice which is locally dreaded as 'katnichhatni'. Farmers are not getting MSP of ₹1,940 per quintal due to 'katnichhatni', the BJP said.

Nexus Esplanade unveils 'the tallest' Christmas tree

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 20: Nexus Esplanade has launched the "tallest Christmas tree in the state" Monday. The 40-ft high tree was unveiled by the centre director Parth Pratim Nayak along with the team, retailers, customers, bloggers and media. The entire unveiling was a sight to behold. Addressing the media, Parth Pratim said, "I'm happy to bring surprise and delight for the customers with the start of Christmas Carnival at Nexus Esplanade. The month is full of surprise for customers with events at lawn area, gifts on shopping and lucky winners."

With superstar Amitabh Bachchan being the Nexus Happiness Ambassador and start of End of Season Sale, it's a win-win chance for everyone visiting the mall, he mentioned. From December 22, the mall will be packed with live events, food stalls, flash-mobs and many more for the customers, the director added.



CP nabs 7 for robbing Mo Bus passengers



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 20: The Commissionerate Police Tuesday busted a gang involved in several cases of snatching and theft in 'Mo Bus', the state-owned public urban transport system.

As many as seven members of the gang were arrested by the special squad of Commissionerate Police in the case.

The arrested criminals were identified as Nikunja Samantray, 55, of Marshaghai in Kendrapara, Seikh Muna, 35, Sk Sultan, 60, and Halim Khan alias Rajesh, 42, of Buxi Bazar under Mangalabag police limits, Sk Firoj alias Babul of Sati Chaura area under Markatnagar police limits in Cuttack, Prafulla Barik of Bhapur in Dhenkanal and Duryadhan Mohapatra, 33 of Delanga area in Puri district.

The accused Samantray and Sultan are currently staying at

Bidanasi in Cuttack and Saheed Nagar in Bhubaneswar respectively.

"They used to target Bhubaneswar-Cuttack and Cuttack-Bhubaneswar plying buses and also Mo Buses to commit the crime. The gang enters into the crowded bus and targets the passengers. They create artificial jam around the standing passengers and cunningly steal cash, hand bags, purse and other articles," revealed a senior police official.

The gang especially targets commuters in parked buses at bus stands in the twin city area. The accused are involved in around six looting cases in the Capital city alone.

The police have seized Rs 57,000 cash and nine cell phones from their possession.

Many have started raising concerns over the safety of commuters travelling in the Mo Bus due to the criminal activities by the gang during the last couple of months.

Students' festival 'Sargiful' begins

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 20: The state level students' festival 'Sargiful-2022' was inaugurated by Jagannath Saraka, Minister, ST&SC Development, Minorities and Backward Class Welfare Department, Law at Adivasi Exhibition Ground, Unit-I, Bhubaneswar Tuesday. The festival will continue till December 23.

Samir Ranjan Dash, Minister, School and Mass Education, Basanti Hembram Minister, Women and Child Development and others graced the occasion.

'Sargiful' started in the year 2010 with an objective to explore the hidden talent of ST & SC students studying in the ST & SC Development, M&BCW Department schools.

1069 students and 149 teachers from Sevashrams, Ashram Schools,



High Schools, Higher Secondary Schools, EMRS and Education Complexes under the ST & SC Development Department of the state are participating in the festival.

There are 25 workshops in the festival including tinkering, coding, cartoons/comics, disaster preparedness, first-aid and community volunteering services by NCC cadets, lamp shade and straw craft, magic, odisha dance, instrumental music, creative writing, screen and fabric printing, life skill education-role play, puppetry, theatre, Math games, photography and video editing.



CHRISTMAS AHEAD: Devotees decorating Church premises days before Jesus' birth celebrations at Cantonment Road in Cuttack, Tuesday

OP PHOTO

Sainik School's diamond jubilee December 24-25

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 20: Sainik School Bhubaneswar will be celebrating its Diamond Jubilee December 24 and 25 this year commemorating 60 years of its establishment. Series of events have been planned to be organised by the school as well as the Old Boys' Association of the school, informed the Principal of the school as well as President and Secretary of OBA, in a Press Meet, Tuesday.

Principal, Col. Balu Bharat informed that December 24, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik will grace the occasion as the chief guest.

The celebration will commence with the Chief Minister unveiling the bust of Biju Patnaik followed by the felicitation of parents of the brave heart of the school, Captain Ashutosh Kumar, who was posthumously awarded the 'Shaurya Chakra' for his gallant act against the terrorists at the J&K border November 8.

The following day Governor Ganeshi Lal will grace the occasion as the chief guest. He will lay a wreath at the Martyrs' Memorial, in the honour of the seventeen valiant heroes of the school. He will also release a souvenir of the OBA and felicitate the revered retired teachers and address the school cadets.

During these two days, various interesting shows like Army Dog Show, Counter Terrorism Operation Demo, Aerobics, Army Band, Naval Band and a March-past of respective Alumni batches will be held.



PRESS RELEASE

Bhub MP's suggestions to CM for City devpt

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 20: BJP MP from Bhubaneswar, Aparajita Sarangi wrote letter to CM Naveen Patnaik Tuesday suggesting 20 measures for the development of the state Capital. Suggestions include drainage master plan, metro train and adequate security for women and senior citizens.

In the letter, Sarangi said that during my tenure as people's representative, I have been in constant touch with senior citizens / intellectuals / professionals housewives and other residents of my



Constituency. There have been several deliberations on the issues pertaining to the city of Bhubaneswar and beyond with the residents. Over a period of time, many good suggestions have come from various quarters. These suggestions are the voices of people based on their lifetime experiences.

She said the state government should consider the suggestions and take appropriate actions in the days to come. She suggested 20 measures for the development of the state Capital to Chief minister Patanik including renovation of existing water ponds within the city and rural areas of Bhubaneswar, removal of encroachments from walking tracks in the City and taking care of stray animals and need for declaring Khandagiri as World Heritage Site. She further added that all overhead electric wires be made underground and public toilets be provided with proper maintenance system in Exhibition Ground and Janata Maidan.

State to construct 9.5 lakh PMAY houses by next June



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 20: To provide shelter to rural poor people, the state government has decided to construct 9.5 lakh pucca houses under the Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana - Gramin (PMAY-G) by June next year.

Chairing a meeting with all collectors through videoconferencing mode, Chief Secretary SC Mahapatra has asked to take steps to speed up the process of providing houses to families living in kacha houses in rural areas.

He directed the collectors to issue work orders by next January. The list of each beneficiary will be displayed in each panchayat for 10 days for the awareness of the general public before issuing the work order.

If any ineligible person is placed in the beneficiary list, people can lodge an objection in this regard in the designated box kept in the panchayat or block office.

Besides, complaints can be lodged through toll free number 1800-3456-768 and online platform.

Before issuing the work orders, photos of the respective houses will be taken and Geo-tagged through the BDOs. Ineligible beneficiaries will be excluded during the verification process.

Mahapatra expressed his hope that through this scheme, extensive pucca houses will be built in rural areas and the families living in kutcha houses can be saved from floods, storms, rains and elephant attacks.

SAI Int'l Residential School celebrates its 5th Founders' Day

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 20: The 5th Founders' Day of SAI International Residential School was celebrated with great grandeur and pomp December 19 and 20.

The Athletic meet set the mood of the day for the celebrations to follow. The morning started with a welcome to the chief guest Mamun Ur Rashid, Deputy Inspector General, CISF KRTC, Mundali. He was given the ceremonial guard of honour by the synchronised marching houses.

Addressing the audience, Rashid emphasized on how sports and games are the integral part of learning and plays a vital role in the success of a student's life.

Aladdin, the mesmerizing English play was the show-stopper of the day one of festivities. The most colourful and enchanting play revolved



around the theme 'think before making a wish'. The students enacted the play immaculately with an Oscarian feel to it. The second day celebrations concluded with cultural event and academic excellence award for the students.

SAI International Silpi Sahoo said, "SAI International is a grooming ground for future leaders and we enable the children to bring

out their best talent. Our Founder, Bijaya Kumar Sahoo has shown the way to 360 degree of holistic development of children and we are walking on his path. Our students have excelled in all fields, be it academics or sports. Children of SAI International are known for their academic excellence and ethical values and I wish them all the best for their future."

Gobinda Sahu ...

Congress Kantabanji MLA Santosh Singh Saluja and former Union minister Bhakta Charan Das demanded a CBI probe into the incident.

Senior BJP leader and Kalahandi MP Basanta Panda said Sahu's mysterious death creates suspicion as it took place hours before he was scheduled to be produced before the court.

"There is also a possibility that Sahu might have been killed as part of a big conspiracy to protect high-profile leaders involved in the case," he said, demanding a CBI probe into the incident.

BJP Mahila Morcha state president Smruti Patnaik alleged that Sahu was murdered as his statement in the court could have ex-

Continued from P1

posed some ruling BJD leaders. BJD MLA and former minister Amar Prasad Sathpathy said law will take its own course.

The kidnapping and murder of Meher, the 24-year-old woman teacher from Jhari village in Turekela block of Bolangir district in October last year, had sent shockwaves across the country, with Opposition having demanded the removal of the then minister of state Dibya Shankar Mishra. Sahu was allegedly a close associate of Mishra, who was dropped from the cabinet six months later.

The woman teacher was working at a private school in Mahaling in Kalahandi district. Sahu was the managing committee member President of the educational institute.

She went missing October 8 last year and her bones and other body

parts were recovered from a pit at an under-construction stadium near the school October 19.

Sahu was subsequently arrested on the charge of killing the woman teacher and chopping her body into pieces, burning it and dumping into the pit. He had also allegedly torched her bag, mobile phone and other belongings to eliminate evidence.

Police probe revealed that the woman teacher had threatened Sahu of exposing his extramarital affairs, over which he allegedly strangled her to death inside his car October 8 last year.

Earlier this month, Ranjit Sahu, principal of the institute, and management committee member Kruti Chandan were arrested on the charges of influencing witnesses in the case.

Covid surge ...

"Every new epidemic wave in another country brings the risk of new variants, and this risk is higher the bigger the outbreak, and the current wave in China is shaping up to be big," said Alex Cook, vice-dean for research at the National University of Singapore's Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health.

"However, inevitably China has to go through a large wave of Covid-19 if it is to reach an endemic state, in a future without lockdowns and the economic and political damage that results," U.S. State Department spokesperson Ned Price said on Monday the potential for the virus to mutate as it spreads in China was "a threat for people everywhere".

Xu Wenbo, an official with the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, told reporters new mutations would occur but played

down concerns. "New strains' immune escape ability becomes stronger, more contagious," Xu said. "But the possibility of them becoming more lethal is low. The possibility of strains that are more contagious and more pathogenic is even lower."

Beijing reported five Covid-related deaths on Tuesday, following two on Monday, which were the first fatalities reported in weeks. In total, China has reported 5,242 Covid deaths since the pandemic emerged in the city of Wuhan in late 2019, a very low toll by global standards. But there are rising doubts that the statistics are reflecting the true impact of a disease ripping through cities after China dropped curbs including most mandatory testing on December 7.

Since then, some hospitals have become inundated, pharmacies emptied of medicines, while many people have gone into self-imposed lockdowns, straining delivery serv-

ices. Some health experts estimate 60% of people in China - equivalent to 10% of the world's population - could be infected over coming months, and that more than 2 million could die.

In the capital, Beijing, security guards patrolled the entrance of a designated Covid crematorium where Reuters journalists on Saturday saw a long line of hearses and workers in hazmat suits carrying the dead inside. Reuters could not establish if the deaths were due to Covid.

Speaking at the same news conference as Xu, the head of Peking University First Hospital's infectious disease department Wang Guiqiang said only deaths caused by pneumonia and respiratory failure after contracting Covid would be classified as Covid deaths. Heart attacks or cardiovascular disease causing death of infected people will not get that classification.

Job seekers...

For the one-month training, which took place between June and July, the victims were duped of Rs 2.67 crore by a group of fraudsters, according to the complaint lodged by 78-year-old M Subbusamy.

Subbusamy, an ex-serviceman, had put the victims in touch with the alleged fraudsters, but he has claimed that he was unaware that the entire thing was a scam and he too had fallen for their trap.

"Each candidate paid money ranging from Rs 2 lakh to Rs 24 lakh to Subbusamy who further paid these to a person named Vikas Rana. Rana posed as a deputy director in the Northern Railway office in Delhi," 25-year-old Snehil Kumar, a victim from Madurai, said. Most of the victims are graduates with backgrounds in engineering and technical education.

"Though the training amount varied for various positions such as travel ticket examiners, traffic assistants or clerks, everyone underwent the same training, ie, counting trains at stations," he added.

Speaking to PTI over the phone from his hometown in Virudhunagar district in Tamil Nadu, Subbusamy said, "Since my retirement, I have been helping

unemployed youths of our locality to find a suitable job without any monetary interest."

In the FIR, he has alleged that he met a person named Sivaraman, a resident of Coimbatore, in one of the MP quarters in Delhi. Sivaraman claimed to be very closely associated with MPs and ministers and offered to facilitate employment in the railways for the unemployed in lieu of monetary gains.

Subbusamy further alleged that Sivaraman asked him to come to Delhi along with job seekers. "Initially, I came with three job seekers and when the news of their job training spread in their villages in and around Madurai, 25 more candidates joined in," Subbusamy said.

According to the FIR, after paying the money as facilitation charges, these prospective candidates were called for a medical examination at the Railway Central Hospital, Connaught Place, and then for document verification at the office of the Junior Engineer, Northern Railway, Shankar Market, New Delhi on various dates.

Victims say that Rana always used to meet them outside for collection of money and never took them inside any Railway building. According to them, all the documents such as orders for training,

identity cards, training completion certificates and appointment letters turned out to be forged when cross-verified with the Railway authorities.

"After document verification, Mr Vikas Rana and Mr Dubey, one of his associates, took all the candidates to Baroda House for issuing study material and kit and also issued them forged/fabricated orders for training, which obviously we realised very late, only sometime back, when we attempted to verify its authenticity," Subbusamy alleged in the FIR.

The EOW in its preliminary investigation found that it was a job scam and further investigation is going on.

Sounding an alarm against such job scams, Yogesh Baweja, Additional Director General for Media and Communication in the Ministry of Railways, said the Railway Board has been regularly issuing advisories and alerting the common people against such fraudulent practices.

"Youngsters should be very careful while dealing with such elements and they should always contact the Railway officials concerned in such situations so that they get to the bottom of the truth as early as possible and save their hard-earned money," Baweja said.

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PADDY PROCUREMENT SCAM IN NAYAGARH

17 millers 'swindle' ₹3.57cr



POST NEWS NETWORK

Nayagarh, Dec 20: Some millers are duping the Food and Civil Supplies department in paddy procurement and supply of rice in this district. This scam has come to light after RTI queries. Sources said Tuesday that 17 millers had taken paddy from the government in the 2021-22 season, but are yet to supply rice worth ₹3.57 crore in return. Surprisingly some of these millers are again set to sign an agreement with the government to procure paddy in the current season. This development has triggered resentment in various quarters. Paddy procurement is going

to start December 23 in Nayagarh district. Sources said that government guidelines have been disregarded with impunity in many cases.

