



**CANDID CONFESSION**  
Actor Kangana Ranaut has praised successful actresses for breaking stereotypes by marrying younger men  
**LEISURE P2**



**OZ, UK JOIN BOYCOTT**  
Australia and Britain will join the US in a diplomatic boycott of the Winter Olympic Games in Beijing  
**INTERNATIONAL P10**



**ROHIT ELEVATED**  
After being made captain of the Indian T20 squad, Rohit Sharma has been named skipper of the ODI squad also  
**SPORTS P12**

**BrahMos missile successfully test-fired**  
Balasore: India successfully test-fired Wednesday the air version of the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile from the integrated test range of Chandipur, sources in the DRDO informed. The mission was described as a 'major milestone' the sources said and added that the missile was fired from supersonic fighter aircraft Sukhoi 30 MK-I. The 'copy book flight' followed the pre-planned trajectory and met all objectives, sources in the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) said. The launch has cleared the way for serial production of the missile, they added.



**Scholz elected German chancellor**  
Berlin: Germany's parliament has elected Olaf Scholz as the country's ninth post-World War II chancellor. The election of Scholz marks the opening of a new era for the European Union's most populous nation after Angela Merkel's 16-year tenure. Scholz won the support of 395 lawmakers Wednesday. His three-party coalition holds 416 seats in the 736-seat lower house of parliament. Scholz's government takes office with high hopes of modernising Germany and combating climate change. However, his biggest challenge will be combating Covid-19. **P10**

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## CDS Rawat killed in copter crash 8K students dropped out due to Covid-19



Rescue personnel retrieve bodies from the burnt remains of the helicopter which crashed in the Nilgiri Hills leading to the death of CDS Bipin Rawat and twelve others; (Inset) Bipin Rawat and wife Madhulika

**India's first Chief of Defence Staff was on his way to attend a function in Wellington, Nilgiri Hills near Coonoor when the tragedy struck**

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 8: Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Bipin Rawat, his wife Madhulika and 11 other people on board an Indian Air Force (IAF) helicopter died Wednesday in a crash near Coonoor in Tamil Nadu, the IAF said.

"Gen Bipin Rawat, Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) was on a visit to Defence Services Staff College, Wellington (Nilgiri Hills) to address the faculty and student officers of the Staff Course today," the IAF said in a tweet.

"With deep regret, it has now been ascertained that General Bipin Rawat, Mrs Madhulika Rawat and 11 other persons on board have died in the unfortunate accident," the IAF added.

It said Group Captain Varun Singh with injuries is currently under treatment at a military hospital in Wellington.

Nilgiris District Collector, SP Amrith had earlier confirmed that 13 persons have been killed in the crash while there was one survivor.

The IAF said a Court of Inquiry has been ordered into the accident, involving a Mi-17V5 helicopter which took off from the Sullur IAF Station in nearby Coimbatore.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, who is monitoring the situation, briefed Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi about the crash and the IAF Chief has been asked to reach the site. Singh also vis-

**CHOPPER MISHAPS**

- MAY 2011:** Five days after the helicopter that he was using went missing, Arunachal Chief Minister Dorjee Khandu was found dead near the China border in 2011. Four others died with him
- SEPT 2009:** A Bell 430 chopper carrying then Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Rajasekhara Reddy to Chittoor district crashed in a forest. His body was recovered 27 hours after the accident.
- MARCH 2005:** Industrialist and former Haryana Power Minister OP Jindal along with Agriculture Minister Surendra Singh died when the helicopter they were travelling in developed a snag and crashed near Saharanpur.
- MARCH 2002:** Former Lok Sabha Speaker and Telugu Desam leader GMC Balaयोग also died when his helicopter crashed into an aquaculture pond

**RAWAT RUFFLED MANY FEATHERS**

There are certain restrictions that prevent the Armed Forces from making political statements. But Bipin Rawat was not averse to breaking those rules frequently

**ON CHINA:** China is the biggest security threat facing India, much bigger than Pakistan. However, India is prepared to deal with any misadventure on the land borders or the high seas. No doubt China is India's number one enemy. China had lodged a strong protest on Rawat's comments stating that it was 'dangerous and irresponsible'.

**ON PAKISTAN:** Let them (Pakistan) attempt to do something to damage our assets, and the reaction from our Armed Forces will be very different. The political will is there. Our armed forces are ready. The territory (PoK) occupied by Pakistan is not controlled by the Pakistan establishment but it is controlled by terrorists. PoK is actually a terrorist-controlled part of Pakistan.

**ON CITIZENSHIP AMENDMENT ACT:** Students are being led into 'inappropriate directions'. Leaders are not those who lead people in inappropriate directions, as we are witnessing in a large number of university and college students. In the Kashmir Valley, youths were misguided by people whom they trusted as leaders. It is unacceptable in the present situation.

**ON CLAMPDOWN IN KASHMIR:** A façade has been created through a fear psychosis by terrorists, and they want to project to the people of Kashmir and the rest of India that harsh measures were being undertaken which is not the truth and far from reality. The situation is normal.

With schools shutdown for lengthy stretches to prevent the spread of Covid-19, many students lost interest in studies as they could not afford online classes

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 8:** Altogether 8,168 students have dropped out of schools across Odisha after the institutions were closed as a preventive measure to stop the spread of Covid-19 in March 2020, School & Mass Education Minister Samir Ranjan Dash informed the Assembly, Wednesday. He was replying to a question posed by Congress MLA Tara Prasad Bahinipati who sought to know the exact figure of the school dropouts since the Covid-19 induced lockdown.

Nuapada district reported the highest number (896) of school dropouts, Dash said in his reply. Similarly, 681 students dropped out in Keonjhar district and 603 in Khurda. While Sonepur, Jharsuguda and Dhenkanal districts recorded 44, 46 and 48 dropouts respectively, Boudh managed to restrict the number to 21, the lowest in Odisha. Dash furnished the data as per the Extended MIS 2019-2020 report.

As a measure to include the dropouts in the mainstream, the department has already directed the district education officers (DEOs) and the PD DRDAs to implement different schemes under the 'Samagra Sikshya Abhiyan', informed Dash.

On being asked whether the students are reluctant to return to schools amidst Covid-19 scare, the minister said that no information to establish the assumption

has been obtained by the department so far.

In reply to a different question Dash said that over 71 per cent students studying from Classes I to X have failed to avail of online classes as they did not have smartphones. In a written reply to a question of MLA Kusumu Tete, the minister said the Odisha government had conducted a survey on availability of smartphones among the students in September 2020 under 'Sikshya Sanjog Programme'.

As per the survey, only 28.87 per cent of the total students studying in Classes I to X in Odisha have been able to attend online classes since the Covid-19 pandemic as they have smartphones, Dash informed.

The worst sufferers were kids in Kandhamal district where only 13.38 per cent have smartphones, the lowest in Odisha. The other districts with low rate of access to smartphones for students are Rayagada (14.34%), Deogarh (4.87%), Gajapati (15.34%), Malkangiri (16.22%), Koraput (17.87%), Nabarangpur (18.03%) and Boudh (18.61%).

Khurda district, which includes state capital Bhubaneswar, recorded the highest percentage (45.80%) of students having access to smartphones. However, it also meant that close to 55 per cent of students in the state capital were not able to attend online classes during the pandemic.

Among other districts, 43.18 per cent students in Jharsuguda, 42.27 per cent in Kendrapara, 41.22 per cent in Bargarh, 38.95 per cent Jagatsinghpur, 37.60 per cent in Cuttack, 35.83 per cent in Puri and 33.24 per cent in Nayagarh have smartphones.

**IRREGULAR by MANJUL**

Oh, my Lord! An era of great losses?

### 4 from 'at-risk' nations test Covid positive

With the threat of the Omicron variant of Covid-19 looming large, the Odisha govt is trying to monitor all international travellers coming into the state

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 8:** At least four persons who arrived in Odisha from Omicron 'at-risk' countries have tested Covid-19 positive. Their samples have been sent for genome sequencing, state Public Health Director, Niranjan Mishra informed Wednesday.

"A total of 982 persons from various 'at-risk' foreign countries have arrived in Odisha till December 7 evening. Among them four have tested Covid-19 positive so far," Mishra told reporters here. He added that all the four are asymptomatic and have been kept in isolation. He also said that their condition is stable. Mishra also informed that till the genome sequencing reports come in, it will not be possible for anyone to say whether they have been infected by the Omicron variant.

Mishra also stated that there is 'no need to panic' about the new variant. "All cases are being kept under observation," he said.

The health official was asked about some of the returnees who have remained untraceable. "Some of them are not picking phones



and in a bid to trace them, our field level healthcare workers and rapid response teams are visiting different villages. Once the exercise is completed, we will know how many of them are untraceable," Mishra stated.

Mishra pointed out that the government has successfully managed the first and second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. "We are fully ready to deal with a possible third wave," Mishra asserted.

Meanwhile, Health Director Bijay Mohapatra said, "We have to be careful in the technical and community sector as far as Omicron variant of Covid-19 is concerned. Children are the risk group as they have not been vaccinated so far. However, the state government has taken necessary steps for paediatric healthcare at various hospitals across the state. We are extending ICU facilities in more hospitals and health workers are being imparted better training for effective healthcare management."

