



ON CLOUD NINE

Actor Bhumi Pednekar says it feels amazing to start and end year 2022 on a creative high

LEISURE P2



'DRONES TO MONITOR NK'

South Korea's President calls for stronger air defences and high-tech stealth drones to monitor North Korea

INTERNATIONAL P10



WARNER'S DAY OUT

David Warner scores double century in his 100th Test to help Australia take command of the match against South Africa

SPORTS P12

SHORT TAKES

HC's no to OBC quota in UP local body polls

Lucknow: The Allahabad High Court Tuesday quashed the Uttar Pradesh government's draft notification on urban local body elections and ordered it to hold the polls without reservation for the Other Backward Classes. The Lucknow bench of the high court ordered that the state government should notify the polls "immediately" as the term of several municipalities would end by January 31. But, as opposition parties blamed the state's BJP government for the "anti-OBC" development, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said the elections will be announced only after finding a way out to provide the OBC reservation. **P8**

Separate queue for schoolkids in Puri

Puri: A day after nine students were injured in a stampede-like situation at Srimandir in Puri, the district administration has decided to introduce a separate queue for school children to enter the 12th-century shrine, an official said Tuesday. The nine injured school students, all of them girls, were released from a hospital here earlier in the day and they have left for home in Mayurbhanj district, Puri Superintendent of Police KV Singh said. **P3**

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Didn't tell you not to bribe bank officers for a loan? You should've donated to political parties instead

MARKET WATCH		
INDEX		VARIATION
SENSEX	60927.43	↑ 361.01
NIFTY	18132.30	↑ 117.70
DOLLAR	82.79	↓ ₹0.04
EURO	88.06	↑ ₹0.16
GOLD	₹54,779	↑ ₹102
SILVER	₹69,480	↑ ₹405

WEATHER		
	BHUB	CTK
TEMP	MAX 33.2°C	32.2°C
	MIN 19.8°C	20.0°C
Humidity	91%	91%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Shallow to moderate Fog likely	



ON A MISSION: Members of the Indian hockey team arrive at Biju Patnaik International Airport in Bhubaneswar, Tuesday, as the state gears up to host FIH Men's World Cup beginning January 13

₹1,509cr shot in the arm for state's agri

KEY CABINET DECISIONS

- Extension of state government employees of new-aided non-government high schools, upper primary (ME) schools and Madrasas on the basis of Odisha Revised Scale of Pay Rules, 2017
- Commencement of direct flight operations to Dubai, Singapore and Bangkok from Bhubaneswar
- Odisha MSME Development Policy, 2022 to replace Odisha MSME Development Policy, 2016

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 27: The state Cabinet, led by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, Tuesday approved 17 proposals, including two worth ₹1,509.43 crore towards boosting agriculture activities.

The state Cabinet has approved for provision of ₹1,142.24 crore for four years from 2022-23 to 2025-26 for implementation of the State Sector Scheme-Development of Potato, Vegetable and Spices with the involvement of Women SHGs and Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs), said Chief Secretary SC Mahapatra.

Similarly, the state government has approved ₹367.19 crore for five years from 2022-23 to 2026-27 for im-

plementation of another State Sector Scheme-Empowerment of Women in Agriculture-Promotion of Entrepreneurship for Women SHGs. Mahapatra said, "The scheme will ensure sustainable income generation of women beneficiaries/Women SHGs & the state shall emerge as the net exporter of mushroom and high value flowers over the mission period."

The Cabinet has approved the proposal of extension of state government grant-in-aid to eligible employees of new-aided non-government high schools, upper primary (ME) schools and Madrasas on the basis of Odisha Revised Scale of Pay Rules, 2017 (7th Pay). About 26,164 teaching and non-teaching employees of the new-aided non-government high schools, UP (ME) schools and Madrasas who are in receipt of 100 per cent Grant-in-Aid as December 31, 2021 will be benefited by the enhancement, said the Chief Secretary.

The state government will bear additional financial implication of ₹280.48 crore per annum.

In a bid to make Odisha as a leading state in the field of international flight operations, the Cabinet has approved a proposal to commence direct flight operations to Dubai, Singapore and Bangkok.

Continued on P5

Dead Russian was Putin critic

DGP orders Crime Branch probe into the mysterious death of multi-millionaire lawmaker Pavel Antov and his fellow traveller Vladimir Bidenov in Rayagada district recently

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 27: A 65-year-old Russian lawmaker, who is believed to have died after falling off the third floor of a hotel in Rayagada district December 24, had criticised Vladimir Putin's war in Ukraine, sources said, Tuesday.

According to media reports, sausage multi-millionaire Pavel Antov had recently sent out a message criticising Russian attacks on Ukraine, but had later retracted the statement, according to several reports.

Antov, from the main pro-Putin party United Russia, had come to Rayagada along with Vladimir Bidenov, 61, and two other friends on tourist VISAs to celebrate his birth anniversary, a police officer said, adding that they had been residing at a hotel in Rayagada.

Antov is reported to have died after falling off the third floor of the



hotel room December 24.

Bidenov was found lying unconscious in the hotel room with a few empty wine bottles around, on the first floor. When rushed to the district hospital, doctors had declared him dead December 22, police sources said.

Director General of Police (DGP) Sunil Kumar Bansal Tuesday ordered a Crime Branch (CB) probe into the deaths of Antov and Bidenov. "DGP, Odisha has ordered CID-Crime Branch to take over enquiry

NO CRIMINAL ASPECT IN DEATHS: EMBASSY

New Delhi: The Russian embassy Tuesday said the Odisha Police has found 'no criminal aspect' in the death of two citizens of the European country in a hotel in Rayagada district within days of each other. "The Consulate General of Russia in Kolkata is following the case and is in touch with local authorities. As per information available to the police, no criminal aspect is seen," Russia Today quoted the Russian embassy here in connection with the death of the two Russians in Odisha. **PTI**

into Rayagada Police Station UD Case (34/2022) and (35/2022). These cases relate to unnatural death of two Russian nationals in Rayagada Dist (sic)," the Odisha Police said on Twitter.

Continued on P5

Covid intranasal vax to cost ₹325

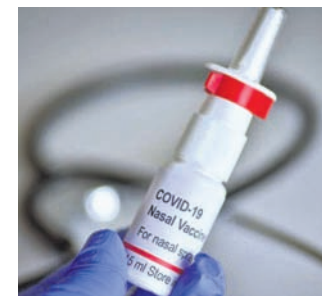
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hyderabad, Dec 27: Bharat Biotech International Limited Tuesday said its Covid-19 intranasal vaccine INCOVACC, which is now available on CoWIN portal, is priced at ₹800 (excluding GST) for private markets and ₹325 (excluding GST) for government supplies.

A press release from the vaccine maker said the jab will be rolled out in the fourth week of January 2023. INCOVACC is the world's first intranasal vaccine for Covid to receive approval for the primary two-dose schedule, and as a heterologous booster dose.

Earlier this month, Bharat Biotech received approval from the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) for the use of heterologous booster doses of INCOVACC.

Krishna Ella, Executive Chairman of BBIL, said, "We have developed Covaxin and INCOVACC, two COVID vaccines from two different platforms, with two different delivery systems. The vectored intranasal delivery platform gives us the capability for rapid product development,



scale-up, easy and painless immunisation during public health emergencies and pandemics."

Phase-III trials of INCOVACC (as a two-dose regimen) were conducted for safety, immunogenicity in approximately 3100 subjects, in 14 trial sites across India while heterologous booster dose studies were conducted for safety and immunogenicity in 875 subjects, the release further said.

INCOVACC was developed in partnership with Washington University, St Louis, which had designed and developed the recombinant adenoviral vectored construct and evaluated in pre-clinical studies for efficacy, it added.

GOBARI RIVER POLLUTION

SC stays NGT's ₹24L penalty on Kendrapara municipality

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 27: The Supreme Court has stayed an order of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) imposing a penalty of ₹24 lakh on Kendrapara municipality for failing to control discharge of waste water into the Gobari river. A bench of Justices KM Joseph and BV Nagarathna issued notices to the Centre, Odisha government and others while seeking their replies to the plea.

"Issue notice. There will be a stay of the impugned order dated July 13, 2022 passed by the National Green Tribunal, Eastern Zone Bench, Kolkata till the next date of hearing," the bench said.

The top court has posted the matter for hearing in the third week of February, 2023.

The apex court was hearing a plea filed by Kendrapara municipality against the July 13 order of the NGT which had directed the Executive Officer of the municipal body to pay environmental compensation.

The tribunal had found an "alarming situation" with regard to water quality in the river and said high level of pollutants and sewage are allowed to flow into the water body.

"So far as the past violations are concerned, the committee (formed by NGT) in its inspection report has determined compensation from April 1, 2020 till March 31, 2022 to be ₹24 lakh. We, therefore, direct the Kendrapara Municipality to deposit the said amount with the State Pollution Control Board, Odisha within one month," the NGT had said.

The green panel had passed the order on a plea filed by Rabeya Tabbasum alleging contamination of the river due to discharge of untreated waste.

Tabbasum alleged that the Kendrapara municipality is dumping municipal solid waste in the Gobari river, also known as 'Madhusagar', at places like Hajaribagicha, Khadianga, Jayapura, Sunaelo, Ekarakhandi, Naya Idgah etc.

NOTES OF BAMBOO

Delhi man takes eco-friendly route to music

Composer-percussionist Subhasis Sabyasachi has turned to the fast-growing bamboo to manufacture musical instruments, including xylophone, tabla, pakhawaj, sitar, veena and guitar, all traditionally made using wood like teak, rosewood, red cedar, mahogany, and poplar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 27: As the climate worsens and the world looks to find more sustainable ways of life, a musician here is leading the way towards a more eco-friendly future by using bamboo to manufacture a wide array of musical instruments.

Composer-percussionist Subhasis Sabyasachi has turned to the fast-growing bamboo to manufacture musical instruments including xylophone, tabla, pakhawaj, sitar, veena and guitar all traditionally made using wood like teak, rosewood, red cedar, mahogany, and poplar, among others. "If we con-

tinue cutting trees for any reason, we won't have any future for our children. That's why I want to eliminate the use of wood in musical instruments and replace it with bamboo," Sabyasachi told PTI.

It was Sabyasachi's guru and tabla maestro Brajen Biswas who first came up with 'Brojo Tarang', a bamboo xylophone.

"After guru ji's demise I am taking this forward, our orchestra plays with all bamboo instruments, my mission is to convey a message about the climate, so that bamboo is used as a substitute," the Delhi-based musician said. He added that since bamboo is among the fastest-growing plants in the world and is widely



Subhasis Sabyasachi has been manufacturing musical instruments with bamboo for the last 20 years

"If we continue cutting trees for any reason, we won't have any future for our children. That's why I want to eliminate the use of wood in musical instruments and replace it with bamboo"

SUBHASIS SABYASACHI | COMPOSER-PERCussionIST

used for climate change mitigation, it is ecological to use it for manufacturing musical instruments.

It is generally the flute that is made using bamboo, but Sabyasachi's musical kitty packs dholak, pakhawaj, tabla, kanjira, guitar, sitar and veena among other instruments. "Every bamboo for-

est hides the instruments for a whole orchestra," he adds.

But doesn't using bamboo instead of traditional wood affect the sound quality? Other than offering a simple 'no' in response to the question, Sabyasachi adds other benefits of using bamboo to the list.

"Unlike other woods, bamboo is a hollow timber. You have to carve and cut through other material to create a hollow, which is naturally available with bamboo. And when it comes to sound, bamboo has a better resonance quality, creating better sound," the 41-year-old said, adding that the instruments made using bamboo are also comparatively lightweight.

leisure



KIM IS HAVING 'HARD' TIME CO-PARENTING WITH KANYE

Kim Kardashian recently shared how the co-parenting situation is going with her former husband, Kanye West. During a Monday guest spot on the *Angie Martinez IRL* podcast, Kim discussed the highly controversial artist and their four children. "Co-parenting is really f***ing hard," Kardashian said, as she was brought to tears.

GIGI HADID DOESN'T HAVE ENERGY TO RUN AFTER LEONARDO DICAPRIO

Things don't look good for fans of Gigi Hadid's rumoured romance with Leonardo DiCaprio, as the model reportedly 'doesn't have the energy' for his hectic routine. In recent months, the pair has been spotted at a number of events together, but neither star has spoken out about the dating speculation



FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshSpeaks.com
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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

ARIES

Today you will be perplexed by some inexplicable and fantastic event. Either that, or you may experience an unforeseen but favourable incident. It may not be earth-shaking, but it will definitely make you assess things. Besides, you could have difficulties meeting deadlines.

TAURUS

You have an easy carefree day ahead. There will be no woes or worries, says Ganesh. But to will be inclined to take up too many things at one time, more than you can handle. This may, in turn, get you stressed and uptight. You are advised to be practical and not to overdo things. If you do get into a fix, a moment's reflection will show you that you alone are to be blamed.

GEMINI

You will ponder over religious and cultural values and issues today. You will indulge in a fair amount of discussion with your family members over the issue and present your thoughts and feelings on the subject.

CANCER

The day looks set to be an ordinary day, for both work and play, says Ganesh. Yet, if you are planning to participate in an event or a competition today, march ahead, by all means. There will, practically, be no one who'll be able to compete with you.

LEO

You will need to keep from being agitated today. Let your spouse or business partner take critical decisions if you aren't in the right frame of mind. Decisions you take today may have to be rethought of later. Important meetings will proceed smoothly, but you will not be able to commit to any final conclusions or contracts. Since it is not an auspicious day for you, postpone all important events, says Ganesh.

VIRGO

Appreciate the things that people do and try your best to inspire them to achieve greater success, says Ganesh. Put on your thinking cap and contemplate seriously. Simply criticizing others will only hurt you. Be as level-headed as you can and keep pegging on towards your targets.

LIBRA

Ganesh says you will try to gain in-depth knowledge about new technological inventions in your spare time today. Some of you may have queries regarding higher education that you may be able to take up today and reach a conclusion about.

SCORPIO

Till now you have experienced all the highs. Today you may come across the lows of the professional world. The equation between your boss, colleagues and you may get slightly disturbed. However, you will make it up by evening. Freshers may look for some career opportunities.

SAGITTARIUS

According to Ganesh, money is likely to slip-off your hand easily today. Try to wave off unnecessary expenditure. The entire day is spent managing funds, while the evening brings a lot of positive energy with it. You prefer to sit back and relax.

CAPRICORN

Today, you will not be in the right mood to work or produce expected results. Mounting work pressure may further dampen your self-confidence, foretells Ganesh. The dullness will vanish in the air by the evening and you will be back to your happy self. Are you wondering who will be responsible for this change? The answer is your friends and family members.

AQUARIUS

You spend a lot of time planning for a better future. Sure, it does minimize the chances of errors as you know possible obstacles in advance. But, the time you spend for calculations takes you away from the reality and you don't fully concentrate on what you have now. Learn to balance, advises Ganesh.

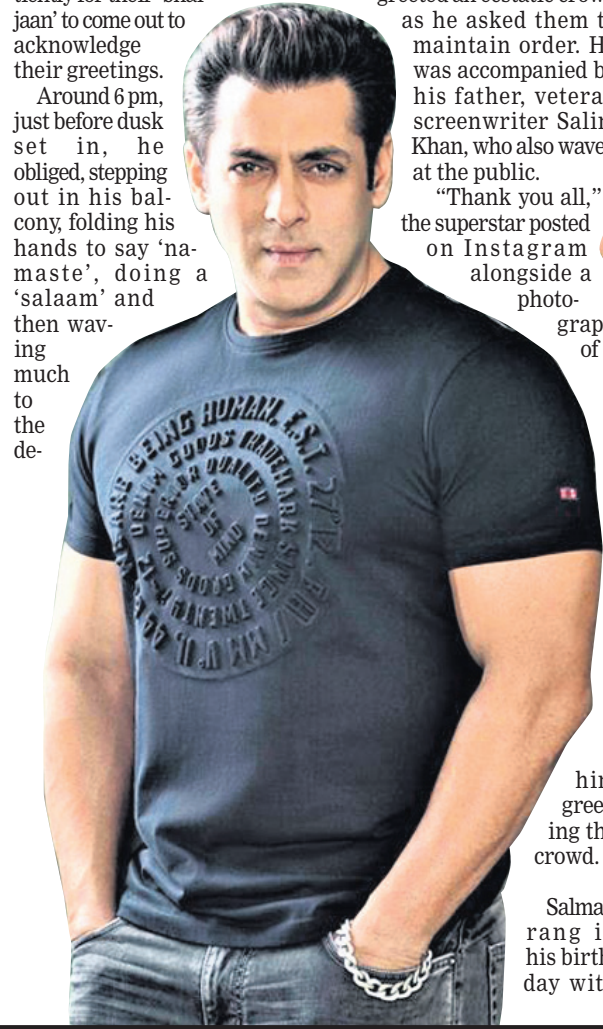
PISCES

You know how important money is and you will think about it all day. You will think less about expenses today and more about prosperity and fame today. Worry about family might increase and in return they will support you, says Ganesh.

Salman rings in his 57th b'day with fans, friends

Mumbai: Salman Khan turned 57 Tuesday and his fans, it seemed, were in full party mode with hundreds of people gathering outside his Bandra home through the day, waiting patiently for their 'bhai-jaan' to come out to acknowledge their greetings.

Around 6 pm, just before dusk set in, he obliged, stepping out in his balcony, folding his hands to say 'namaste', doing a 'salaam' and then waving much to the de-



light of the crowds, some who were carrying life-size cut-outs and others who breached barricades in their excitement. Dressed in powder blue T-shirt and denims, Salman greeted an ecstatic crowd as he asked them to maintain order. He was accompanied by his father, veteran screenwriter Salim Khan, who also waved at the public.

"Thank you all," the superstar posted on Instagram alongside a photograph of

combined celebration for their daughter Ayat Sharma, who turned three, and the Bollywood star.

The party was attended by superstar Shah Rukh Khan, Tabu, Kartik Aaryan, Suniel Shetty, Pooja Hegde, Riteish Deshmukh, Genelia D'Souza, Sangeeta Birlani, Sonakshi Sinha, Sajid Nadiadwala and wife Warda Nadiadwala, Ramesh Taurani and Iulia Vantur.

him greeting the crowd.

Salman rang in his birthday with



Shruti opens up on ageism

Mumbai: Actor Shruti Haasan had a phenomenal 2022 with her hands full of films. From headlining an international project *The Eye* to shooting for Prabhas co-starrer *Salaar*, NBK's *Veera Simha Reddy*, and Chiranjeevi's *Waltair Veerayya*, Shruti is having one of the best years on the professional front.

In a recent interview, the *Luck* actor talked about ageism in the film

industry. Shruti said, "I think ageism in the world is an issue. It is a youth and the vanity-driven world we live in, especially in the world of social media. The question is do you want to buy into it or not? There is beauty and grace with every age. There are certain roles you can play with only a certain amount of age and experience and those are the things I like to focus on and not get into the

whole ageism talk." Talking about how younger actresses being cast opposite senior actors, she added, "I think it is normal in society that if there is a younger woman with an older man not many questions are raised as to whether the older woman wants to remarry or date again, so this is societal conditioning. It is a male-driven society, world, and industry as well."