Leaders of various opposition parties and social activists in Nayagarh district have warned of agitation if the errant millers are registered again for paddy procurement. They pointed out that millers who have failed to clear their dues should be barred from procuring paddy.

Following a Cabinet decision, this policy has been in force for the 2022-23 Kharif marketing season.

The district level paddy procurement committee held a meet-

ing November 15 in Khandapara. It was presided over by District Collector Rabindranath Sahu. A decision was taken to procure paddy December 23 onwards.

A total of 153 preliminary agriculture cooperative societies (PACSs) have been engaged to run 167 procurement centres. Strangely the 17 errant millers have been allowed for procurement. The Food and Civil Supplies department issued a letter to the millers May 12 to clear their pending dues. However, they have not done so yet even though more than six months have elapsed.

When contacted, district Civil Supplies officer Tilotama Pradhan kept mum on the issue.

The president of the district unit of Congress, Ranjit Das alleged that the Food and Civil Supplies department is showing favouritism to the errant millers. He said that the party has submitted a memorandum to the secretary of the Food and Civil supplies department and the district collector to remove the names of the errant millers from the list. Das warned that Congress would resort to agitations if these millers are allowed to procure paddy again.



HOME COMING: As many as 907 Maoists and sympathisers wishing to join the mainstream surrendered at the Ghanabada BSF camp in Panasput panchayat under Chittrakonda police limits in Malkangiri district, Tuesday. The rebels decided to shun violence and join the mainstream after being inspired by the developmental works undertaken by the state government and the administration

NEWS IN BRIEF

Labourer killed

Berhampur: A labourer was killed after a huge pile of debris and soil fell on him while he was digging up a well at Srirammang locality under Bada Bazaar police limits here, Tuesday. The deceased was identified as Santosh Sethy, 35, a native of Jagdalpur village under Sadar police limits. He was rushed in a critical condition to the MKCG Medical College and Hospital here. However, he succumbed to his injuries during treatment. Doctors stated that Santosh died due to asphyxiation and his vital signs were very weak when he had arrived at the hospital. On being informed, police rushed to the spot and sent the body for post-mortem.

Man gets 23 years in prison for raping minor

Keonjhar: A special POC SO court in Keonjhar handed Tuesday a prison term of 23 years to Sonu Mahakud (31) of Joda locality who was convicted of raping a minor February 6, 2016. The court also imposed a penalty of ₹60,000 on the convict. According to the case diary, on the day of the incident, the victim along with her brother and sister was at home while their parents had gone outside for work. At night, Sonu, who was their neighbour, knocked at the door of the victim and raped the minor. Next day, on returning home, her parents got to know about the incident and filed a complaint at the Joda police station. Police then arrested the accused and produced him in court.

JJM team reviews projects in Bhadrak

Bant: A central team from Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) reviewed various projects Tuesday in some panchayats under Bant block of Bhadrak district. JJM sector officer, Dr Pradip Shiv Ram and official Appa Rao visited Gopinathpur panchayat for two days and conducted review of implementation of various programmes like Basundhara Yojana, Swachh Bharat Mission, Healthcare and Jal Jeevan Mission. They also visited Pahadpur and Bajipur villages. The two JJM officials were accompanied by people's representatives, panchayat executive officers, members of various SHGs and engineers of Rural Water Supply and Sanitation department (RWSS). The team also visited projects at Charigan, Adia and Odanga panchayats to review the work being done there.



ARMS EXPO: Girl students try their hands with guns displayed at an arms exhibition organised by BSF-99 battalion at Narayanpatna Government High School premises in Rayagada district, Tuesday

Gopalpur bus terminal left to rot

INFRASTRUCTURE BUILT AT A COST OF ₹6 CRORE LIES UNUSED SINCE INAUGURATION

POST NEWS NETWORK

Gopalpur, Dec 20: Gopalpur in Ganjam district is an important place in the tourism map of Odisha. However, a modern bus terminal inaugurated six years ago here, is still not operational. The Odisha government organises the 'Gopalpur Mahotsav' every year to attract tourists. In these circumstances, the non-functional bus terminus is indeed an eye sore. Locals said had the bus terminal been operational, it would have attracted more tourists to Gopalpur.

Sources said that the decision to set up a modern bus terminal for facilitating the arrival and departure of tourists was taken a few years back. Accordingly the foundation stone of the bus terminal was laid in 2014. The Berhampur Development Authority (BDA) built the bus terminal at a cost of ₹6 crore. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik inaugurated it on the birthday of Biju Patnaik in 2016.

However, that was probably the last time the terminus was in the news. Since then it has been lying unused. The entire infrastructure including resting places, drinking water facilities, lamp posts, toilets and ticket counters are gathering dust. Some of the fans and electrical fittings in the bus depot have disappeared while the others are going to waste. The place has now turned into a haven for anti-social activities.

Questions are being asked as to why such a huge amount was invested to develop a facility that has been left to rot.

The premises of the bus stand now wear a shoddy and dirty look

with broken bottles, polythene sheets and gutka pouches strewn all over.

The 'Gopalpur Mahotsav' is going to kick off from December 24 this year. Thousands of tourists from India and abroad will visit the scenic sea spot on the occasion.

Members of various cultural outfits and local leaders said Tuesday that if the bus terminal had been operational, it would have made life for the tourists that much easier. They wouldn't have to face the inconvenience as they had been facing in the past. They said that the district administration and the BDA should take steps to make the facility operational.



Ambulance driver, patient have a drink

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jagatsinghpur, Dec 20: Drink your way to health seems to have been the motto of an ambulance driver in this tiny town near the coast. He stopped his vehicle on the way to a hospital and offered his injured passenger a peg, while pouring himself another. In videos that went viral on social media, the ambulance driver is seen making pegs for himself and the patient, while parking his vehicle on the side

of a highway in Tirtol locality of this district. While the driver was seen gulping his peg down at one go, the patient, with one leg plastered, sipped his drink while lying down on the stretcher. When onlookers confronted the driver, he claimed that the patient himself had asked for a drink. A woman and a child were also seen in the ambulance. Jagatsinghpur chief district medical officer (CDMO) Dr Kshetrabasi Dash said, "Since it was a

private ambulance, we don't have much to say. But the RTO and the police station concerned must take action against the erring driver."

Normal life hit as tribals observe 12-hour bandh in Mayurbhanj district



POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada, Dec 20: Normal life was severely hit as several tribal organisations observed a 12-hour dawn-to-dusk bandh in Mayurbhanj district demanding regularisation of tribal language and script teachers employed by the Odisha government. The bandh was observed from 6.00am to 6.00pm.

The bandh call was given by tribal organisation including the Adivasi Mula Manch, Zilla Pesa Gram Sabha Samanwaya Committee, Masha Army, Majhi Pargana Mahal, Mundari Samaj SawarJamda and various other like-minded outfits.

All shops and business establishments remained closed while vehicular movement was severely restricted. The effect of the bandh was felt in Baripada, Rairangpur, Karanjia, Biso, Jashipur, Bahalda, Bangriposi and various other localities in the district.

"The government appointed 100 Alchiki community mobilisers in 2007 and 20 Mundari language teach-

ers in 2009 on contractual basis. They have been working since the last 15 years on a continuous basis without being regularised by the Odisha government. The 12-hour bandh call has been given over the demand for their regularisation. Our agitation will continue till fulfillment of the demands," an agitator said. "As they have not been regularised, they have lost out on the hike in salaries. They are getting a paltry sum of ₹3,200 per month. The government has betrayed the teachers," another tribal agitator said.

This teacher braves all odds for his students

RAJARAM DHANGDAMAJHI WANTS KIDS OF MAOIST-DOMINATED AREA IN KALAHANDI DISTRICT TO ACHIEVE SUCCESS IN LIFE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhawanipatna, Dec 20: There are people all across the globe who will be remembered always for the sacrifices they make for the benefit of society. One such person is Rajaram Dhangdamajhi, a teacher by profession. He has dedicated his life to educate children in a Maoist dominated area of Kalahandi district without caring for his own life. Rajaram works as a teacher at Surli Primary School in Dedar panchayat of Junagarh block. He incidentally is a native of Kapsara village under Bhawanipatna block. Rajaram's main goal is to educate kids so that they can have a future away from the shadow of a gun. Rajaram does his work diligently without any fear and expectations.

His only aim is to educate children and make them good citizens who can leave the forest area and have a successful life of their own. He crosses a river daily to reach the school situated deep inside a forest and at times he also escorts the kids back home after school hours.

Rajaram's efforts stand out at time when most teachers play truant if they are posted in remote areas. There are many instances of teachers who attend schools only on the day the salaries are given. Not so for Rajaram, he has been teaching in this school since the last 20 years with sincerity and devotion.

Sources said that Rajaram started his career as a teacher in Surli Primary School, March 17, 2001. He was transferred to Supel Primary School under



the same panchayat, August 1, 2008. However, he was transferred again to Surli Primary School, September 23, 2009. Since then, he has been at his present workplace.

Reaching the school is also very tedious for Rajaram. He travels 13 kilometres on National Highway-26 on his bike to a particular place. Then accompanied by his students, he walks

another four kilometres over hilly terrains to reach Haradaguda village. Then they cross the Sagada river and walk for another two kilometres to reach the school.

Locals pointed out that if all the teachers would have shown the same dedication as Rajaram, then Kalahandi district would have been a much better place to live in.

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER DHENKANAL (R&B) DIVISION, DHENKANAL
Email - eedklpwd@gmail.com
INVITATION FOR BIDS THROUGH e-Procurement
Bid Identification No. DKL - 1
TENDER CALL NOTICE NO. 26 OF 2022 -23
Invitation for Bids

No. B-998:

- The Superintending Engineer, Dhenkanal (R&B) Division, Dhenkanal, on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites percentage rate bids in single cover system in ONLINE MODE only, for Construction of Building work & Electrical work as detailed below.
- Nature of work Road & Building work
- No. of work 02 Nos.
- Bid Cost. Rs. 6,000/- (each)
- Class of Contractor C & B Class
- Availability of Bid Documents in the website From 10.00 AM of 22.12.2022 to 5.00 PM of 05.01.2023
- Date of Opening of Bid Dt. 06.01.2023 at 11:00 AM.
- The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website: https://tendersodisha.gov.in. Any addendum / corrigendum / cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website only.

Superintending Engineer
Dhenkanal (R&B) Division, Dhenkanal
OIPR-34016/11/0018/2223

EAST COAST RAILWAY
File No. DRM/Engg/KUR/22-23/
E-Tender/125, Dt.: 16.12.2022
Tender No.: etender-CENT-KUR-348-2022, Dtd.: 08.12.2022

Description of PROPOSED UP-GRADATION OF ANGUL RAILWAY STATION OF KHURDA ROAD DIVISION.
Approx cost of the work : ₹243.15 Lakhs, EMD: ₹271,600/-
Completion period: 06 (Six) Months
Tender Closing Date and Time : at 1500hrs of 30.12.2022

No manual offers sent by Post / Courier / Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letterhead and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.

Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-tender is available in website <http://www.ireps.gov.in>

The tenderers / bidders must have Class-III Digital Signature Certificate and must be registered on IREPS portal. Only registered tenderer(s)/bidder(s) can participate on e-tendering. All relevant papers must have to be uploaded at the time of participating on e-tendering as per instruction.

Note: The prospective tenderers are advised to revisit the website 10 (Ten) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes/corrigenda issued for this tender.

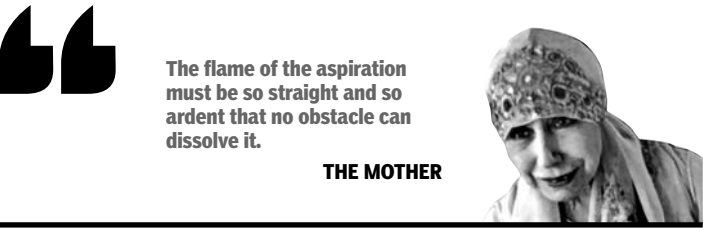
Divisional Railway Manager (Engg),
PR-826/N/22-23
Khurda Road

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
RURAL WORKS DIVISION-II, NAYAGARH
E-Mail: nayagarhrw2@yahoo.in
"e" Procurement Notice for Road Works
Identification No. Online Tender / 06 / RWD-II / 2022-23

No. O-1471-1: 1. Name of the work: Construction of Road works. 2. Total number of works: 9 Nos. 3. Approx. estimated cost: Rs. 1.09 lakh to Rs. 16.82 lakh. 4. Class of contractor: D & C Class of contractor. 5. Period of completion: Sl. No. 1 to 5 = 2 months. Sl. No. 6 to 9 = 1 month. 6. Other details:

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of tender online for bidding		Last date & time of seeking tender clarification	Date and time of opening of tender
		From	To		
1	2	3	4	5	6
Executive Engineer, Rural Works Division-II, Nayagarh	Online Tender / 06 / RWD - II / 2022-23	Dt. 29.12.2022 at 11.00 A.M.	Dt. 09.01.2023 upto 5.00 P.M.	Dt. 09.01.2023 upto 1.00 P.M.	Dt. 10.01.2023 at 11.00 A.M.

Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in
OIPR-25144/11/0007/2223
Sd./- Executive Engineer, R.W. Division-II, Nayagarh



The flame of the aspiration must be so straight and so ardent that no obstacle can dissolve it.

THE MOTHER

The Blue Bird

On 19 December 2022, Elon Musk tweeted "Should I step down as head of Twitter? I will abide by the results of this poll" and held a Twitter based poll that offered a choice of Yes or No to Twitteratis. The results were not shocking. 'Yes' mustered 57% of the votes while 'No' could manage only 43%. This was a clear indication of popular perception about Musk among his own social media subscribers. In the past, Musk has followed through and gone ahead to implement the suggestion of majority voters from a poll response, like reinstating Donald Trump's suspended account. Unsurprisingly this time, instead of stepping down from his leading role in the social media giant, Musk's response to his snubbing was to announce that he would henceforth only allow paying blue tick users to participate in such social polls.

It appears Twitter's moderation nowadays is not governed by a set of rules, but by the whims and fancies of its owner. Recently, Musk had suspended the accounts of some top US journalists for criticizing him on the social media platform. Twitter had suspended the accounts of several journalists from CNN, the New York Times, The Washington Post and many other news outlets. Musk accused them of posting "basically assassination coordinates" against him and his family. Following heavy criticism on this move, he reinstated some of the banned accounts after initiating a poll on Twitter asking whether the accounts should be brought back and getting a majority users voting in favour of bringing back the accounts. Musk had also suspended over 25 Twitter accounts allegedly posting public flight data, including that of his own private jet. This was followed by the removal of the accounts of those who had reported on that purge, alongside the account of one of Twitter's most notable competitors, Mastodon.

The suspensions came without warning a day after Twitter changed its policy on sharing 'live location information' and suspended an account, @ElonJet, that had been using public flight data to share the location of Musk's private plane. The account was run by a college student, Jack Sweeney. Sweeney has claimed Musk previously offered him money to take down the account, but later in November said he would allow it to stay online.

Many of the journalists with suspended accounts had been covering that rule change and refuted Musk's claims that he and his family had been endangered by the location sharing. Musk suggested on Twitter, without evidence, that the journalists had revealed private information about his family, known as doxxing. "Criticizing me all day long is totally fine, but doxxing my real-time location and endangering my family is not," he had tweeted.