### IN PERFECT SYNC



Girls from Kandhamal perform Odissi at the inaugural ceremony of the State-level Dance Festival by Bharat Scouts and Guides at the association's headquarters in Unit-III area of Bhubaneswar, Wednesday

### RBI keeps interest rates unchanged

This is the 9th successive time that the RBI has kept key interest rates unchanged at 4% and has maintained an accommodative stance to revive and sustain growth

AGENCIES

**Mumbai, Dec 8:** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) kept borrowing costs Wednesday at a record-low for the ninth consecutive time. It decided to continue supporting economic growth amid uncertainty over the impact of the Omicron strain of the coronavirus on the economy.

The six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), which has paused rate changes since August last year, unanimously decided to keep the benchmark repurchase rate at four per cent and voted 5-1 to retain its accommodative policy stance as long as is necessary, reflecting a continued bias to support economic growth given that inflation was not a big worry. The reverse repo rate - the level at which it absorbs excess cash from lenders - was kept unchanged at 3.35 per cent.

The RBI also kept the GDP growth projections unchanged at 9.5 per cent for the current fiscal and retained the inflation forecast of 5.3 per cent for the full year.

"Given the slack in the economy and the ongoing catching-up of activity, especially of private consumption, which is still below its pre-pandemic levels, continued policy support is warranted for a durable and broad-based recovery," RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said. "Our motto is to ensure soft landing that is well-timed," he added.

RBI had slashed the repo rate by a total of 115 basis points (bps) since March 2020 to soften the blow from the coronavirus pandemic and tough containment measures.

On inflation, the central bank took comfort from the excise tax cuts in petrol and diesel and the steps taken by the government to moderate prices in food categories such as edible oil and pulses.

They will be hanged by neck until they are dead," Judge Abu Zafar Mohammad Kamruzzaman of speedy trial Tribunal-1 of Dhaka pronounced while he simultaneously sentenced five other BUET students to life imprisonment.

All the convicts belonged to the ruling Awami League's student front 'Bangladesh Chhatra League' (BCL), which, however, had expelled them from the organisation immediately after the cold-blooded murder. The BUET authorities had expelled them soon after the incident.

They killed 21-year-old Abrar Fahad in cold blood suspecting him to be an activist of 'Chhatra Shibir', the student wing of right wing Jamaat-e-Islam after he criticised the ruling Awami League over the water sharing issue in common rivers with India. Abrar's battered body was found in his university dormitory. Investigations revealed he was beaten to death with a cricket bat and other blunt objects.

"I am happy with the verdict," Fahad's father Barkat Ullah told reporters outside the court. The defendants' lawyers said they planned to challenge the verdict in higher court.

**MARKET WATCH**

INDEX	VALUE	VARIATION
SENSEX	58649.68	↑ 1016.03
NIFTY	17469.80	↑ 293.10
DOLLAR	75.41	↑ ₹0.02
EURO	85.23	↑ ₹0.29
GOLD	₹48,004	↓ ₹56
SILVER	₹61,510	↓ ₹318

**WEATHER**

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP MAX	27.2°C	27.5°C
TEMP MIN	19.1°C	18.5°C
Humidity	93%	91%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Light rain	very likely

# leisure



## CHRIS HEMSWORTH TROLLS BRO LIAM IN INSTA POST

Hollywood star Chris Hemsworth recently took to Instagram to playfully troll his younger brother and actor Liam Hemsworth. "Met this young lad recently, reminded me of my younger self. He insisted on the resemblance and I assured him no one else has this look," said the *Thor* star sharing a few b&w photos of him and his brother.

## WILSON'S MGMT WAS OPPOSED TO HER WEIGHT LOSS PLAN

Hollywood star Rebel Wilson has said that her management team was opposed to her losing weight because she had been so successful playing the "funny fat girl".



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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**ARIES**  
You may be taut with stress at work. But it doesn't stop you from knocking down your opponents. You are considerate but cunning when you need to be. People should know you by now. Ganesh says just march on ahead.

**TAURUS**  
Stress might take its toll on you today. Ganesh foresees a demanding and difficult day. There may be a need for solitude to spend time with yourself. In relationships, you will look for a common ground to live and let live, says Ganesh.

**GEMINI**  
You need to guard against hurting the sentiments of anyone today. You need to pay greater attention to the problems of your elders and solve their issues. Post noon you may find yourself busy in religious or intellectual pursuits, says Ganesh.

**CANCER**  
You may face a hurdle, as you tend to intervene in others' matters. But your tact will save you from any untoward incident. By evening, a good news from your kin or intimate friends will cheer you up.

**LEO**  
Old is gold. This adage holds true for you in that you shall be led by conventional wisdom today. Your ability to stay upbeat is peaking just at the right time, and you shall be supremely confident about your chances of a brilliant future. This shall reduce the tension in your work and go a long way in helping you enjoy warmth and affection later in the evening, says Ganesh.

**VIRGO**  
Being open-minded with your beloved about your likes and dislikes, as much as about your ambitions, will be crucial today. You will feel very energetic. Ganesh advises you to give enough respect to customs and traditions, and pay heed to calls of higher education.

**LIBRA**  
Ganesh says that you will gain popularity and prestige with certain people today. Today you may be in a situation where you are amongst strangers in a strange situation but you will be able to handle it perfectly well without getting scared or tensed.

**SCORPIO**  
Keeping your personal and professional life different would prove beneficial to you, says Ganesh. Commitment and dedication towards your work will win you accolades. This definitely calls for a celebration in the evening. Raising a toast to your success story followed by candlelit dinner with your beloved would be just perfect to end the day.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Matters concerning family bonds will keep you occupied for most part today. Be sure to make all your loved ones feel special. Early in the day, those with whom love's labour has been lost might try to end all connections.

**CAPRICORN**  
You know your cards well, now it all depends upon how you play them to your advantage and boost your business, feels Ganesh. You have an efficient team working for you, but you will need to examine their talents without any biases. If they perform well in absolute terms, you can expect the productivity you require from them, today.

**AQUARIUS**  
It is time to catch up some friends and have a good time. You discuss a variety of topics with them, ranging from music to spirituality, from social system to human values, and from politics to career prospects.

**PISCES**  
You will find yourself experiencing problems with taking critical decisions urgently. You will need to carefully weigh the pros and cons of every alternative, before you pronounce your verdict. This is a better practice than to take decisions on a whim, even if slow.

## 'KatVic' Wedding

# Kangana hails 'rich' actors for breaking stereotypes

**Mumbai:** Known for speaking her mind, actress Kangana Ranaut Wednesday took to her social media to praise "rich and successful" leading actresses for "breaking stereotypes" by marrying younger men.

Her note comes during the much-talked about wedding of Hindi film stars Vicky Kaushal and Katrina Kaif. Kangana Wednesday morning wrote a note on her Instagram stories praising Hindi film actresses.

She wrote: "Growing up, we heard many stories of successful rich men marrying much younger women... For women to be more successful than their husband was seen as a major crisis, forget marrying a

younger man after a certain age, marriage was impossible for women."

Kangana added: "Nice to see rich and successful women, leading ladies of Indian film industry breaking the sexist norms...Kudos to men and women both for redefining gender stereotype."

Katrina Kaif, who is 38, is five years elder to Vicky. The two lovebirds are set to marry in Rajasthan December 9, IANS



## Sara remembers Sushant as Kedarnath clocks three years

**Mumbai:** With her debut film, *Kedarnath*, completing three years, actress Sara Ali Khan couldn't help but reminisce the time she spent with late actor Sushant Singh Rajput.

Taking to Instagram, she shared, "Three years ago my biggest dream came true. Today, I'm really missing my Mansoor (Rajput's character). It's only because of Sushant's unwavering support, selfless help, constant guidance and compassionate advice that Mukku was able to reach your hearts."

Sara also penned an emotional note, remembering Sushant Singh Rajput on his death anniversary earlier in the year.

"Whenever I needed help, advice or a laugh you were always there. You introduced me to the world of acting, made me believe that dreams could come true, and gave me all that I have today. Still can't believe you're gone. But every time I look at the stars, the rising sun or the moon I know you're here. From *Kedarnath* to *Andromeda*," read Sara's post. IANS

## Shrinivas Udgata, Arun Kamal, Divya Dutta to receive Kalinga Literary Award - 2021



Shrinivas Udgata Arun Kamal Divya Dutta

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar:** The Kalinga Literary Festival (KLF), a three-day extravaganza on literature, will be held here from December 10. Nearly 300 eminent personalities from the fields of literature, cinema, media and politics will assemble to deliberate on the central theme - India at 75: Commemorating the Republic of Letters - at the eighth edition of the festival, said KLF founder Rashmi Ranjan Parida at a presser, Wednesday.

This year veteran Odia writer Shrinivas Udgata, eminent Hindi poet Arun Kamal, Hindi film actress and writer Divya Dutta will be conferred with Kalinga Literary Awards while Taro Sindik will get Kalinga Literary Youth Award for 2021.

Several sessions on different themes will connect to the central theme. The key sessions will be on topics such as Atmanirbhar Bharat, Ayodhya, democracy, cultural nationalism, Generation Y, Indian Languages, Puri, Kashmir, Nepal, publishing industry, ancient history, Media, Market, Children, Women, Transgender, Citizen Engagement, Cinema, Hockey and Covid-19.