'It feels amazing to start and end year on a creative high'

Mumbai: Bhumi Pednekar has delivered some of the most memorable performances by a leading lady in recent years. In 2022, Bhumi gave two brilliant performances in *Badhaai Do* and *Govinda Naam Mera!* Talking about her notable year, Bhumi says, "It feels amazing to have started and also ended the year on a creative high. I was fortunate to begin the year with *Badhaai Do* that gave me so much love and appreciation. It's a really special film and I'm glad we tried to make a very important point about inclusivity through the film's sensitive messaging."

Bhumi, who played the role of a lesbian girl named Sumi in *Badhaai Do* with utmost sensitivity and brilliance, adds, "I have received so many awards for this film throughout the year which I dedicate to the LGBTQIA+ community in India. *Badhaai Do* would sit right on the top of my filmography for being a film that also aimed at making a change."

Bhumi's performance in *Govinda Naam Mera* as Gauri Waghmare, a feisty, witty, independent woman who challenges the status quo of gender through her life choices, has received unanimous positivity. She is happy to be ending 2022 on a high and she has managed to deliver diverse roles with ease.



Have trained 90K women free of cost in martial arts: Akshay

Mumbai: Akshay Kumar, who will be soon seen in the film *Selfie*, talked about teaching martial arts to women for self-defence on *Kaun Banega Crorepati 14*. He said that he thought of starting these classes after the brutal murder and rape of a 22-year-old girl in Delhi in 2012 which was widely known as Nirbhaya case.

"After the Nirbhaya case in 2012, I started the women's self-defence class in 2013. In my life, I am in this position today not because of acting but because of martial arts, self-defence,

and discipline hence I opened self-defence classes in many parts of India," he said.

Akshay, who is known for movies like *Khiladi*, *Mohra* and *Bhool Bhulaiyaa*, among others, added: "It has been 10 years since that and till now we have trained 90,000 women free of cost in martial arts."

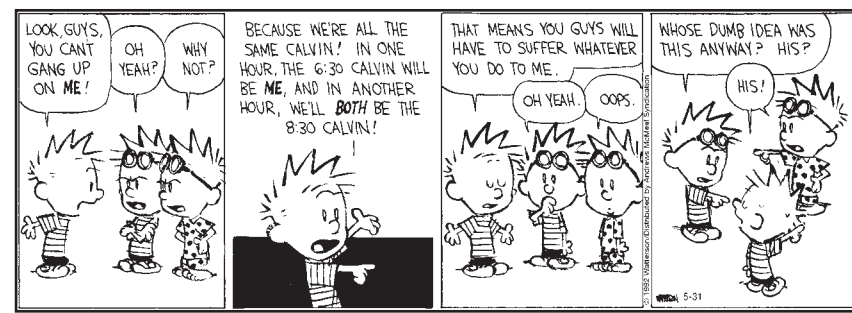
The *Khiladi* Kumar also shared that he trained in martial arts in Thailand for a few years and then in Mumbai and that he was a martial arts teacher before starting his career in acting.



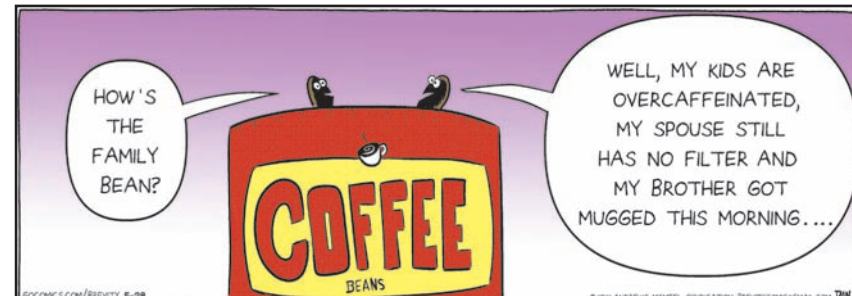
PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

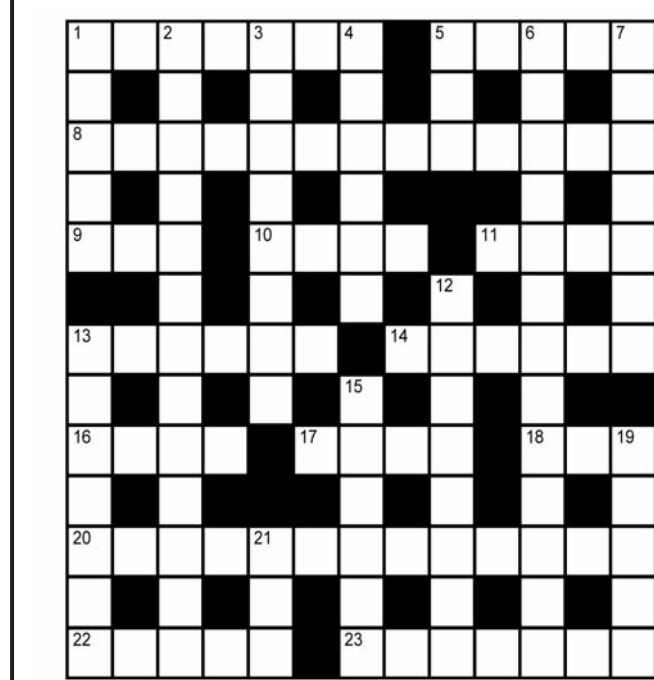


BREVITY



FUN post

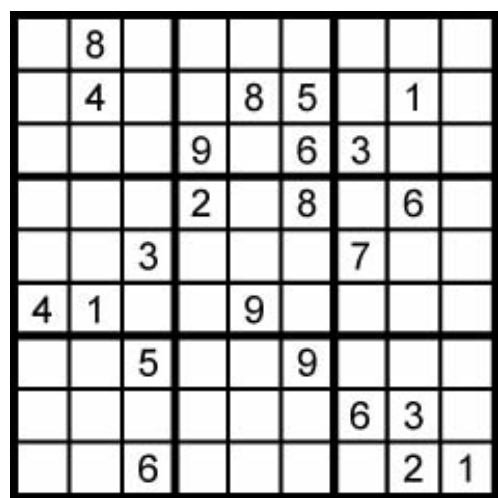
CROSSWORD



- Across
- 1 Bird of night (4,3)
 - 5 Egyptian water lily
 - 8 Angler's gear (7,6)
 - 9 Take to court
 - 10 Joie de vivre
 - 11 State (Fr.)
 - 13 Aromatic seasoning
 - 14 Femme fatales
 - 16 Ocean predator
 - 17 Fairy tale villain
 - 18 Cat hangout
 - 20 Type of pull
 - 22 Fable writer
 - 23 Olympian, e.g.
 - 3 Salad topper, at times (5,3)
 - 4 Deadlock
 - 5 Pastureland
 - 6 Go for it (4,3,6)
 - 7 Detectives
 - 12 Dinner extra (4,4)
 - 13 Black Sea republic
 - 15 Large lizard
 - 19 Sign of life
 - 21 Rascal
- Down
- 1 Sword handles
 - 2 Mamas' medical specialists

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

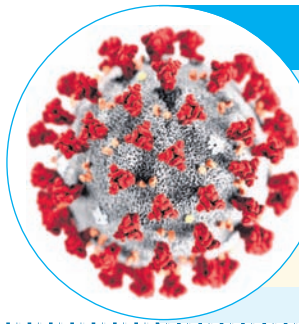


CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



SCINTILLATING SHOW

Artistes of Jagruti Cultural Academy performing during the International Odissi Dance Festival at Rabindra Mandap in Bhubaneswar, Tuesday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	66,24,18,512	63,49,80,132	66,87,778
India	4,46,77,459	4,41,43,342	5,30,696
Odisha	13,36,304	13,26,915	9,204

CP to ensure tight security for New Year celebrations

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 27: The Commissionerate Police has made elaborate security arrangements to ensure a safe and hassle-free zero night and New Year celebrations in the Capital. Speaking to media persons, DCP Paratek Singh Tuesday said, "We expect large gathering of people after the gap of two years. We have issued advisories to all the hotels organizing zero night celebrations asking them to maintain respectable behaviour."

Singh also informed that security arrangements will be made at different places from 7pm in the evening. Adequate numbers of police personnel will be deployed at all traffic squares to ensure the revelers not face any inconvenience due to probable traffic snarls.

The city police will deploy extra forces at the hotels and banquets for zero night celebrations. The hotels have permitted to organize the celebrations till 12pm.

We have planned to do motor vehicle checking at 28 spots in the city to check over-speeding and rash driving. Similarly, cops will check drunk driving by the revelers at 17 places. The enforcement activities will continue till 2am.

As many as four additional DCPs, seven ACPs, 23 inspectors and around 50 sub-inspectors along with 13 platoons of police force will be deployed in the Capital for



Four additional DCPs, seven ACPs, 23 inspectors and around 50 sub-inspectors along with 13 platoons of police force will be deployed in the Capital city for the zero night celebrations

the zero night celebrations.

This apart, the quick response teams of city police will be in place at Master Canteen, Kalpana,

Khandagiri and Rasulgarh squares while striking forces will be placed at Vani Vihar, Master canteen and Nalco square.

"The tourist destinations in the City like Deras Dam, Ekamra Park, and Biju Patnaik Park, Botanical Garden, Nandankanan and Lingaraj temple will witness large footfalls on the first day of the New Year January 1, 2023 which is also a Sunday. We anticipate heavy traffic congestions at above spots. As many as 10 sections of forces will be deployed on picnic spots and tourist places. I appeal all to follow traffic related tips shared on the social media handles of DCP Bhubaneswar and DCP Traffic," Singh Added.

Pujari calls on Chouhan, invites him to Hockey WC

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 27: Higher Education Minister Rohit Pujari met Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan at Bhopal Tuesday and invited him to attend Hockey World Cup 2023. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had earlier announced that his counterparts from all the states would be invited to the ensuing Men's Hockey World Cup. Patnaik had made the announcement at an all-party meeting convened here ahead of the sporting extravaganza recently.

Pujari met Chouhan and personally handed the invitation of CM Naveen Patnaik apart from various felicitations such as the Hockey India T-shirt and a Silver Ashoka Chakra. Chouhan conveyed his thanks and greetings to CM Naveen Patnaik for his invitation and said he would explore the possibilities of visiting Odisha for the event.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



Jagatsinghpur Dy DM in Vig net

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 27: Vigilance sleuths Tuesday carried out simultaneous searches at various places related to Jagatsinghpur Deputy Collector Chittaranjan Pilla on charges of amassing ill-gotten properties disproportionate to his actual income.

The places where searches were conducted include flats at Gadakana, Rangamatia and Nuagaon in Capital city, and two flats at Sunahat in Balasore, a double-storey building at Sonepur

town, native house at Naighati in Baliaapal of Balasore and his residence and office at Jagatsinghpur.

As many as nine teams of Vigilance led by two DSPs, 14 inspectors, six ASIs and other staffers involved in searches conducted following warrants issued by Court of Special Judge, Vigilance, Bhubaneswar. The Vigilance officials have so far unearthed 11 plots in the name of Pilla and his relatives which include a plot in prime area of the City, 10 plots in Birmaharajpur, Sonepur, Baliaapal and Narayanpur in Balasore.

"The Registered Sale Deed (RSD) value comes to ₹30.53 lakh. However, the actual value is likely to be much higher. Undervaluation of the plots during registration is suspected. A thorough probe has been initiated in this regard," Vigilance sources said.

This apart, the sleuths found ₹1,85,285 in cash, approx ₹48.71 lakh bank deposits and insurance policies, mutual fund investments, two 4-wheelers worth ₹11.40 lakh, three 2-wheelers worth over ₹3.24 lakh, gold and household articles worth over ₹13.64 lakh.

Kriti Utsav concludes

Bhubaneswar: The spirit of India's unity in diversity was reflected at the valedictory ceremony of the five-day-long Kriti Utsav, the 36th Inter University East Zone Youth Festival, as it came to an end Tuesday at KIIT Deemed to be University. The youth festival saw participation of 13 universities and 450 contestants and coincided with the silver jubilee celebrations of KIIT Deemed to be University. Speaking on the occasion, V-C Sasmita Samanta said, "The spirit of Kriti Utsav is based on traditional Indian philosophy and the essence of our age-old traditions of education, sports, and heritage and culture being showcased and students demonstrating the best of their talents."

EOW probed 22 fraud cases this year

Bhubaneswar: The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the Crime Branch has investigated 22 cases so far in 2022. The fraud amount involved in the 22 cases is more than ₹100 crore. Similarly, the wing has managed to arrest 60 fraudsters from various states across the country during the above period. "All these cases had extensive areas of operation from the interiors of India to places outside Indian territorial boundaries like China, Hong Kong, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Nepal & Sri Lanka," said an EOW official. The EOW also sought the help of various central, other state agencies like ED, Income Tax, Financial Intelligence Unit, RBI, Intelligence Bureau, Bureau of immigration, CBI/Interpol, Mumbai Police and Delhi Police. It secured the assistance of global digital giants like Google and Facebook during the probe into financial crimes in 2022.

Man's body found in Kuakhai river

Bhubaneswar: The body of a man was recovered from Kuakhai river under Pahala police limits Tuesday. The deceased identified as Tophan Samal, 30, was a resident of Kandi Sahi of Naharkanta. Tuesday morning, some locals spotted the body floating in the river and informed the police, who reached the spot and sent the body to Capital Hospital for post-mortem.

Separate queue for schoolkids

NINE STUDENTS FROM HRUDANANDA HIGH SCHOOL IN RASGOVINDPUR AREA OF MAYURBHANJ WERE HOSPITALISED MONDAY NIGHT DURING A STAMPEDE LIKE SITUATION AT SRIMANDIR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Puri, Dec 27: A day after nine students were injured in a mini stampede at the Srimandir in Puri, the district administration has decided to introduce a separate queue for schoolchildren to enter the 12th century shrine, an official said Tuesday.

The nine injured school students, all of them girls, were discharged from a hospital here earlier in the day and they have left for home in Mayurbhanj district, Puri Superintendent of Police KV Singh said.

Earlier, reports said that six students were injured in the crowded



temple Monday night.

"We have introduced a separate queue for schoolchildren (in the temple) from today keeping in view the arrival of pupils during the winter vacation. Now many schoolchildren are coming for picnics to Puri and going to the temple," Singh said.

The new queue will not be there after the vacation, he said.

The nine students who were hospitalised Monday night were also part of a 70-member group of boys and girls from Hrudananda High School in Rasgovindpur area of Mayurbhanj district, who had come to Puri for a picnic during the Christmas holidays.

It was reported Monday night that six girls were caught in a mini stampede and fainted while climbing the 22 steps (Baisi Pahacha) to the temple at around 8 pm.

"We had reported injury of six children. Actually, three more also fainted and were admitted to the hospital. They were dehydrated and were administered saline," the Puri SP said.

They had to wait in a queue for almost two hours before reaching the steps.

All of them were discharged from the hospital Tuesday morning, he said adding that they have left for their home in Rasgovindpur area in Mayurbhanj district.

Police to maintain traffic for Hockey WC

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 27: The Commissionerate Police will deploy around 20 platoons of police force to ensure smooth traffic movement during the upcoming Men's Hockey World Cup next month. Speaking to media, twin city Traffic DCP Thakur Prasad Patra said that around five DSPs, 18 SIs and ASIs along with 15 constables will be deployed in the City.

The officers are currently being deployed in carrying out of BMC eviction drive in City.

"The City police will also provide green corridor for emergency services like ambulances. The vehicles carrying players will be provided pilot protection by the Commissionerate Police," said Pathak. "Similarly, seven spots have been earmarked for parking during the tournament. The traffic officials will provide important information regarding traffic situation on social media handles during the event," he added while urging the people to share with the police any traffic related problems on social media.

Additional CP Umashankar Dash will personally supervise the traffic arrangements during the World Cup, he informed.

CM's commitment to create a 'yodha' in each household

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 27: On the International Day of Epidemic Preparedness, Tuesday, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik reaffirmed his government's commitment to build an Odisha that's pandemic-resilient and to empower every household of the state to fight disasters.

The Chief Minister, through his Twitter account said, "Epidemics and pandemics like Covid-19 pose huge challenge to global health security with massive impact on life and livelihood. On International Day of Epidemic Preparedness, I reiterate commitment to create a Yodha in every household for a disaster and pandemic-resilient Odisha."

The rapid surge in Covid-19 cases in China has triggered fears across the world of another possible wave. The state government might make it mandatory for people to wear face masks, according to official sources. The government is likely to advise people to maintain social distancing in public places. Many states and union territories have already brought back the rule of mandatory mask-wearing in public places.

The CM also reviewed the Covid-19 preparedness in the state Tuesday



"A mock drill was conducted at all the hospitals Tuesday to review the preparedness and the available facilities. All the districts have been asked to scale up testing, tracking and treatment. Government medical colleges and district hospitals have been ordered to make special arrangements for the treatment of Covid-infected patients," a government official said.

In its 75th session and 36th plenary meeting December 7, 2020, the UNGA passed a resolution which declared December 27 as the International Day of Epidemic Preparedness. The decision is part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The declaration recognised the "devastating impacts of major infectious diseases and epidemics," especially of the current Covid-19 pandemic, on people's lives and the long-term damage to social and economic development.

NEP aims at transforming edu system: CM

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 27: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Tuesday said that National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 drafted by eminent scientist K Kasturirangan aims at transforming Indian education system.

He was speaking at an academic session organised by Biju Patnaik University of Technology (BPUT) at the Convention Centre in Lok Seva Bhawan. The theme was 'Transformation of Technical and Professional education in line with New Education Policy - 2020.'

Appreciating the BPUT for the meet, Patnaik said the NEP-2020 is a meaningful attempt to bring about relevance, and set the tone and the direction at all levels of education.

He said this meeting will help bring awareness among the education community on the new policy and deliberate on the challenges and opportunities for its implementation. Stating that technology is dominating every bit of life, every part of society, the CM said, "We must focus on reshaping our technology education for the changing needs of the 21st century."

"The future of our civilisation



provide all necessary support in the endeavour for transformation of our technological education, he added.

Speaking on the occasion, Skill Development and Technical Education Minister Pritiranjan Gharai spoke about the transformation of state in various fields by the application of the 5T model of governance.

Among others, Secretary to CM (5T) VK Pandian, Principal Secretary SDTE Usha Padhee, IIT Bhubaneswar Director Shreepad Karmalkar and BPUT vice chancellor Banshidhar Majhi attended the inaugural session.

It may be mentioned here that the university has plans for implementation of the new policy and discussion on various aspects of it such as introduction of multi-disciplinary courses, bringing improvement in research, innovation, and rankings, capacity building, creation of broad framework for technical institutions, promotion of local language in engineering education, faculty development and many other issues.

banks solely on the quality and direction of our education. Our future depends on how successfully we prepare our children for the future," he further said.

Higher education is critical for societal aspirations, developmental priorities and social values, all of which

must be assessed, nurtured and refined regularly, he added.

The Chief Minister expected the deliberations to be meaningful and come out with clear proposals and suggestions for effective implementation of NEP-2020.

The state government is ready to


We must focus on reshaping our technology education for the changing needs of the 21st century

NAVEEN PATNAIK | CHIEF MINISTER

6th Death Anniversary

In Loving Memory


"We remember you with Pride and Gratitude. Your presence remains with us like a Blessing. We miss your Love, Affection and Guidance. Your path of Righteousness will continue to inspire us."