These incidents show Musk is changing the platform's policies not for the benefit of the users, but as a reaction to events that affect him personally. "This is causing concern", said John Davison, director of litigation and senior counsel at the Electronic Privacy Information Centre, a non-profit organisation that focuses on privacy and free expression. The intention, he said, appears not to protect Twitter users, but help Musk himself.

Earlier Musk had alleged a 'crazy stalker' followed a car carrying his young son. The veracity of the incident is yet to be confirmed and it is not clear how an account tweeting aircraft location data publicly available via many sources could be linked to a car incident. But, it seems Musk's word is to become law in the Twitter world.

The American Civil Liberties Union had conceded Musk does have a right to bar journalists and others from the platform, but termed the suspensions "an attack on free expression." Trevor Timm, executive director of Freedom of the Press Foundation, says Musk's self-interested acts have shown how moderation on the platform could be further manipulated. Members of the European Parliament had also questioned Musk's action against the journalists. The letter offered recommendations on how he could amend Twitter policies to better comply with the European Union's new Digital Services Act, which makes online platforms more accountable for harmful content posted by users. Large online platforms must comply with it by 2024.

Musk's suspension and reinstating of accounts at his own free will and complying or ignoring his own poll results according to what suits him goes to show Twitter is now a plaything in his hands. Twitter users will now have to decide what the social media platform stands for and how they will continue using it.



Dhurjati Mukherjee

THE NEED FOR INCREASING YIELD IN A POPULOUS COUNTRY LIKE INDIA IS HIGHLY RELEVANT IN VIEW OF THE PROJECTIONS OF FAO

Poverty, hunger and food insecurity along with inadequate funding in agriculture are among the key trends the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) observed that will prevent the world from being able to feed itself in the future. Obviously, with population increasing quite rapidly and the diet improving marginally, countries like India and many others in South Asia and Africa are facing an enormous challenge in feeding their population living in backward regions.

In a recent report titled 'The Future of Food and Agriculture: Trends & Challenges', the international agency which works with governments and the private sector to ensure food quality and safety globally said that "if trends continue, the target of ending hunger by 2030 will not be reached." The FAO said that despite progress in reducing the prevalence of undernourishment, some 794 million people were estimated to be undernourished between 2014 and 2016.

Its most recent projections of trends in undernourishment, provided in another report, 'Achieving Zero Hunger', suggested that under a "business as usual" scenario, some 637 million people in low and middle-income countries would be undernourished by 2030, most of them living in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia." As improvements in food security are associated with increases in purchasing power, the organisation submitted that the twin-track approach is needed, "one that combines investment in social protection, to immediately tackle undernourishment, with pro-poor investments in productive activities, to sustainably increase the income-earning opportunities of the poor."

However, the FAO recently noted that "adequate food availability does not automatically imply adequate food intake by all." It pointed out that inequalities in income and other means of subsistence explain large differences in people's access to food. Secondly, it stated that poorer households tend to face impediments to the adequate use of food, owing to a lack of access to facilities such as storage, cooking equipment and clean water, and to services such as health care and basic nutrition education.

FOCUS AGRICULTURE

IMPENDING FOOD CRISIS



With population increasing quite rapidly and the diet improving marginally, countries like India and many others in South Asia and Africa are facing an enormous challenge in feeding their population living in backward regions

degradation in India but also restore degraded land by bringing life into the soil through regenerative practices including nature-positive food production in rural landscapes to ensure that production and productivity is maintained.

The need for increasing yield in a populous country like India is highly relevant in view of the projections of FAO. Agricultural scientists have suggested certain measures, which include double cropping, better rotation of crops, fighting plant diseases and pests. It may be noted that "productivity enhancing investment in agriculture, however, depends not only on the state of knowledge but also on conditions governing the adoption of technology; it depends on the land tenure system which determines how the agricultural produce is divided between owners of land and agricultural labour; on the terms of trade between agriculture and industry, which determine the relative cheapness of industrial inputs vis-a-vis agricultural produce; and on the level of demand of agricultural produce."

Though on the institutional front, the government is trying in a limited manner to solve the problems of agriculture through land reforms and on the technological front, a modest beginning has been made in converting farmers to the use of improved implements, seeds, chemicals, manures, much more needs to be done. Small farmers at the grassroots levels need training and support which is not coming from the local administration. It also needs to be mentioned that water scarcity has been a hindrance to the spread of irrigation facilities.

Finally, it goes without saying that it is only through an integrated measure of a policy/programme that the challenges facing Indian agriculture can be squarely met. The objectives of government policy should be to develop an effective system and provide similar benefits to agriculture as does industry experience. Modernising operations could inspire youths to agriculture and agro-based industries to ward off the challenge of under-nutrition and hunger that has been predicted.

The writer is Sr Consultant & Guest Faculty at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Kolkata.

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Finally, the dietary transition is partially reflected in improved access to more nutritious foods, including meat, dairy products, fruits and vegetables, but not necessary in the right balance.

In view of this critical condition, the United Nations launched a record-breaking appeal to international donors asking for \$51.5 billion to tackle spiraling levels of desperation, fuelled in part by Russia's war in Ukraine. The disruption to food and fertilizer shipments caused by the war combined with climate-related disasters and a looming threat of global economic recession to produce what the UN appeal warns is "the largest global food crisis in modern history".

"The needs are going up because we have been smitten by the war in Ukraine, by COVID, by climate, and I fear that 2023 is going to see an acceleration of all these trends," Martin Griffiths, the UN humanitarian aid coordinator, stated recently. About 339 million people or one in 23 people on the planet will need assistance, the UN estimated. That is 25% above the 2022 figure and bigger than the population of the US.

For India as for many other countries, the Russia-Ukraine war has come with a very high cost in the form of record fertilizer subsidies apart from creating pressure on its food stocks at a time when domestic production was hit due to indigenous factors. The Indian government has also been forced to offer subsidies for cook-

ing gas as a result of soaring prices.

Meanwhile, the rice and wheat stocks of the central government shrunk alarmingly by as much as 37% in a year as rising food inflation signals growing shortages in the economy. Wheat and rice stocks in government-owned godowns stood at 511.36 lakh tonne as on October 1 which is the lowest since October 2017 when it was 433.36 lakh tonne. A year ago, there was 816 lakh tonne of stock. Experts believe that heavy rain in late September could have impacted the standing paddy crops in Punjab and Haryana. It may be mentioned here that wheat inflation has been more than 10 per cent since November 2021 while paddy inflation has been on an increasing trend since February this year and touched a five year high of around 6%. Agriculturists believe that cereal inflation is expected to stay till the year end due to erratic rains in the Indo-Gangetic plains and various other places.

Another aspect of the problem, which has indirect reference to the production of foodgrains, is another recent report stating that over 29% (over 96 million hectares) of India's total geographical area (328.7 million hectares) is degraded. If looked at this phenomenon globally, where the land has lost its topsoil that supports life, the extent of degradation in terms of losing soil fertility goes up to 40 per cent, threatening roughly half of the global GDP. Scientific reports have emphasised the need to not only stop

IN JEST THIS

Raising awareness about LGBTQA



Melvin Durai

WHATEVER REASONS YOU GIVE FOR STRAIGHT PEOPLE NEEDING TO BE MARRIED ALSO APPLY TO GAY PEOPLE

Many countries have made great progress in recognising gay rights, but others are far behind. India is somewhere in between: homosexuality has been legal in India since 2018, but same-sex marriages have yet to be officially recognised. The Supreme Court may soon consider an appeal from several gay couples who want to be legally married.

It's important for everyone to learn more about the LGBTQA community, so they don't make judgements based on faulty assumptions. That's why I've decided to answer questions from people who are eager to learn.

Question: Why do gay people need to get married? Why can't they just live together as couples?

Answer: Why do straight people need to get married? Whatever reasons you give for straight people needing to be married also apply to gay people. Being legally married allows them to enjoy a number of rights that are granted to married couples, such as being able to share retirement benefits, receive sur-

vivor benefits, adopt children and file for divorce. Why should straight couples be the only ones who can get divorced?

Q: I heard that Harvard University has appointed its first gay president. Is this true?

A: No, Harvard has appointed Claudine Gay as president. Gay is not gay. She is straight.

Q: What about the writer Susan Straight? Is she gay?

A: No, she is straight. You can't tell a person's sexual orientation from their name, just as you can't tell their race. Barry White is black, while Rebecca Black is white.

Q: Is it true that Luxembourg has a gay prime minister and Serbia has a lesbian prime minister?

A: Yes, in many countries, being gay does not exclude you from holding public office. Many people do not consider sexual orientation when they vote. They do not ask themselves questions such as, "Is this man

too gay to balance the budget?" or "Can I trust a lesbian to know what's best for our country?"

Q: Are there any gay people in Saudi Arabia?

A: Yes, but being openly gay is suicidal. Saudi Arabia is one of more than 60 countries where homosexuality is illegal. Even worse, it's one of a few countries, including Iran, Brunei, Mauritania and Yemen, where your life is at serious risk if you commit the crime of loving someone of the same sex.

Q: It used to be that gay people were LGBT. Now they're LGBTQIA. Are they trying to take over the alphabet?

A: No, they are not trying to take over the alphabet. They're just trying to be inclusive. LGBTQIA includes lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual.

Q: I do not mind gays and lesbians, but I'm envious of bisexuals. When they go to a dating site, they can choose both men and women.

It's not fair. Shouldn't we force them to make a choice?

A: We can't force them to make a choice, because sexual orientation is not a choice. You are born that way. If you're bisexual, you can't suddenly say, "From now on I'm going to be attracted to women only." That would be like a dog saying, "From now on, I'm going to chase Toyotas only."

Q: Why do LGBTQIA people insist on using different pronouns? Why can't they be satisfied with he/him and she/her? I met one person who went with "they/them"; another who preferred "ze/zir"; and a third who likes "per/per." It's perplexing.

A: It can be confusing, but you'll eventually get the hang of it. Remember how long it took you to say "Chennai" instead of "Madras"; or "Mumbai" instead of "Bombay"? Gender is not binary - that's why we need different pronouns. If you're unsure which pronoun someone prefers, just ask them. They won't bite - and neither will ze.

WISDOM CORNER

- People who think they know everything are a great annoyance to those of us who do. **ISAAC ASIMOV**
- Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once we grow up. **PABLO PICASSO**
- The path of least resistance is the path of the loser. **HG WELLS**

WORDSWORTH

Dumbledore

Not the Headmaster of Hogwarts, though J K Rowling must surely have borrowed his name from this rather rare term for a kind of bee. And a nicely echoic word it is, which evokes the drowsy hum of questing bees on summer afternoons. Its first part is one of a set of rhyming words from English of some centuries ago, the others being bumble (from a root meaning to drone or buzz) and humble (from an old Germanic word meaning to hum). All three have been used to form names for those furry, blundering, slow-moving bees that are so large you wonder how they get off the ground (bumblebee is now the usual term almost everywhere, humblebee was once common in Britain but is now much less so; dumbledore is the rarest). To various extents all imitate the insect's buzz; the final dore of dumbledore is an Old English word for any insect that flies with a loud humming noise. Charlotte M Yonge used our word in The Daisy Chain, published in 1875: "Those slopes of fresh turf, embroidered with every minute blossom of the moor - thyme, birdsfoot, eyebright, and dwarf purple thistle, buzzed and hummed over by busy, black-tailed, yellow-banded dumbledores". The image of Professor Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore takes a knock when you discover that our word is linked with the archaic or dialect dummel, for someone who is stupid and slow (our dumb and the German dumm are cousins) and dumbledore has also appeared in dialect as a name for a blundering person (Thomas Hardy put it into the mouths of a couple of rustics in Under the Greenwood Tree). Moreover, it has sometimes been applied in English dialect to a far less pleasant insect, the cockchafer (also called the May bug), a considerable pest of crops; it's a large beetle that flies very haphazardly with a loud buzzing sound.

LOL

How to charge them

Two guys were walking along a road in Georgia when they were struck by a police car driven by a drunken cop. One guy was thrown through the



windshield and his buddy was knocked down an embankment. The first guy was charged with breaking and entering and the second with leaving the scene of an accident.

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

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

Hold all-party meet

Sir, This refers to "Cong seeks PM's reply," Orissa POST, Dec 19. Ever since Defence Minister Rajnath Singh informed Parliament that the Chinese PLA attempted to unilaterally change the status quo in the Arunachal Pradesh's border, the Opposition has been demanding a debate on Sino-Indian border issue. For sure, Parliament is the most appropriate platform to debate the issues concerning national security. However, the border issue with China has turned very sensitive, given the aggression and hostility adopted by PLA along the LAC. In this context, detailed open discussion may not be wise and can turn adverse. In fact, India has dealt the challenges posed by PLA deftly. It has strengthened its defences on the border. It has laid out a red line on no normalisation until status quo ante is restored at the border. It has deepened its collaboration with the US both bilaterally and under the Quad umbrella to expand its geopolitical options and send a signal to China, which, through its own actions, lost any public goodwill it may have had. While it has been careful in its public remarks and chosen not to be unnecessarily confrontational, India has played a critical role in opinion-building across the world on the nature of the Chinese threat. And it has decided to build its own economic and military capabilities. Against this context, the government can choose to hold an all-party meeting to take the Opposition into confidence, and to evolve unity in this critical matter of national security. **N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE**

Undemocratic act

Sir, A portrait of Bahadur Shah Zafar hung on the wall of a biryani outlet in Maharashtra's Kolhapur was smashed by a group of men belonging to a Hindutva outfit, who termed the last Mughal emperor a "descendant of Aurangzeb." Some young men, who belong to a right-wing organisation, were visiting the biryani outlet where they saw Zafar's portrait. They objected to it, saying why the picture of a descendant of Aurangzeb had been hung on the wall and asked the eatery staff to remove it. The staff agreed, but the portrait was not removed. Later, the group visited the eatery again, took down the portrait and smashed it up. Bahadur Shah Zafar was the 20th and the last Mughal emperor and also an Urdu poet. He died at age 87 in 1862 in Rangoon, where he had been exiled after the 1857 rebellion. The act is out and out undemocratic and objectionable. **Asit Mohanty, JAJPUR**

national

of the day quote

When you need to enter Parliament in a wheelchair, there's only one entrance with a ramp, at door 9, a good four minute trip (with the assistance of helpers) to the Lok Sabha. This temporary disability has taught me how poorly equipped we are to support people with disabilities

SHASHI THAROOR | SENIOR CONG LEADER

In the last eight years, our double-engine government has taken the pace of development to its peak. Today's Haryana is not the state anymore where there was favouritism in jobs

MANOHAR LAL KHATTAR | HARYANA CM

Karnataka Congress President DK Shivakumar thinks lightly about the Mangaluru cooker blast. The Congress State President supports divisive forces, anti-nationals and corrupt. Now, it can be called as a party of terrorists

NALIN KUMAR KATEEL | K'TAKA BJP PRESIDENT

SHORT TAKES

Woman kills self after being raped

Kolkata: A woman in West Bengal's Bongaon committed suicide late Monday after being raped by a self-styled godman who assured her of settling her domestic issues using black magic. Based on the FIR filed by her family members as well as a suicide note recovered from near her hanging body, the police Tuesday arrested the Sukumar Das, the self-styled godman, and his assistant, Jaideb Das. As per the complaint filed by the elder brother of the deceased homemaker, ever since she got married a few years back, her relationship with her husband was quite bitter with both getting into frequent quarrels.