This apart, more than 30 new books and monographs will be released during the three-day festival. Nepal will be the Country partner this year with the country's Ambassador joining as the Guest of Honour. Besides, 10 writers and poets from Jammu and Kashmir will be in attendance.

The organisers also announced the KLF Book Awards 2020-21 in various categories. Forty nine books were selected for the year 2020 and 2021. Sachitananda Mohanty, Advisor KLF and Debasish Samantaray Co-Director KLF were also present at the press meet.

## Money Heist, Power of the Dog top Netflix's global rankings

For nearly 190 million total viewing hours last week, Netflix audiences were singing *Bella Ciao* after the fifth and final instalment of the Spanish drama series *La Casa de Papel* popularly known as *Money Heist* dropped December 3.

In just two days, *Money Heist* took the top spot in Netflix's English language shows, rising to No. 1 on Netflix's Global top 10 list, reports variety.com.

*Money Heist*, the twisty story of a bank robbery, features standout performances from Ursula Corbero, Alvaro Morte, Itziar Ituno, Pedro Alonso and Najwa Nimri, among other international talents.

Other non-English shows that have proven their staying power in Netflix's Global Top 10 include Korean dramas *Squid Game* (21.2 million hours) and *Hometown Cha-Cha-Cha* (11.56 million) which have held their ground on non-English language TV Top 10 list for 12 weeks and 14 weeks, respectively.



Among English-language series, following *Lost in Space* was *True Story*, the Kevin Hart drama that grabbed 29.81 million viewing hours in its second week in the Top 10.

*The Power of the Dog*, Jane Campion's western-drama starring Benedict Cumberbatch, Kirsten Dunst, Jesse Plemons and Kodi Smit-McPhee, took the Number 1 spot on the Top 10 English-language Movies list, opening with 27.2 million hours.

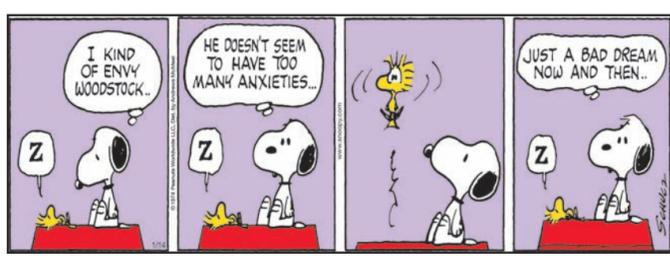
For the most part, viewers who watched English-language films went hard for Christmas: *Castle for Christmas* was second to *Power of the Dog* with 25.55 million viewing hours.

Over on the non-English movie side, French comedy *Spilled Brats* was No. 1 with 26.73 million hours viewed.

Brazil cinched slot No. 8 with the rom-com *Just Short of Perfect*, its third week in a row in the Top 10.

Other non-English feature titles making the Top 10 include *The Whole Truth*, *Green Snake*, *More the Merrier*, *Sooryavanshi*, *The Claus Family*, *Dhamaka* and *Bordertown: Mural Murders*. AGENCIES

### PEANUTS



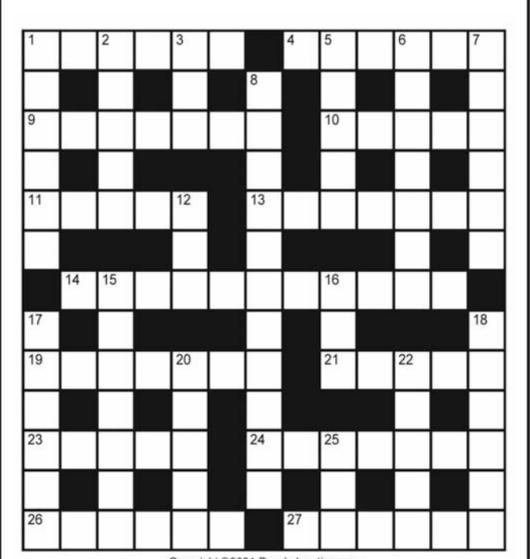
### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### BREVITY



### FUN post CROSSWORD



- Copyright ©2021 PuzzleJunction.com
- Across**
- 1 Stew meat
  - 4 Peregrine, for one
  - 9 Ramen
  - 10 Cupid's projectile
  - 11 Spirit of a people
  - 13 Choices
  - 14 Hibernia (7,4)
  - 19 Resting place
  - 21 Marina sight
  - 23 Penniless
  - 24 Worship
  - 26 Parthenon site
  - 27 Deleted
  - Down**
  - 1 Zoo denizen
  - 2 Incisor
  - 3 Engine need
  - 5 Show flexibility
  - 6 A way to save petrol (3,4)
  - 7 State-of-the-art
  - 8 Shakespeare comedy (2,3,4,2)
  - 12 Lady's man
  - 15 Large extinct beast
  - 16 Slick
  - 17 Anxiety disorder
  - 18 Be there
  - 20 Ancient Greek theatre
  - 22 Poker player's stack
  - 25 Paddle

### 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.

		3		5		2		
8	7		2	1				
4								
		1	2					3
2		6	7					1
	6		9					8
				6	5			
	1	4	8					
9	5				1			6

### SOLUTIONS

**CROSSWORD**

H	O	N	E	S	T	Y	S	T	E	E	P
E	A	A	U	I	T	P	O				
M	A	C	A	B	R	E	R	A	I	S	E
R	V	L	U	C	T						
Q	U	E	U	E	D	E	T	O	U	R	
U	R	S								R	W
A	D	A	P	T	S					S	C
Y	N									C	U
S	T	A	N	C	E					S	U
O	I	T	L	H							
P	I	Q	U	E						E	P
E	U	C	R	O							S
C	R	E	T	E						Y	A
											N

**SUDOKU**

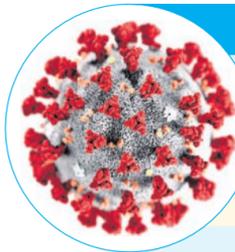
9	2	3	7	4	8	1	6	5
7	6	5	9	3	1	4	2	8
4	8	1	6	5	2	7	3	9
1	9	4	3	2	5	6	8	7
2	5	8	4	6	7	3	9	1
6	3	7	8	1	9	5	4	2
8	1	6	2	7	3	9	5	4
5	4	9	1	8	6	2	7	3
3	7	2	5	9	4	8	1	6

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



## POTTERY RITUALS

Deities Rudrapala and Ratneswari being worshipped at a pottery at Kumbharpada in Puri on the occasion of Kurala Panchami, Wednesday



## COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	26,76,42,979	24,10,45,279	52,91,050
India	3,46,56,822	3,40,89,137	4,73,952
Odisha	10,50,760	10,40,403	8,426

# BMC to ramp up testing at edu institutions

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 8:** With the state struggling to trace several foreign returnees amidst Omicron scare, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) has decided to ramp up testing in educational institutions, especially in schools where physical classes are being held.

With the objective of 'testing, tracing and treatment' the civic authority has now focused on increased RT-PCR and Rapid Antigen tests in all major schools and colleges. As per sources, the BMC has targeted 1,500 tests at the institutions on a daily basis.

"We have ramped up mass testing of students and staffers in the state capital following the direction of Commissioner Sanjay Kumar Singh in the wake of detection of Omicron variant in the country. Institutions have been asked to isolate students or staff having symptoms and immediately contact authorities for testing of the Covid suspects as well as their close contacts. Authorities of the institutions have also been directed to remain in constant touch with local health workers and doctors of their localities and report any suspect case immediately," a BMC official said.

Acting as per the commissioner's direction, testing has been intensified in all zones of

## OMICRON SCORE



The civic authorities have set a target of conducting 1,500 tests daily at the schools and colleges in the Capital city

the BMC. In North Zone, the testing has covered at Ashram School, Rasulgarh, Ashram School, Nayapalli, Prabhujee English Medium School, Institute of Hotel Management, VSS Nagar, Jaydev College, Nahar Kanta, Biju Patnaik College, Jayadev Vihar, GGP Colony High School, VSS Nagar High School and other institutions.

Moreover, random testing is also being carried out in tribal hostels, offices of private organisations, markets and apartments to check transmission. Notably, a testing kiosk was put up again at Biju Patnaik International Airport (BPIA) last week for helping passengers with travel history to 'at risk' countries for the Omicron variant to undergo on-the-spot testing.

Similarly, Covid-19 testing camps are being held at RD Women's University, Maharishi College of Natural Law, Unit-IX Boy's School, Badagada High School and Capital High School, among others.

Likewise, the civic body is conducting testing camps at DAV School, Unit-VIII, IRC Village High School, Saraswati Sishu Mandir, Nayapalli (Ward-23), Tapoban High School, Paika Nagar High School near Delta Square under South-West Zone. Till today, about 1,500 tests have already been conducted in each zone.

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# Booking of Kalyan Mandaps in City now just a click away

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 8:** Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) Wednesday launched online booking of Kalyan Mandaps for family functions or any other social occasions.

The online booking system which is developed by Bhubaneswar Smart City Limited (BSCL) will be made available for BMC Kalyan Mandaps at Saheed Nagar (ground and first floor), VSS Nagar, Chandrasekharpur, Badagada, Unit VIII, Sashtri Nagar, Buddheswari and Unit VI, sources said.