∨ Gopal Chandra Mohanty
Ex- Principal Secretary, Law Department, Govt. of Odisha.
Ex- Chairman, State Law Revision Committee.

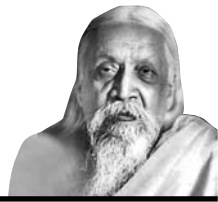
Fondly Remembered by

Kanak Mohanty
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Samikhya, Samyantaka, Anwasha
Staffs and Management of Xpose Advertising



Care not for time and success. Act out thy part, whether it be to fail or to prosper.

SRI AUROBINDO



Nation of Women

Disturbing reports are coming from Israel, Afghanistan and Iran where new measures are being taken to deny freedom and gender equality to their women. In a significant development, Israel's incoming Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud party gave its word in its coalition agreement with Far-Right politician Bezalel Smotrich's Religious Zionism faction 26 December that the new government will not ratify the Istanbul Convention on combating violence against women. It means Jerusalem will not join what is perceived to be the most advanced of all international treaties on the fight against gender-based violence. Countries that accede to the Convention are mandated to legislate strict laws on the prevention of domestic violence, protection of victims, prosecution and policy coordination. The Convention, officially opened for signing in 2011, has, so far, been signed by 45 countries and the European Union. Ironically, Turkey itself withdrew from the agreement last year that led to condemnation from the European Council and the USA. The reservations expressed by Israel's Far-Right Religious Zionism are in keeping with its agenda against immigration and gender equality. India is not a signatory to this Convention.

The second country in discussion now is the Islamist regime of Iran which has been facing widespread protests by women in different parts of that country for the use of its moral police brutally forcing women to conform to a dress code that tramples on women's freedom. Women and girls in Iran continue to be treated as second class citizens according to a UN expert report to the Human Rights Council. The report cites domestic violence, thousands of marriages of girls aged between 10 and 14 each year and continuing discrimination against women in law and practice.

As the third country, as international attention is focused on the Russia-Ukraine war, Afghanistan under the Taliban regime has silently and steadily taken its crusade against women to a new level of degradation 16 months after its takeover. It has now shut all Afghan women aspiring for higher education out of the precincts of universities. Nor are the women allowed to work in non-government organisations (NGOs), both domestic and foreign. Already, the women in the country have been robbed of their right to education at high schools, spend time in public gardens, gymnasiums and public baths and go to shops except with a male escort from the family. Under Taliban rule women are free only to have primary level education without opportunities for work. In other words, a medieval world is being sought to be created in Afghanistan where women have been consigned to the home and the hearth under a veil.

What Afghan women had been fearing for several months came true after the Taliban government's Ministry of Higher Education announced a few days back that the women in the country would be banned from studying at public and private universities "until further notice." The decision was made by the Taliban government's cabinet, which has demanded all higher education institutions implement the new order "immediately." The day after the order was issued women were seen bursting into tears in front of the gates of universities as they were not allowed in by the guards. Women teachers in some cases reportedly argued with the security guards to let them and students into the campus, but they were flatly denied.

All hopes about the Taliban returning to power as a reformed, chastened outfit now lie shattered. Even the worst economic crisis the country is facing appears not to bother the bigoted leadership so much as the shackling of Afghan women with medieval ideas and a skewed interpretation of religion.

Time is probably ripe for women of the world to seek and carve out a separate country for themselves. It could be a nation that would be green, clean and luscious.

WISDOM CORNER

- Faith is an oasis in the heart which will never be reached by the caravan of thinking. - KAHILIL GIBRAN
- What you get by achieving your goals is not as important as what you become by achieving your goals. - ZIG ZIGLAR
- Happiness is not something ready made. It comes from your own actions. - DALAI LAMA

WORDSWORTH

Egyptian days

As far back as the historical record can be traced, we know that certain days have been thought to be unlucky. In medieval times they were often listed in calendars as the dies Aegyptiaci, the Egyptian days, since they were supposed to have been identified by Egyptian astrologers, considered to be authorities on such matters. Some said they were days on which calamitous events had occurred in ancient Egypt, such as the plagues described in the Bible. Medieval calendars precisely identified the days that were to be considered inauspicious, on which no project or enterprise should be begun: 1 and 25 January; 4 and 26 February; 1 and 28 March; 10 and 20 April; 3 and 25 May; 10 and 16 June; 13 and 22 July; 1 and 30 August; 3 and 21 September; 3 and 22 October; 5 and 28 November; and 7 and 22 December. It was considered especially important that doctors should not let blood on these days. Another Latin term for them was dies mali, the unlucky, evil, or unpropitious days. By the beginning of the fifteenth century, the Latin phrase had been Anglicised into dismal, at first in direct reference to the evil days, but later to any event that brought misfortune and disaster. By the seventeenth century the word had weakened to our modern sense of something that merely causes gloom or depression. When in 1849 Carlyle described economics as "the dismal science", he meant only that it was cheerless.

Electroclash

This is yet another pop-musical genre. Its beginning, at least in terms of journalistic attention and appearances of the name in newsprint, was at the Electroclash festival held in New York in October 2001. The genre has since become big in Montreal and has also spread to Europe. It's a retro style, a romantic reaction against impersonal house music in clubs, with emphasis on synthesisers, theatrical performance, personalities, and song and dance, plus some rock and punk influences, all mixed in with an interest in fashion and art. The best-known bands are probably ARE Weapons and Fischerspooner. Some people think it's the future; others consider it to be no more than a tarted-up rehash of old ideas. They could, of course, all be right. Or it might have vanished again within months. Listening to electroclash, at times, is like burrowing into a wormhole that exits somewhere near 1985. The music is replete with the gorgeous, tuneful synths that characterized acts like Flock of Seagulls. Indeed, while listening to the Soviet tune "Candy Girl" on the Electroclash compilation CD, you'd swear you'd happened upon some undiscovered old '80s track (The Toronto Star, Feb. 2002).

LOL

Choose a punishment

Private Loyds was brought up before the unit commanding officer for some offence. "You can take your choice, private - one month's restriction or twenty day's pay," said the officer.



"All right, sir," said the bright soldier. "I will take the money."

IN JEST THIS

Great things await you in 2023



Melvin Durai

I HAVE A CRYSTAL BALL. AND WHEN I LOOK IN THE CRYSTAL BALL, I SEE YOU ACHIEVING GREAT THINGS

In just a few days, you'll be entering 2023, the best year of your life. Great things are going to happen for you in 2023. How do I know this? I have a crystal ball. And when I look in the crystal ball, I see you achieving great things. Yes, YOU! Not your brilliant co-worker, not your over-achieving cousin, not that crazy guy who owns Twitter.

I see people patting you on the back and saying, "Fantastic job!" I see you attending an award ceremony and receiving a plaque with an inscription in gold letters. What does it say? Well, it's hard to make out the exact words, but I think it says, "Filmmaker of the Year." No, maybe it says, "Film-watcher of the Year." I'm not sure, but it's a very impressive award, and you have a big smile on your face as you receive the award from Salman Khan. You

seem very pleased to be in the presence of the founder of Khan Academy.

I see you being very active and getting into the best shape of your life. You are doing a lot of walking and even a little running. You don't just run to catch the bus; sometimes you run to evade the bus. I see you entering a marathon and crossing the finish line before the organisers have left for the day. Your blood pressure and other vital signs improve to such an extent that your doctor wonders if you are taking a special drug. "Exercise is my drug," you say with a smile, and the doctor writes you a prescription for more exercise.

I see someone thanking you profusely for helping them. It's not a friend or relative but a stranger, someone you spotted on the street who desperately needed help. You

helped this person out of pure kindness, not expecting anything in return. You don't receive any awards for your act of charity, but you can feel Mother Earth nodding in approval. Or maybe that's just an earthquake.

I see you giving up a bad habit. It's a habit that you've had for many years. You've tried to give it up in the past, but have always failed. But in 2023, you finally succeed in casting the habit aside. I'm not sure what the habit is, but I see you walking past a cigarette display without buying any, shaking your head vigorously when someone offers you a beer, and stopping yourself from finishing all the jamuns at the buffet.

I see you picking up a good habit. It's just one habit, but it makes you feel good about yourself. You've tried to pick up this habit in the past,

but for one reason or another, you failed. This time, you finally succeed. I'm not sure what the habit is, but I see you spending a few minutes meditating every morning, reading a few pages of a book every evening, and trimming your fingernails once a month.

I see you having plenty of achievements in 2023, including one that earns you a Guinness World Record. This brings you a lot of pride, as you are the first member of your extended family to have random strangers tweeting about you. I do not know exactly what record you will set, but I see you binge-watching a TV series, chatting nonstop for hours with your friends, and surviving for months without social media.

I see all these things for you in 2023. Now it's just up to you to make them come true.

FOCUS ECONOMIC PROSPECTS

BRACING FOR SLUMP

Reports about the economic prospects for 2023, both on India and the world, appear quite stark. Former Reserve Bank of India Governor Raghuram Rajan stated recently that the next year will be difficult for the Indian economy as also for the rest of the world as the country failed to generate reforms needed for growth. He said policies should be formulated keeping in mind the lower middle class, which suffered the most due to the pandemic. Rajan also pitched for creating a conducive environment for small and medium-scale industries and giving a push to a green revolution in the field of sustainable energy. According to him, the next revolution in the country can be in the service sector.



Dhurjati Mukherjee

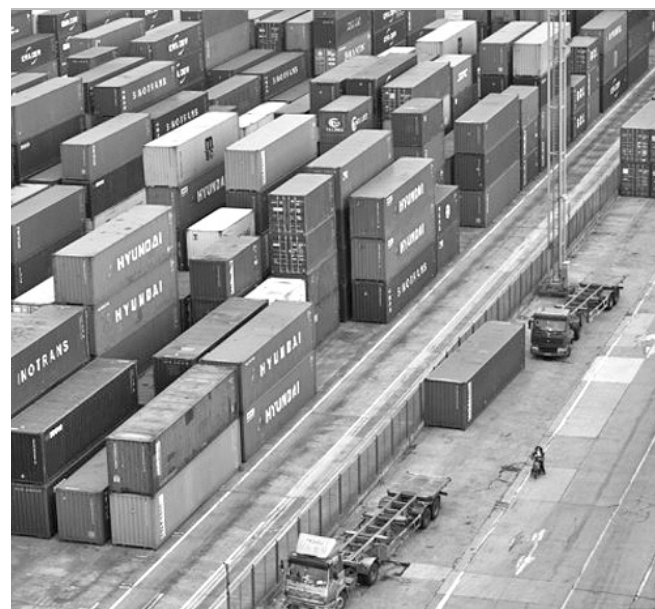
THE GLOBAL ECONOMY HAS A GREAT INFLUENCE ON OUR COUNTRY

Not just Rajan but various studies such as that of the Institute of International Finance, a global association of the financial industry, expects the global economy in 2023 will be weak as it was in 2009 after the global financial crisis. The OECD underscored the "usually imbalanced and fragile outlook" for next year. And very recently, the IMF said that worsening indicators show further downgrades to global growth are likely, along with others, and sounded an alarm on the possibility of a global recession.

Another report of the Survey of Professional Forecasters, a report prepared by the central bank, expects a median real GDP growth of 6 per cent next year after the 6.9 per cent anticipated this year. Though many label India a bright spot in the light of its economic performance in these troubled times when most countries face grave challenges and risk either a recession or low growth, one cannot be too optimistic as the global economy has a great influence on our country.

The fiscal deficit is high at 6.4 per cent but looks under control because tax reforms have created surging revenues and optimism for the future. Inflation is still high and is expected to be so in the coming months though lower than in Europe and the US. The only silver lining is the high GDP growth as Morgan Stanley predicted that China's GDP growth in the next decade will average just 3.6 per cent while India's will average around 6.5 per cent.

As has been pointed out repeatedly, measuring the state of the economy on considerations



The hype created about high GDP has no meaning unless growth translates into real development that upgrades the standards of living of the impoverished sections

of GDP growth is somewhat erroneous. Growth can become real development if the bottom tiers of the population are benefitted by the growth rate. The question of the latter's purchasing power is very important in this context.

It is generally believed that a solid domestic demand and fundamentals make India sufficiently shockproof to external hits and macro-financial risks. This may be partly true, but it cannot be doubted that demand needs to be boosted up. Less than three months ago, on September 30, the RBI had decreased this further to 7 per cent and once again, due to geopolitical tensions, tighter global financial conditions and slowing external demand.

Though Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman stated recently that the forthcoming Budget will continue to push growth on the back of public spending, it is necessary to know in which areas this spending would be directed. Public spending should eye on the rural population, especially those belonging to the lower segments of society, so that their purchasing power is steadily increased through providing more resources towards welfare schemes.

The development of rural infrastructure - both physical and social - is highly important for real development i.e., the devel-

opment that percolates to the lowest levels whereby the bottom segments of the population benefit. It remains to be seen how much money would be allocated in the coming Budget for grassroots development schemes and what measures would be taken to ensure that the welfare benefits reach the actual beneficiaries to upgrade their standards of living.

The hype created about high GDP has no meaning unless growth translates into real development that upgrades the standards of living of the impoverished sections. There are many economists who talk about evolving an alternative strategy of development - not just that benefits the top industrial class but small traders and entrepreneurs who struggle to eke out a dignified existence. It is the latter section whose uplift can benefit the transformation of the rural and semi-urban sectors.

Three critical "access" barriers currently constrain the aspirations of those living in rural areas. Firstly, and most important is the poor physical connectivity (access to all-weather roads and electricity) followed by lack of digital connectivity and finally, limited financial inclusion (access to commercial banks and bank accounts). As India marches forward, it faces new challenges in health and sustainable living, even

as it has achieved key health targets such as polio eradication. There is need for greater investment in rural health to upgrade health centres in blocks, especially in backward districts.

Meanwhile, cities grappling with alarming rates of congestion and pollution, together with an unhealthy population, could significantly affect urban growth and lead to a fast deterioration in the quality of life of its citizens. Thus, there is also need for investments in the urban sector and improving infrastructure requirements, wherever absolutely needed. But more than that, what is most important is the maintenance of existing infrastructure, specially roads and highways, some of which are in pitiable condition.

As the country enters a new era of envisioned growth with India taking over the presidency of G-20, many feel that 2023 is the time for all Indians to come together as one and address the most pressing societal challenges facing the country today. Keeping this in view, the priorities are obviously in areas like skilling and job creation, the socio-economic inclusion of rural India and the building of a healthy and sustainable future for every citizen, apart from huge investments in infrastructure development.

For all these to become a reality, resource mobilisation has to be a priority. Corporate taxation must be increased but it was revealed in the Rajya Sabha very recently that business houses contributed 8 percentage points less to the gross tax revenues than they did in 2014. This corporate tax works out to just Rs 2.5 lakh crore. At such a juncture when huge investments are called for the government should make all possible efforts to raise this figure substantially to at least Rs 3 lakh crore.

Finally, it has been agreed that there are too many variables that blur the country's economic outlook and we will likely have some clarity over the next few months as we assess the energy crisis in Europe and the slowdown in China. The strength of all four economic drivers will be key for sustainable growth, and there are possibilities that not all may reach full steam.

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

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, Rasulgari Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

War against drugs

Sir, In Parliament, Home Minister Amit Shah sounded optimistic about India's war against illicit drugs smuggled from across the country's sensitive borders. The need of the hour is a no-holds-barred attack on the drug mafia that has come to stay. Countries like Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran and Myanmar have posed severe threat to India's fight against drugs. There are no two opinions about the deep nexus between drug lords and terror perpetrators. That is why Shah's assertion that the fight against drugs across the borders will be total assumes significance. Also, tackling drug proliferation through sea and air is extremely important. Coordination between the Centre and states cannot be overstressed. Enhanced expertise among security agencies is too vital to be ignored. Of course, the agencies have seized large containments of drugs and destroyed them in a short span of time over the years. But much more has to be done in the government's zero-tolerance policy against drug trade. Encompassed in this should be an effective treatment and rehabilitation of innocent individual drug users who have no role to play in the larger nefarious drug trade.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

Promote all sports

Sir, We are a cricket-crazy nation. Our madness for cricket is widely known. Cricket is to India and the sub-continent what football is to Latin America. Cricket stars like Sachin Tendulkar and Virat Kohli are no less popular to Messi and Maradona. The name, fame, glamour and money associated with cricket is simply unheard of. Popularity of cricket is such that it even fetches Bharat Ratna, a Rajya Sabha seat and what not? Of late, cricketers have turned administrators too. IPL has simply made cricket a household name world over. In the just concluded IPL auction, Sam Curran was sold for a whopping Rs 18.5 crore for Punjab Kings. Curran confessed he had a sleepless night on the eventful day. It is no wonder that BCCI is the richest cricket body in the world. But dominance of cricket overshadows all other games. Popular games like hockey, football and other traditional games had to pay a heavy price for this. Of course, newly formed league matches are turning into a boon for such sports and their players. The football fever during the just-concluded FIFA World Cup and the hockey craze ahead of the upcoming FIH Men's Hockey World Cup in Odisha will likely give an impetus to these sports. It is time the government initiates concrete steps for development of other sports.

Pratap Nayak, BHUBANESWAR

Four jailed for ponzi fraud



POST NEWS NETWORK

Balasure, Dec 27: A special chit fund court here handed Tuesday seven years imprisonment separately to two persons and three years of imprisonment each to two others after convicting them in a ponzi case. Judge Biswajit Dash concluded the hearing and pronounced the verdict, as per a Supreme Court order which had directed to conclude the hearing in the case by 2022.

Those who got prison terms of seven years each are chief manager of 'Shashtra Enterprises' (formerly Smart Gain) V Sampad, a resident

of Tamil Nadu and B Mallikarjun Raju belonging to Andhra Pradesh. The latter was a member in the board of directors of the company. The judge also slapped a penalty of ₹4.21 lakh on them. The court passed the order after examining the statements recorded by 57 witnesses and 79 documents. Special Public Prosecutor Pranab Kumar Panda pleaded the matter on behalf of the Odisha government.

The court also sentenced Sadashiv Nayak and Tapan Kumar Barik of Mayurbhanj district to three years in prison. They were also slapped with fines of ₹60,000 each. As per the case diary, the convicts

opened a firm called 'Smart Gain' on the top floor of Kuntala Bhawan on Baripada Station Road, August 2009. Later, the firm was renamed as 'Shashtra Enterprises Ltd' in October 2009. The agents appointed by the firm were asked to procure money from people living in Mayurbhanj district by offering them lucrative interest rates and other profitable schemes.

The agents collected ₹4.83 lakhs from 1,357 people in Mayurbhanj district and ₹21,93,000 from 10,327 persons residing in other districts of Odisha. However, the company failed to return the money to people on time as promised.

Depositor Khirod Chandra Barik, a resident of Ward No-20 in Baripada town lodged a complaint against the chief manager and one of the board of directors at the Baripada Town Police station, November 2, 2010. Baripada Town police registered a case and launched an investigation. However, the matter was then handed over May 11, 2011 to the Crime Branch to investigate following which the arrests were made.



SPLENDID PERFORMANCE: Artistes performing a Sambalpuri dance routine on the fourth evening of Gopalpur beach festival, Tuesday

OP PHOTO

Kidney patient dies in road accident

Balasure: A kidney patient returning to his home in Paschim Medinipur district of West Bengal from a hospital in Bhubaneswar was killed and six others suffered injuries when the ambulance carrying them ramed into a moving truck Tuesday, police said. The accident took place on NH-60 under Jaleswarpur police station in Balasure district early in the morning. Seven people including the driver and the patient's relatives were in the ambulance, police informed.