BJP MPs seek Prez rule in Bihar

New Delhi: BJP MPs from Bihar Tuesday raised the issue of deaths due to consumption of spurious liquor in the state in Lok Sabha, seeking imposition of President's rule there. BJP MP and former Union minister Ravi Shankar Prasad claimed during Zero Hour that post-mortem of those who have died after consuming spurious liquor in Bihar's Chhapra, has not been done. This, the lawmaker from Patna Sahib said, was a violation of human rights.

Monkeypox declining globally

New Delhi: The global trajectory of monkeypox continues to show a declining trend since mid-August, Minister of State for Health Bharati Pravin Pawar told the Rajya Sabha Tuesday. Most cases detected till date have been mild and treatment for the disease remains largely supportive, Pawar said in written reply to a question. According to the WHO, investigational drugs are used in some countries in clinical research settings only.

Maoist surrenders

Chaibasa (Jharkhand): A Maoist, wanted in several cases, surrendered before the police in Jharkhand's West Singhbhum district Tuesday, police said. Kuldeep Ganju alias Tuilu (25), a close aide of top Maoist Misir Besra alias Sagar Ji, laid down his .303 rifle before Superintendent of Police Ashutosh Shekhar and CRPF officers in Chaibasa. The SP said that the Maoist was perturbed by exploitation in the banned outfit and mounting operations by security forces.



Great to meet CEO, @Google and Alphabet, @sundarpichai today afternoon. Discussed India's digital transformation and global strategic developments

S JAISHANKAR | EAM OF INDIA

ASI GETS WATER, PROPERTY TAX NOTICES FOR TAJ MAHAL

The Archaeological Survey of India has been asked to pay a water tax of nearly Rs 2 crore and a property tax of about Rs 1.5 lakh for the Taj Mahal, along with a Rs 5-crore service tax for the Agra Fort, in an apparent first-of-its-kind action by local authorities



The fifth submarine of the Project-75, Kalvari Class submarines, Vajir, delivered to the Indian Navy in Mumbai

PTI PHOTO

Chhota Rajan discharged in murder case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 20: A sessions court here has discharged gangster Chhota Rajan in a case related to the 1999 murder of an alleged member of the Dawood Ibrahim gang. The court allowed Rajan's discharge plea December 17. The detailed order became available Tuesday. As per the prosecution, Anil Sharma, an alleged member of the Dawood gang, was shot by Rajan's men in suburban Andheri on September 2, 1999. Sharma was allegedly part of the team that had carried out a shootout at JJ hospital here on September 12, 1992. The shooting had been allegedly carried out by the Dawood gang to kill a rival gang member. Sharma was killed due to the rivalry between Dawood and Rajan gangs, the prosecution claimed. But the judge, in his order, noted that the prosecution "did not bring or collect any incriminating evidence against this applicant (Rajan) except the words allegedly uttered by the informant (complainant)."



OPPN SLAMS GOVT OVER LACK OF JOBS, PRICE RISE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 20: Opposition parties Tuesday targeted the government on several issues, including inflation, unemployment, non-payment of GST dues to the state governments and the plight of farmers, while discussing the Appropriation Bills in the Upper House. Congress and Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) MPs in the Rajya Sabha slammed the government for "gross miscalculation of expenditure" in the Budget and sought to know whether there was any "misplaced focus" when the funds were allocated. During the discussion on the Supplementary Demands for Grants, which Lok Sabha passed last week authorising the government to spend an additional Rs 3.25 lakh crore in the current financial year, Ameer Yajnik of the Congress said it was a big amount for which Parliament's approval is being sought. Taking part in the discussion, Trinamool Congress' Dola Sen



lamented that India's "AER (agriculture expenditure ratio) of crop husbandry has dropped from 4.2 per cent to 2.8 per cent in the last few years". She also asked the Centre not to discriminate against non-BJP-ruled states in fertiliser allocation. Defending the additional demands, BJP MP Arun Singh said it has been made to benefit farmers and poor people. CPI(M) member John Brittas brought the attention of the House

Shinde 'lands' in trouble

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Nagpur, Dec 20: The Bombay High Court has ordered status quo on a decision taken by Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, when he was a minister in the erstwhile Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government, of allotting land meant for slum dwellers to private persons, a ruling that prompted the Opposition to demand the CM's resignation and hold protests in the legislature complex here Tuesday. The HC order provided ammunition to Opposition members to target the Shinde-Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) dispensation during the ongoing winter session of the state legislature in Nagpur; but Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis stoutly de-

fended the government in the Council and denied any wrongdoing on part of the CM. A division bench of Justices Sunil Shukre and M W Chandwani of the HC's Nagpur bench, in its order passed December 14, noted that the court since 2004 has been monitoring the land allotments made by the Nagpur Improvement Trust (NIT) to politicians and other influential individuals. This was after a petition was filed by Nagpur-based social activist Anil Wadpalliwar, alleging the NIT, a local planning authority constituted under the state government during the ongoing winter session of the state legislature in Nagpur, gave away land to politicians and others at meagre rates.



towards high inflation in the country and stated it was "loot in broad daylight". He also pointed towards the rise in the currency to Rs 29.17 lakh crore at present from 17.74 lakh crore in 2016. Congress' G C Chandrashekar said the central government had promised to double the farmers' income by 2022 but "unfortunately the problem of farmers has doubled". Mentioning the Crop Insurance scheme, he said the government has several schemes but many of them are not benefiting half of the farmers. Jose K Mani of Kerala Congress(M) raised concerns over the fall in the price of rubber that has been hurting the farmers in the state. Ram Gopal Yadav from Samajwadi Party said the budget for health, education and agriculture are lesser than required. He expressed concern over expenditure incurred by people on healthcare and suggested the Centre meet the entire expenses as is being done in many countries.

Border dispute raised in Maha, K'taka legislatures

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Nagpur, Dec 20: Opposition parties in Maharashtra Tuesday targeted the Karnataka government in the state Assembly over the alleged ill-treatment being meted out to Marathi-speaking people, while the legislature of the neighbouring state reiterated that no land would be ceded to Maharashtra. Raising the issue in the Maharashtra Assembly during the ongoing winter session in Nagpur, Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) MLA Jayant Patil said a lathi (baton) was raised at his party colleague and legislator Hasan Mushrif on Monday when he visited Belagavi to meet the Marathi-speaking people there.

The border dispute between the two states is on the boil once again for the last few weeks

Leader of Opposition Ajit Pawar said the issue was very sensitive to everyone. Chief Minister Eknath Shinde said that for the first time the Centre has intervened which is a positive step. The long-pending border dispute between the two states flared up again on Monday when members of Opposition parties- Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray), Congress, and NCP - from Maharashtra were stopped from entering Karnataka by the police. They were to attend a gath-

ering organised by the pro-Maharashtra group Maharashtra Ekikaran Samiti (MES). In Belagavi, where the Karnataka legislature is holding its session, both the Houses will be passing a resolution on the border dispute. The Karnataka legislature reiterated the state's stand that the issue had been settled long ago and not an inch of land will be given to Maharashtra. During a debate, Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai himself suggested passing a unanimous resolution in both Houses reiterating and asserting the stand. Members of all political parties including Leader of Opposition Siddaramaiah agreed.

Guj's Sun Temple, Vadnagar town in list of UNESCO heritage sites

The UNESCO website describes a tentative list as an "inventory of those properties which each State Party intends to consider for nomination"

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 20: Three new cultural sites in India, including iconic Sun Temple at Modhera, historic Vadnagar town in Gujarat and rock-cut relief sculptures of Unakoti in Tripura, have been added to the tentative list of UNESCO world her-

itage sites, the ASI said Tuesday. The UNESCO website describes a tentative list as an "inventory of those properties which each State Party intends to consider for nomination". On Tuesday, Union Culture Minister G Kishan Reddy tweeted to share the news and also shared images of the three sites. "Congratulations India! India adds 3 more sites to @UNESCO's Tentative List: 01 Vadnagar- A multi-layered Historic town, Gujarat 02 Sun Temple, Modhera and its adjoining monuments 03 Rock-cut Sculptures and Reliefs of the Unakoti, Unakoti Range, Unakoti District," he tweeted. Vadnagar, an ancient city in



Mehsana district of Gujarat is steeped in history and endowed with rich built heritage. It is the hometown of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The Archaeological

Survey of India (ASI) also shared his tweet and added that the step will provide a big boost to India's cultural heritage. "Big boost to #India's cultural

heritage, as Sun Temple, Modhera & adjoining monuments, rock-cut Sculptures & Reliefs of Unakoti and Vadnagar; a multi-layered historic town, Gujarat are the 3 new sites added to Tentative List of @UNESCO #WorldHeritageSites, making the count to 52," he tweeted. A senior official said that the names of the three sites for inclusion in the tentative list of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites, were sent "about 15 days ago". "There names were given to UNESCO for it, and all three names were accepted. The nomination, for inclusion in UNESCO World Heritage Sites list each year is sent from the list of tentative sites. The choice of

the site is decided by the central government," the official said. The Sun Temple, Modhera dedicated to the Sun God, is one of the remarkable gems of temple architecture in India. It impresses not only with its architectural structure and technological achievements as in position of the temple against to Sun; but also in particular with its sculpture decoration, representing true artistic mastery. Prime Minister Modi had visited the Surya Mandir in Modhera in October. He had also inaugurated heritage lighting there which makes it the first heritage site in India to be powered solely by solar energy, the PMO had earlier said.



Goa turning into 'narco-tourism' hotspot

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Panaji, Dec 20: Though it is generally believed that drugs came to Goa with the hippies six decades ago, now the involvement of locals has given a boost to this illegal trade. The police is facing a challenge to crackdown on it and break the chains of suppliers.

Ganja, which is very easily available in the coastal state, is grown not only in the forest areas, but also in apartments. Many such persons cultivating ganja were arrested in the past, including foreigners.

While ganja and charas have much flow, hashish oil, cocaine, LSD, ecstasy tablets, MDMA, heroin, methamphetamine are also available in the state. Nidhin Valsan, Superintendent of Police (Crime Branch), said that foreigners and others bring drugs to Goa from Delhi and Mumbai. "They mostly use railways to enter Goa. In the past we have registered cases, wherein accused persons were bringing drugs in trains," he said.

"Apart from ganja and charas, they also bring LSD, ecstasy tablets, MDMA etc. We are keeping a close watch on their activities," he said. He said that so far there is no case of the 'dark web' being used for the drug trade. "Though there is no such case, but our cyber crime police is keeping a watch on such activities and we are spreading awareness of the ill effects of drugs in schools and public places," Valsan said.

He said the Goa police is coordinating with other states to act



GANJA, WHICH IS VERY EASILY AVAILABLE IN THE COASTAL STATE, IS GROWN NOT ONLY IN THE FOREST AREAS, BUT ALSO IN APARTMENTS. MANY SUCH PERSONS CULTIVATING GANJA WERE ARRESTED IN THE PAST, INCLUDING FOREIGNERS

WHILE GANJA AND CHARAS HAVE MUCH FLOW, HASHISH OIL, COCAINE, LSD, ECSTASY TABLETS, MDMA, HEROIN, METHAMPHETAMINE ARE ALSO AVAILABLE IN THE STATE

against the flow of drugs. "We even follow up the old cases and see the involvement of habitual accused persons. We leave no stone unturned to eradicate drugs from the state," Valsan said.

There are many cases where tourists visiting the state were arrested for growing ganja. In 2018 a Russian couple was arrested for growing marijuana inside their rented apartment in the beach village of Anjuna in North Goa. In 2019, a four-member Russian gang was arrested on the same charge and in 2020 yet another Russian national was arrested from Morjim in North Goa for growing mari-

juana in rented premises. It is believed that six decades ago drugs entered the coastal state along with the hippies. Since then Goa continues to be a haven for narcotics. Many beaches of Goa were thronged by the hippies earlier and now domestic tourists too visit Goa and fall prey to drug peddlers.

The coastal state has emerged as a haven for the narcotics trade, with drug peddlers and suppliers changing their modus operandi. "People know that drugs are not good for health, but they fall prey to it when they come here to have a good time. It becomes difficult to check every route, as you never

know which route drug suppliers will take," a senior police officer said on condition of anonymity. "Is it possible to check each and every passenger in a train, who comes here?," he questioned.

He said now that the locals' involvement is increasing in the drug trade, there should not be political interference in taking action. Sources informed that most of the drugs are smuggled on trains from Delhi and Mumbai. On August 21 this year, the state Crime Branch sleuths had arrested a Nigerian woman, who allegedly tried to smuggle drugs to Goa by concealing the consignment worth Rs 15,10,000 in her sandals.

She had arrived from Delhi by train carrying the drugs. Such methods are used to transport narcotics into Goa. According to official records, 168 cases in 2017, 222 cases in 2018, 219 cases in 2019, 148 cases in 2020, and 121 cases in 2021 have been registered under the NDPS Act.

According to sources, the Goa police in the last 10 months has arrested more than 24 foreign nationals, of which the majority are Nigerian nationals. During this period, the police arrested around 116 alleged drug peddlers, out of which 31 were residents of Goa, 62 were from outside Goa and 24 were foreign nationals.

In the last 10 months, the police have seized a variety of drugs weighing over 140 kg. Even hashish oil, charas and other drugs such as cocaine, LSD, ecstasy tablets, MDMA, heroin, methamphetamine etc were seized.

Microchips in stray dogs soon

The Tiruchy corporation is planning to insert microchips the size of a rice grain and work on a radio frequency identification system. It is to be noted that a handheld scanner will provide details of the dog

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, Dec 20: The Tamil Nadu Animal husbandry department is mulling the possibility of inserting microchips in stray dogs that undergo birth control programmes. This is following animal rights activists petitioning the department over the strays undergoing birth control programmes having health issues. The Tiruchy municipal corporation, which is in an accelerated mode in sterilizing stray dogs, has already petitioned the state Animal husbandry department on the matter. It is to be noted that Tiruchy corporation is sterilizing stray dogs at a rate of 60 per day and is to increase it by 120 per day.

A senior official of the Tiruchy corporation said, "We want to ensure that the strays are not facing any health issues after the dogs undergo birth control programmes. The current method of cropping the ears of the dogs that are subjected to birth control measures does not provide any information on these stray dogs and about their health conditions and hence contemplating the possibilities of inserting microchips in the body of stray dogs."

The Tiruchy corporation is planning to insert microchips the size of a rice grain and work on a radio frequency identification system. It is to be noted that a handheld scanner will provide details of the dog.

The state animal husbandry department is planning to hold a



meeting of experts, including veterinarians and animal activists before giving the green signal in implementing the microchip in stray dogs that have undergone birth control programme.

Sudha Rani (41), an animal health activist from Tiruchy while speaking to IANS said, "We have been relentlessly petitioning the corporation and the state animal health department for conducting studies on the health condition of stray dogs that have undergone birth control programme. The present procedure

of cropping the ear of those dogs that were sterilized will not be of much help other than identifying that it was sterilized. The corporation officials informed me that they are mulling on inserting microchips into these dogs. Let there be an expert committee on this and then they decide." She said that if there were no health issues with inserting these microchips, then it would be a good method to understand the health issues of those dogs that have undergone the birth control programme.