"This initiative will help the citizens, especially the elders, who search for venues for wedding ceremonies and other social functions at affordable prices. The online option would also help in maintaining transparency in the service delivery," said BMC Commissioner and BSCL Managing Director Sanjay Kumar Singh.

Citizens applying for BMC Kalyan Mandaps will have to check real-time availability of such venues for the selected date range from the particular section under Bhubaneswar.Me portal.

The booking fees can be paid

The booking fees can be paid through multiple online payment options such as UPI, credit card and debit card

through multiple online payment options such as UPI, credit card and debit card. The confirmation of booking is communicated through a system-generated booking certificate and booking confirmation over the registered mail and mobile number.

It can be mentioned here that the civic authorities have launched the Bhubaneswar.Me portal to ensure transparency in providing various services to the citizens. This initiative will also help citizens to achieve common service requirements.

Bhubaneswar.Me is a unified service portal that currently delivers 100 plus services from 16 government organisations that are divided into broad categories of public amenities such as search for safe public transport, access to hi-speed WIFI system, citizen services, city events and city maps among others.

# Naveen condoles Gen Rawat's death

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 8:** Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Wednesday condoled the death of Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Bipin Rawat, his wife Madhulika and 11 others in a helicopter crash in Tamil Nadu and said it was an irreparable loss to the nation.

"Deeply saddened by the demise of Chief of Defence Staff Gen #BipinRawat, his wife & 11 other Defence personnel in a very tragic accident in #TamilNadu. It is an irreparable loss to the nation. Deepest condolences to the bereaved families and wish speedy recovery of the injured," Patnaik tweeted. Group Captain Varun Singh is currently being treated at a military hospital.

# ₹24.5 lakh seized from Rajdhani passenger



The seized cash OP PHOTO

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Cuttack, Dec 8:** Huge amount of cash stashed in the luggage of a passenger, who was travelling in New Delhi-bound Rajdhani Express, was seized by a joint team of the

Railway Protection Force (RPF) and Government Railway Police (GRP) at Cuttack railway station, Wednesday.

The passenger has been identified as Arun Swain of Jajpur. Swain boarded the train from Bhubaneswar. Acting on a tip-off,

the joint team carried out a thorough search of Swain's luggage leading to the recovery. Swain could not give any satisfactory explanation for carrying such huge amount of cash with him. "We have detained Swain for interrogation. The Income Tax department has been apprised of the incident. I-T department officials will assist us in the probe," Biswal said.

Swain possessed around ₹24.5 lakh in ₹20 and ₹10 denominations. The cash was stashed in four trolley bags of Swain, said GRP official Umakanta Biswal.

According to sources, Swain boarded the train from Bhubaneswar. Acting on a tip-off,

the joint team carried out a thorough search of Swain's luggage leading to the recovery.

Swain could not give any satisfactory explanation for carrying such huge amount of cash with him. "We have detained Swain for interrogation. The Income Tax department has been apprised of the incident. I-T department officials will assist us in the probe," Biswal said.

Sources, meanwhile, claimed that the authorities concerned would examine the CCTV footage from Bhubaneswar railway station as part of their investigation into the cash seizure.

# BJD MPs URGE GOYAL TO LIFT SURPLUS PARBOILED RICE



BJD MPs submitting a memo to Union Minister Piyush Goyal, Wednesday

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 8:** BJD MPs from Odisha Wednesday urged Union Minister Piyush Goyal to instruct Food Corporation of India (FCI) for lifting of surplus parboiled rice from the state during upcoming kharif marketing season (KMS) 2021-22.

The delegation had members from both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha including Pinaki Misra and Prasanna Acharya. They met the minister in Delhi and submitted a memorandum.

In the memorandum, the BJD MPs

said 14 lakh farmers have sold 77.33 lakh tonne of paddy (equivalent to 52.35 lakh tonne of rice) by October 10, 2021 during KMS 2020-21 and ₹14,444 crore has been transferred to their bank accounts within 24-48 hours of the purchase of their paddy.

However, the government of India through a letter (dated 31.8.2021) informed that no surplus parboiled rice shall be accepted from Odisha by FCI for the next KMS.

"This decision has shocked and distressed lakhs of farmers of Odisha, es-

pecially from the western and southern regions of Odisha," the memorandum said. Odisha is estimated to procure 52 lakh tonne of rice in the upcoming KMS, the MPs said and added state's own requirement is about 24 lakh tonne rice comprising all the schemes.

Thus, a surplus of 28 lakh tonne rice would be left with Odisha which would comprise 4 lakh tonne raw rice and 24 lakh tonne parboiled rice

If the FCI does not lift this 24 lakh tonne of parboiled rice due to restrictions imposed by the Department of Food and Public Distribution (DFPD) then it would severely affect Odisha's paddy procurement operations as well as cause distress to 10 lakh farmers, the MPs said.

The BJD MPs said that it was their duty to protect the interest of the farmers and their families.

## Sahu for revision of SDRF sharing pattern

POST NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi, Dec 8:** BJD MP Chandrasekhar Sahu Wednesday urged the Union government to consider Odisha as a Special Category State and modify the sharing pattern in the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) as 90:10.

Speaking during the Zero Hour in Lok Sabha, Sahu said as per the Disaster Risk Index worked out by the Commission for States, the score of Odisha is 90 out of 100, the highest among all the states for disasters and natural calamities.

"The sharing pattern in the State Disaster Response Fund as per the recommendations of the 14th Finance Commission was 90:10 for the Centre and the States respectively. However, the Centre has modified the sharing percentage to 75:25 and released SDRF accordingly," Sahu added. He requested the Centre to consider Odisha as a special category and a Special Focus State and special dispensation may be given by allowing sharing pattern of 90:10 in SDRF at par with the North East.

# Renovate Coast Canal: Bhadrak MP to Centre

POST NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi, Dec 8:** Biju Janata Dal (BJD) MP Manjulata Mandal Wednesday urged the Union government to take steps for immediate restoration and renovation of Coast Canal in Bhadrak.

Speaking during the Zero Hour in the Lok Sabha, the Bhadrak MP apprised the House that there is a Coast Canal of 126 km from Mankunda of Bhograi to Charbatia-Basudevpur-Chandbali of Bhadrak. This canal was considered the lifeline of erstwhile Balasore district.

"Major portion of the coast canal comes under my parliamentary constituency of Bhadrak. This canal was constructed during the British regime. It was mainly used for irrigation and maritime trade. It was said that due to

flourishing maritime trade on this water route, several industrial units had come up along the banks of the canal," the BJD MP said.

However, she said after Independence, trade on this route lost its relevance as the canal became defunct. She said if the canal becomes operational, it will help farmers.

"If the canal is renovated and it becomes functional, it will be helpful in promoting waterways and river-linking facilities. It will also help avoid drought-like situation in coastal parts of Odisha. Its renovation will be immensely helpful for farmers and unemployed youths of Odisha," Mandal said.

The BJD MP requested the Union Ministry of Shipping and Waterways to invite experts for immediate restoration and renovation of the Coast Canal at the earliest.

**OFFICE OF THE BLOCK DEVELOPMENT OFFICER, SONEPUR**  
No. 4266 Date: 06.12.2021  
**TENDER CALL NOTICE**  
Name of the executing agency: Panchayat Samiti, Sonapur

Sl. No.	Name of the Work	Estimated Cost (in Rs.)	Class of Contractor
1	Const. of Panchayat Samiti Building, Sonapur	80,40,950.00	A & B

For details visit: [subarnapur.nic.in](http://subarnapur.nic.in)

**EAST COAST RAILWAY**  
File No. DRM/Engg/KUR/21-22/  
E-Tender/80, Dt. 06.12.2021  
1.Tender No. e-Tender-EAST-KUR-217-2021, Date: 03.12.2021  
Description: PROVISION OF ADDITIONAL LOOP AT BADABANDHA (BDBA) STATION OF KHURDA ROAD DIVISION.  
Approx cost of the work: ₹200.25 lakhs, Completion Period of the work: 12 (Twelve) Months  
2.Tender No. e-Tender-South-KUR-218-2021, Date: 03.12.2021  
Description: HIRING OF 01 (ONE) LIGHT MOTOR VEHICLE (TATA SUMO/BOLERO/QUALIS/ SCORPIO EQUIVALENT VEHICLE) ALONG WITH DRIVER FOR OFFICIAL USE OF DEPUTY CHIEF ENGINEER/ITM/KHURDA ROAD FOR A PERIOD OF 32 MONTHS.  
Approx cost of the work: ₹15.09 lakhs, Completion Period of the work: 32 (Thirty Two) Months  
Date & time of Tender Closing: 24.12.2021, 1500 hrs (For both tender).  
No manual sent by Post/ Courier/Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-Tenders, even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.  
Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-Tenders is available in website <http://www.iraps.gov.in>  
Note: The prospective tenderers are advised to visit the website 10 (ten) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes/ corrigendum issued for this tender.  
Divisional Railway Manager (Engg./I) Khurda Road  
PR-613/M/21-22

**Government of India**  
**Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment**  
**Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan)**  
5th Floor, Pt. Deendayal Antyodaya Bhawan, CGO Complex, Lodhi Road, New Delhi-110003  
**ANNOUNCEMENT OF SCHOLARSHIPS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES 2021-22 (PRE-MATRIC, POST-MATRIC AND TOP CLASS EDUCATION)**

Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities provides an opportunity to Students with Disabilities (Divyangjan) for availing scholarship under three schemes viz. Pre-matric, Post-matric and Top Class Education for the year 2021-22. Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities invites applications for the above scholarship schemes. The brief details of umbrella scheme are given below:

Timeline	Eligibility	Instructions
Last date for submission of online applications for Fresh scholarship (first time applicants) and renewal scholarship (applicants who have got scholarship in the year 2020-21)	i. Pre-Matric Scholarship ii. Post Matric Scholarship iii. Top Class Scholarship	15th December, 2021
	(a) Scholarships are open for Nationals of India. (b) A person with disability having not less than 40% disability and having a disability certificate issued by the competent medical authority. (c) Parental income ceiling per annum for Pre-Matric, Post-matric Scholarships is Rs.2.50 lakh and for Top Class Education is Rs.6.00 lakh. (d) Not more than two disabled children of the same parents will be entitled to receive benefits of the scheme. In case, if the second child is a twin, the scholarship under these schemes will be admissible to both twins. (e) Scholarship for studying in any class will be available for only one year. If a student has to repeat a class, he/she would not get scholarship for a second (or subsequent) year. (f) A scholarship holder under these schemes will not hold any other scholarship/stipend. If awarded any other scholarship/stipend, the student can exercise his/her option for either of the two scholarships/stipends, which is more beneficial to him/her and should inform the awarding authority through the Head of the Institution about the option exercised.	
	For Applicants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applicants are advised to apply online for Pre-Matric, Post Matric and Top Class Schemes on the website of National Scholarship Portal at <a href="http://www.scholarships.gov.in">www.scholarships.gov.in</a> (a link to the site is also available at <a href="http://www.disabilityaffairs.gov.in">www.disabilityaffairs.gov.in</a>) or Mobile App of National Scholarship Portal.</li> <li>Detailed instructions for filling up application under any of the scheme are available in the "Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)" available on the home page of NSP.</li> <li>Applicants are advised to provide active/correct bank account details while applying for scholarships to avoid payment failure.</li> </ul>

davp 38117/11/0021/2122

MLAs share ideas on improving lives of children

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 8: Legislators from several political parties Tuesday attended an interaction with children and discussed the ways to support the kids, especially to deal with challenges posed by Covid-19 pandemic.

In the interaction, at least 25 MLAs led by Speaker SN Patro came together with children to discuss ways to improve lives of children in Odisha. Child representatives also presented the MLAs with their 'Charter of Demands'.



Organised by Unicef along with the Global Policy Research Foundation, the interaction marked the beginning of a partnership with MLAs in Odisha to accelerate the progress for children, especially at the grass root level.

Through the partnership the law makers will be supported with technical and thematic knowledge including research and data as well as inputs for legislative committees on children's issues.

Unicef Chief of Field Office Monika Nielsen said, "MLAs have the power and influence to speak for children. They are uniquely positioned to send the message that the well-being of children is the responsibility not just of people who work with children, but of all in the society. We are proud to get the opportunity to engage with MLAs of Odisha and are committed to ensure children's voices are heard."

The Assembly Speaker said, "Addressing rights of children is crucial for our state's progress. We need to ensure that our actions benefit children both in rural and urban areas. There are many government schemes which are benefiting a large number of children. However, having dialogues with children helps in reminding us what we are doing and what more needs to be done."

DIN OVER MAMITA

All-party meet fails to break the ice

The House witnessed high drama after both the Biju Janata Dal and the Bharatiya Janata Party legislators tried to outwit each other in a poster war

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 8: Pandemonium continued to prevail in the state Assembly for the seventh consecutive day Wednesday as both the opposition and treasury bench members created ruckus in the House.

The House was adjourned four times during the pre-lunch session and twice in the post-lunch session. The Assembly could not transact any business throughout the day.

Repeated attempts by the Speaker to break the impasse through dialogue in the all-party meeting convened in the pre and post lunch sessions failed to yield any result.

As soon as the House assembled for the day at 10:30am, the opposition BJP and Congress members rushed to the well holding placards and banners. They sought slogans reiterating their demand for the sacking of the Minister of



BJP members beat gongs and show placards as a mark of protest while BJD workers demonstrate under the statue of Mahatma Gandhi on Assembly premises



BJD workers demonstrate under the statue of Mahatma Gandhi on Assembly premises

State (MoS) for Home, Dibya Shankar Mishra over Mamita Meher murder case.

The BJP members continued to beat gongs and bells as a mark of protest. The Congress MLAs showed placards and shouted slogans. The House witnessed a high drama after both the BJD and the BJP legislators tried to outwit each other in a poster war.

While the BJP members showed the photographs of Gobinda Sahu (the prime accused in Mamita murder case) with Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, the treasury bench members standing on their seats showed photographs of Mohan Lal Sharma, advocate of Gobinda Sahu with senior BJP leaders like Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, former Odisha BJP president Basanta Panda, senior BJP

OPPOSITION CREATES RUCKUS IN THE HOUSE THROUGHOUT THE DAY

ASSEMBLY ADJOURNED SIX TIMES DURING THE DAY

BJD LEADER PRATAP DEB ALLEGED THAT MOHANLAL SHARMA, THE ADVOCATE FIGHTING FOR GOBINDA SAHU, IS AN ACTIVE MEMBER OF BJP

leader KV Singh Deo.

As the House plunged into a complete chaos, the Speaker adjourned the House till 11:30am. After the House reassembled, the opposition members started their agitation again.

Finding no other alternative, the Speaker again adjourned the

House at 11:33am and called an all-party meeting. The proceedings were subsequently adjourned twice till 4pm as the meeting failed to break the ice.

There was no change in the situation in the afternoon session too. The opposition members continued their protest forcing the Speaker to adjourn the House again.

The Speaker again convened an all-party meeting in the post-lunch session but to no avail. Later, he adjourned the House till tomorrow. The House could not take up the Question Hour in the pre-lunch session and the demands for grants for the first supplementary grants relating to Home department could not be taken up in the post-lunch session. The treasury bench members

sat on a dharna in front of Mahatma Gandhi's statue alleging double standard by BJP in Mamita Meher murder case.

BJD leader Pratap Deb alleged that Mohanlal Sharma, the advocate fighting for Gobinda Sahu, is an active member of BJP.

Alleging BJP is maintaining 'double standard' on the murder case, Deb said, "The BJP is making a hue and cry over the murder case inside and outside the House and demanding the resignation of Mishra. On the other hand, it engaged Sharma to let Gobinda free."

Opposition chief whip Mohan Majhi rubbished the allegation made by the BJD. He said Sharma is not a member of BJP, and the BJD is making the false allegation.

Substandard pulses seized

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack: A joint team of Cuttack Municipal Corporation (CMC) Health department and police Wednesday seized around 40 sacks of substandard pulses from two godowns in Malgodown area of the city here. According to sources, some traders of Malgodown were selling substandard pulses for last several days. Officials of the joint team raided the two godowns after receiving several complaints in this regard from locals. "The joint team has sealed the two godowns. Two separate cases have been registered in this regard. Two persons are being interrogated in connection with the seizure of substandard pulses," said Malgodown police in-charge Trupti Ranjan Nayak.

Man gets 14-yr RI for raping minor

Cuttack: The POCSO court here Wednesday sentenced a 46-year-old man to 14 years of rigorous imprisonment (RI) after convicting him of raping a 14-year-old girl of Khuntuni in 2015, an official said. The court has also slapped a penalty of Rs 10,000 on convict Suresh Purty. The convict would undergo six-month additional RI in case of failure to pay the penalty, the court ruled. This apart, the special court directed the District Legal Services Authority to pay Rs 5 lakh compensation to the victim. According to the case registered with Khuntuni police March 1, 2015, Purty abducted the minor girl and forced himself on her.

BANKERS' DEMO



Members of Odisha state unit of United Forum of Bank Unions stage a demonstration near SBI's Main Branch at Unit-I in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday, to press for fulfilment of their demands

3-pronged prog to multiply farm income in state, says Agri Secy

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 8: The state government has adopted a three-pronged programme to ensure agricultural growth and multiply farmers' income, Agriculture and Farmers' Empowerment, Principal Secretary Suresh Kumar Vashishth said here Wednesday.

"The biggest need today is to empower the farmers as 90 per cent of the farming community in the state fall in the small and marginal category and the need is to encourage them to diversify and go for high value and climate resilient crops," Vashishth said while addressing a Capacity Building Program for Input Management of Rabi Crop for Farmer Producer Organisations (FPO) at the Institute of Agricultural Sciences, SOA's faculty of agricultural sciences.

Vashishth said the government was focusing on crop diversification and integrated farming while promoting the Farm Pond Plus programme to encourage farmers to take up pisciculture alongside horticulture. The programme was jointly organised by SOA, Livelihood Alternatives, DhanukaAgriTech Limited and NAFED. Odisha's cultivation pattern was heavily tilted towards paddy with the crop claiming 70 per cent of the agricultural land while the rest 30 per cent of the cultivable area was under cereals, pulses, oilseeds and other crops, Vashishth remarked.