Scribe Sunil Behera breathes his last

Berhampur: Acclaimed media personality Sunil Kanta Behera breathed his last Tuesday following a cardiac arrest at the MKCG Medical College and Hospital here. He was 67. Behera completed his PhD in Journalism and Mass Communication from Berhampur University. He was a 'Professor of Eminence' at Tezpur University in Assam. At the time of his death he was a visiting professor in Central University of Odisha.

Morbi-like disaster awaits Nagavali bridge

PEOPLE CONTINUE TO USE DILAPIDATED STRUCTURE IN RAYAGADA DISTRICT AS DANGER LOOMS LARGE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rayagada, Dec 27: The hanging bridge over Nagavali river in Rayagada district is in a precarious condition due to lack of repair and maintenance. It is a prime recipe for disaster as people from outside the district and even other states are using the bridge. A Morbi-like disaster cannot be ruled out, sources said here Tuesday.

The district administration had closed the bridge in September, but later revoked the order due to pressure from locals during the very same month. Iron fenceings were set up on both entrances of the bridge to prevent people from using it. However, miscreants stole parts of the fencing making it easy for people to crowd on the dilapidated structure. These days people are found frequently on the bridge taking selfies and indulging in other fun activities.

The bridge is an important means of communication for people living in 25 villages around it. Earlier the district administration had decided to close the bridge for public use till its renovation following a spate of fatal



mishaps involving tourists at the site.

The 151-metre long suspension bridge, which was built in 2011 at a cost of ₹1.20 crore and opened for public in 2012, connects Chekaguda area of Rayagada town with Mariguda village. It is suspended at a height of 33 metres above Nagavali river using cantilever technology.

Before the bridge was constructed, over 30,000 people of 25 villages in Karubai, Bada Alubadi, Baisingh, Dungaladi, Durgapadu, Mirabali, Tala Alubadi and Erukubadi panchayats had to travel an extra 20km to reach Rayagada town. The bridge

The banks of the Nagavali river are full of sharp and slippery boulders. So the administration has installed warning signages for tourists not to get down from the bridge to take a bath in the river. However, visitors rarely pay heed to the warnings.

Sources said at least 27 persons, mostly tourists, have drowned in the river in the last five years. Besides, 25 others have been rescued. A few months back, two minor boys, a tourist and a local got drowned in the river.

Following the death of the two minors, the district administration decided to close the bridge in September. However, as villagers protested against the decision, it was reopened again for limited use. However, the bridge is being used by all and sundry despite being in a precarious condition.

Sources belonging to the Public Works department said safety measures including fixing of iron nets on both sides of the bridge would be done soon. Various outfits have demanded that movement of tourists and people carrying heavy loads should be restricted on the bridge.

GOBINDA'S DEATH IN KANTABANJI SUB-JAIL

CB hands over sealed evidence to magistrate

POST NEWS NETWORK

Titilagarh, Dec 27: The Crime Branch (CB) team probing the alleged suicide of Gobinda Sahu, the prime accused in the Mamita Meher murder case, visited Titilagarh in Bolangir district Tuesday. The five-member team headed by DSP Bijay Mallick handed over sealed documents and articles as evidences about the alleged suicide to sub-divisional magistrate Navin Chandra Nayak. Later, the CB team left for the forensic lab in Bhubaneswar.

Notably, on December 23, an 11-member CB team had recreated the scene of the alleged suicide on the premises of the Kantabanji sub-jail with help of a dummy.

The CB had earlier seized a hand-written letter inside an envelope found in the pocket of the deceased. It has been sent to the Handwriting Bureau to check its authenticity. The CB

team had checked the CCTV footage that might have captured the incidents leading to Gobinda's death.

The envelope found in the pocket of Gobinda was addressed to his elder daughter Lipika Sahu, who is working for a company outside Odisha. However, the CB did not disclose the contents inside the envelope as it may hamper the probe.

The CB officials have interrogated prison inmates regarding Gobinda's behaviour on the day he allegedly died by suicide.

A photograph of the place where Gobinda allegedly committed suicide has gone viral. It has created doubts regarding the murder accused's death. In the photograph, two cloth napkins are seen hanging from the railings of a window fitted with iron doors. One of the napkins is blue in colour with white prints while the other is white and dirty.

Continued from P1

Dead Russian ...

While Budanov's last rites were completed in Rayagada following due approval from the Russian authorities, police have preserved the mortal remains of Antov, he added.

According to sources, Antov along with three others had booked the trip to India under the 'India Tribal Tour' through Delhi-based travel and tour company Trip India Private Limited. "The trip package included some places of Odisha and in North-eastern states. The total trip was of 14 nights and 15 days," said an official of the travel and tour company, requesting anonymity.

Hotel owner Koushik Thakkar said Antov was visibly disturbed and appeared to be under depression following the death of Bidenov.

₹1,509cr shot ...

This move will open up the entire eastern side. This will make travel for people of Odisha friendly and also economical. It will also help Prabasi Odias to come to their state in an easier manner, said Mahapatra.

IndiGo will start 186 seater flight operations from Biju Patnaik International Airport in Bhubaneswar to the three international destinations in next one or two months. The expenditure will be borne by the state government towards this flight operation. In lieu, the revenue generated through ticketing will be retained by state government, he added.

The state Cabinet also approved the Odisha MSME Development Policy 2022 which will replace the existing Odisha MSME Development Policy, 2016.

The cabinet has approved the tender of ₹344.67 crore and Operation & Maintenance cost for five years amounting to ₹3.42 crore for Construction of in stream storage structure across river Mahanadi at Choudhury Gada in Jagatsinghpur district and across river Paika at Tikhiri in Kendrapara district.

Animal sacrifice on at Sulia Yatra

DESPITE AWARENESS CAMPAIGN NO LET UP IN KILLING OF ANIMALS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Balangir/Deogaon, Dec 27: The roads leading to the Sulia shrine at Badakhala in Khairaguda and at Sanakhala in Kumuria villages under Deogaon block in Bolangir district wore a tinge of red as hundreds of animals and birds were sacrificed at the annual Sulia Yatra which began, Tuesday. During the festival, hundreds of buffaloes, goats, sheep and hens were sacrificed as part of the rituals associated with Sulia Yatra.

Despite awareness campaigns to prevent the sacrifice of animals, the rituals have continued. The festival started as the Baruas and Dehurias (category of priests) reached the Sulia shrine in a procession to the beating of drums and traditional instruments. Later, the animal sacrifice was conducted at these two shrines.

Thousands of devotees thronged



the places and assembled at the festival which was being held after a gap of two years due to Covid-19 restrictions. The tribal outfits said that they will continue with the sacrifice ritual even if the administration objects to it. They remained adamant on keeping alive

the age-old practice. The tribals said that appeasing the deity by sacrificing animals brings good rainfall and harvest.

A ritual called 'nishipuja' was also performed at midnight along with the custom of worshipping traditional weapons.

IPU-TCs boon for Sundargarh patients

OVER 1 LAKH THERAPY SESSIONS CONDUCTED IN A YEAR WITH MODERN EQUIPMENT

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sundargarh, Dec 27: Integrated Physiotherapy Unit and Therapeutic Centres (IPU-TCs) in tribal-dominated Sundargarh district are helping rehabilitate children with neurological disorders. These centres are also coming to the aid of senior citizens, accident victims and stroke patients among others. Facilities like behaviour, speech, early intervention and occupational therapy are provided to beneficiaries free of costs. In the last one year, people in various age groups have availed of the services. So far, over one lakh therapy sessions have been conducted, officials said here recently.

In order to provide easy access, the IPU-TCs have been set up at community health centres (CHCs)

in various blocks and ULBs. At present 20 IPU-TCs are operational in the district. The district mineral foundation (DMF), Sundargarh is financially supporting the programme.

"IPU-TCs have become considerably popular in the district. People, particularly in rural areas, are getting the benefits of advanced treatment facilities. It is largely due to the whole-hearted support and co-operation extended by the district administration and employees of the Health department that so far over one lakh therapy sessions have been conducted, benefiting people across sections," said CDMO and PHO Dr Saroj Kumar Mishra.

"Providing calibrated treatment, rehabilitating persons with disabilities (PwDs) and their empow-



erment remains the biggest challenge of present times. The IPU-TCs are playing a worthwhile role in that direction. The main objective of this programme is to provide an opportunity to the PwDs to lead a dignified life in the society,"

Mishra added. IPU-TC services were launched in this district in January 2022. The 'Therapeutic Centre' is located on the premises of the Government Medical College and Hospital, Sundargarh, while IPU-TCs are

catering to the interest of people living in rural areas, officials said.

A cross section of the rural population, including the differently-abled, senior citizens, working class, women and children are particularly benefiting from the advanced physiotherapy treatment available at IPU-TCs that are equipped with an array of modern equipment. Trained physiotherapists are counselling and providing the necessary remedies to the patients. Every IPU-TC is equipped with a separate ward for the treatment of children.

Special attention is also being given to the treatment of PwDs and ailing senior citizens. Eco-friendly e-Ambulance facility has been extended for their smooth conveyance to the centres. Moreover, free treatment by therapists at doorsteps has been provided to bed-ridden patients, who can't be shifted to the IPU-TCs.

यूको बैंक UCO BANK
ZONAL OFFICE, UCO Bank Building, 2nd Floor, C-2, Ashok Nagar, Bhubaneswar- 751009, Odisha, Ph.: 0674-2620417
EMPANELMENT FOR CCTV & DIGITAL FIRE GUM BURGLAR ALARM SYSTEM
Bids are invited by Bank for Empanelment of vendors for supply, installation and AMC of CCTV & Digital Fire cum Burglar Alarm System in Bhubaneswar Zone.
Detailed Notice and Bid forms may be obtained from Bank's website www.ucobank.com. The bids can be submitted till **09.01.2023, 15.00 hrs** at the above address.
Zonal Manager

PANCHAYAT SAMITI, CHHENDIPADA
INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)
IDENTIFICATION No: - CHHB- 02/2022-23
E-mail address: - ori-chhendipada@nic.in
The Block Development Officer, Chhendipada on behalf of the Governor of Orissa invites Percentage rate bid in single cover system for the 5 nos of building works & 2 nos Culvert from the Class "B", "C" & "D" contractors accordingly, registered with the State Government and contractors of equivalent grade / Class registered with Central Government/ MES / Railway, to be eventually drawn up in PWD P-I form, for execution of Building. The proof of registration from the appropriate authority shall be enclosed along with the bid. If successful, the bidder who has not registered under State Government has to register under the State PWD in appropriate class of eligibility before signing the agreement. Bidders may submit bids for any or all the Buildings. The details of the Eligibility criteria, enclosures etc. along with the list of project and date and time of sale, receipt and opening of bid documents can be viewed in the office of the undersigned during office hours & downloaded from the District website i.e www.angul.nic.in.
Sd./- Block Development Officer
Chhendipada

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
E-procurement notice
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
SONEPUR (R&B) DIVISION, SONEPUR
E-mail - eeppwdsnr@gmail.com, Phone -06654-221081
BID IDENTIFICATION No. SE/R&B/SNPR/23/2022-23
No.5404 // Dt.23.12.2022
No.B-1042:1.The Superintending Engineer, Sonapur (R&B) Division, Sonapur on behalf of Governor of Odisha, invites Percentage Rate bids in Single Cover System in Online Mode for construction of Road & Building works detailed in the DTCN from the eligible Class of Contractors.
2. No. of work : 03 (Three)
3. Tender Cost: Rs.6,000/-for Serial No.1 to 3
4.Class of Contractor : "C" & "B" Class Contractor for Serial No.1 and 2 : "D" & "C" Class Contractor for Serial No.3
5. Date and time Available in Website & receipt of Bids: From 10.00 A.M. of 28.12.2022 to 5.00 P.M. of 06.01.2023.
6.Date of Opening of Tender: 07.01.2023 at 11.30 AM.
7.The Bidders have to participate in Online bidding only. Further details can be seen from the Website.
8.Any Corrigendum / Addendum will be displayed in the website:www.tendersodisha.gov.in.
Sd./- Superintending Engineer
Sonapur (R&B) Division, Sonapur
OIPR-34081/11/0016/2223

MURMU GLORY FOR ODISHA

community and also the second woman after Pratibha Patil to hold the highest Constitutional post. She also became the first President of India who was born after Independence and thus becoming the youngest person to become the first citizen of India. Her father Biranchi Narayan Tudu was a farmer. Her family named her Puti Tudu but she was renamed by her school teacher to 'Droupadi'. Murmu began her political career when she was elected as the councillor of Raipur Nagar panchayat as an independent candidate. Later, she joined Bharatiya Janata Party and was elected twice from Raipur Assembly seat between 2000 and 2006. She also served as a Minister of State with Independent Charge for Commerce and Transport department from August 6, 2002 to May 16, 2004 and Fisheries and Animal Resources Development from August 6, 2002 to May 16, 2004. Murmu was sworn in as the Governor of Jharkhand on May 18, 2015, becoming the first woman to hold the position.

Although the year was marked by a surge in elephant deaths, prompting the High Court to dub it as 'a bad year for elephants', it brought some cheers for the state with Droupadi Murmu becoming the President of India and some gifted souls receiving Padma awards. Elections, Archana honey-trap, spike in suicides, lawyers' stir, vandalism inside Srimandir and curbs-free festivals made the year more eventful. OrissaPOST recollects the major events of the year...

A JUMBO TRAGEDY

It would not be an overstatement to label the year 2022 as a year of disaster for the elephants. If the details available from Odisha Wildlife Society are to be believed, 81 Jumbos perished by December 24 this year, making it a year of major casualties for the pachyderms in recent times.

Among them, 34 elephants are known to have died natural death while the reason behind the 15 casualties is yet to be ascertained. Similarly, 19 elephants were electrocuted, nine poached, one poisoned and three succumbed in train accidents. Moreover, the burnt and buried skeletal remains of 10 elephants were recovered across the state.

What raised a concern was that the forest officials went into hiding when reports surfaced about buried elephants. The man-animal conflict was at an all-time high. Over 416 elephants died in the state between 2017-18 and 2021-22 for a variety of natural and unnatural reasons. This indicates that 83 elephants die each year on an average. The unnatural reasons include getting shot dead by poachers, poisoning and electrocution, rail or road accidents, or dying after falling from a high altitude. The pachyderms had to battle for survival as they moved from forests to human habitats. Due to dwindling forest cover, animals frequently stray into human habitats, destroying crops and properties of villagers living near the forests thus leading to man-animal conflict.



416 ELEPHANTS DIED BETWEEN 2017-18 AND 2021-22 81 JUMBOS PERISHED BY DECEMBER 24 THIS YEAR, MAKING IT A YEAR OF MAJOR CASUALTIES FOR THE PACHYDERMS IN RECENT TIMES



VATICAN VISIT: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik meets Pope Francis and presents him a pattachitra depicting the Tree of Life, in the Vatican City June 22. ST Secretary VK Pandian is also seen

SURGE IN SUICIDES

A spike in suicide cases in Capital city this year baffled the denizens while many wondered whether the reason could be the fallout of the pandemic. Raimohan Parida, the versatile actor of Odia film industry, hanged himself in his residence June 24. Neighbours said he was fighting depression. Model and businessman, Soumya Ranjan Panigrahi was found hanging at his residence in Nandan Vihar, January 30. Basanti Jena, an asst prof of OAUAT, committed suicide in her residential quarters at Khandagiri February 10. Tushar Jagtap and Mia Tushar Jagtap, a couple from Maharashtra died by suicide April 28 after hanging their 15-year-old daughter at Laxmisaagar. Odia TV actress Rashmitika Ojha was found hanging at her rented house in Nayapalli, June 20. The unpreceded rise in number of suicides by youths, such as Ruchika Mohanty, a student of BJB College, hanged herself in her hostel room July 2. Her suicide note blaming harassment by her seniors led to a massive protest following which the administration ordered a probe. Similarly, July 15, businessman Sanjay Perwal drank acid after his wife Sanjana Perwal hanged herself at an apartment in Laxmisaagar. Software engineer Sweta Utkal Kumar took the extreme step over failed romance, August 23. Housewife Subhashri Mohapatra hanged herself at her Shastri Nagar residence August 31. In November, a series of suicides stunned the Capital. A total of six young people ended their lives within a span of seven days.

THE MYSTERIOUS ARCHANA

alleging that a girl invited him to her house in Bhubaneswar for dinner, recorded objectionable videos and later started blackmailing him. This case had sent shockwaves across the state with speculations rising about the involvement of several senior politicians. The issue also rocked the Assembly where opposition members demanded a statement from the Chief Minister. The Enforcement Directorate began a probe into the issue November 2 and took Archana and her husband Jagabandhu on remand in phases. Her explosive statement to media that she 'would reveal something that would change the entire scene of Odisha' raised quite a few eyebrows. However, she is yet to reveal anything crucial. Probe is on.

THE MYSTERIOUS ARCHANA

On July 1, over 10 lakh devotees descended on the seaside town and jostled to catch a glimpse of the Trinity - Lord Jagannath, Devi Subhadra and Lord Balabhadra - who embarked on a nine-day sojourn to their aunt's place Gundicha Temple on three majestic chariots. A sea of devotees congregating on the Grand Road on Rath Yatra day and swaying to the beats of cymbals and chant of 'Hari Bol' after two back-to-back years marred by the pandemic was indeed a sight to behold. Devotees were denied entry to the Holy City during the car festival in 2020 and 2021, thanks to the Covid-induced restrictions. DURGA PUJA Colourful lights illuminated the streets, and revellers flocked to a variety of thematic pandals and relished on lip-smacking delicacies as Odisha celebrated Durga Puja this year with the much-needed pomp and gaiety missing in the last two years. Ayodhya's Ram Mandir, Delhi's Akshardham Temple and Russia's Heritage Museum-themed pandals greeted revellers in the state Capital. In the Millennium City of Cuttack, where puja is a symbol of communal harmony, pandals on the theme of Mahesmati Mansion of Bahubali movie by Badamtili Puja Committee and Amarnath Cave by Khanagari Puja Committee were among the crowd pullers. BALI YATRA Asia's largest open-air trade fair, Bali Yatra kicked off on Mahanadi riverbed November 8 after two years' hiatus. The annual trade fair that commemorates state's glorious maritime past saw record business this year. Apart from bringing cheers to traders and shoppers, the fair made a mark in the Guinness Book of World Records as over 2,100 students of 22 schools made 22,000 paper boats in just 35 minutes at an event organised by the CMC at Barabati Stadium in the Silver City.