Kamal Haasan to join Bharat Jodo Yatra

With Kamal Haasan in the process of reworking his political strategy, the possibility of the actor contesting the 2024 Lok Sabha elections is high and he can be a major campaigner for the alliance across Tamil Nadu



The announcement of Kamal Haasan has come as a surprise as he was fervently opposing the Congress and its ally, the DMK in Tamil Nadu politics

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, Dec 20: South Indian movies superstar, Kamal Haasan who is also the President of Makkal Needhi Maiam (MNM), will be joining the Bharat Jodo Yatra led by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi in New Delhi on December 24.

The announcement of Kamal Haasan has come as a surprise as he was fervently opposing the Congress and its ally, the DMK in Tamil Nadu politics.

However, it is seen as a shrewd political move as he and his party have not been performing well in successive elections.

Kamal Haasan himself lost from

the Coimbatore South constituency in the 2021 Tamil Nadu Assembly elections and several senior leaders of the party resigned and joined other parties.

A strong polarisation has already taken place in Tamil Nadu politics with the Secular Progressive Alliance (SPA) led by the DMK taking on the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) led by the AIADMK and BJP. The Congress, the two communist parties, CPI-M and CPI, the MDMK, the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) are among the coalition partners of the SPA. The NDA has the BJP, the AIADMK, the PMK, and some small parties. The MNM has nothing to boast of other than the screen image of the actor and the organisational network of the party is also not that good.

A whole lot of second-rung leaders of the party have already left MNM and Kamal Haasan knows for sure that if he does not align with either of the two fronts, he would not be able to lift the party morale and party cadres would also leave the party.

Prof. Hamid Hassan, a retired professor of Political Science, said: "This is a shrewd move by Kamal Haasan to align with the Congress-DMK bandwagon as he knows that fighting single in Tamil Nadu will not reap any dividends.

Kamal has always been a staunch supporter of secular progressive forces and hence he won't be at difficulty in having a political alliance with the Secular Progressive Alliance."

With Kamal Haasan in the process of reworking his political strategy, the possibility of the actor contesting the 2024 Lok Sabha elections is high and he can be a major campaigner for the alliance across Tamil Nadu.

DANCE BAR GIRLS IN GOA FACING IRE

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Panaji, Dec 20: Dance bar culture, which was banned in Mumbai-Maharashtra in the year 2005, has spread its wings in Goa.

Facing nuisance, BJP leaders in the coastal belt from North Goa are up in arms against it, claiming that it is tarnishing the image of the coastal state. Along with Goa's BJP MLA Michael Lobo, sarpanch Joseph Sequeira from Calangute constituency, in North Goa, has demanded state police to act against the mushrooming of dance bars in their area, claiming they are being operated illegally.

These elected representatives have also submitted a letter to the state government and the Director General of Police, demanding action. Sources informed that not only in Calangute, but wherever there is good footfall of domestic tourists, these dance bars are being operated by availing licence meant for 'restaurant'.

BJP leader Joseph Sequeira said,

that around 16 illegal dance bars are operating in his panchayat jurisdiction. "We have not permitted anyone to operate dance bars, licences are issued only for restaurants. There is no provision to issue a licence for a dance bar, hence the restaurant licence is being used for illegal purposes," Sequeira said.

"No sooner had the dance bars been banned in Mumbai, they looked at Goa as an opportunity to spread this concept here. My village name is getting spoilt for this illegal trade. This should be stopped. Our elected representatives (MLAs) should discuss this issue in the Assembly session and put a ban on it," Sequeira added.

According to Sequeira, he has served notices to all the 16 dance bars. "We have sought a reply from them and have told them to remove all banners and hoardings (mentioning as dance bars) from the village. We will take further action," he said.

He said that there will be no im-



pact on tourism activities if these dance bars are banned. "There will be absolutely no effect on tourism business," he said, adding that they are conducting surprise checks. According to local MLA Michael Lobo, because of these dance bars, tourists have become active, who cheat

tourists visiting the coastal village. "I am confident that the police will take action. Earlier, there were 700 to 800 touts. But after my appeal to the Chief Minister, the police acted and now only 200 to 250 touts are there, who operate during night time," Lobo claimed. Lobo said

that tourists visiting the state should get safety.

"We need to send a message to the world that tourists are safe here. Illegal things should be stopped. Panchayat has given licences for restaurants, but they convert them into dance bars. It is totally illegal. I had stopped this earlier, but again it has started," he said.

"Last time, the panchayat and the Planning Development Area (PDA) had taken action against these dance bars and they were demolished. But again they have been constructed and now 12 to 13 dance bars are established," Lobo said.

In the past few days, he claimed that numerous incidents of touts have been reported who cheated tourists of large amounts of money by making false promises. According to Lobo, various incidents go unreported as most of the tourists hesitate to complain since they are here to enjoy their holiday, and they do not prefer to waste time and energy at police stations.

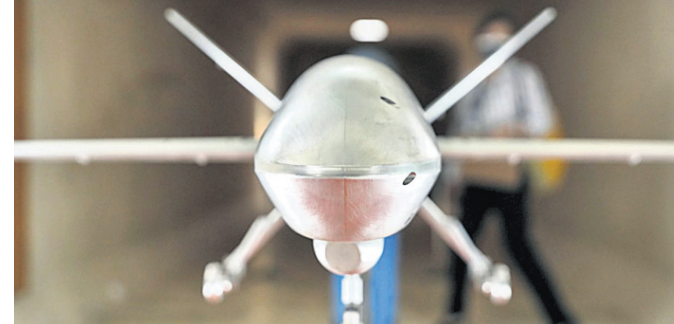
To make Goa drone mfg hub, state frames policy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Panaji, Dec 20: The Drone Policy 2022 launched by the Goa government has suggested that its departments consider the use of the unmanned aerial vehicles for efficient and effective governance.

Chief Minister Pramod Sawant on Monday launched the Drone Policy 2022, as per which the government will engage with technical institutes and academia to design drone-related courses for use in sectors like agriculture, horticulture, forestry, healthcare, mining and others.

"The government will help in establishing drone schools that offer various courses in drone operations and pilot certification," the policy said, adding the government will encourage the setting up of centres of excellence within higher academic institu-



tions to promote research and development.

The policy mentions that "drones offer tremendous benefits to almost every sector of the economy including but not limited to agriculture, infrastructure, emergency response, transportation, geospatial mapping, media, entertainment, law enforcement and others."

The Department of Information Technology, Electronics and Communications has in its policy said the state government shall extend the benefits under the Goa Start-Up Policy 2021 and the Goa IT Policy 2018 to drone as well as drone component manufacturers and service providers.

Further, drones shall be the key focus area for the government for

the purpose of any additional incentives which could be accrued thereon, the policy mentions. Since this technology is in the nascent stage, the government endeavours to create an industry ready workforce, it said.

The IT department will also develop capacity-building programs for government officials, create customised modular training for differentiated needs based on levels and fields of service. The policy also aims to create a network of certified drone pilots and instructors in the state.

Goa Information Technology Minister Rohan Khaunte on Monday said the drone policy aims to position Goa as a key state in India's drone ecosystem, by harnessing opportunities to promote manufacturing, innovation, generate employment and provide value-added services in the state.

TN TO SET UP HIGH-TECH LABS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, Dec 20: The Tamil Nadu school education department will hire IT companies to set up high-tech labs in Classes 6 to 8.

Presently the high-tech labs are set up in the government high schools and higher secondary schools. The state school education department will direct the IT companies to procure computer systems for the projects.

Sources in the state school education department said that each high-tech lab would be provided with 10 computer systems, a projector with a mounting kit, web cameras, LAN connectivities with a hard disk capacity of 1 TB annually. High-tech printers, headphones, and CCTV cameras will also be installed.

The computer firm will provide UPS, and generators will also be kept available for uninterrupted power supply. The operating system will be open software and Linux will be provided. The IT firm will maintain each laboratory for five years and the company will also replace the worn-out equipment.



MIGRANT WORKERS IN TIRUPPUR FACE UNCERTAINTY

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, Dec 20: The migrant workers of Tiruppur, the textile city of Tamil Nadu, are facing uncertainty as several units are shut down following fluctuating yarn prices. The city which was once buzzing with activities are now in lockdown mode.

Sujit Mandal, a migrant worker from Midnapore in West Bengal, who has been working in the textile city as a tailor, said, "There is

uncertainty all around and we don't have any means to survive here after the textile units have shut down as a protest demanding increase in yarn prices."

He adds, "Presently we are surviving at the benevolence of our owner who provides us food from his home. However there seems to be no solution in sight as the protests have been continuing for the past two months and nothing has happened."

According to the Tamil Nadu revenue department, there are



around 1.3 lakh migrant workers in Tiruppur district but the total number as ascertained by the industrial safety and health department is only 64,300.

The exact number of migrant workers in the district is not clear and revenue department officials said that their report was based on the figures they arrived at during the relief measures taken during Covid-19. The officials said that several workers had moved out of Tiruppur and had gone back home.

The Tiruppur Export Association (TEA) president, K.M. Subramain said that they had put a proposal to the Southern Railway to register the workers as soon as they reach the railway station. He said that his organisation is yet to receive a response from the Southern Railway.

There are around 6200 dyeing, knitting, stitching, and garment printing units in and around Tiruppur, and the exact number of migrant workers in these units is not known.

of the day quote

Whatever factors and situations that led to this (Mukroh) violence, if proper coordination and communication was maintained by all agencies of both the governments, I am sure it (border violence) could have been averted

CONRAD K SANGMA | MEGHALAYA CM

Not just workers and party members, there are several people who will join the yatra for a day or two to show their support for this initiative. The manual registration process was on till December 18 and we received an overwhelming response from the public

ANIL CHAUDHARY | CONGRESS' DELHI UNIT PRESIDENT

Now, I am going to stay lifelong in this party (Samajwadi Party), whether I get a post or not. This is our party. I had worked continuously with 'netaji' (Mulayam Singh Yadav)

SHIVPAL SINGH YADAV | MEMBER OF THE UP LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

SHORT TAKES

Three killed in Ajmer accident

Jaipur: Three men were killed after being hit by an unidentified vehicle in Rajasthan's Ajmer district, police said Tuesday. The incident occurred late Monday night near Naya Gaon bridge. The trio was walking when they were hit by the vehicle, Madangaj police station SHO Nemichand Chaudhary said. Their bodies were handed over to their family members after post mortem Tuesday.

Guj: Depressed farmer ends life

Junagadh: A farmer, who was suffering from depression for the past few years, allegedly died by suicide in Gujarat's Junagadh district, police said. The farmer -- Shivraj Dhandhal -- was suffering from depression due to financial constraints and social issues, his family said. Mendarda Police Sub Inspector K M Mori said Dhandhal was missing since Monday morning.

Bridge collapses, probe ordered

Begusarai: An inquiry has been ordered into the collapse of a yet-to-be-inaugurated bridge built over a river in Begusarai district of Bihar, which has brought the spotlight on sub-standard construction works in the state, an official said Tuesday.



Children's opinions on any issue should be considered, and not ignored out right, as it would instill a sense of responsibility in them

PINARAYI VIJAYAN | KERALA CM

NAXAL VIOLENCE REDUCED

The incidents of Naxal violence have reduced by 77 per cent from the high of 2,213 in 2010 to 509 in 2021, Union Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai said in Lok Sabha Tuesday



Cold wave grips north India

Biting cold gripped north India Tuesday while dense fog caused several accidents, leaving three people dead and 40 injured in Uttar Pradesh and Haryana, and forcing a change in school timings in Punjab

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 20: Dense to very dense fog engulfed the Indo-Gangetic plains, including Delhi, for the second morning on the trot Tuesday, lowering visibility to 50 metres in the city and affecting road traffic and train movement.

Flight operations, however, were unaffected in the national capital, an airport official said. On Tuesday, 11 trains were reported running late by one to five hours. Visibility dropped to 50 metres at the Palam and Safdarjung airports in Delhi between 5.30 am and 7 am, an IMD official said.

The Safdarjung Observatory, the primary weather station in Delhi, recorded a minimum temperature of 6.3 degrees Celsius, two notches below normal. The maximum temperature is likely to settle around 22 degrees Celsius. The minimum and maximum temperatures are likely to drop to five degrees Celsius and 20 degrees Celsius in the next few days in Delhi.

Satellite images showed a thick layer of fog over Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, north Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh in the morning.

One person died and 24 were injured when a bus collided with a truck amid low visibility due to dense fog on the Yamuna Expressway in Greater Noida,



Police personnel inspect the accident site as several vehicles collided with each other due to heavy fog on the Bulandshahr-Aligarh road

police said. The accident took place around 6.30 am in Dankaur area, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Greater Noida) Abhishek Verma said.

A container truck moving ahead of the bus suddenly came to a stop, which caused the bus to crash into it and then hit the railing along the expressway, he said.

In a separate incident, a truck loaded with lentils hit the divider of the highway and overturned in the Dadri area of Greater Noida, police said. In Bulandshahr, a truck driver was killed and six people were injured in a pile-up involving several vehicles on the Bulandshahr-Aligarh road in Arnia, police said.

In Kaushambi, Nitish (25) was travelling with his friend on a motorcycle when their two-wheeler hit a stationary truck near Sayara overbridge on the Prayagraj-Kanpur road around 9 am due to low visibility, police said. Nitish died in the accident while his friend was

referred to SRN Hospital in Prayagraj in critical condition, they said. Eight people were injured in Sitapur when their van hit a stationary truck due to low visibility, police said, adding four passengers were grievously injured in the accident that occurred near Kalli village under the Misrikh police station area, they said.

Two police vehicles, which were part of Haryana Deputy Chief Minister Dushyant Chautala's cavalcade, met with an accident on the Hisar-Sirsa Highway, police said. A bodyguard sustained injuries. They said all others, including Chautala, were safe.

The deputy Chief Minister was travelling from Hisar to Sirsa Monday night when the accident took place due to dense fog, police said.

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann announced that all schools in the state will open at 10 am from December 21 till January 21 due to

foggy weather. The weather department said cold wave to severe cold wave conditions are likely at isolated places in Haryana and Punjab while dense to very dense fog is likely at most places over the next 4-5 days. Meanwhile, cold wave across Kashmir intensified on Tuesday as the temperatures fell several degrees below the freezing point, a day ahead of 'Chilla-i-Kalan', the 40-day harshest winter period, officials said.

The minimum temperature in Srinagar recorded last night was minus 3.4 degrees Celsius, while Gulmarg resort in north Kashmir's Baramulla district recorded a low of minus 4.0 degrees Celsius, they said. The meteorological department has forecast colder nights over the next couple of days as further fall in the minimum temperature is expected. There is possibility of rains or light snowfall in some parts of Kashmir around Christmas.

Delhi L-G seeks recovery of ₹97cr AAP spent on advts

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 20: Delhi Lt Governor VK Saxena Tuesday directed the Chief Secretary to recover Rs 97 crore spent by Aam Aadmi Party on political advertisements which it published as the government advertisements.

The L-G has directed the Chief Secretary to implement the September 2016 order of the Supreme Court appointed Committee on Content Regulation in Government Advertising (CCRGA) and the pursuant order of Directorate of Information & Publicity (DIP), GNCTD, directing AAP to pay Rs 97,14,69,137 plus interest, to the state exchequer, for political advertisements that it got published/telecast in the garb of government advertisements.