"We're surplus in paddy but deficit in pulses and oilseeds," he said adding pilot projects were being taken up in Koraput, Rayagada, Malkangiri and Nabarangpur where farmers were being provided incentives to take up pulses and oilseed cultivation. Thrust was now being put on integrated farming with farmers being encouraged to diversify into cereals, oilseeds, pulses, fruits, vegetables, livestock, poultry and fisheries, Vashishth said adding farmers are being asked to take up freshwater aquaculture in a big way combining it with horticulture on the embankment of the ponds.

World peace anthem

Bhubaneswar: The world peace anthem, created by state's music director Rajakishore Gochhayat, was formally launched at Press Club of Odisha, Wednesday. The anthem 'We have the denizens of our earth' aims to spread the message of unity, harmony, brotherhood and establish world peace. Youth artists from several countries have lent their voice to this anthem. Gochhayat, also a music teacher in a leading private school, conceptualised the anthem in 1999 with same objectives.

Karna jawan goes missing at Cuttack

Cuttack: A jawan of the Indian Army, who had reportedly boarded Rajdhani Express at New Delhi to reach the Silver City, has gone missing at the station here. Sources said around 150 jawans boarded Rajdhani Express at New Delhi to reach Cuttack from where they were supposed to leave for Charbatia to attend a camp Tuesday. "The train reached Cuttack station at 3:30pm Tuesday and jawans alighted. While taking attendance, Tenzin Gawa, a jawan from Karnataka, was found to be missing. He couldn't be reached over phone despite repeated attempts," GRP officer Umakant Biswal said. "A missing case has been registered in this regard and the jawan's call details is being analysed. We'll examine the footage of CCTVs at the railway station. All the stations between New Delhi and Cuttack have been alerted," Biswal added.

Special train from Puri to New Tinsukia from Dec 12

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 8: The Railways has decided to run a special train between New Tinsukia in Assam and Puri from December 12, 2021.

The New Tinsukia-Puri Special from will leave at 22:30hrs (10:30pm) every Sunday from December 12, 2021 to January 30, 2022 and arrive at Puri at 11:00hrs (11am) Tuesdays.

In return direction, 05969 Puri-New Tinsukia Special will leave the Pilgrim City at 05:00hrs (5am) every Wednesday from December 15, 2021 to February 2, 2022 and reach New Tinsukia at 16:45hrs Thursdays.

This train has One AC-2 Tier, Four AC-3 Tier, Eleven Sleeper Class, Four Second Class Seating and Two Guard, luggage-cum-second class seating coaches in its composition having stoppages at important stations like Dibrugarh, Rangiya, New Jalpaiguri, Malda Town, Rampurhat, Bardhaman, Dankuni, Kharagpur, Balasore, Bhadrak, Jajpur-Keonjhar Road, Cuttack, Bhubaneswar and Khurda Road between New Tinsukia and Puri from both the directions.

Prashanti Express to be cancelled partially. In view of safety related modernisation work in connection with non-interlocking at Hindupur and Devarapalli stations for commissioning of double line between Yelahanka and Penukonda Railway Section under Bangalore Division of South Western Railway jurisdiction, some of the trains are being cancelled, diverted and partially cancelled. Of the above trains, 18463/18464 Bhubaneswar-Bangalore-Bhubaneswar Prashanti Express will be cancelled partially for three days from both the directions.

Vamsadhara row: Apex court adjourns hearing to Jan 25

POST NEWS NETWORK

Technology is a great enabler. We will provide the links. We have no difficulty at all. If you're comfortable, we are also comfortable. We will provide the links, said the SC bench. During the hearing, senior advocate Jayant Bhushan appearing for Odisha, told the court that several technical experts are assisting both states in this case. Thus, they need a lot of links for virtual hearing. "Technology is a great enabler. We will provide the links. We have no difficulty at all. If you're comfortable, we are also comfortable. We will provide the links," the bench had observed. Earlier, Andhra Pradesh had filed an affidavit in response to Odisha's petition against the order of the tribunal. Andhra Pradesh contended that Odisha's petition is conceived and no case is made out for the interference of the SC. Andhra Pradesh also submitted in the SC that the tribunal has considered all objections raised

New Delhi, Dec 8: The Supreme Court Wednesday adjourned hearing of a batch of petitions filed by Odisha against the order of Vamsadhara Water Dispute Tribunal allowing Andhra Pradesh to construct Neradi barrage to January 25 next year. A three-judge bench of the apex court comprising Justices DY Chandrachud, Surya Kant and Vikram Nath pronounced that it would hear Vamsadhara dispute as first case January 25, 2022. The counsels of both the states agreed to this. The SC had earlier said that it would hear the dispute



in virtual mode.

WASSUP TODAY

BHUBANESWAR ■ Rangabati, western Odisha dance extravaganza, by Culture department and Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademy, Rabindra Mandap, 6:30pm

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

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LOST

By virtue of an affidavit before Notary Public, Barbil on dated 22.07.2016 I, Jaswant Singh, S/o-Dippendra Bahadur Singh, aged about 38 years residing At- Baneikela Hudisahi, P.O.- Baneikela, P.S.- Joda, Dist.- Keonjhar, Odisha do hereby solemnly affirm and declare that, I am recorded Tenant of Khata No.- 174/222, Mouza - Kamarjoda Unit No. 33, Police Station Joda, Police Station No.33, Tahasil Barbil, Tahasil No. 02 (63), District Keonjhar, Odisha Registered Sale Deed. This said original documents missed on 20th July, 2016 at about 10.30 a.m. somewhere in transit on the way to Joda R.I. Office and in spite of my best effort it could not be traced out. Sd./- Jaswant Singh

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SHORT TAKES

**Drunken man axes wife to death**

**Sundargarh:** A drunken man axed his wife to death Tuesday night over a family feud at Nabarangpur village under Sadar police limits in Sundargarh district. The deceased has been identified as Niati, wife of Raju Ekka. According to sources, Niati had an altercation with Raju as he had allegedly brought another married woman to their house. Earlier in the day, the issue was taken to Sadar police station where it was resolved by officials, source added. At home, severe arguments broke out between the couple over the same issue again Tuesday night. Things took an ugly turn when, in a feat of rage, Raju picked up an axe and attacked Niati leading to her death. Worse, Raju went to sleep after committing the crime. On being informed by Raju's son about the incident, some neighbours called police. Sadar police recovered the body Wednesday morning from a pool of blood and sent it to a hospital for post-mortem. Police also detained Raju and initiated a probe into the incident.

**Techie arrested for fake loot case**



**Chhatrapur:** An engineering student had filed a complaint at Chhatrapur police that ₹40,000 had been snatched away from him by miscreants on Chhatrapur-Madhapur road December 6. The complainant was identified as Niranjan Nayak of Karpada. However, during investigation, police found his allegation fake. It was blatant lie. Police have rather registered a case against him. Nayak was arrested and produced in court Wednesday. IIC Satyaranjan Pradhan said action was taken against the engineering student for lodging a false complaint.

**BrahMos supersonic cruise missile test-fired at Chandipur**



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Balasure, Dec 8:** The air version of BrahMos supersonic cruise missile was successfully test-fired from Sukhoi 30 MK-I off Odisha coast, Wednesday. Official sources said, the missile which was launched from the aircraft followed the pre-planned trajectory and met all the mission objectives. The air version of BrahMos was last flight-tested in July 2021. The launch is a major milestone in the development of BrahMos missile as it now clears the system for the serial production of air-version BrahMos missiles within the country.

"Major airframe assemblies which form the integral part of the Ramjet Engine are indigenously developed by Indian Industry. These include non-metallic air frame sections comprising Ramjet fuel tank and pneumatic fuel supply system. During the test, the structural integrity and functional performance have been proven," a PIB release read. Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh congratulated the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), BrahMos, Indian Air Force and the industry on the successful test firing. BrahMos is a Joint Venture between India (DRDO) and Russia (NPOM) for the development, production and marketing of the supersonic cruise missile. BrahMos is the potent offensive missile weapon system already inducted into the Armed Forces.



Shop owners opposing exorbitant hike in rent and charging of interest by Rourkela Development Authority (RDA) staging a demonstration outside its office in Rourkela, Wednesday

**MAHANGA DOUBLE MURDER**

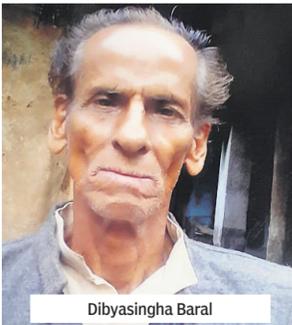
**ADJ sets aside cops' plea against fresh probe order**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Nichintakoili, Dec 8:** The much-hyped Mahanga double murder case took an interesting turn Wednesday as the court of the Additional District Judge (ADJ), Salipur rejected two revision petitions filed by Mahanga police challenging the order of a Judicial Magistrate First Class (JMFC) for fresh investigation into the case and submission of call detail records (CDRs) of three persons. The court of ADJ heard the two revision petitions Tuesday but had reserved its order. The court made its ruling Wednesday and quashed the two revision petitions. The order has mounted further trouble for the Mahanga police. Earlier, the court of the JMFC had directed the Mahanga police to file a fresh investigation report and submit CDR by 10.30 am of December 10 and issued a show-cause notice to the IIC of Mahanga police station asking why action would not be taken against him. Challenging the decision of the JMFC court, advocate Santosh Moon on behalf of the Mahanga police had filed the petition in the ADJ court on the basis of



File photo of Kulamani Baral



Dibyasingha Baral

a letter issued by the Cuttack SP and the affidavit of the Mahanga IIC. However, the ADJ quashed the two petitions. It was learnt that the state government might approach the High Court in the case. Earlier, November 20, the JMFC, Salipur had expressed displeasure over the slow pace of investigation into the Mahanga double murder case in which the name of Law Minister Pratap Jena figured in the FIR. The court had directed Mahanga police for fresh probe and submit CDRs

of Bapi Biswal, the minister's assistant, Sarat Chandra Naik, Mahanga block chairperson and the deceased Prafulla Biswal who is the prime accused for the period between December 2020 and February 2021. Notably, BJP leader Kulamani Baral and his associate Dibyasingha Baral were hacked to death, January 2, 2021. After investigation, police had filed a charge sheet against 14 accused, but allegedly dropped the name of Minister Pratap Jena.