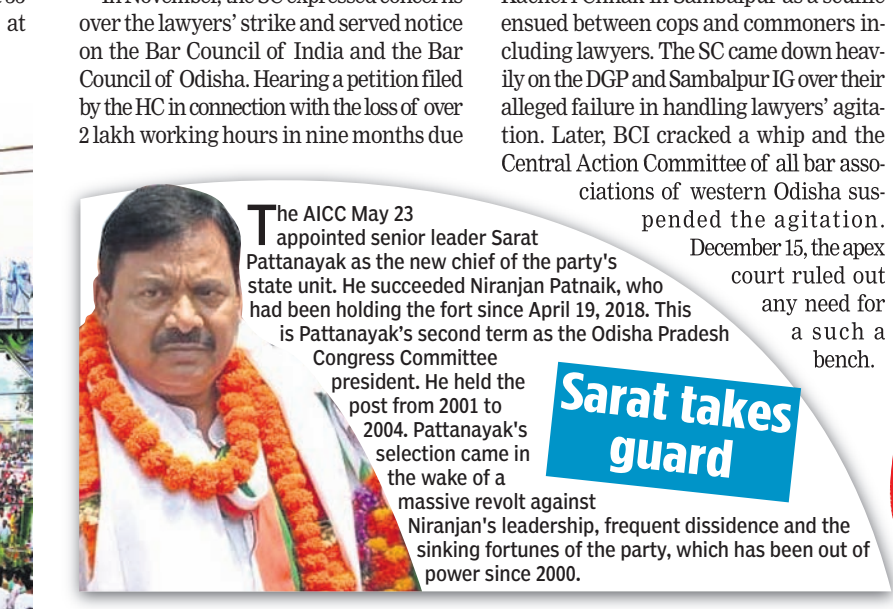
Festivities back with a bang

The long-pending demand for establishment of a permanent High Court bench intensified in the outgoing year with a number of bandh calls across the state, especially in western Odisha. Early months of 2022 saw a slew of cease-work strikes of the lawyers in different western towns, leaving the court proceedings completely paralysed. In November, the SC expressed concerns over the lawyers' strike and served notice on the Bar Council of India and the Bar Council of Odisha. Hearing a petition filed by the HC in connection with the loss of over 2 lakh working hours in nine months due to non-participation of lawyers in court proceedings, the SC November 14, warning of contempt proceedings and suspension of licences, ordered the agitating lawyers to get back to work. However, Sambalpur lawyers backed by civilians launched a 'Satyagraha' December 12 to press for their demands. Effigies of judges were burnt as a sign of discord. All hell broke loose at Kacheri Chhak in Sambalpur as a scuffle ensued between cops and commoners including lawyers. The SC came down heavily on the DCP and Sambalpur IG over their alleged failure in handling lawyers' agitation. Later, BCI cracked a whip and the Central Action Committee of all bar associations of western Odisha suspended the agitation. December 15, the apex court ruled out any need for a such a bench. Sarat takes guard

In pursuit of bench, lawyers lose bread & butter



The AICC May 23 appointed senior leader Sarat Pattanayak as the new chief of the party's state unit. He succeeded Niranjan Patnaik, who had been holding the fort since April 19, 2018. This is Pattanayak's second term as the Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee president. He held the post from 2001 to 2004. Pattanayak's selection came in the wake of a massive revolt against Niranjan's leadership, frequent dissidence and the sinking fortunes of the party, which has been out of power since 2000.



RURAL POLLS BJD BREAKS ITS RECORD

BJD registered a landslide victory in the panchayat elections this year by winning a record number of 706 Zilla Parishad (ZP) zones out of the total 851, breaking its own record in 2017 elections. The ruling party formed all 30 ZPs in the state. Rival BJP could secure only 42 seats followed by Congress 37 seats. Independent candidates won three seats while others got four. The BJD gained 267 more seats as compared to its performance in the previous panchayat polls held in 2017. The BJP lost 255 ZP seats in 2022. While the saffron party had secured 297 ZP seats in 2017 elections, its tally has now come down to 42. The Congress, which had bagged 60 ZP seats in 2017, has now won only 37 seats. The seats won by Independents and others, which were 17 in the previous election, have dipped to only seven in this election. While BJP, the state's main opposition party, failed to win any of the ZP seats in 10 districts, the Congress could not open its account in 18 districts. The districts where BJP could not win any of the ZP seats were Bhandrak, Deogarh, Jagatsinghpur, Jajpur, Jharsuguda, Koraput, Malkangiri, Mayurbhanj, Nabarangpur and Rayagada. Similarly, Congress candidates could not open accounts in Angul, Baragarh, Bhandrak, Boudh, Cuttack, Deogarh, Dhenkanal, Ganjam, Jajpur, Jharsuguda, Kendrapara, Keonjhar, Khurda, Mayurbhanj, Nayagarh, Puri, Sambalpur and Sundargarh.

No brakes on ragging

The outgoing year saw ragging rearing its ugly head in many state-run educational institutions. In November, a group of students allegedly harassed a junior girl student at Binayak Acharya College in Ganjam. The incident, which came to the fore after its video went viral on social media, created a flutter in the state. At least a dozen of those allegedly involved in the ragging were expelled and some five were arrested. Also in November, in Ganjam, a Class XI girl student alleged ragging at Kharilokte Junior College. Authorities of the state-run college suspended nine students over the allegation. Then came Burla's VSSUT. A second-year student of E&T department alleged harassment by a few of his seniors in late November. Six days later, three final-year students were expelled.

Gobinda dead in jail

Gobinda Sahu, the prime accused in sensational Kidnapping and murder of Kalahandi teacher Mamita Meher in October last year, died 'by suicide' at Kantabanji sub-jail in Bolangir district December 20. Authorities of Kantabanji sub-jail said Sahu was found hanging from a tree 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 Judicial Magistrate First Class (JMFC) in the afternoon. Crime Branch started a probe into Gobinda's death.

3 bypolls: Alaka, Suraj, Barsha winners

The state witnessed three Assembly bypolls this year with the ruling BJD winning two seats and BJP one. Bypoll to the Brajarajnaraj assembly seat was necessitated due to death of BJD MLA Kishore Mohanty and held May 31. The BJD had fielded Mohanty's wife Alaka Mohanty who registered a spectacular victory by polling total 93,953 votes. Kishore Chandra Patil of Congress got 27,831 votes while BJP's Radharani Panda came third with 22,630 votes. Bypoll to Dhammagar seat was held in November and necessitated following death of BJD MLA Bishnu Sethi. However, the BJP retained the seat by fielding Sethi's son Suryabanshi Suraj who defeated his nearest rival of BJD Abanti Das by 9,881 votes. Suraj got 80,351 votes, while Das secured 70,470 votes in Dhammagar bypoll. Congress nominee Baba Harekrushna Sethi got only 3,561 votes. Byelection to Padampur Assembly seat in Baragarh district was necessitated following the demise of the BJD MLA Bijaya Ranjan Singh Baraha. BJD fielded his daughter Barsha, a 29-year-old lawyer, who trounced her BJP rival Pradeep Prorhit with a staggering margin of over 42,000 votes. Barsha garnered 1,20,807 votes while Pradeep secured 78,128 votes. Congress's nominee and three-time MLA Satya Bhusan Sahu lost his deposit in the election and got just 3,594 votes. The BJD increased its vote share to 58 per cent as compared to 41.29 per cent votes in the 2019 polls. A resounding triumph in Padampur came as a booster for the party in the run-up to the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections due in 2024.

Kendrapara Casanova

Three women died after eight wagons of a speeding goods train crashed into the waiting hall of Korai station in Jajpur district November 21 after one of them derailed and the rest jumped off the tracks. Parbati Bindhani, 55, her daughter across seven states over 38 years before coming out of luck February 14. Ramesh Chandra Swain, the 66-year-old from a coastal village in Kendrapara district, is now cooling his heels in a jail in judicial custody. Swain, according to police, posed as a doctor posted as a deputy director general under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. His victims, of lakhs of rupees before moving on to greener pastures. Swain got married for the first time in 1982, and the last in 2020, 38 years apart. His last marriage to a teacher was solemnised at an Arya Samaj temple in Delhi.

Shyamamani Devi

Known as 'kollu' (cuckoo) of Odisha, Shyamamani Devi was honoured with Padma Shri this year for her contribution to music and arts, renditions of Odissi, Chhanda and Chhumpu, authored by medieval Odia poets such as Upendra Bhanja. Also famous for her renditions of folk music, she will be remembered as a woman who broke the glass ceiling.

Ifu Mallick

After the media reported about his struggle to arrange money for higher studies, this talented initial key from Kandhamal, who had cracked NET on his own, got an opportunity to meet the Chief Minister. The state government provided ₹2,950 towards expenses for his first-year MBBS course.

Kuni Dehury

This 35-year-old woman from Keonjhar got a shout out from the Prime Minister in his Mann Ki Baat programme for her initiative to empower women by training them to spin silk and weave clothes using solar-powered machines.

Namita Meleka

This tribal girl from Koraput became an internet sensation when, during the pandemic, her covers of popular Bollywood songs went viral on social media. Now, Namita is all set to entertain the audience at the inaugural ceremony of Hockey World Cup at Barabati Stadium in Cuttack January 11.

- THOSE WHO LEFT US: DURYODHAN MAJHI (JANUARY 10), MANGLU CH BISWAL (JANUARY 12), HEMANANDA BISWAL (FEBRUARY 25), BINAPANI MOHANTY (APRIL 24), RAJAT KUMAR KAR (MAY 8), SIVAJI PATNAIK (MAY 23), BISHNU CH SETHI (SEPTEMBER 19), JAYANTI PATNAIK (SEPTEMBER 28), BIJAY BARIHA (OCTOBER 2), ABASARA BEURIA (NOVEMBER 17), GOLAK NAIK (NOVEMBER 23), MOHAN JENA (DECEMBER 12)

national

of the day quote

Be prepared to meet any challenge, if need be, by preparing the standard operating procedures to treat COVID-19 cases at village clinics with facilities to test and treat the new sub-variant of the virus

Y S JAGAN MOHAN REDDY | ANDHRA CM

In the last panchayat election, TMC did not allow us to file nominations. They won by looting votes. Now, facing public ire they have gone into hiding. Confront them seeking the details of expenses made by the panchayats

DILIP GHOSH | BJP LEADER

Players from the state winning medals in Olympics and Asian Games will be appointed as deputy superintendent of police and deputy collector

SHIVRAJ SINGH CHOUHAN | MP CM

SHORT TAKES

Attack averted

Udhampur/Jammu: Police Tuesday defused an improvised explosive device (IED) weighing 15 kilograms which was recovered in Jammu and Kashmir's Udhampur district, officials said. A major terror plan was averted when the cylindrical shaped IED, 300-400 grams of RDX, seven 7.62 mm cartridges and five detonators were recovered in Basantgarh area on Monday, they said.

Over 4,400 houses damaged in Assam

Dibrugarh/Tinsukia (Assam): A massive hailstorm swept through several areas of upper Assam, damaging nearly 4,500 houses in four districts, officials said Tuesday. According to an Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) report, a total of 4,483 houses were damaged across 132 villages in Dibrugarh, Charaideo, Sivasagar and Tinsukia districts. Almost 18,000 people have been affected, and the families hit by the hailstorm were supplied with tarpaulin sheets, it said. The severe hailstorm lashed the upper Assam areas late on Monday and early Tuesday, an official of the Dibrugarh district administration said.

2 blind students suspended

Bhavnagar (Gujarat): The trustees of a school for visually impaired children in Bhavnagar on Tuesday suspended two students and asked 10 others to apologise for allegedly beating two fellow students from the same school on suspicion of stealing money from their bags. The incident took place at K.K. School and Home for the Blind.

CLASSIFIED

AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an Affidavit before in the Court of Executive Magistrate, Khurda, I, Hapizur Raheman Khan @ Hapizuraheman Khan is one and same person for all practical purposes.



We salute Rahu Gandhi for undertaking Bharat Jodo Yatra to unite India and strengthen and nurture secularism and brotherhood in this country

MEHBOOBA MUFTI | PDP CHIEF

UNIQUE PLEDGE

A couple in Andhra Pradesh has decided to make their wedding day a special one by pledging to donate their organs, and impressed by their gesture about 60 of their relatives have also come forward to fill the organ donation forms



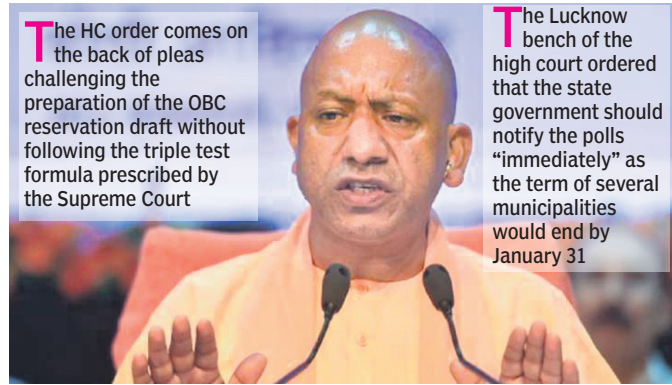
HC orders local body polls in UP without OBC quota

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, Dec 27: The Allahabad High Court Tuesday quashed the Uttar Pradesh government's draft notification on urban local body elections and ordered it to hold the polls without reservation for the Other Backward Classes.

The Lucknow bench of the high court ordered that the state government should notify the polls "immediately" as the term of several municipalities would end by January 31. But, as opposition parties blamed the state's BJP government for the "anti-OBC" development, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said the elections will be announced only after finding a way out to provide the OBC reservation. If necessary, the state government will approach the Supreme Court, he said.

Justice D K Upadhyay and Justice Saurav Lavania annulled the government's December 5 draft that provided reservation of seats in the urban body polls for the OBC - apart from those for the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and women. The court directed the state election commission to hold the elections by January 31, after transferring the OBC seats in the draft notification to the general category. The HC order comes on the back of pleas challenging the preparation of the OBC reservation draft without following the triple test formula prescribed by the Supreme Court. The "triple test" requires setting up a com-



Urban civic body elections will be held in the state only after reservation is provided to Other Backward Classes for which the government will set up a commission. If necessary, the state government will approach the Supreme Court

YOGI ADITYANATH | UP CM

mission to hold a "rigorous empirical inquiry" into the nature of the "backwardness" in the context of the local bodies, specifying the proportion of reservation based on the commission's recommendations, and not exceeding the overall 50 per cent quota limit.

Soon after the verdict, Adityanath said the state government will set up a commission on urban body elections and provide reservation to the OBC on the basis of the triple test. "Only

after this, the urban body general elections will be conducted. If necessary, the state government will also appeal to the Supreme Court after considering all legal aspects regarding the decision of the High Court", an official spokesperson said, quoting the CM.

The high court held the triple test conditions formulated by the Supreme Court 11 years ago as mandatory. "Until the triple test is completed in all respects by the state government, no reservation for Backward Class of citizens shall be provided," the order said.

It said the term of the municipalities in the state has either ended or shall end by January 31, 2023. Since the process of meeting the triple test is "arduous and is likely to take considerable time", it directed that the state government and the state election Commission notify the elections "immediately" without the OBC quota.

Covid scare: Hosps conduct mock drill



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 27: Many hospitals across the country held mock drills Tuesday to check preparedness of health facilities to deal with any spurt in COVID-19 cases, with Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya saying it was important to gauge operational readiness of equipment and human resources. Mandaviya oversaw the drill at the Centre-run Safdarjung Hospital here, while health ministers reviewed the drill in their respective states.

Officials said the mock drill focused on parameters such as the availability of health facilities in all districts, the capacity of isolation beds, oxygen-supported beds, ICU beds and ventilator-supported beds, and optimal availability of doctors, nurses, paramedics, AYUSH doctors, and other frontline workers, including ASHA and Anganwadi workers.

Mandaviya said the drill was necessary to know how prepared our hospitals are. "Covid cases are rising all over the world and India

might witness a spike in cases too. Hence it is important that the entire Covid infrastructure in terms of equipment, processes and human resources are in a state of operational readiness", he stated.

Clinical readiness at hospitals is crucial, Mandaviya said while noting that government as well as private hospitals are undertaking mock drills. Cautioning against complacency, he urged everyone to follow Covid appropriate behaviour. He also asked people to refrain from sharing unverified information and ensure high level of preparedness.

In the national capital, the drill took place at the LNJP Hospital and other government-run facilities.

In Uttar Pradesh, Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak visited a hospital in Lucknow to ascertain its preparedness to deal with any eventuality.

In Mumbai, medical facilities including the civic-run Seven Hills Hospital (having 1,700 beds) and Kasturba Hospital (35 beds), government-run Cama Hospital (100 beds), St George Hospital (70 beds), Tata Hospital (16 beds), and Jagjivan Ram Hospital (12 beds) conducted the mock drill.

Madhya Pradesh saw such drills being conducted in all government medical institutions in the state. State Medical Education Minister Vishvas Sarang said the COVID-19 situation in Madhya Pradesh was under control and not a single positive case was reported from the state in the recent past.

Officials in West Bengal said the mock drill was conducted at Kolkata-based hospitals.

BSF man killed for protesting against daughter's video

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kheda, Dec 27: A 42-year-old Border Security Force jawan was murdered allegedly by seven members of a family in Gujarat's Kheda district after he went to their house to protest while holding one of them responsible for circulating an objectionable video of his minor daughter on social media, police said on Tuesday.

The incident took place at around 10 pm Saturday and the seven accused were arrested Sunday, they said. BSF jawan Melaji Vaghela, his wife and son went to the house of Dinesh Jadav at Chaklasi village in Nadiad taluka of the district to protest against the objectionable video of Vaghela's daughter, which they claimed was circulated on social media by Jadav's son.

"After a heated argument over the

issue, Jadav and his six other family members attacked Vaghela and his family members with sticks and sharp weapons," Nadiad's Deputy Superintendent of Police V R Bajpai told reporters.

Vaghela received injuries on his head and other body parts and died on the spot, he said. His son Navdeep too suffered severe head injuries and his wife was also injured, the official said.

An FIR was registered on Sunday night at Chaklasi police station under various Indian Penal Code Sections including 302 (murder), 307 (attempt to murder), 323 (voluntarily causing hurt), 504 (intentional insult) and 143 (unlawful assembly), he said. All the seven accused were arrested. They were sent to judicial custody on Monday, the official said.



A street is covered in white after hailstorm in Sivasagar district

PTI PHOTO

Man stabs woman 51 times

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Korba, Dec 27: A man allegedly killed a 20-year-old woman by stabbing her 51 times with a screwdriver in Chhattisgarh's Korba district after she refused to talk to him, police said on Tuesday.

The incident took place in the pump house colony of South Eastern Coalfields Limited (SECL) on December 24, city superintendent of police (Korba) Vishwadipek Tripathi said.

According to the police, the victim was alone in the house when the accused arrived there. He covered her mouth with a pillow to muffle her screams and stabbed her 51 times with a screwdriver. The victim's brother found her in a pool of blood when he arrived home later, the official said.

Preliminary investigations have revealed that the accused, who hails from Jashpur district, had befriended the victim three years ago when he was working as a conductor in a passenger bus and the woman used to travel by it, he said.

2022 saw attack on collegium system; record appointments in HCs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 27: Amid a renewed attack mounted by the government on the collegium system of appointing members to the higher judiciary, a "record" 138 judges were appointed to the various high courts this year.

Law Minister Kiren Rijiju, who has been questioning the collegium system, dubbed it as being "alien" to the Constitution. He also said that the issue of vacancies and appointments in the higher judiciary would continue to linger till such time a new system is created for the same. Seeking to overturn the collegium system, Parliament had passed - with near unanimity - the National Judicial Appointments Commission Act which was given constitutional status.

The government brought into force the Constitution (Ninety-Ninth Amendment) Act, 2014 and the National Judicial Appointments Commission Act, 2014 on April 13, 2015. However, both the Acts were challenged in the Supreme Court which eventually declared both the laws as unconstitutional and void on October 16, 2015.