This, apart from being a gross case of misappropriation of

Government funds for the benefit of a political party, also amounts to contempt of the Supreme and High Court, said LG Secretariat.

The Supreme Court in its order in 2015, while disposing a Writ Petition (Civil) of 2003, with regards to "restraining the Union of India and all State Governments from

using public funds on Government advertisements which are primarily intended to project individual functionaries of the Government or a Political Party, and laying down of appropriate guidelines by this Court.", had postulated guidelines to regulate Government Advertising and eliminate unproductive expenditure. Pursuant to this order, a three-Member Committee on CCRGA was constituted by Ministry of Information & Broadcasting to regulate the content of Advertising and eliminate unproductive expenditure of Government Revenue.

Hitting back, AAP alleged that the LG issued the 'illegal' orders on the directions of the BJP which was 'flustered' after the loss in the MCD polls



ENCOUNTER IN SHOPIAN, 3 LeT TERRORISTS KILLED

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, Dec 20: Three Lashkar-e-Toiba terrorists were killed in an encounter with security forces in Shopian district of Jammu and Kashmir Tuesday, police said.

Additional Director General of Police, Kashmir zone, Vijay Kumar said two of the three slain terrorists have been identified and were involved in civilian killings. He said one of the slain ultra was Lateef Lone, who was allegedly involved in killing of Kashmiri Pandit Puran Krishan Bhat, while the other terrorist was identified as Umer Nazir, who was involved in killing of Till Bahadur Thapa of Nepal.

Giving details of the encounter, a police official said security forces launched a cordon and search operation at Munjh Marg in Zainapora area of Shopian following information about presence of terrorists.

The search operation turned into an encounter, the official said, adding three LeT ultras were killed in the exchange of fire with the security forces. An AK 47 rifle and two pistols were recovered from the encounter site.



Vehicles stuck in a traffic jam, near Majnu Ka Tilla in New Delhi

PTI PHOTO

Girl marries 'kidnapper'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad, Dec 20: The kidnapping of a 18-year-old girl from Telangana's Rajanna Sircilla district took a twist with the girl now releasing a video of her marriage with the boyfriend who "kidnapped" her. Shamili stated that she was not kidnapped but at her request, her boyfriend Gnaneshwar took her from home as her parents were trying to marry her off to some other man.

The video was released hours after the "kidnapping" in Moodepalle village of Chandurthi mandal. The video clip of the incident had gone viral on social media and sent the police in a tizzy. The couple released a video and photographs of their marriage, performed at a temple. In the selfie video, Shamili said that they were in love for four years but her family did not approve of their relationship since he is Dalit. She also revealed that they were married last year but since she was minor then, the wedding was not legal and her parents had filed a police case against Gnaneshwar. He was sent to jail in the case.

Referring to the CCTV footage of the "kidnapping" that went viral on social media in the morning, Shamili said she could not recognise him as he was wearing a mask.

SOCIAL PROGRESS INDEX

Pondicherry, Lakshadweep, Goa best performers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 20: Pondicherry, Lakshadweep and Goa have emerged as best-performing among all states and Union Territories in the Social Progress Index (SPI), while Jharkhand and Bihar as worst, according to a report mandated by the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM).

The report titled 'Social Progress Index: States and Districts of India' released by EAC-PM Chairman Bibek Debroy further said that Aizawl (Mizoram), Solan (Himachal Pradesh) and Shimla (Himachal Pradesh) have emerged as the top 3 best-performing districts.

The report has been prepared by the Institute for Competitiveness and the Social Progress Imperative and was mandated by the EAC-PM. According to the report, Pondicherry



REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE

In terms of shelter and personal safety, Chandigarh and Nagaland have emerged as the front-runners, respectively

According to the report, in terms of basic human needs, Goa, Pondicherry, Lakshadweep and Chandigarh are the top four states with the best performance in water and sanitation and shelter as compared to other states and Union Territories

has the highest SPI score of 65.99 in the country, attributable to its remarkable performance across components like personal freedom and

choice, shelter, and water and sanitation. Lakshadweep and Goa closely follow it with scores of 65.89 and 65.53, respectively, it

added. As per the report, Jharkhand and Bihar scored the lowest, 43.95 and 44.47, respectively.

The report ranks 36 states/Union Territories and 707 districts of India based on their performance across various social progress indicators in terms of access to education, healthcare, water and sanitation, exercising personal freedom and choice, ensuring shelter, personal safety and quality environment for people. It pointed out that only 27 out of 112 districts under the Aspirational District Programme (ADP) have scored above the national average on the Social Progress Index.

Among these 27 districts, only 5 have ranked in top 100 districts. SPI assesses the performance of states and districts on three dimensions of social progress -- basic human needs, foundations of well-being and opportunity.

On the basis of access to basic knowledge, the report said, Punjab has the highest component score of 62.92, while Delhi has topped the list for access to information and communication with a score of 71.30. In terms of health and wellness, Rajasthan has the highest component score of 73.74, while in case of environmental quality, the top three states are Mizoram, Nagaland, and Meghalaya -- all from north-east region.

The report said Tamil Nadu has achieved the highest component score of 72.00 under opportunity dimension. Within this dimension, Andaman and Nicobar Islands have the highest component score for personal rights, while Sikkim has topped the list for inclusiveness.

India's aggregate Social Progress Index score of 60.19 in 2022 is slightly lower than the world average of 65.24.

Mann meets KCR

AGENCIES

Hyderabad, Dec 20: Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann Tuesday met his Telangana counterpart and Bharat Rashtira Samithi (BRS) president K Chandrasekhar Rao.

The Telangana Chief Minister warmly welcomed his Punjab counterpart with a bouquet of flowers on his arrival at Pragathi Bhavan and took him in.

The two Chief Ministers discussed the political situation in the country along with the progress of Telangana and governance of the state of Punjab, etc, said a statement from Chief Minister's Office (CMO).

In view of formation of BRS party at the national level, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader congratulated KCR, as the BRS leader is popularly known.

After the discussions, KCR bid adieu to Mann by offering him a shawl and presenting a memento. Rajya Sabha Members Joginapally Santosh Kumar, State



Planning Board Vice-Chairman B. Vinod Kumar, MLCs S Madhusudhana Chari, Kadiam Srihar, Government Whip Balka Suman, MLAs A Jeevan Reddy, Guvvala Balaraju, Government Chief Advisor Rajeev Sharma, Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar, CM Secretary Bhupal Reddy, former MP S Venugopala Chari, Civil Supplies Corporation Chairman Ravinder Singh, former members of State BC Commission Ediga Anjaneya Goud and others were present on the occasion.

international



I absolutely don't believe that Britain is a racist country. And I'd hope that as our nation's first British Asian Prime Minister when I say that, it carries some weight

DESIGN UNVEILED
The design for the first set of bank notes to feature new monarch of Britain, King Charles III, was unveiled by the Bank of England Tuesday



of the day quote

We are still moving in the wrong direction. The global emissions gap is growing. The 1.5-degree goal is gasping for breath. National climate plans are falling woefully short

This year's Hanukkah arrives in the midst of rising and emboldened antisemitism at home — and quite frankly, around the world

Sri Lanka has approved a proposal to set up an institute aimed at educating parliamentarians and officials to help them make informed decisions on economic and trade affairs

SHORT TAKES

Nepal blacklists 16 Indian cos

Kathmandu: Nepal's drug regulatory authority has blacklisted 16 Indian pharmaceutical companies, including Divya Pharmacy which manufactures Yoga Guru Ramdev's Patanjali products, stating that they failed to comply with the World Health Organisation's (WHO) drug manufacturing standards. The Department of Drug Administration, in a notice issued on December 18 asked the local agents in Nepal, which have been supplying these medicines, to immediately recall them.

Deuba faces stiff challenge

Kathmandu: Nepal Prime Minister and the ruling Nepali Congress President Sher Bahadur Deuba will face-off against General Secretary Gagan Kumar Thapa for the post of its parliamentary party (PP) leader election on Wednesday, party officials said. The election assumes considerable political significance as the PP leader could possibly lead the next government after the Nepali Congress emerged as the single-largest party in the general elections held on November 20.

Weinstein found guilty of rape

Los Angeles: After a month-long trial and nine days of deliberations, Los Angeles jurors on Monday found Harvey Weinstein guilty of the rape and sexual assault of just one of the four accusers he was charged with abusing. But the three guilty counts involving an Italian actor and model known as the trial as Jane Doe 1 still struck a major blow against the disgraced movie mogul, and provided another #MeToo moment of reckoning, five years after he became a magnet for the movement. Weinstein, 70, who is two years into a 23-year sentence for a rape and sexual assault conviction in New York that is under appeal, could get up to 24 years in prison in California when he's sentenced.

Five bodies found

Bangkok: Rescuers found a survivor and recovered five bodies from a Thai warship that sank over the weekend in the Gulf of Thailand, navy officials said Tuesday, as hopes faded for two dozen people still missing. Officials acknowledged there were not enough life jackets for all those aboard. The HTMS Sukhothai, a corvette in service for 35 years, sank Sunday night in rough seas with 105 people aboard. The navy said an earlier tally of 106 people on board was incorrect because one sailor failed to join the journey.

ZELENSKY VISITS COMBAT ZONE; PUTIN RALLIES FORCES

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Beijing/Singapore, Dec 20: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy Tuesday visited an eastern city that is a focus of some of the most intense combat of Russia's nearly 10-month war, while Russian President Vladimir Putin praised the "courage and self-denial" of his front-line forces in Ukraine.

Zelenskyy met with military personnel in Bakhmut, the scene of "fierce battles" between Ukraine's defenders and Russia's invading forces, the president's office said. The city, located about 600 kilometers (380 miles) east of Kyiv, has remained in Ukrainian hands, thwarting Moscow's goal of capturing Ukraine's entire Donbas region.

It was not clear how Zelenskyy got to Bakhmut, but his unannounced trip to the combat zone appeared designed to shore up the morale of Ukrainians and to dishearten the Russians trying to encircle the city. The president saluted people's "courage, resilience and strength shown in repelling the enemy attacks."

"Bakhmut Fortress. Our people. Unconquered by the enemy. Who with their bravery prove that we will endure and will not give up what's ours," he wrote on his Telegram channel. While the Kremlin tries to advance its stalled invasion and Ukrainians burned their furniture to try to stay warm, Putin hailed his country's military and security agencies during a Kremlin ceremony. Among others, he presented awards to the



A firefighter works at a site of a critical power infrastructure object which was hit during Russia's drone attacks in Kyiv

- THE PRESIDENT SALUTED PEOPLE'S 'COURAGE, RESILIENCE AND STRENGTH SHOWN IN REPELLING THE ENEMY ATTACKS'
- THE ANNEXED PROVINCES - DONETSK, KHERSON, LUHANSK AND ZAPORIZHZHIA - REMAIN FIERCELY CONTESTED
- RUSSIA'S GROUND INVASION, WHICH BEGAN FEBRUARY 24, HAS LOST MOMENTUM IN RECENT MONTHS

Moscow-appointed heads of four regions of Ukraine that Russia illegally annexed in September.

"Our country has often faced challenges and defended its sovereignty," Putin said. "Now Russia is again facing such challenge. Soldiers, officers and volunteers are showing outstanding examples of courage and self-denial on the front line."

Russia's ground invasion, which began February 24, has lost momentum in recent months.

The annexed provinces - Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk and Zaporizhzhia - remain fiercely con-

tested. Capturing Bakhmut, which is located in Donetsk, would cleave Ukraine's supply lines and open a route for Russian forces to press on toward the cities that are key Ukrainian strongholds in the province.

Mercenaries from the Wagner Group, a shadowy Russian military company, are reported to be leading the charge in Bakhmut. Before Russia's full-scale invasion, Russia-backed separatists had controlled parts of Donetsk and neighboring Luhansk since 2014. The two provinces together make up the Donbas.

The North's Foreign Ministry said in a statement that Japan's push to acquire counterstrike capability has nothing to do with self-defence but is a clear attempt to acquire "preemptive attack capability meant to launch strikes on other countries' territories"

N KOREA THREATENS JAPAN

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Seoul, Dec 20: North Korea threatened Tuesday to take a "resolute and decisive military step" against Japan while it slammed Tokyo's adoption of a national security strategy that includes an attempt to turn the country into "an offensive military giant."

The North's statement came four days after Japan announced a security strategy that includes a counterstrike capability against enemy targets and doubles its mil-



A woman has her mouth painted in red during a protest against Iran's ruling theocracy following the death of young Kurdish Iranian woman Mahsa Amini demanding authorities to free thousands of detained protesters and to stop executions, outside Iran's embassy, in Mexico City, Mexico

itary spending to gain a more offensive footing against threats from China and North Korea. "Japan's foolish attempt to satiate its black-hearted greed — the building up of its military inva-

sion capability under the pretext of (North Korea's) legitimate exercise of the right to self-defence — cannot be justified and tolerated," an unidentified ministry spokesperson said in a statement carried by state media. The statement accused the United States of supporting and instigating the Japanese military ambitions and undermining regional peace. It said that such U.S. moves are forcing North Korea to work hard to complete its plans to develop new strategic weapons to thwart enemy attempts to invade it.

Quake jolts Northern California

REUTERS

Ferndale, Dec 20: A strong 6.4-magnitude earthquake that struck off the coast of northern California Tuesday injured two people, damaged a bridge and left thousands of homes and businesses without power.

The earthquake struck at 2:34 a.m. local time (1034 GMT) and was about 10 miles (16.1 km) deep, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) said.

It struck about 7.4 miles (12 km) west-southwest of Ferndale, California, a Humboldt County town that is home to about 15,000 people and located 261 miles (420 km) north of San Francisco and just south of Eureka.

The earthquake caused numerous gas leaks, downed powerlines and at least one structure fire in Ferndale, local media reported.

Two people were injured in Humboldt County, where wide-

spread damage to roads and homes was reported, the sheriff's office said on its website.

It did not give details on the extent or circumstances of the injuries. It is unclear if the earthquake caused any deaths.

"Be prepared for aftershocks. Check gas and water lines for damages or leaks. Exercise caution if traveling," the office said on Twitter. Local media reported that the California highway patrol was responding to reports of cracks in the Ferndale bridge over the Eel River in and out of Ferndale.

Highway 101 and Highway 299 remained open through Humboldt County, State Senator Mike McGuire said on Twitter, noting that transportation officials were assessing state highway infrastructure.

"That earthquake was insane," said Twitter user Jimmy Eller, who said he lived in Humboldt County.



A woman has her mouth painted in red during a protest against Iran's ruling theocracy following the death of young Kurdish Iranian woman Mahsa Amini demanding authorities to free thousands of detained protesters and to stop executions, outside Iran's embassy, in Mexico City, Mexico

POWER CRISIS DEEPENS

Pak plans to shut markets by 8 pm, put curbs on weddings

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Islamabad, Dec 20: Markets and restaurants across Pakistan will have to pull down their shutters by 8 pm while wedding halls will be limited till 10 pm, as the cash-strapped country on Tuesday unveiled a desperate plan to conserve energy.

Pakistan is in the midst of an acute energy crisis, high inflation and depleting remittances. The ongoing Russia-Ukraine war and the catastrophic floods in June have only compounded the country's energy woes.