**MATTER OF LIVELIHOOD**

**PRELIMINARY SURVEY IN BALASORE**

**Jawad damages paddy on 10,591 ha**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Balasure, Dec 8:** Cyclonic storm Jawad accompanied by incessant rainfall has destroyed standing paddy crops in Balasure district. A preliminary assessment by agriculture department has estimated the loss of paddy crops in 10,591 hectares, a report said. Farmers were preparing for harvest when the Jawad induced rainfall submerged ripen paddy crops in thousands of hectares of farmlands. Farmers apprehend that the paddy crops on farmlands and those have been harvested might germinate after remaining submerged in water. They claimed that it will take at least 20 days to completely drain out the water from their farmlands and by then all the paddy crops will either decompose or germinate. Directed by the state relief commissioner, the district agriculture department conducted an expeditious survey of the farmlands and estimated the crop loss on 10,591 hectares. The survey pointed out that paddy cultivation was undertaken on 1,96,519 hectares in 360 panchayats

under 12 blocks in the district. The cyclone-induced rainfall affected crops in 999 revenue villages of 228 panchayats. Farmers had harvested crops on 93,460 hectares before the cyclonic storm while paddy crops are yet to be harvested from 1,03,059 hectares. Crops in 15,278 hectares submerged in rainwater while paddy crops have been destroyed on 10,591 hectares, the report said. District agriculture officer Nikunja Kishore Rout said the survey on crop loss was conducted on war footing.

**GANJAM: DENGUE CASES SPIKE TO 307**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Berhampur, Dec 8:** Dengue has acquired an alarming proportion in Ganjam district. The disease has spread to all parts of the district despite the claims of health officials that they are putting in efforts to curb it. With four more persons testing positive, the total number of affected people in the district rose to 307, Wednesday. It is rapidly spreading in Berhampur Municipal Corporation where 135 persons including 17 children have tested positive for the disease. Currently, the total number of dengue patients is 307, chief district medical officer, Dr Umashankar Mishra said. Two people of Hatibandha Sahi under BeMC area tested positive for the disease, Wednesday. Two youths of Rangelunda and Khallikote areas also tested positive.

**Work on 4th jumbo corridor kicks off**

HIGH UTILITY POLES BEING SET UP IN FORESTED POCKETS TO WARD OFF ELEPHANT ELECTROCUTION

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Sambalpur, Dec 8:** Amid sporadic reports of elephant casualties across the state for various reasons, good news has come for the environmentalists and wildlife conservationists. The work on the fourth elephant corridor in the state has started here. The state government has sanctioned ₹108 crore for the ambitious project aimed at ensuring safety of the wildlife including elephants in western Odisha. TP Western Odisha Distribution Limited (TPWODL) has also allocated ₹105 crore to carry out overhead electrification work in forested pockets so as to ensure safe passage and movements of elephants. The work will be completed by March 2022. For the safety of wild animals, elephants and their movement in Western Odisha, TPWODL has started installing the high utility poles in 59 out of 84 sections. These areas have



been identified as strategic spots where elephants have hectic movements. In many cases, elephants die after coming in close contact with loosely hanging electricity wires in forested pockets. In the 59 sections of the TPWODL, there is a plan to install 730 poles of 33-

**FEMALE JUMBO ELECTROCUTED**

**KEONJHAR:** A female elephant died from electrocution in Naranpur range of Keonjhar district Wednesday. According to the forest department, a herd of 18 elephants was spotted in Naranpur reserve forest Tuesday. One of the animals came in contact with an utility pole which was charged due to an exposed 33-KV wire. However, other elephants managed to escape the danger. The forest officials had informed the electricity distribution company of Naranpur section to snap power supply for safety of animals, but the latter had not taken it seriously. Regional chief conservator of forests Arun Kumar Mishra and DFO Dhanraj HD visited the spot and started an investigation into the elephant casualty.



KV, 18,300 poles of 11-KV and 6,000 LT-line poles. As part of this project, aerial bundled insulated (AB) cables with a distance of 470 km will be drawn up overhead so as to ward off electrocution accidents. It was learnt that such work has been in progress in Naktideula and Jujumara forest areas with the help of forest officials. According to sources, about 150 elephants are in Naktideula and Jujumara areas. The TPWODL and the forest officials by using GPS have identified the elephant movement route and installed 9-metre high utility poles. There are around 230 poles to be set up in Jujumara and 30 in Naktideula.

**Keonjhar: 380 schools have only one teacher each**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Keonjhar, Dec 8:** Severe crunch of teachers has paralysed primary education in Keonjhar. The sorry state of affairs is reflected from the fact that 380 primary schools in the district are run by only one teacher each. More shocking is the fact that 19 of these schools do not have any teacher at all. This has led to an increase in the drop-out rate. In 13 blocks, only one teacher manages education in 380 schools each. As per official guidelines, at least two teachers are required in a primary school. There are no teachers in three schools in Anadapur block; four in Champua block; three in Ghatagaon block; one in Harichandanpur block and three in Hatadihi block.

**The Odisha Small Industries Corporation Ltd.**  
(A Government of Odisha Undertaking)  
(An ISO:9001:2008 certified Govt. Company)  
Industrial Estate, Madhapatna, CUTTACK - 753 010, Odisha.  
Tel No. : 0671-2341204, 2342816 Fax : 0671-2341875/2342561  
e-mail: osicld@gmail.com, osicm@gmail.com, website: osicld.in  
CAD-2230 OSIC GST No. 21AAAC02101M121

**TENDER CALL NOTICE**

**Tender Notice No.5167 DL07.12.2021**  
The Managing Director, OSIC Ltd., Cuttack invites tender from experienced MSMEs duly empanelled with OSIC for the work "Construction of Model Smart Park at NAC, Kotpad". Tender details can be downloaded from the OSIC website [www.osicld.in](http://www.osicld.in). Authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tenders without assigning any reason thereof or the tendering process may be cancelled in Toto. Any corrigendum/ changes/modifications will appear in OSIC Ltd. website [www.osicld.in](http://www.osicld.in) only. Sd/-  
MANAGING DIRECTOR  
OIPR-14073/11/0071/2122

**OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF HORTICULTURE, ANGUL**

**EXPRESSION OF INTEREST, (EOI)**

No. L-2647-  
No. L-106:- Office of the Deputy Director of Horticulture, Angul invites applications from interested Agencies/ Farms/ Institutions/ Organizations/ NGOs/ TRUSTs of state and national repute for "ENGAGEMENT AS FACILITATING AGENCIES FOR CONDUCTING BASELINE SURVEY IN APC PROJECT BLOCKS IN ANGUL DISTRICT, UNDER PROMOTION OF AGRICULTURE PRODUCTION CLUSTER (APC) UNDER DMF, ANGUL as detailed in the scope of work in this Eoi. The interested and eligible Agencies / Farms / Institutions / Organizations with valid Registration Certificate as a society / Trust/ Cooperative, as detailed in Eoi, may send their applications latest by 24th of December 2021 by 5:00 PM through registered post / Speed Post and no other means. For application form & details please visit [www.angul.nic.in](http://www.angul.nic.in), [www.apcodisha.net](http://www.apcodisha.net). N.B.: Applications received after the due date and time will not be considered. Sd./- Deputy Director of Horticulture, Angul  
OIPR-01448/11/0003/2122

**Paradip civic body losing revenues in crores**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Paradip, Dec 8:** Paradip Municipality has stood first in the state in collection of holding tax worth ₹1.70 crore in 2020-21 fiscal, a report said. The state government took note of the achievement and the state housing and urban development department felicitated the municipality at a function September 25. However, the civic body is losing revenue worth crores of rupees by not collecting revenue from over 1,200 houses. The inconsistency in tax collection deprives the state government of its share of revenue. Reports said, there is a place in civic body area where tax collecting personnel are not interested to collect holding tax from over 1,200 buildings in the area. The place in question is Bijaychandrapur or Tarinigada in the port town. The area houses over 1,200 buildings while construction of new buildings continues. The tax officials collect holding tax from only 573 houses



in the area while leaving aside the rest of the houses. When contacted, Sarada Mahali, a holding tax collector, said they are not collecting holding tax from the rest of the houses as these establishments lack any sale deeds or Patta. This is because the district administration has imposed restrictions on sale

and purchase of land in Bijaychandrapur mouza since 2016. However, some people taking advantage of the situation adopt fraudulent means to sell and purchase land in the area. The tax collectors collect tax from those houses that have been either sold or purchased before 2016. Moreover, the civic body has not

conducted any survey for holding tax collection in the port town for 13 years even though rules have it that all residential buildings and establishments must be surveyed once in every five years. The state urban development department had conducted a survey for the last time in 2008. The civic body had twice written a letter to the urban development department urging it to conduct a survey but the pleas are yet to be addressed, Duryodhan Nayak, law officer of the civic body said. Sourindra Kumar Routray, executive officer, said those who are liable to pay tax are delaying but those who lack proper records are eager to pay tax. Several industries have come in Paradip. This has led to a sharp rise in land prices. Many people are looking for loopholes to regularise their illegal constructions. Currently, 55 illegal slums and colonies have mushroomed at Bijaychandrapur, Musadia, Uday Vihar and Lockpada areas of the port town.