After the judgment, the collegium system returned. In a recent written reply in Parliament, Rijiju had said that "Representations from diverse sources on lack of transparency, objectivity and social diversity in the collegium system of appointment of judges to the constitutional courts (SC and the HCs) are received from time to time with the request to improve this system of appointment of judges."

But at the same time, he has made it clear that there is no pro-



posal at present to reintroduce a bill on National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC). Amid a standoff between the government and the Supreme Court

collegium over the appointment of judges, a parliamentary panel had recently asked the Executive and the Judiciary to come up with an "out of box thinking" to deal with

the "perennial problem" of vacancies in high courts.

The committee also said that it is 'surprised' to note that the Supreme Court and the government have failed to reach at a consensus on revision of the Memorandum of Procedure for appointment of judges to the Supreme Court and the high courts, though the same is under consideration of both for "about seven years now".

The committee expected the government and the judiciary to finalise the revised MoP, which is more efficient and transparent. MoP is a set of documents which guide the appointment, elevation and transfer of Supreme Court and high court judges.

On November 25, the government asked the Supreme Court Collegium to reconsider 20 files

related to appointment of high court judges. The government had expressed "strong reservations" about the recommended names. Out of the 20 cases, 11 were fresh cases and nine were reiterations made by the top court collegium. Late last year, Parliament had cleared amendments to the Representation of the People Act.

In June this year, the government issued rules allowing linking of electoral roll data with Aadhaar on a voluntary basis, making electoral law gender neutral for service voters and enabling young citizens register as voters four times a year instead of the present one. Now a citizen who turns 18 on the January 1 or April 1 or July 1 or October 1 in a calendar year can immediately apply for voter registration. The four qualifying dates will considerably enhance the voter base.

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Everyone should make efforts for the progress and welfare of the society at their own level. Tree plantation, cleanliness, drug eradication and adult education drives must be undertaken with the spirit of cooperation, consent and collectivity at the local level

NO RESPITE

The northern parts of the country will witness fresh cold wave conditions from December 31 onwards, said India Meteorological Department Tuesday



of the day quote

The CPI(M) had used terror tactics such as killing, arson and rape to rule Tripura for 35 years in two stints. The communists had taken away people's rights. They had pushed the state to a disaster-like situation and no development had taken place

Today I am the chief minister... I want to serve every community, be it Jat, Gujjar, Rajput, Kushwaha, Jatav, Brahmin, Baniya, Meena. Because, I know that no one is made the chief minister on the basis of caste

Rahul Gandhi is probably still living in the era of 1962. I would like to tell Rahul you should not indulge in humiliating the Indian Army time and again. Has the Congress decided to bring down the morale of the Indian Army by insulting the Indian Army again and again? Or does Rahul Gandhi have no faith in the Indian Army?

Border row: Maha ups ante

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Nagpur, Dec 27: The Maharashtra legislature Tuesday unanimously passed a resolution to "legally pursue" the inclusion of 865 Marathi-speaking villages in Karnataka into the western state, amid the raging boundary dispute.

The state government will legally pursue in the Supreme Court the case to include (in Maharashtra) "every inch" of the land of Belgaum, Karwar, Bidar, Nipani, Bhalki cities and the 865 Marathi-speaking villages in Karnataka, said the resolution moved by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde in both the Houses.

The Karnataka legislature had passed a resolution on the issue to purposely fuel the border row, it said and condemned the southern state's stand. The Maharashtra resolution also said the Centre should tell the Karnataka government to ensure the safety of the Marathi-speaking population living in the neighbouring southern state.

"The state government stands resolutely with the Marathi-speaking people in 865 villages and cities of Belgaum (also called Belagavi), Karwar, Nipani, Bidar and Bhalki that are being contested in the Supreme Court," the resolution said.

"The state government will legally pursue in the Supreme Court the case to include (in Maharashtra) each and every inch of the land of Belgaum, Karwar, Bidar, Nipani, Bhalki cities and the 865 Marathi-speaking villages



MAHARASHTRA LAID CLAIM TO BELAGAVI WHICH WAS PART OF THE ERSTWHILE BOMBAY PRESIDENCY, AS IT HAS A SIZABLE MARATHI-SPEAKING POPULATION. IT ALSO LAID CLAIM TO MORE THAN 800 MARATHI-SPEAKING VILLAGES WHICH ARE CURRENTLY PART OF KARNATAKA

KARNATAKA MAINTAINS THE DEMARCATION DONE ON LINGUISTIC LINES AS PER THE STATES REORGANISATION ACT AND THE 1967 MAHAJAN COMMISSION REPORT AS FINAL

We strongly condemn Maharashtra's resolution. It has been so long since the State Reorganisation Act 1956 came in, and people on both sides are living peacefully. Maharashtra has the practice of making such statements and resolutions for the sake of their politics



BASAVARAJ BOMMAI | KARNATAKA CM

in Karnataka," it added. The Maharashtra resolution said when the chief ministers of the two states had met Union Home Minister Amit Shah, it was decided that till the Supreme Court

gives its judgement on the matter, it should be ensured the issue does not flare up any further. However, the Karnataka government took a contrary stand by passing a resolution in its state Assembly.

SHORT TAKES

Tiger found dead

Umaria: A tiger cub was found dead in the Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve (BTR) in Madhya Pradesh's Umaria district with forest officials suspecting another feline killed it during a fight. The reserve's patrolling team spotted the carcass in Khtoli range on Monday, BTR's field director Rajiv Mishra said in a statement. After receiving the information, senior officials reached the spot and inspected the area, he said. The cub was about 15 months old. Prima facie, on the basis of an inspection of the area, it seems the cub was killed by another tiger in a fight, the official said.

Student assaulted

Amreli (Saurashtra): A principal of a Gurukul has been booked on charges of abusing and assaulting a 12th grade student for singing a Telugu movie song 'Ramuloh'. He has been booked for voluntarily and intentionally hurting and provoking. According to Investigating Officer Bhavesh Amrelia, the incident occurred on December 22, in the Shree Swaminarayan Gurukul, Tarvada Amreli, where complainant Uday Kalasiya was beaten by the principal Piyush Savaliya. Initially, the student did not inform his parents or lodge a complaint. But when he could not bear the pain, he informed his parents and lodged a complaint on Saturday night.

Woman robbed

Patna: Two unidentified men allegedly hypnotized a woman and made off with her jewellery in Kankarbagh locality of the district, police said Tuesday. The incident took place when Ranju Prasad -- wife of a retired botany professor in the College of Commerce, Patna -- was going to a doctor's clinic for a medical check-up.

Three killed in UP

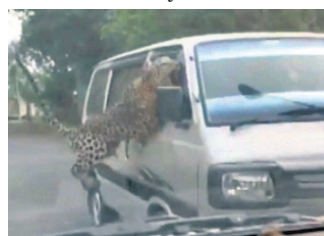
Kannauj (UP): Three people were killed after a car in which they were travelling rammied into a vehicle from the rear on the Agra-Lucknow Expressway in Kannauj district on Tuesday. An executive officer, a clerk and another person were among the deceased. As per the police officials, the accident occurred due to poor visibility as the area was covered in a thick blanket of fog. Police said that the executive officer has been identified as Tanuj Tomar, the clerk Sudhir Singh and one other person Aslam.

Leopard that attacked 13 people captured

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Guwahati, Dec 27: A leopard that injured at least 13 people, including three forest officials, in Assam's Jorhat district, was tranquillized and captured by the forest department Tuesday.

The incident took place around the Rain Forest Research Institute, located at Chenijan in Jorhat. According to forest officials, the leopard came out of the forest and started attacking people without any provocation. Iqbal Ahmed, the forest ranger of Jorhat Forest Range, said that they received information about the leopard attacking people and creating a ruckus on the institute campus on Monday morning. "A team from the forest department immediately rushed there to



capture the leopard. However, it attacked and injured two of the forest officials. We then called more forest department officials, but in another attack by the leopard, another person sustained injuries," he added. The forest department then launched an observation campaign and watched the big cat through Monday night. "Today, around 9.30 a.m., we were able to get hold of the leopard and successfully tranquillize him," Ahmed said.



BJP candidate Rekha Gupta files her nomination for the post of MCD Mayor at Civic Centre in New Delhi

PM's brother, family injured in accident

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mysuru, (Karnataka) Dec 27: Prime Minister Narendra Modi's brother Prahlad Modi and family members sustained injuries when the car in which they were travelling met with an accident near here, police said Tuesday.

According to sources, other than the driver, Prahlad Modi, his son, daughter-in-law and a

grandchild were in the car. They are said to have suffered some injuries and have been shifted to JSS Hospital for treatment. As per the police, the injuries are said to be "minor" in nature.

The incident happened near Kadakola around 1.30 PM when their car, on the way to Bandipur, is said to have hit the road divider. Mysuru Superintendent of Police Seema Latkar has vis-

ited the spot and the hospital, sources said.

A doctor at the hospital said, "All were stable with minor injuries when they came, they were immediately attended and are out of danger without any major bleeding. X-rays and CT scans have been done...Only the child has suffered a small fracture on left leg tibia, but it is not major and is being treated."

Khurshid compares Rahul to Lord Ram

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Moradabad/New Delhi, Dec 27: Senior Congress leader Salman Khurshid has likened Rahul Gandhi to Lord Ram and described him as "superhuman" and a "yogi doing tapasya" as he lauded the former party chief for his Bharat Jodo Yatra, evoking sharp criticism from the BJP.

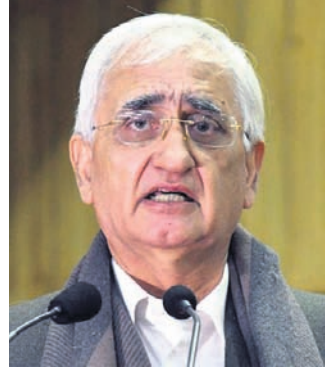
Slamming the opposition party leaders for their show of "sycophancy", the BJP said comparing a person out on bail in a corruption case, a reference to the National Herald probe, to a God worshipped by so many people not only hurts the feelings of Hindus but also the entire society.

The Congress leader, however, remained unfazed and defended his remarks. "No one can replace God but everyone can try to walk the path shown by him. Why should anyone object if I say someone is following that path," he said on Tuesday.

While BJP spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia targeted the Congress at a press conference for Khurshid's comparison, another party spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla, in a swipe at Congress leaders, said they put "parivaar ki bhakti" (devotion to family) above "bhagwaan and rashtra ki bhakti" (devotion to God and nation).

The Congress must apologise for hurting Hindu sentiments, Poonawalla said. Khurshid, a former Cabinet minister, also likened Congress workers to Lord Ram's brother Bharat. Talking to reporters in Moradabad on Monday, Khurshid, who is the state coordinator of the yatra, said, "Rahul Gandhi is superhuman. While we are freezing in the cold and wearing jackets, he is going out in T-shirt (for the Bharat Jodo Yatra). He is like a yogi, he has called himself so, doing his 'tapasya' (penance) with focus."

Drawing a parallel with Lord



Ram and his brother Bharat, Khurshid said, "Lord Ram's 'khadau' (wooden slipper) goes very far. Sometimes when Ram ji is not able to reach, Bharat takes his 'khadau' and goes to places. Like that, we have carried the 'khadau' in Uttar Pradesh.

"Now that 'khadau' has reached Uttar Pradesh. Ram ji will also come, this is our belief." He was responding to a question about the Gandhi-led yatra not passing through Uttar Pradesh till now.

Asked about BJP's reaction to his remarks, Khurshid told reporters on Tuesday, "If I believe somebody is following the path shown by God, then what will I say if I have to praise him? How do you praise a person if he has attained such a height? Isn't this said that he is like God? No one can replace God but everyone can try to walk the path shown by him."

"Why should anyone object if I say someone is following that path and that people can again see the story they associate with God. If the BJP has never seen a good man, then it's their problem." BJP spokespersons, however, alleged that the Congress, when in power, had questioned the existence of Lord Ram and accused its leaders of repeatedly riding roughshod over Hindu sentiments.

KPs move CAT over bar on transfers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, Dec 27: Protesting Kashmiri Pandit employees have approached the Central Administrative Tribunal against a Jammu and Kashmir administration order stating those granted employment under the prime minister's special package cannot be transferred.

The move to approach the CAT's Srinagar bench comes days after Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha announced that the striking employees would not be given salaries, a statement criticised by all major political parties. Kashmiri Pandit employees have been on a strike for over seven months to demand their "relocation" from the Valley in view of targeted killings by terrorists. The protesting employees have also sought interim relief from being forced to join work at their respective postings till the gov-



ernment provides them a secure work environment and releases their pending salaries.

The petition filed by Boopinder Bhat and Yogesh Pandita is likely to be listed for hearing after the tribunal resumes functioning on December 30.

They have challenged sub-rule 4 of rule 4 of the Jammu and Kashmir Kashmiri Migrants (Special Drive) Recruitment Rules, 2009, which provides that "in case the appointee migrates from valley again for any reason whatsoever, he shall lose the job without any notice and shall stand terminated".

New inexpensive sensor can detect toxic chemicals in food

ACCORDING TO THE FOOD SAFETY AND STANDARDS OF INDIA REGULATION 2011, FORMALIN IS NOT PERMITTED FOR USE IN FOOD. HOWEVER, THE CHEMICAL IS OFTEN USED AS A PRESERVATIVE FOR FISH AND MEAT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 27: Researchers have developed a new cost-effective sensor that can detect toxic chemicals such as formalin in food samples like preserved meat, fish and honey.

The team at Shiv Nadar Institution of Eminence Delhi-NCR noted that the chemical sensor for monitoring environmental pollutants offers a cost-effective, easy synthesis and excellent water solubility. The chemosensor, described in the journal ChemComm, also provides good sensing ability to formaldehyde or formalin - a naturally occurring organic compound - upto 0.3 micro Moles (uM). According to the Food Safety

and Standards of India (FSSAI) regulation 2011, formalin is not permitted for use in food. However, the chemical is often used as a preservative for fish and meat. It is also used as a disinfectant for treating external parasites and fungi in aquaculture.

The researchers noted that the sensor can discriminate the formaldehyde from other analogues spectroscopically in parts per million (ppm) concentrations. It also can be visually monitored at higher concentrations.

The detection method can monitor formaldehyde in real samples, including preserved fish and chicken. It can also quantify other analogues in honey such as methyl glyoxal (MGO). "We have used a



simple optical method, especially fluorescence, to detect formaldehyde," Anumesh Samanta, Assistant Professor, Department of Chemistry, School of Natural Sciences, Shiv Nadar Institution of Eminence. "Low concentrations of formalde-

hyde can be detected by fluorimeter, and higher concentrations can be detected by the naked eye using a simple UV torch. This sensing method is easy and inexpensive for real sample analysis, including preserved fish and

honey," Samanta said.

Current fluorescent-based small molecular sensors for formaldehyde are either partially or not soluble in an aqueous solution, limiting the real application in preserved food samples, the researchers said.

A few colorimetric chemosensors or test kits have been developed, but these are not sensitive like fluorescence techniques, they said. An alternative highly water soluble fluorescence-based small molecular chemosensor was urgently needed to develop, according to the researchers.

Samanta said from a chemistry point of view, the detection of reactive carbonyl species (RCS) is solely dependent on the o-

phenylenediamine (OPD) derivatives. However, none of the current chemical sensors are effective for simultaneous detection and discrimination among formaldehyde and other analogues, such as methyl glyoxal (MGO).

"Our design principle, its synthesis, and application are unique compared to similar studies in this research field," said Samanta. "This research is a proof-of-concept and a practical demonstration of analysing toxic pollutants in food samples," he added.

The research team is trying to develop a test kit that can be detected by mobile onsite instead of using any spectrophotometer, Samanta added.

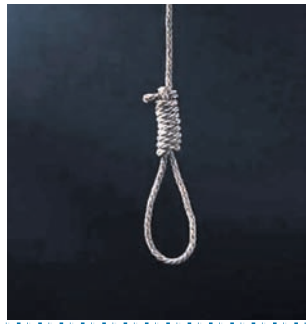
international



A hundred million people across the world were forced to leave their homes in 2022 and the UN is continuing to help those in need in a myriad of ways
CHRISTA ROTTENSTEINER | CHIEF OF MISSION UK IOM - UN MIGRATION

MATTER OF CONCERN

The youth suicide rate in South Korea increased in 2021 amid the Covid-19 pandemic to remain as their No. 1 cause of death, in yet another sign of a chronic problem that has plagued the country for years, data showed Tuesday



of the day quote

We're a mature country. We're a sovereign country. We are an independent country
AK ABDUL MOMEN | BANGLADESHI FOREIGN MINISTER

We will quickly implement everything that was agreed upon in Washington. As much as possible
VOLODYMYR ZELENSKYY | PRESIDENT OF UKRAINE

Our new discovery will open the door to similar discoveries in other geological fields adjacent to the region. We will start new drilling as soon as possible
RECEP TAYYIP ERDOGAN | PRESIDENT OF TURKEY

SHORT TAKES

Another scandal-hit Japanese Min quits

Tokyo: Japan's reconstruction minister Kenya Akiba resigned Tuesday following allegations of his involvement in political funding and other scandals. Akiba, who was effectively sacked by Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, is the fourth minister to resign over similar funding and other scandals since October, as the approval rating for the cabinet approaches the critical 30 per cent level, reports Xinhua news agency. Kishida has decided to appoint former reconstruction minister Hiromichi Watanabe to take over Akiba's portfolio.

Pak makes security plan for Islamabad

Islamabad: Pakistan Police Tuesday announced special security measures, including setting up 25 new checkpoints, to tighten security in the federal capital here after several countries, including the US, UK, Saudi Arabia and Australia asked their citizens to restrict their movement, warning of a possible terror threat. According to the security plan, shared on Islamabad police's official Twitter account, entry points of the Red Zone will be recorded via Safe City cameras while video surveillance of metro bus passengers would also be conducted.

16 dead as bus crashes into truck

Cairo: A passenger bus slammed into a parked truck on a highway in the Sudanese city of Omdurman early Tuesday, killing at least 16 people, police said. The bus swerved off the road and hit a parked truck in Omdurman, the twin city of the capital, Khartoum, according to a police statement.

STORM GRIPS US



A massive winter storm stretching from the Great Lakes all the way down to the Rio Grande along the Mexican border has killed at least 57 people across the US as of Tuesday. Storm-related deaths have been recorded in 12 states -- Colorado, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Missouri, Nebraska, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Tennessee and Wisconsin

Yoon calls for stealth drones to monitor NK

Seoul, Dec 27: South Korea's President Tuesday called for stronger air defenses and high-tech stealth drones while the military apologized for failing to shoot down North Korean drones that crossed the border for the first time in five years.

On Tuesday, the military again launched fighter jets and attack helicopters after spotting suspicious flight paths at a front-line area. A local county office sent emergency text messages notifying residents of a new batch of North Korean drones. But the military later said it was a flock of birds. "We have a plan to create a military drone unit tasked with monitoring key military facilities in North Korea. But we'll advance the establishment of the drone unit as soon as possible because of yesterday's incident," President Yoon Suk Yeol said during a regular Cabinet Council meeting. "We'll also introduce state-of-the-art stealth drones and bolster our surveillance capability."