The national energy-conservation programme was launched by Pakistan's Defence Minister Khawaja Asif, and it comes a day after Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif directed authorities to reduce circular debt in the energy sector.

Asif said the federal government will approach provinces for the implementation of this nationwide scheme. Briefing the media after the cabinet meeting, the minister said a final decision will be taken by Thursday.

"In the next few days, we will be approaching all the provinces with this national project and then on Thursday the final approval of the conservation policy will be given,"



Asif said. Under this scheme, he said the timing of wedding halls would be limited to 10pm, while restaurants, hotels and markets would close down by 8pm.

He, however, said that there may be some room for the closing time for restaurants to be extended by

Negotiations fail, all terrorists killed



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Peshawar/Islamabad, Dec 20: Pakistan Army's special forces stormed a counter-terrorism centre in the restive Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province and killed all 33 terrorists, ending a nearly two-day long hostage crisis that had gripped the nation.

Two commandos of the special forces were also killed in the rescue operation that was launched after negotiations between the government and the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) militants to end the hostage crisis failed.

Defence Minister Khawaja Asif confirmed that "all the terrorists" of the Pakistani Taliban who had taken hostages at a Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) centre in Bannu were killed in an operation conducted by the Pakistan Army's Special Services Group (SSG).

"This operation was initiated on December 20 at 12:30 pm by the Special Service Group and all terrorists were killed," Asif said while speaking on the floor of the National Assembly. He said that 33 terrorists were under arrest at the CTD compound and one of them had managed to snatch a gun from an employee after hitting him in the head with a brick.

The defence minister said that two commandos were killed while over a dozen injured during the operation. Asif said that the militants had killed two hostages before the rescue operation.

He said that all remaining hostages were freed but didn't pro-

vide their numbers. Earlier, police sources had said that about two dozen officials had been made hostages. He said that the entire CTD compound was cleared by 2:30pm. Earlier, officials said that all the terrorists were killed in the operation that lasted 15 minutes. Footage aired on TV on Tuesday showed plumes of smoke rising in the air from the CTD compound.

The standoff began on Sunday when an arrested TTP militant, who was being interrogated at the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) police station inside the Bannu Cantonment, snatched an AK-47 from the police and opened fire. He then freed other wanted militants being held at the building and together they took control of the compound. They also took several policemen as hostages. The TTP demanded safe passage for its militants either to South or North Waziristan tribal districts.

The situation in Bannu remained tense on Tuesday as police and security agencies asked residents to remain indoors. A security alert was issued earlier and all schools and colleges in the Bannu district remained closed on Tuesday.

Mobile services in the cantonment area and the surrounding areas were also suspended, officials said. "The unfortunate aspect of this is that terrorism is again making strides in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan," the defence minister said.

This operation was initiated on December 20 at 12:30 pm by the Special Service Group and all terrorists were killed

KHAWAJA ASIF | PAKISTAN DEFENCE MINISTER



The burden of regulatory changes on the small cars is far higher than the regulatory burden on big cars and that is changing the whole market behaviour.

RC BHARGAVA | MARUTI SUZUKI INDIA CHAIRMAN

AMAZON TO MAKE BIG BIZ CHANGES IN EU SETTLEMENT

Amazon has agreed to make major changes to its business practices to settle antitrust investigations that found the ecommerce giant gave itself an unfair advantage over rival merchants, European Union regulators said Tuesday.



of the day quote

India is set to usher in a revolution in the global fertiliser space with its nano fertiliser technology even as eight such production plants will start functioning in the country by 2025

MANSUKH MANDAVIYA | MINISTER OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILISERS

India is the cornerstone of our global strategy, certainly one of the top focus markets from OYC perspective

MASASHI NAKAGAWA | CHAIRMAN, ORIENTAL YEAST INDIA

We currently manage 10,000-plus buildings spread across commercial offices, healthcare, hospitality and retail across the globe. We are aiming to double this by the end of 2023 and tap into the USD 30 billion real estate focused operations software market

PRABHU RAMACHANDRAN | FACILIO CO-FOUNDER & CEO

Inflation 'down, but not out': RBI bulletin

WITH HEADLINE INFLATION PROJECTED TO RISE IN THE SECOND QUARTER OF THE FINANCIAL YEAR STARTING NEXT APRIL AFTER DECLINING IN THE FIRST THREE MONTHS, THERE CAN BE NO LETTING DOWN OF THE GUARD, THE BULLETIN SAID



Mumbai, Dec 20: India's headline inflation has broadened out and become 'stubborn', the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said in its monthly bulletin Tuesday. "Inflation may be slightly down, but it is certainly not out," the central bank said in a report. With headline inflation projected

to rise in the second quarter of the financial year starting next April after declining in the first three months, there can be no letting down of the guard, the bank said. India's annual inflation rate fell to 5.88% in November; below the upper end of the RBI's comfort band of 6% for the first time this year. According to the central bank's estimates, annual inflation is seen cooling to 5.9% in January-March next year and 5% in April-June

omy is supported by domestic drivers as reflected in high frequency economic indicators. "Waning input cost pressures, still buoyant corporate sales and turn-up in investments in fixed assets are heralding the beginning of an upturn in the capex cycle in India," it added. The article further said that in December, as India engages in setting out its priorities and deliverables under its G20 Presidency, there is a sense that "perhaps her time in the centre of the world's stage has arrived." As the third largest economy in PPP terms, and the fifth largest in terms of market exchange rates, India accounts for 3.6% of G20 GDP while its share in real (PPP) terms is much higher at 8.2%. In 2023, India is projected to be among the fastest-growing economies within G20. "Our priorities under the G20 Presidency encapsulate a vision of unity and interconnectedness," said the article and added they will also reflect the priorities of the global South: One Earth, One Family, One Future.

Sebi to phase out share buyback through bourses



Mumbai, Dec 20: Capital markets regulator Sebi Tuesday decided to gradually phase out buyback of shares by companies through the stock exchange route to address the drawbacks associated with the existing mechanism. Sebi Chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch said the regulator has chosen the tender offer route for share buyback as the present mode is vulnerable to favouritism. "This is a glide path and will lead to the phasing out of the present buyback mode (through stock exchange route)," she told reporters after its board meeting here. Also, the board has decided that companies would have to utilise 75 per cent of the proceeds of the buyback undertaken through the stock exchange route from the existing minimum of 50 per cent. Further, Sebi said that buybacks will be undertaken through a separate window on stock exchanges till the time they are permitted through the exchanges. Since shares are bought back at the prevailing market price, acceptance of shares under buyback is a matter of chance for most shareholders. There is no clarity as to whether shares are accepted under buyback or sold in the open market and thus shareholders are unable

to claim the benefits arising out of buybacks. The phasing out the route would address the drawbacks associated with the existing buyback of shares through the stock exchange mechanism. In its board meeting, Sebi has approved an amendment to buyback of securities rules which would streamline the process of buyback, create a level playing field for investors and promote ease of doing business. A Sebi committee, headed by HDFC vice-chairman and CEO Keki Mistry, proposed that the mechanism of share buybacks through open market transactions should be abolished in a phased manner, with the option to close down the route from April 2025. With regard to share buyback through tender offer route, Sebi has decided to reduce timeline for completion of buyback by 18 days by removing the requirement of filing draft letter of offer with the regulator and its observations thereof, and reduction of the duration of the tendering period and period available for payment of consideration to the shareholders. Also, it has allowed upward revision of buy-back price until one working day prior to the record date. In addition, the regulator would make it mandatory to place the relevant documents with respect to buyback.

Markets recoup on fag-end buying

AFTER TUMBLING OVER 700 POINTS INTRA-DAY, SENSEX CLAWED BACK LOST GROUND ON LAST MINUTE BUYING IN INDEX HEAVYWEIGHTS

AGENCIES

Mumbai, Dec 20: Equity benchmarks recovered most of their intra-day losses to close modestly lower Tuesday amid buying in index majors Reliance Industries and Tata Consultancy Services despite lacklustre global cues. After tumbling over 700 points intra-day, the 30-share BSE Sensex clawed back lost ground on last minute buying in index heavyweights. It finally ended 103.90 points or 0.17 per cent lower at 61,702.29. On similar lines, the broader NSE Nifty dipped 35.15 points or 0.19

per cent to end at 18,385.30. Tata Motors led the Sensex losers' list, dropping 1.75 per cent, followed by Hindustan Unilever, Bharti Airtel, M&M, NTPC, Maruti Suzuki, L&T and HDFC Bank. In contrast, Tata Consultancy Services, Reliance Industries, UltraTech Cement, IndusInd Bank, Axis Bank and ICICI Bank were among the prominent winners, climbing up to 1.29 per cent. The market breadth was negative, with 21 of the 30 components closing in the red. In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge declined 0.27 per cent and the smallcap index dipped 0.02 per cent. Among sectoral in-



dices, telecommunication went lower by 1.32 per cent, realty (1.04 per cent), auto (0.76 per cent), FMCG (0.57 per cent) and metal (0.51 per cent). Energy, IT and oil & gas ended in the green. Elsewhere in Asia, equity markets in Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong closed lower after the Bank of Japan's policy move.

SHORT TAKES

Axis Bank forays into retirement biz

Mumbai: Axis Bank Tuesday announced that it has received regulatory nod to act as a pension fund manager and has already crossed ₹100 crore in assets under management (AUM) for its retirement business. The third largest private sector lender received a commencement of business certificate from the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) on September 20, and the AUM has been managed in the first 45 days of the business, as per a company statement. The bank has launched a step-down subsidiary Axis Pension Fund Management through its subsidiary Axis Asset Management Company, which marks its foray into the retirement business, the statement added. Axis Bank's chief executive and managing director Amitabh Chaudhry said Axis Pension Fund will capitalise on the investment management capabilities and distribution strength of the group and aims to be the preferred retirement solutions provider.

Dabur promoters offload 1 pc stake

New Delhi: Home-grown FMCG major Dabur India Tuesday said its promoters the Burman family have sold shares amounting to about 1 per cent stake in the company through the open market to raise funds for financing some ventures. "Burman family, who are part of the majority shareholders of Dabur India Ltd, have sold approximately 1 per cent shares through a block deal," said a regulatory filing by Dabur India. These shares were sold through two holding companies -- Gyan Enterprises and Chowdry Associates. "The purpose of doing this transaction is to raise funds for financing some ventures in the private hands of the Burman family," it added. Shares of Dabur India settled at ₹579.85 a piece, down 1.51 per cent from the previous close.

Jaxay Shah on ONDC's board

New Delhi: Quality Council of India (QCI) Chairman Jaxay Shah has been appointed to the board of Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC). ONDC is an initiative of the commerce and industry ministry to offer small retailers an opportunity to provide their services and goods to buyers across the country through an e-commerce system, where buyers will be able to purchase the products, which are sold on any platform.

Over ₹4L cr raised via disinvestment since 2014: Govt

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 20: The government has raised over ₹4.04 lakh crore through disinvestment and strategic sale of public sector enterprises since the Modi government came into power in 2014, the Finance Ministry said Tuesday. Of this, the largest amount totalling over ₹1.07 lakh crore through offer for sale in 59 cases. This was followed by a stake sale through Exchange Traded Fund (ETF) in 10 tranches, aggregating to ₹98,949 crore. Strategic sales in 10 companies, including Air India, yielded ₹69,412 crore to the exchequer in the last 8 years. Share buyback in 45 cases fetched ₹45,104 crore. 17 CPSEs were listed since 2014-15, which yielded ₹50,386 crore. Of this, the initial public offering (IPO) of LIC alone fetched the government ₹20,516 crore. The additional market capitalisation of ₹7.31 lakh crore was achieved through new listings, the ministry said.

BIZ BUZZ

BIPF receives INDIA CSR award

BHUBANESWAR: Bansidhar & Ila Panda Foundation (BIPF) has received the winner award as CSR implementing partner for health, education and livelihood in recognition of its work done for community development at the 13th CSR Leadership Summit 2022 held in New Delhi. Ashok Behera, VP-BIPF, received the award in gracious presence of former MP RK Singh and Dr Shalini Rajnish, Additional Chief Secretary of Karnataka. India CSR awards are given by INDIA CSR network annually to the best contributors in various fields of community development and CSR activities. BIPF is the CSR arm of IMFA but also has been implementing projects for community in association with NABARD and with corporates like GECL as a CSR registered body. Ashok Behera said: "The award establishes credential as a CSR partner to corporates and we look forward to association with other corporates to help meet CSR obligations under mandatory compliance requirement in Odisha. Few more corporates and PSUs have also received awards on this occasion."



Birla Fertility & IVF in state



BHUBANESWAR: CK Birla Healthcare launched its comprehensive fertility centre, Birla Fertility & IVF at Anuj Times Square, Janpath, Saheed Nagar, Bhubaneswar. This is the group's first centre in the state, offering clinically reliable treatment, a price promise and empathetic and trustworthy care to patients with fertility issues. The facility at Bhubaneswar is Birla Fertility & IVF's 12th clinic in the country, adding to its existing presence across multiple locations in Delhi, Gurugram, Kolkata, Lucknow, Patna and Varanasi. Birla Fertility & IVF is currently the fastest-growing IVF and fertility brand in the country. It delivers high pregnancy rates with multiple live births across all centres, over 95% patient satisfaction score and offers affordable and transparent pricing to patients. Commenting on the launch of the new facility, Akshat Sethi, CEO, Birla Fertility & IVF, CK Birla Healthcare said, "With Birla Fertility and IVF, the newest brand and venture of the CK Birla Group, the Group aims to be a global leader in fertility care with a vision to transform the future of fertility through outstanding clinical outcomes, research, and innovation."

EPFO adds 12.94L net subscribers

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 20: Retirement fund body EPFO added 12.94 lakh subscribers on a net basis in October 2022, the labour ministry said Tuesday. The ministry in a statement said that around 2,282 new establishments have started complying for the first time under the Employees' Provident Funds & Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952 ensuring social security cover to their employees. A year-on-year comparison of payroll data reflects an increase of 21,026 in net membership in October 2022, it stated. Of total 12.94 lakh members added during the month, around 7.28 lakh new members have been covered under the social security cover of the EPFO for the first time, the provisional payroll data of EPFO showed. Among the new members, the highest number was registered for the age group of 18-21 years with 2.19 lakh members. This was followed by the age group of 22-25 years with 1.97 lakh members. Out of the total new members who joined, approximately 57.25 per cent are from the age group of 18-25 years of age.