He said that South Korea's military needs more intensive readiness and exercises to cope with threats posed by North Korean drones. Lt. Gen. Kang Shin Chul, chief director of operation at the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said in a televised statement the military feels sorry because of its failure to shoot down the North Korean drones and for causing big public concerns. Kang acknowledged South Korea lacks capacities to detect and strike small surveillance drones with a wingspan of less than 3 meters (9.8 feet) though it has assets to spot and bring down bigger combat



South Korea's military scrambled warplanes and attack helicopters Monday, but they failed to bring down any of the North Korean drones that flew back home or disappeared from South Korean radars

It raised serious questions about South Korea's air defense network at a time when tensions remain high over North Korea's torrid run of missile tests this year

drones. Kang said South Korea will establish drone units with various capacities and aggressively deploy military assets to shoot down enemy drones.

It was the first time North Korean drones entered South Korean airspace since 2017. The drone flights came three days after South Korea said North Korea launched two short-range ballistic missiles, extending its record testing activities this year.

North Korea has touted its drone program, and South Korean officials have previously said the North had about 300 drones. Advanced drones are among modern weapons systems that North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has vowed to procure, along with multi-warheads, underwater-launched nuclear missiles and a spy satellite.

Since taking office in May, Yoon, a conservative, has expanded reg-

ular military drills with the United States and vowed to sternly deal with North Korean provocations. He's offered massive support plans to North Korea if it abandons its nuclear weapons, but the North has rejected his overture.

On Monday, South Korea sent its own surveillance assets, apparently unmanned drones, across the border as corresponding steps against the North Korean drone flights. South Korea's public confirmation of reconnaissance activities inside North Korea is highly unusual and likely reflects a resolve by Yoon's government to get tough on North Korean provocations.

Yoon used the drone incident to hit at his liberal predecessor's engagement policy with North Korea. He said Tuesday South Korea's military had conducted little anti-drone training since 2017, when Moon Jae-in was inaugurated.

Nepal Prez calls Parl session Jan 9

Kathmandu: Nepal President Bidhya Devi Bhandari Tuesday called the first session of the new Parliament January 9 after the country went to polls November 20. This will be the first Parliament session after the appointment of Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda" as the new prime minister of the landlocked nation Monday. The first cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Prachanda Monday recommended the president for calling the new parliament session. Prachanda was Monday sworn in as the Prime Minister of Nepal for the third time, a day after the former guerrilla leader dramatically walked out of the pre-poll alliance led by the Nepali Congress and joined hands with opposition leader K P Sharma Oli.

Serbia puts army on alert

It was the first time since the recent crisis started that Serbs have blocked streets in one of the main towns

REUTERS

Mitrovica, Kosovo, Dec 27: Protesting Serbs in the ethnically divided city of Mitrovica in northern Kosovo erected new barricades Tuesday, hours after Serbia said it had put its army on the highest combat alert following weeks of escalating tensions between Belgrade and Pristina.

Serbia's defence ministry said in a statement late Monday that in response to the latest events in the region and its belief that Kosovo was preparing to attack Serbs and forcefully remove the barricades, President Aleksandar Vucic had ordered Serbia's army and police to be put on the highest alert. "There is no reason to panic, but there is reason to be concerned," Serbia's defence min-

Cos welcome end of quarantines in China

THE DECISION TO LIFT SOME OF THE WORLD'S STRICTEST ANTI-VIRUS CONTROLS COMES AS IT TRIES REVERSE AN ECONOMIC DOWNTURN

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Beijing, Dec 27: Foreign companies welcomed China's decision to end quarantines for travellers from abroad as an important step to revive slumping business activity while Japan Tuesday joined India in announcing restrictions on visitors from the country as infections surge. It has ended curbs that confined millions of people to their homes and sparked protests, but hospitals have been flooded with feverish, wheezing patients as the virus spreads. The announcement late Monday that quarantines for travellers from abroad will end January 8 is the biggest step toward ending limits that have kept most foreign visitors out of China since early 2020. Quarantines were reduced last month from seven days to five.

Also Monday, the government downgraded the official seriousness of Covid-19 and dropped a requirement for people with the virus to be quarantined. That added to a rapid drumbeat of steps to dismantle controls that had been expected to stay in place at least through mid-2023. "It finally feels like China has turned the corner,"

the chairman of the American Chamber of Commerce in China, Colm Rafferty, said in a statement. He said ending the quarantine "clears the way for resumption of normal business travel."

Business groups have warned companies were shifting investment away from China because foreign executives were blocked from visiting.

The American chamber said more than 70% of companies that responded to a poll this month expect the impact of the latest wave of outbreaks to last no more than three months, ending in early 2023.

The British Chamber of Commerce expressed hope China will restart normal processing of business visas to allow "resumption of crucial people to people exchanges." The move "will potentially boost business confidence," but companies are likely to "wait to see how the situation on the ground evolves" before making long-term decisions, the European Chamber of Commerce in China said in a statement. Meanwhile, Japan announced visitors from China will undergo virus tests starting Friday as a "temporary emergency measure."



Tensions rise in northern Kosovo

with criminal gangs and freedom of movement should be restored. There should not be barricades on any road," the Kosovan government said in a statement Monday.

REUTERS

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ister Milos Vucevic told RTS television late Monday. Since December 10, Serbs in northern Kosovo have erected multiple roadblocks in and around Mitrovica and exchanged fire with police after the arrest of a former Serb policeman for allegedly assaulting serving police officers during a previous protest. Around 50,000 Serbs live in the northern part of Albanian-majority Kosovo and refuse to recognise the Pristina government or the state. They see Belgrade as their capital and are backed by Serbia, from which Kosovo declared independence in 2008. "Kosovo cannot engage in dialogue

enable security and freedom of movement in Kosovo, and prevent misleading narratives from affecting the dialogue process," KFOR said in a statement.

In Mitrovica Tuesday morning trucks were parked to block the road linking the Serb-majority part of the town with the Albanian-majority part. The local Serbs are demanding the release of the arrested officer and have other demands before they will remove the barricades.

TAIWAN'S BIG MOVE AMID CHINA THREAT

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Taipei, Dec 27: Taiwan Tuesday announced an extension in mandatory military service from four months to one year, citing the threat from an increasingly hostile China.

Beijing considers self-ruled, democratic Taiwan a part of its territory, to be taken one day, by force if necessary, and the island lives under the constant fear of a Chinese invasion.

Under President Xi Jinping, China's sabre-rattling has intensified in recent years, and Russia's invasion of Ukraine deepened worries in Taiwan that Beijing might move similarly to annex the island. China's "intimidation and threats against Taiwan are getting more obvious", President Tsai Ing-wen told a press conference. "No one wants war... but my fellow countrymen, peace will not fall from the sky." "The current four-month military service is not

enough to meet the fast and ever-changing situation," she added.

"We have decided to restore the one-year military service from 2024." The extended requirement will apply to men born after January 1, 2005, Tsai said. Mandatory service used to be deeply unpopular in Taiwan - once a brutal military dictatorship that has since morphed into a progressive democracy. Its previous government had reduced compulsory military service from one year to four months with the aim of creating a mainly volunteer force. But recent polling showed more



than three-quarters of the Taiwanese public now believes that is too short. The military has also struggled to recruit and retain full-time personnel because of low

financial incentives. Tsai described the extension as "an extremely difficult decision... to ensure the democratic way of life for our future generations."

OUTGUNNED
The prospect of a Chinese in-

vasion has increasingly worried Western nations and many of China's neighbours.

Xi, China's most authoritarian leader in decades, has made clear that what he calls the "reunification" of Taiwan cannot be passed on to future generations.

Taiwan and China split at the end of the Chinese Civil War in 1949, and Tsai has said becoming a part of China is not acceptable to the people of the island.

Taiwan is a mountainous island and would present a formidable challenge to an invading force, but it is massively outgunned with 89,000 ground forces compared with China's one million, according to a Pentagon estimate released last month. Beijing also has a huge advantage in military equipment.

Taiwan has stepped up reservist training and increased its purchases of warplanes and anti-ship missiles to bolster its defences. But experts have said that is not enough.

UN: 26 Rohingya refugees died at sea making perilous journey

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Pidie (Indonesia), Dec 27: At least 26 Rohingya Muslims had died in dire conditions during a month at open sea while making a dangerous voyage that brought scores of others to safety in Indonesia, a UN agency said Tuesday, adding there will likely be more.

Exhausted women and children were among 185 people who disembarked from a rickety wooden boat Monday in a coastal village in Aceh's Pidie district, authorities said.

A distressing video circulated widely on social media showed the Rohingya worn out and emaciated, with many crying for help.

"They are very weak because of dehydration and exhaustion after weeks at sea," said local police chief Fauzi, who goes by a single



name. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees said that survivors told the agency that 26 people died during the long journey.

According to UNHCR, more than 2,000 people are reported to have taken risky sea journeys in the Andaman Sea and the Bay of Bengal this year, and nearly 200 have reportedly died.

UNHCR has also received unconfirmed reports of one additional boat with some 180 people still missing, with all passengers presumed dead.

of the day quote

Number of recognised startups is increasing significantly, the Fund of Funds for Startups and Startup India Seed Fund Scheme are doing good. Startups too will attract significant FDI in 2023

ANURAG JAIN | DPIIT SECRETARY

Our work on the automation side has helped us save power, be more sustainable and reduce greenhouse gas emissions

GEENA MALHOTRA | CTO, CIPLA

We expect Elista to have turnover of ₹1,500 crore by 2025 out of which ₹500 crore will come from the domestic market and ₹1,000 crore from exports to CIS countries, Middle East and Africa

SAKET GAURAV | ELISTA CMD

SHORT TAKES

Domestic coal quality up: Govt

New Delhi: The government Tuesday said the quality of domestic coal has increased considerably as the grade conformity of fossil fuel has improved to 69 per cent in the current fiscal. The government and the coal companies, including Coal India, have taken several steps to achieve the objective of supplying quality coal to all consumers. In a statement, the coal ministry said, "The grade conformity (of coal) has jumped to 69 per cent in 2022-23 (till November 2022) as against 51 per cent in 2017-18." These companies have taken steps like periodic re-gradation of coal mines, introduction of improved mining technology and installation of auto analyzers, among others to improve the quality of Indian coal.

Govt may offload wheat from FCI

New Delhi: The government is considering releasing 15-20 lakh tonnes of wheat next year from the FCI stock for bulk consumers like flour millers, under the Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS) to contain rising retail prices, according to official sources. According to the data maintained by the consumer affairs ministry, the average retail price of wheat was at ₹32.25 per kg on December 27, higher than ₹28.53 per kg in the year-ago period. Wheat flour (atta) price too remained higher at ₹37.25 per kg than ₹31.74 per kg a year ago. Under the OMSS policy, the government allows state-run Food Corporation of India (FCI) to sell foodgrains, especially wheat and rice, at pre-determined prices in the open market from time to time to bulk consumers and private traders.

FTA to increase apparel exports

New Delhi: Customs duty advantage under the India-Australia free trade agreement will help Indian apparel exporters get greater market access in that country as compared to their competitors, AEPCC said Tuesday. The agreement is coming into force from December 29. Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPCC) Vice Chairman Sudhir Sekhri said Australia is the largest importer of garments in the southern hemisphere. While China's share in import of apparel into Australia is more than 70 per cent, India's share is less than 5 per cent. "With the India-Australia ECTA (Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement) getting operationalised, India will have a slight duty advantage over Vietnam and Indonesia for imports in the Australian market," he said.



We are cautiously optimistic about the year 2023 and hope to see a revival in rural demand in 2023

MOHIT MALHOTRA | DABUR INDIA CEO

India plans \$2 billion incentive for green hydrogen industry

THE INCENTIVE AIMS TO REDUCE THE PRODUCTION COST OF GREEN HYDROGEN BY A FIFTH OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

REUTERS

New Delhi, Dec 27: India is planning a \$2 billion incentive programme for the green hydrogen industry, three sources told Reuters, in a bid to cut emissions and become a major export player in the field. The 180-billion-rupee (\$2.2 billion) incentive aims to reduce the production cost of green hydrogen by a fifth over the next five years, said a senior government official and an industry manager working in renewable energy. It would do this in part by increasing the scale of the industry, they said.

The current cost in India is 300 rupees to 400 rupees per kg, said the manager. The United States and the European Union have already approved incentives worth billions of dollars for green hydrogen projects. Hydrogen can be used as a fuel. It is made by splitting water with an electrical process, electrolysis. If the devices that do that, electrolyzers, are powered by renewable energy, the product is called green hydrogen, a fuel free of greenhouse emissions. The Indian aid could be announced in the February 1 budget for the fiscal year beginning April 1, said the government official. All sources declined to be named discussing a budget proposal.

The ministries of renewable energy and finance did not respond to queries sent by Reuters. Indian companies such as Reliance Industries, Indian Oil, NTPC, Adani Enterprises, JSW Energy and Acme Solar have big



plans on green hydrogen. Adani, led by the world's third-richest person, Gautam Adani, said in June that it and France's TotalEnergies would jointly create the "world's largest green hydrogen ecosystem".

GREEN AMMONIA, TOO

The Indian government expects industry to invest 8 trillion rupees in green hydrogen and its derivative green ammonia by 2030, said the industry manager and another government official. Green ammonia is made by combining nitrogen with hydrogen using renewable energy sources; it can be used by the fertiliser industry or as a fuel or convenient means of transporting hydrogen.

The green hydrogen proposal is likely to be called "Strategic Intervention for Green Hydrogen Transition (SIGHT)" and will be split into 45 billion rupees for electrolyser manufacturing for five years and the 135 billion rupees for green hydrogen and green ammonia production for three years, the manager and second official said. The incentive for making green hydrogen is likely to be 50 rupees per kg for three years, they said. India aims to sell 70% of the production to countries such as South Korea, Japan and in the European Union, an industry official said, adding that derivatives,

including green ammonia, had an equally strong demand.

The government is estimating global demand for green hydrogen will exceed 100 million tonnes by 2030, from just under 75 million tonnes now, according to other industry sources.

In February the government announced plans for India to make 5 million tonnes of green hydrogen annually by 2030, a figure that the first government official said could be doubled, depending on international demand.

The government also plans for the country to achieve electrolyser manufacturing capacity of 15 gigawatts in phases by 2030. That would be almost 10 times current global capacity.

US-based Ohmium International has commissioned India's first green-hydrogen factory in Bangalore. Reliance Industries, Larsen & Toubro, Greenko and H2e Power last year announced plans to build gigawatt-scale factories.

Indian oil refineries and fertiliser and steel plants annually use 5 million tonnes of hydrogen made from natural gas, called grey hydrogen. The process produces carbon dioxide. Higher gas prices have pushed the Indian grey hydrogen price to around 200 rupees per kg from 130 rupees a year ago.

Sensex, Nifty rise for 2nd day as banking, metal shares shine

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 27: Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty closed higher for a second straight day Tuesday on gains in banking, IT and metal shares following a firm trend in the global markets.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 361.01 points or 0.60 per cent to settle at 60,927.43. During the day, it rallied 420.26 points or 0.69 per cent to 60,986.68. The broader NSE Nifty climbed 117.70 points or 0.65 per cent to end at 18,132.30. From the Sensex pack, Tata Steel, Tata Motors, Larsen & Toubro, Asian Paints, Wipro, Bajaj Finance, ICICI Bank, Tech Mahindra and Titan were the

major winners. Hindustan Unilever, ITC, Mahindra & Mahindra and Nestle were the laggards.

In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge climbed 1.46 per cent and midcap index advanced 0.78 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, metal jumped 4.59 per cent, commodities climbed 2.34 per cent, telecommunication (1.54 per cent), industrials (1.38 per cent), realty (1.38 per cent) and power (1.15 per cent). FMCG remained the only laggard.

Elsewhere in Asia, equity markets in Seoul, Tokyo and Shanghai ended with gains. International oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.49 per cent to USD 84.33 per barrel.



Ola, Uber, Dunzo worst platforms in providing fair work conditions

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 27: Five digital platforms - cab aggregators Ola and Uber, grocery delivery app Dunzo, pharmacy platform PharmEasy and Amazon Flex - have the lowest scores in a rating of digital platforms on the basis of providing fair working conditions for gig workers.

The rating of 12 digital platforms was done by a Fairwork India team in association with the Oxford University. Fairwork evaluates the work conditions of digital labour platforms internationally. Fairwork India Ratings 2022 Report, which assessed platforms against five principles: Fair Pay, Fair Conditions, Fair Contracts, Fair Management, and Fair

Representation, found that Amazon Flex, Dunzo, Ola, PharmEasy and Uber scored zero out of 10 points.

"This year, no platform scored more than seven out of the maximum of ten points, and none scored all the first points across the five principles," the report said.

The Fairwork India Ratings 2022 evaluated 12 platforms, including Amazon Flex, bigbasket, Dunzo, Flipkart, Ola, PharmEasy, Porter, Swiggy, Uber, Urban Company, Zepto and Zomato.

Each of the five principles is broken down into two points: a first point and a second point that can only be awarded if the first point has been fulfilled. Every platform receives a score out of 10. Urban Company scored the most,



seven out of 10, followed by bigbasket (6/10), Flipkart (5/10), Swiggy (5/10), Zomato (4/10), Zepto (2/10), and Porter (1/10).

Banks' GNPA's down, but situation can impact health: RBI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 27: Indian banks' gross non-performing assets declined to 5.8 per cent, but the present macroeconomic environment can impact lenders' health, the Reserve Bank said Tuesday.

The GNPA's, which touched a peak in FY18 following the asset quality review, have been declining sequentially to reach 5 per cent in September, the RBI said in the Trends and Progress of Banking in India report for FY22 released Tuesday.

The number stood at 5.8 per cent in March 2022, according to the report which also had a strong commitment by the RBI to be not complacent, given the present environment.

"Although presently the Indian banking sector remains robust and resilient with improved asset quality and strong capital buffers, the policymakers remain mindful of dynamically evolving macroeconomic conditions that may impinge on the health of regulated entities," the report said.

The decrease in the GNPA's was attributed to lower slippages and also a reduction in outstanding GNPA's through recoveries, upgradations and write-offs, the report said.

However, the restructured assets ratio increased by 1.1 percentage points for all the borrowers and by 0.5 percentage points for large borrowers, the report said, adding that the efforts to help individuals and small businesses with the loan re-structure scheme has been successful.

Total govt debt rises to ₹147 lakh crore in Q2: FinMin report



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 27: The total liabilities of the government increased to ₹147.19 lakh crore at September-end from ₹145.72 lakh crore at the end of June this fiscal year, according to the latest data on public debt. In percentage terms, it reflects a quarter-on-quarter increase of 1 per cent in second quarter of 2022-23. Public debt accounted for 89.1 per cent of total gross liabilities at September-end 2022, up from 88.3 per cent as on June 30, the quarterly report on public debt management released by the finance ministry Tuesday said.

Nearly 29.6 per cent of the outstanding dated securities had a residual maturity of less than 5 years, it said.

During the second quarter, it said, the central government raised ₹4,06,000 crore through dated se-

curities, as against notified amount of ₹4,22,000 crore in the borrowing calendar, while repayments were at ₹2,371.15 crore.

The weighted average yield of primary issuances hardened to 7.33 per cent in Q2 FY23 from 7.23 per cent in Q1 FY23, it said, adding, the weighted average maturity of new issuances of dated securities was lower at 15.62 years in Q2 as compared to 15.69 years in Q1.

During July-September 2022, the central government did not raise any amount through Cash Management Bills. The Reserve Bank did not conduct Open Market operations for government securities during the quarter.

The net daily average liquidity absorption by RBI under Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF) including Marginal Standing Facility and Special Liquidity Facility was at ₹1,28,323.37 crore during the quarter, it said.

IT Ministry made nodal ministry for e-gaming

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 27: The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has been appointed as the nodal ministry for online gaming, a move the industry said would bring clarity and certainty for all stakeholders.

The Department of Sports under

the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports has been notified as the nodal Ministry for "eSports as part of multi-sports events".

The Centre notified these amendments to the Allocation of Business Rules recently.

Minister of State for IT Rajeev Chandrasekhar tweeted that MeitY will soon come out with norms for

online gaming intermediaries.

"The government is committed to fully encouraging tech innovation, but also to ensure no illegal content/services is possible. @GoI_MeitY will soon publish rules for online gaming intermediaries and start public consultation on same," Chandrasekhar tweeted Tuesday.

PFRDA for bringing gig workers into pension fold

THE NUMBER OF GIG WORKERS, A LARGE CHUNK OF WHOM ARE DELIVERY AND SALES PERSONNEL, IS EXPECTED TO REACH 9.9 MILLION IN 2022-23, UP ABOUT 45% FROM 2019-20

REUTERS

New Delhi, Dec 27: India's pension fund regulator has recommended the federal government introduce a UK-like pension scheme for the country's gig workers, a move aimed at bringing about 90% of the overall workforce into the pension fold, its chairman told Reuters.

The Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA), which manages over \$102 billion in assets, has proposed that workers at food and cab aggregators be automatically enrolled into the National Pension Scheme (NPS), Chairman Supratim Bandyopadhyay said in an interview Tuesday.

The PFRDA regulates the NPS,



India's voluntary retirement savings scheme that was started in 2004 and now has 16.7 million subscribers, including from the government and private sectors as well as from parts of the unorganised sector.

The PFRDA has recommended that employers deduct a part of their payouts to gig workers' and contribute that to the NPS scheme, said Bandyopadhyay.

India's informal or unorganised sector employs about 90% of the country's workforce, depriving them of social security benefits.

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India's informal or unorganised sector employs about 90% of the country's workforce, depriving them of social security benefits.

The number of gig workers, a large chunk of whom are delivery and sales personnel, is expected to reach 9.9 million in 2022-23, up about 45% from 2019-20, according to a report by think-tank NITI Aayog released in June.

The PFRDA's recommendation to bring these workers into the pension fold replicates UK's pension system that mandates every em-

ployer, even those with just one employee, enrol their staff into a pension scheme and contribute towards it.

Currently, Indian law mandates only firms with more than 20 workers need to enrol in the Employee Provident Fund scheme, which requires contributions from both the employer and employees.

"This leaves a vast, unexplored area of the unorganised sector not covered under any pension scheme," said Bandyopadhyay.

To make the NPS scheme attractive, the regulator has also suggested the government double the annual tax exemption for subscribers to 100,000 rupees (\$1,208), he said.

GOING GREEN

India plans to raise 160 billion rupees (\$1.93 billion) through its first-ever issuance of sovereign green bonds this fiscal year.

The PFRDA and its ten pension fund managers are keen to invest in these green bonds, said Bandyopadhyay. "I believe you will see, when the guidelines come out, a lot of fund managers will be fighting for this (green bonds)," he said.

"Being a long-term investor, we just cannot look away and say 'No, others will do it.' Our fund managers also have agreed to that."

unorganised workers or employees are. A starting point to improve their working condition would be to ensure that they receive at least the hourly minimum wage, after considering work-related costs, and ensuring that the demands they make through collective action are heard, acknowledged and considered by the platforms," Professor Balaji Parthasarathy, the Principal Investigator of the team told PTI.

The Fairwork India Team was spearheaded by the Centre for IT and Public Policy (CITAPP), International Institute of Information Technology Bangalore (IIIT-B), in association with Oxford University.

This report examines the work conditions of platform workers on

digital labour platforms in India. It evaluates 12 platforms offering location-based services in sectors such as domestic and personal care, logistics, food delivery e-pharmacy, and transportation, in India.

"Even with workers and worker groups repeatedly emphasising the importance of a stable income for platform workers, platforms have been reluctant to publicly commit to, and operationalise, a minimum-wage policy," the report said.

This year, bigbasket, Flipkart, and Urban Company implemented and operationalised policies to ensure that all workers on these platforms earn at least the hourly local minimum wage after factoring in work-related costs, it added.

Arsenal extend league lead



Eddie Nketiah (L) celebrates his goal with his teammate during Arsenal's Premier League match against West Ham, Monday

ASSOCIATED PRESS

London, Dec 27: Arsenal showed how to fight back on Boxing Day, traditionally a busy time in English soccer, by beating West Ham 3-1 to stretch their lead at the top of the Premier League to seven points. Newcastle moved second with a 3-0 win at Leicester Monday, pushing defending champion Manchester City down to third. Said Benrahma's 27th-minute penalty kick gave David Moyes' West Ham a 1-0 lead at halftime after the Gunners had a spot-kick disallowed by VAR on the stroke of the interval. But Arsenal coach Mikel Arteta saw his team move up through the gears after the break with Bukayo Saka and Gabriel Martinelli scoring with fine finishes at the start of the second period. Eddie Nketiah sealed the victory in front of former Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger by finishing off a slick move to fill the void of the injured Gabriel Jesus and earn Arsenal a 10th straight home win in the Premier League. Chris Wood's penalty and a sublime strike by Miguel Almiron put Newcastle 2-0 up against Leicester after only seven minutes, with Joellinton adding a third just after the half-hour mark for the Magpies' sixth straight league win. Man City trails Newcastle by one point but has played two fewer games. The seven games Monday were the first in the Premier League in more than a month because of the long break for the World Cup in Qatar.

KANE SCORES
Harry Kane, who returned to the Premier League after missing a penalty in England's World Cup quarterfinal loss to France two weeks ago, scored a goal to help fourth-place Tottenham come back from a two-goal deficit in a 2-2 draw with Brentford. Kane shrugged off chants of "You let your country down" from a section of the Brentford fans. He headed in a cross from Clement Lenglet in the 65th. Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg equalised six minutes later for Tottenham. Vitaly Janelt and Ivan Toney scored for Brentford. Liverpool beat Aston Villa 3-1 for their third straight league win and stayed sixth, a point behind Manchester United. Mohamed Salah and Virgil van Dijk struck in the first half at Villa Park before Stefan Bajcetic scored near the end of the second. Liverpool's third straight victory moved the club five points adrift of the Champions League spots. In other games, Wolverhampton manager Julen Lopetegui marked his Premier League debut with a dramatic stoppage-time 2-1 win at Everton. The defeat ramped up the pressure on Everton coach Frank Lampard. Substitute Rayan Ait-Nouri scored on the counterattack in the fifth minute of added time. Wolves moved off the bottom of the table and within a point of 17th-place Everton. Brighton beat struggling Southampton 3-1 at St. Mary's and trails Liverpool by one point. Southampton lost its fourth straight league game and dropped to last place. Fulham won a Premier League derby in the capital for only the second time in 29 attempts with a 3-0 victory at nine-man Crystal Palace. Bobby Decordova-Reid, Tim Ream and Aleksandar Mitrovic scored for the visitors while Tyrick Mitchell and James Tomkins were sent off for the hosts. Fulham manager Marco Silva dedicated the win to George Cohen, the club's 1966 World Cup-winning England right back who died Friday

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UNADKAT OPENS UP ON COMEBACK

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 27: Jaydev Unadkat did get his much-awaited chance with the red ball and he kept his "promise" with a spirited effort in his first Test for India after 12 years. His love for the longer version of the game became apparent more than ever in January when he typed a tweet that went viral. "Dear red ball, please give me one more chance. I'll make you proud, promise!" the left-arm pacer had posted. "Everyone thought that I was referring to a national comeback. I was just missing red ball cricket in general as Ranji Trophy was postponed for a second time (due to COVID)," Unadkat told PTI in an interview after his arrival from Bangladesh. The 31-year-old, who had played his first and only Test way back in 2010 with the great Sachin Tendulkar and current head coach Rahul Dravid being his celebrated teammates, featured in his second outing last week in remarkable circumstances. Having not been on selectors' radar despite a record-breaking performance in the 2020 Ranji Trophy, a national recall came for Unadkat when he expected it the least. Eventually, his patience and perseverance prevailed as he was flown to Bangladesh as a backup pace option, with Mohammad Shami not regaining full fitness for the series. The visa delays meant he could only reach Chattogram after the start of the first Test but against all expectations, stand-in skipper KL Rahul gave Unadkat the big break he was waiting for while toiling on the domestic circuit for years. The opportunity came at the expense of spinner Kuldeep Yadav, whose exclusion after an eight-wicket haul in the series opener triggered a selection controversy. The scoreboard would show that Unadkat took three wickets in his comeback Test but his impact was bigger in the game. It did not take long for him to make his presence felt as he removed previous game's centurion Zakir Hasan with a ball that jumped from good length. That was his maiden wicket in Tests and Unadkat says that moment will remain the most special of his career. "I was trying to extract bounce off length and I felt I could do that. The feeling (when it happened) will remain one of the most special memories of my cricketing career. Getting a Test wicket is something I visualised 1000 times," said Unadkat. Did he feel the pressure of replacing Kuldeep? "Absolutely not. When you don't expect things and they happen, I take it in my stride. I just wanted to contribute. If not take a wicket then create pressure from the other end. That was the thought. "Domestic cricket has helped me immensely that way. You always have a role to play as a bowler even when you aren't getting the wickets. You can create pressure and put batter in doubt and other bowlers can capitalise on that." What worked for Unadkat was his ability to bowl long spells on flat decks. 12 years from his debut, he was also a much wiser man having captained Saurashtra to unprecedented success. "I got my chance as the management felt I was suited to the pitch. Like you said the conditions were similar (to Rajkot), not a lot of pace off the wicket and you will have to extract whatever you can by hitting the length hard. I knew

I was pretty young when I made my debut. All these years (at Ranji level) I never felt like a veteran. I am still 31 and at my peak. These four to five years would be the peak of my career and I want to continue as much as I can

JAYDEV UNADKAT



if I will stick to my strengths, there will be something coming my way and that is how I got that extra bounce." The comeback has made him more humble as it was the only thing he was working towards. "It was very emotional for my family, my wife who was not around in 2010 when I made my debut. He believed in me more than I did. And when I got to know that I was playing, I felt the same goosebumps I felt 12 years ago," he fondly recalled. Unadkat could be the next left-arm pacer India have been looking for years but he is not thinking about that. When Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammad Shami are back, finding a spot in the XI will be much tougher.

'Warner special' propels Australia



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Melbourne, Dec 27: Facing pressure to retain his place in Australia's team, David Warner defied his critics and heatwave conditions with a spectacular return to form, scoring a memorable double century (200 r, 254b, 16x4, 2x6) in his 100th Test. Leading the three-match series one-nil, Australia had resumed at Melbourne Cricket Ground Tuesday at 45/1 in sunny conditions in reply to South Africa's lacklustre first-innings total of 189. By stumps, Australia was 386/3, an overall lead of 197, with Alex Carey not out on nine and Travis Head unbeaten on 48 (48b, 7x4, 1x6). While Australia is in a strong position, two of the home side's pace bowlers, Mitchell Starc and first-innings hero Cameron Green, are nursing finger injuries ahead of South Africa's second innings. Steve Smith (85, 161b, 9x4, 1x6) and Warner shared an entertaining third-wicket partnership of 239 runs, as Australia took control of the match in stifling conditions. Smith's exit at 314/3 was followed by Warner's dramatic departure 15 runs later, retired hurt due to cramp, with the crowd of 42,614 on their feet. England's Joe Root is the only other player in Test history to score a double century in his 100th Test. Ever the showman, Warner tried to shrug off leg cramps, leaping in the air to celebrate his 200, before immediately buckling at the knees. Unable to continue after com-

pleting his double ton in 99-degree Fahrenheit heat, Warner limped off with medical staff assisting him. The 36-year-old opener took the last few steps unassisted before crashing to the turf as soon as he crossed the boundary rope, looking elated and exhausted. The feisty left-hander scored his 25th Test century and first since January 2020 off 144 deliveries, pulling a short ball to the leg-side boundary before launching into extravagant celebrations in the post-lunch session Tuesday Warner leapt into the air, waved his bat and blew a kiss to wife Candice in the crowd. By tea, Australia held a 42-run advantage at 231/2. Anrich Nortje finally ended the third-wicket partnership by removing Smith caught at gully at 315/3. The big fast bowler had narrowly escaped serious injury earlier in the day when an overhead "Spidercam" camera whizzed past and collided with his left shoulder and elbow, knocking the fielder to the turf in a bizarre incident. Green was sent for a scan after retiring hurt for six at 363/3. The right-hander was struck by Nortje on the index finger of his bowling hand. Warner's day of celebration also included overtaking Justin Langer (7,696) and Mark Waugh (8,029) Tuesday to become Australia's seventh-highest Test scorer. **BRIEF SCORES:** South Africa 189; Australia 386/3 (David Warner 200 r, Steve Smith 86, Travis Head 48 batting; Anrich Nortje 1/50). Match to continue.

Esports gets official recognition

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 27: The Government of India Tuesday gave Esports a major boost by integrating it with mainline sports disciplines in the country. The President of India, Droupadi Murmu, in exercise of the powers "conferred by clause (3) of article 77 of the Constitution" amended the rules governing Esports and asked the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology and the Sports Ministry to include "eSports as part of multi-sports events". There had been a growing demand for Esports to be included in the curriculum of multi-discipline events after it was included in the 2018 Jakarta Asian Games as a demonstration sport, meaning medals won in the sport were not counted in the official overall medals tally.

But following the President's notification, issued on December 23, that IT Ministry will be the nodal agency for online gaming-related matters and the sports ministry will have to include it in its curriculum, it has come as shot in the arm for Esports enthusiasts. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) too is going big on popularising e-Sport with Singapore being confirmed to host the inaugural Olympic Esports Week in June next year. This marks the next big step in supporting the development and integration of virtual sports with the Olympic movement and engaging further with competitive gamers. The IOC had said in November this year that the Olympic Esports Week would showcase the best of virtual sports - hybrid physical and simulated sports - in the four-

day festival from June 22 to 25, including exhibiting the latest technologies, panel discussions, education sessions and show matches. IOC President Thomas Bach had said last month that the inaugural Olympic Esports Week would mark an important milestone "in our ambition to support the growth of virtual sports within the Olympic Movement". The Indian DOTA 2 team had clinched bronze at the first Commonwealth Esports Championship held in Birmingham in August defeating New Zealand. The sport will make its debut at the Asian Games to be held in Hangzhou, China next year. Reacting to the report of its inclusion as a mainline sport, Lokesh Suji, director, Esports Federation of India and vice-president of Asian Esports Federation, said the efforts of the fraternity had finally borne fruit.

Sindhu ton puts Haryana in control against Odisha

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Dec 27: Nishant Sindhu (142 batting, 209b, 21x4, 2x6) struck a brilliant century to help Haryana recover from a tough situation in their Ranji Trophy Elite Group A match against Odisha at the DRIEMS Ground in Tangi, Tuesday. Odisha invited the visitors to bat first after winning the toss. Seasoned pacer Suryakant Pradhan (4/68) proved Odisha's call right with his impressive bowling display as Haryana were reduced to 91/4 inside 22 overs. However, the visitors ended up 306/5 at stumps on the opening day. Haryana lost their opening wicket in the seventh over when Ankit Kumar (23 off 22 balls) got out with the scoreboard reading 36/1. Haryana lost the second in the

18th over and it triggered a mini collapse. The visitors lost their second on 76 runs, the third on 89 and the fourth on 91 runs. It was looking like Odisha could run through the Haryana batting line-up inside two sessions. However, Sindhu had other ideas. Sindhu found an able ally in 29-year-old wicket-keeper Rohit Sharma (55, 145b, 7x4) as the duo stitched together 155 runs for the fifth wicket to take their side close to 250. Govind Poddar (1/43) broke the stand when he breached the defence of Rohit early in the final session of play. Then all-rounder Jayant Yadav (28 batting) joined Sindhu at the middle and the pair ensured Haryana of no further inroads in the day. They had already added 60 runs when umpires call off the play for the day.

Hardik named captain for T20Is against SL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 27: The transition phase in Indian cricket kick-started Tuesday with premier all-rounder Hardik Pandya being named captain for the upcoming series against Sri Lanka starting January 3. The 27-year-old Baroda man has also been named as the vice-captain of the ODI squad, indicating current regime's plans to see him as long-term white ball leader once 35-year-old Rohit Sharma decides to call time on his illustrious international career. While Rohit, recuperating from a finger injury was named captain of the ODI series which is to follow the T20Is, it is understandable that the shortest format will now feature fresh faces and primarily IPL performers. Even Virat Kohli and KL Rahul are also not part of the T20I format and there is an indication that the duo along with Rohit might not be picked again keeping the 2024 T20 World Cup in mind. The trio will probably be asked to concentrate on 50-over format with a World Cup set to be played in India next year. Suryakumar Yadav, for his mind-blowing one year, is now the new vice-captain in T20Is. Pandya, who led Gujarat Titans to IPL triumph



Hardik Pandya (2nd from R) to lead India in T20Is against India, while Suryakumar Yadav (L) was named his deputy

during the last edition was touted as Rohit's replacement after India lost to England in the semifinals of the T20 World Cup playing archaic cricket. The T20I team has a fresh look with two uncapped pacers Shivam Mavi and Mukesh Kumar being inducted into the shortest format. Ruturaj Gaikwad and Rahul

Tripathi, two powerhouse IPL performers, made it to the T20 side. The ODI side boasts of a more experienced look with Mohammed Shami coming back from shoulder injury. Pant heads for NCA. Rishabh Pant is not a part of both the white-ball squads and it is understood that he has been asked to report at the NCA for a

knee strengthening rehabilitation programme for two weeks. Hence, he will miss the entire Sri Lanka series. But BCCI's statement doesn't mention whether he has been rested or dropped. End of road for Shikhar Shikhar Dhawan, one of India's contemporary white ball greats, has perhaps played his last match

for the country after a prolonged bad patch which finds him ousted from the national ODI set-up. Ironically, even one series before Bangladesh, he was leading the side in New Zealand but his dismal drop in scoring rate and also not being able to string a series of consistent scores have gone against him. As reported by PTI December 11, Dhawan has now been predictably dropped and possibly it is the end of the road for one India's star performers at the 2015 ICC Champions Trophy and 2015 World Cup, where he was the highest scorer.

T20I SQUAD: Hardik Pandya (C), Ishan Kishan (wk), Ruturaj Gaikwad, Shubman Gill, Suryakumar Yadav (vc), Deepak Hooda, Rahul Tripathi, Sanju Samson, Washington Sundar, Yuzvendra Chahal, Axar Patel, Arshdeep Singh, Harshal Patel, Umran Malik, Shivam Mavi & Mukesh Kumar.

ODI SQUAD: Rohit Sharma (C), Shubman Gill, Virat Kohli, Suryakumar Yadav, Shreyas Iyer, KL Rahul (wk), Ishan Kishan (wk), Hardik Pandya (vc), Washington Sundar, Yuzvendra Chahal, Kuldeep Yadav, Axar Patel, Mohd. Shami, Mohd. Siraj, Umran Malik & Arshdeep Singh.