YouTube's ecosystem contributes ₹10k cr to India's GDP

In India, over 4,500 channels had over 10 lakh subscribers and the number of YouTube channels in the country making ₹1 lakh or more in their annual revenue increased by over 60 per cent y-o-y in 2021

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 20: Online video platform YouTube's ecosystem has contributed over ₹10,000 crore to India's GDP and supported more than 7.5 lakh full-time equivalent jobs in the country, according to a report. In India, over 4,500 channels had over 10 lakh subscribers and the number of YouTube channels in India making ₹1 lakh or more in their annual revenue increased by over 60 per cent year-over-year

in 2021, the YouTube Impact Report based on analysis by Oxford Economics said. "YouTube's creative ecosystem contributed over ₹10,000 crore and supported more than 7,50,000 full-time equivalent jobs in the Indian economy in 2021. That economic impact shows up in four ways, through direct, indirect, induced, and catalytic impacts," the report said. YouTube recorded over 30 billion views in 2021 on just health condition videos and has decided



to onboard healthcare institutions like Narayana Health, Manipal Hospitals, Medanta, and Shalby Multi-Specialty Hospitals to create and amplify credible content, covering more than 100

medical conditions, YouTube said in a blog. Oxford Economics surveyed 4,021 YouTube users, 5,633 creators of all sizes, and 523 businesses to analyse the impact of

turn to YouTube to learn things that will enhance their everyday lives, whether it's practical skills like changing a tyre, concepts of personal finance, motivational advice, or helpful professional skills that will help them monetise their hobbies, pursue a career, or build a business. It found that 77 per cent of female users agree that YouTube is a helpful platform for lifelong learning, 56 per cent of female users agree that YouTube helps them learn skills that help them in their everyday life, 90 per cent of female creators agree that YouTube helps them share their passions and ideas and 88 per cent of female creators agree that YouTube helps them be creative, according to the report.

GRAND HOMECOMING

ARGENTINA FORGETS ITS ECONOMIC CRISIS IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE FIFA WORLD CUP TRIUMPH



NIGHT TO REMEMBER: Thousands throng the streets of Buenos Aires as the bus with the Argentina team leaves the airport Tuesday; (Inset): Lionel Messi and head coach Lionel Scaloni were the first two to embark from the aircraft with the former holding aloft the World Cup trophy

AGENCIES

Buenos Aires, Dec 20: Thousands of fans lined up in the middle of the night to try to get a glimpse of the Argentina soccer team that won one of the greatest World Cup finals of all time. By looking at the reaction of the fans one can safely predict that it is going to be a day of huge celebrations at the

Argentina capital here. Members of the team, led by captain Lionel Messi, were all smiles as they descended from the plane in Ezeiza, right outside Argentina's capital, shortly before 3.00am Tuesday onto a red carpet that had been rolled out for the squad.

Messi was the first player from the plane carrying the World Cup, flanked by coach Lionel

Scaloni, who put his arm around the captain as they walked past a sign that read, "Thank you, champions."

The players were welcomed by rock band 'La Mosca' singing *Muchachos*, a song that was written by a fan to the tune of an old song by the band and became a popular unofficial anthem for Argentine fans at the

World Cup in Qatar.

The newly-crowned football World Champions boarded an open top bus and several, including Messi, could be seen singing the words to *Muchachos* while they waited for everyone to get on heading to the headquarters of the Argentina Football Association (AFA).

The bus moved at a snail's pace as fans, many of whom were waving Argentine flags, swarmed the bus on a highway, eager for a glimpse of the players as law enforcement officers tried to keep them at bay.

President Alberto Fernández declared a national holiday Tuesday so the country could celebrate the tremendous victory.

The day after the streets of Argentina turned into massive parties following the Sunday victory, many kept a close eye on the flight that brought the players home to celebrate. As the plane got closer to Argentine soil, almost 2,00,000 people were tracking its path online and news channels gave live coverage of the arrival.

In the afternoon, people started arriving at the airport and outside the AFA headquarters in hopes of getting a glimpse of the team.

Several players posted photos of the plane ride on social media sites. Messi held the World Cup on the plane. Nicolás Tagliafico, meanwhile, posted a photo of the World Cup buckled into an airplane seat as if it was just another passenger.

As of early Tuesday morning there were no official plans for Fernández, or any other political leaders, to take part in the celebrations despite earlier rumours that the players would go to Government House, which was offered for the celebrations, according to Argentina Security Minister, Anibal Fernández.

The World Cup and the success of the Messi-led squad has brought much-needed good news for a country that has been stuck in economic doldrums for years and is suffering one of the world's highest inflation rates and where almost four-in-10 people live in poverty.

AFTERMATH OF FINAL LOSS TO ARGENTINA

3 French players face racial abuse



(From left): Aurelien Tchouameni, Kingsley Coman and Randal Kolo Muani

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 20: Three French players – Kingsley Coman, Aurelien Tchouameni and Randal Kolo Muani – have been subjected to appalling racist abuse following their World Cup final defeat against Argentina in Doha. The Les Bleus lost a nail-biting final to Argentina on penalty kicks following a 3-3 draw after extra-time.

During the thrilling clash, Kolo Muani missed a chance to win the game in extra-time for France, while Tchouameni and Coman both missed penalties in the nerve-wrangling shootout.

The trio received numerous racist messages on social media after that. Meta, which owns Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp, later removed all such vile comments.

As per reports, Real Madrid's Tchouameni has limited comments on his Instagram posts. Kolo Muani of Eintracht Frankfurt turned them off.

"We don't want racist abuse on Instagram, and we've removed the disgusting comments for breaking our rules. We also want to help protect people from having to see

this abuse in the first place, which is why we've developed 'Hidden Words', a feature that filters of offensive comments and DMs, and 'Limits', which hides comments and DMs from people who don't follow you, or only followed you recently," Meta said in a statement.

"We're in touch with players and their teams directly since Sunday's final, to offer them support and help them turn on these tools," the company added.

Bayern Munich also issued a statement of support for Coman, condemning the racist remarks made about him. "The FC Bayern family is behind you, King. Racism has no place in sport or our society," the club said on Twitter.

France manager Didier Deschamps also took to the social media in support of the players. "There is no room for racism in sport. I am proud of the players who gave it their all. They tried their very best," Deschamps said on Twitter.

France President Emmanuel Macron also came down heavily on the abusers. "In sport, you win some and lose some. We did not deserve to lose the final. I am very proud of our gallant footballers," Macron said.

SHORT TAKES

US Open champs to play in Pune tourney

Pune: Reigning US Open champions Rajeev Ram and Joe Salisbury will headline the star-studded doubles field at the fifth edition of Tata Open tennis tournament here along with four Indians, including the defending champions Rohan Bopanna and Ramkumar Ramanathan. The tournament will be played December 31 to January 7 at the Balewadi Stadium here. Ram and Salisbury are currently ranked No. 3 in doubles. They also won the title at season-ending ATP Finals in Turin. "We are looking forward to playing in India," Ram and Salisbury said in a release.

'Poor' rating for pitch in Brisbane

Brisbane: The International Cricket Council (ICC) gave Tuesday a below average rating to the Brisbane pitch after the first Test between Australia and South Africa ended in two days. Australia won the game by six wickets after South Africa managed 152 and 99 in their two innings. Australia made 218 in their first innings. The hosts also lost four wickets in their second innings. "Overall, the Gabba pitch for this Test match was too much in favour of the bowlers. There was extra bounce and occasional excessive seam movement," ICC match referee Richie Richardson said in his report. "I found the pitch to be 'below average' as per the ICC guidelines since it was not an even contest between bat and ball. It was at times dangerous for the batters," Richardson added.

Wild card for Venus

Melbourne: American legend and seven-time Major champion, Venus Williams has been awarded a wild card into the women's singles main draw of the 2023 Australian Open, the year's first Grand Slam. Venus, a former World No 1, is a two-time finalist here and the 42-year-old will be making her 22nd appearance in the tournament which begins January 16 at the Melbourne Park here. Venus made her first appearance here in 1998. "I am very excited to be returning to Melbourne to compete at the Australian Open in January," said Venus, who owns a 54-21 career win-loss record at the Australian Open. "It will indeed be a great honour for me to again play in Melbourne where I am loved," she added.

ODISHA BATTERS FAIL TO IMPRESS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 20: Odisha batters once again failed to deliver Tuesday as they were bowled out for only 213 in their four-day Ranji Trophy Elite Group A encounter against Uttarakhand in Dehradun. After being put in to bat, Odisha could only manage in 213 all out in their first essay. At stumps on Day 1, Uttarakhand were four without loss.

A number of Odia batters like Kartik Biswal (48), former skipper Biplab Samantray (46), Abhishek Raut (32), Anurag Sarangi (27) and Rajesh Dhupar (21) got starts, but failed to convert those into substantial scores. As a result there were no fruitful partnerships during the Odisha innings, something which is very important in a four-day game. The only notable partnership was of 80 runs between Biplab and Kartik for the fourth wicket after Odisha had been reduced to 38 for three.

The departure of Biplab with the score at 192 sparked off a mini collapse as Odisha lost their last four wickets for only 21 runs against some disciplined bowling by the Uttarakhand bowlers. However, the Odia batters also played reckless shots at times to lose their wickets.

Left-arm spinner Swapnil Singh (4/48) was the pick of the



Kartik Biswal top scored for Odisha

Uttarakhand bowlers. He was well-supported by Mayank Mishra (3/39). To their credit, they bowled a steady length and line waiting for the Odia batters to make a mistake and they did so at regular intervals.

BRIEF SCORES

Odisha 213 all out (Kartik Biswal 48, Biplab Samantray 46, Swapnil Singh 4/48); Uttarakhand 4 without loss. Match to continue.

Historic series triumph for England

Pakistan routed in four days as visitors dominate proceedings

AGENCIES

Karachi, Dec 20: A relentless England line-up powered to an eight-wicket win in the third and final cricket Test here Tuesday to complete a historic series sweep in Pakistan.

England started the day needing a further 55 runs for victory and reached 170-2 within 38 minutes to secure their second successive win with more than a day to spare in their first Test tour to Pakistan in 17 years. This incidentally was Pakistan's first ever 0-3 loss in a three-Test series on home soil.

Chasing 167 for a win, England did not lose any more wickets on the fourth day as Ben Duckett (82 n o, 78b, 12x4) and skipper Ben Stokes (35 n o, 43b, 3x4) finished off the game in a jiffy. Stokes did offer a chance off leg-spinner Abrar Ahmed, but Agha Salman could not hold on to it.

England won the first Test on a flat wicket in Rawalpindi by 74 runs in dimming light on the last day before recording a thrilling 26-run win at Multan on a slow turning track inside four days.

Stokes said that Duckett's peerless innings in the third Test against Pakistan 'absolutely vindicated' the opener's selection in the side and the 'selflessness' he showed was something to be proud of.

"We are absolutely vindicated (by Duckett's inclusion in the side). He is very well known in



WELL DONE MATE: Pakistan players congratulate England skipper Ben Stokes after the end of the game in Karachi, Tuesday

England and now around the world, how well he is against spin and the options that he has. I think Zak (Crawley) and Duckett complement each other very well," Stokes told 'Sky Sports' after the historic win.

It was a just a third loss for Pakistan at the National Stadium

here in 45 Tests and the first in 15 years. England were the first team to beat Pakistan there in a Test in 2000 before South Africa won a Test here seven years later.

BRIEF SCORES

Pakistan 304 and 216 lost to England 354 and 170 for 2 (Ben Duckett 82 n o, Ben Stokes 35 n o) by 8 wickets.

Australian eves script emphatic win over India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 20: Heather Graham (4/8) became only the second woman cricketer from her country to take a T20I hat-trick as Australia crushed India by 54 runs in the final match to clinch the five-game series 4-1 here Tuesday. Graham first dismissed Devika Vaidya and Radha Yadav with the last two deliveries of the 13th over. She then returned in the final over of the innings to dismiss Renuka Singh to achieve her hat-trick. Then with the final ball of the innings, she got the prized scalp of Deepti Sharma (53).

Put into bat, Asheigh Gardner (66 n o) and Grace Harris (64 n o) struck explosive unbeaten half-centuries to power Australia to an imposing 196 for four. They put on an unbeaten stand 129 runs for the fifth wicket off just 62 balls.

The Indian eves were always under pressure during the chase. Losing Smriti Mandhana (4) early did not help their cause. Except for Deepti, none of the other Indian batters could get going. Shafali Verma (13), Harleen Deol (24), skipper Harmanpreet Kaur (12) and Richa Ghosh (10), all failed in their efforts to force the pace as India were dismissed for 142.

In spite of having Australia at 17 for two and 67 for four at one stage, the Indian bowlers failed to drive home the advantage. Then Gardner and Harris took the game away.

Rohit, Saini ruled out of second Test

DESPITE INJURY PROBLEMS, INDIA START FAVOURITES AGAINST HOSTS BANGLADESH

AGENCIES

Mirpur, Dec 20: India skipper Rohit Sharma will miss the second Test also against Bangladesh, starting here Thursday, as he has not made a full recovery from a thumb injury. It was on the cards as a BCCI official Monday had ruled out the possibility of Rohit's presence.

Rohit had flown back to India to see a specialist after injuring his left thumb while fielding in the second ODI against Bangladesh here December 7. He is under the care of the BCCI medical team following his injury, which he sustained. Pacer Naveep Saini, who had made a comeback into the Test team, is also out of the game with an abdominal muscle strain.

"The medical team is of the opinion that the injury needs some more time to heal completely before the Indian captain can bat and field with full intensity. He will



continue his rehab and will not be available for the second and final Test against Bangladesh," the BCCI said in a release.

In fact after the first Test at Chattogram which India won by a huge margin of 188 runs, stand-in skipper KL Rahul had expressed doubts over Rohit's availability for



the second game of the two Test series. "Frankly speaking we are not aware of Rohit's injury status," Rahul had said in the post-match news conference.

The BCCI informed that Saini has also suffered an injury during training. "Navdeep Saini is also ruled out of the second Test owing

to an abdominal muscle strain. The fast bowler will now report to the NCA for further management of his injury," the BCCI said in the same statement.

With Saini ruled out, India's pace bowling reserves in Bangladesh have taken another hit, with the first-choice new-ball pair of Jasprit Bumrah (back) and Mohammed Shami (shoulder) already missing the tour. Mohammed Siraj and Umesh Yadav are set to remain India's preferred quick bowling options in the game, but should they need a third seamer – or should there be another injury, India are left with only two options to choose from, in Shardul Thakur and Jaydev Unadkat.

Rahul will continue to lead the side in Rohit's absence, with Cheteshwar Pujara being his deputy. India lead the two-Test series 1-0.

23-member Odisha team for SFI meet

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 20: A 23-member swimming team from Odisha left Monday for Hyderabad to take part in the first Swimming Federation of India (SFI) National Ranking Championships. The tournament which started December 20 will end December 23.

There are 12 men and 11 women who have found a place in the Odisha squad for the championships. The team was selected on the basis of performances of the swimmers in the recently held Zonal Level Ranking Championships held at the Biju Patnaik Swimming complex at the Kalinga Stadium here. The tournament was held December 10 and 11 where swimmers from five states took part.

The president of the Odisha

State Swimming Association, Pradip Kumar Padhee thanked Tuesday the Department of Sports and Youth Services for supporting the team and hoped that the swimmers will perform well at Hyderabad.

Women's squad: Pratyasha Ray, Mannata Mishra, Vadra Satpathy, Adyasha Mishra, Divyanka Dibyajyoti Pradhan, Aakankshya Nayak, Sonia Patel, Arpita Sahu, Punyatoya Behera, Nandini Dalabehera and Sunita Sahu.

Men's squad: Bikash Haripal, Jadu Budek, Nabin Sharma, Nitesh Seth, Amiya Kumar Pradhan, Yajat Gupta, Piyush Thakur, Anmol Mohanty, Ganesh Naik, Sunil Kumar Behera, Ayush Aryaman Badu and Subrata Dalabehera.

Manager/Coach: Sandeep Sejwal. A physiotherapist and a masseur is accompanying the squads.