**OPHC**  
**THE ODISHA STATE POLICE HOUSING & WELFARE CORPORATION LTD.**  
(A Government of Odisha Undertaking)  
JANAPATH, BHOINAGAR, BHUBANESWAR-22  
Ph.: 0674-2541545, 2542921, Fax: 0674-2541543  
E-mail: ophwc.od@nic.in, Website: www.ophwc.nic.in  
e-procurement notice No.-33,OPHC/2021-22 & 34/ OPHWC/2021-22

**INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)**

No.CAD-2213-

1	The Chief Engineer (OSPH&WC), Odisha, Bhubaneswar invites Percentage rate bid in Double Cover / Single Cover system in ONLINE MODE only, for the work as detailed below:	
2	Nature of work	Building works
3	No. of works	04 Nos.
4	Bid cost	Rs. 7,080/- (To be paid online) for single cover bid Rs. 11,800/- (To be paid online) for double cover bid
5	Value of tender	Rs. 10.00 lakh to Rs.9.00 Cr.
6	Class of contractor	'D' Class to 'Super' Class

**SCHEDULE OF TENDER**

	Single Cover Bid	Double Cover Bid
7	Availability of bid documents in the website	Di.10.12.2021 to Di.20.12.2021
8	Last date / time of receipt of bids in the portal	Di.20.12.2021 upto 5.00 P.M.
9	Date of opening of bid	Di.21.12.2021 at 11.30 A.M.
10	The bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website: <a href="https://tendersodisha.gov.in">https://tendersodisha.gov.in</a> . Any addendum / corrigendum / cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website.	Di.24.12.2021 upto 5.00 P.M.

Sd./- Chief Engineer (OSPH & WC), Odisha  
N.B. - The quoted rate should be all inclusive but excluding G.S.T. as applicable under works contract.  
OIPR-12025/11/0038/2122

Life is life - whether in a cat, or dog or man. There is no difference there between a cat and a man. The idea of difference is a human conception for man's own advantage.

SRI AUROBINDO



# Perfect Turkic Union

I still have vivid memories of my first trip to Turkey in 1993. After the Soviet Union's collapse two years previously, we Kyrgyz gained access to a world we had hitherto only imagined. We all had Turkish relatives somewhere in the West with whom we had lost contact. And there was a similar emotional reaction on the Turkish side: Turkey was the first state to recognise the independence of my country and the other Soviet Central Asian republics.

So, when I arrived at Atatürk airport in Istanbul, I approached ordinary Turks and tried to speak with them. To my disappointment, we didn't understand each other. I realised that although many elements of our respective languages were similar, differences in pronunciation and the many Persian, Arabic, and Latin words that had become a part of modern Turkish prevented me from communicating freely with the people I met. Despite a shared culture and traditions, history had separated Turkic-speaking people not only geographically and linguistically but also in essence.

But a gradual cultural rapprochement has taken place in the 30 years since the ex-Soviet Turkic states gained independence, and major powers are increasingly taking note. The latest step came at a summit in Istanbul in November, when the seven members of the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States - Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkey, and Uzbekistan, plus Hungary and Turkmenistan as observers - renamed themselves the Organisation of Turkic States.

The OTS spans 6,149 kilometers from Hungary to Kyrgyzstan and has a combined population of over 170 million and an aggregate GDP of over \$1.3 trillion. In Istanbul, the assembled leaders proclaimed that an alliance based on deep roots, kinship, brotherhood, and political solidarity would guide cooperation in economic development, trade, and investment. The countries pledged to pay special attention to strengthening their cultural and humanitarian ties.

It is no secret that Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan wants to turn Turkey into a pivotal regional player. To realise this goal, the country could pursue one of three models: pan-Islamism, neo-Ottomanism, or pan-Turkism. With pan-Islamism, the Turks have serious competitors in Saudi Arabia and Iran. Neo-Ottomanism is untenable, because Turkey has lost its influence in its former European and Asian territories. But when it comes to pan-Turkism, the country has no rivals. For example, Turkey recently cemented its special relationship with Azerbaijan by actively supporting it in its 2020 war with Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh.

So far, there is no sign that Turkey is seeking to dominate the Turkic world, and even if it wanted to, the Central Asian states have too much geopolitical room for manoeuvre. Because the region is now a playground for three global powers - Russia, China, and the United States - the Central Asians are able to play them off against each other.

All states build partnerships to promote their domestic and foreign priorities. And because the Central Asian countries value their multi-vector orientation, they will not put all of their diplomatic eggs in one basket. Instead, they will continue to cooperate with Russia for historical reasons, China for economic investment, and the US for security.

Erdoğan, a realist at heart, no doubt understands this, and will not seek to reorient the other Turkic countries exclusively in Turkey's direction. He is playing for more regional influence, not necessarily exclusive leadership. Russia seems to grasp this reality, and may even seek full OTS membership. Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has said previously that, "I see no problems with us joining this organisation." And strengthening cooperation between the ex-Soviet Turkic states and Turkey may also strengthen Turkey's bilateral relationship with Russia. Some even speculate that Turkey, instead of trying to join a European Union that has barred its door, will instead opt for the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union, joining Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan (Uzbekistan is an observer).

For its part, China has been studiously silent on the new Turkic union. But the Global Times recently published a commentary about the OTS that may well have expressed the Chinese government's fears. "This organisation," the newspaper said, "may trigger the rise of extreme nationalism, which could intensify ethnic conflicts and hit the regional stability and security."

Moreover, it added, "There are also groundless sayings that Uyghur people in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region are of the same ethnic group as Turks. [...] China should remain vigilant against the spread of pan-Turkism and pan-Islamism that the Organisation of Turkic States may bring about."

The plight of the Uyghur minority, a Turkic ethnic group in Xinjiang province, is undeniably a sensitive issue for China. But if the OTS serves to reinforce and deepen regional economic ties and thus strengthen Chinese President Xi Jinping's Belt and Road Initiative, it is likely to turn a blind eye to what China does in Xinjiang.

The West, meanwhile, has so far said little about the OTS. But with the Eurasian chessboard becoming increasingly pivotal as great-power competition heats up, it is unlikely to remain silent for long.

The writer is a former Prime Minister of Kyrgyzstan.

PROJECT SYNDICATE

## WISDOM CORNER

The same boiling water that softens the potato hardens the egg. It's what you're made of. Not the circumstances.

UNKNOWN

If we have the attitude that it's going to be a great day it usually is.

CATHERINE PULSIFER

You can either experience the pain of discipline or the pain of regret. The choice is yours.

UNKNOWN

## WORDSWORTH

### Carborexia

To exhibit carborexia is to have an extreme dark green attitude towards environmental issues. This can show itself as excessive recycling and in other ways, but in particular it refers to an obsessive desire to reduce one's personal carbon footprint. The term first appeared in an article in the New York Times October 17. The adjective is carborexic. It's the newest addition to the group of words based on anorexia, in full anorexia nervosa, the medical term for obsessive desire to lose weight. Other examples are bigorexia, a slang term for muscle dysmorphia, in which a false body image leads bodybuilders to work out too much; orthorexia, in which sufferers are obsessed with eating the right diet, in particular avoiding foods thought to be harmful to health; and tanorexia, a obsessive desire for a suntan. Others of lesser staying power that have appeared in recent years are yogarexia, excessive practice of yoga to lose weight, and drunkorexia, consuming alcohol in place of food as a way to keep thin. The implication of these various forms is that -orexia is turning into a suffix that refers to an obsessive-compulsive attitude often related to body image. The chances are that carborexia will not survive, unlike bigorexia and orthorexia.

## FOCUS RUSSIA

# PUTIN'S LAST GASP?

Today's Russia poses a clear and present danger to world peace. In July, President Vladimir Putin published a long article, "About the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians," effectively denying the legitimacy of Ukraine's existence as an independent nation-state. He also has pursued a policy of military mobilisation around Ukraine's border, first in April and even more intensively in recent weeks. Senior Ukrainian and US officials, including President Joe Biden, are warning that Russia may launch a major ground war against Ukraine in early 2022.



Anders Aslund

VARIOUS CAUSES OF RUSSIA'S AGGRESSIVENESS HAVE BEEN SUGGESTED, BUT THE MOST IMPORTANT ONE FOCUSES ON RUSSIAN DECLINE

Various causes of Russia's aggressiveness have been suggested, but the most important one focuses on Russian decline, and whether this has made the country more dangerous. Is Putin genuinely intent on attacking Ukraine? If so, what should Ukraine and the West do about it?

The decline is obvious. Russia's economy has been completely stagnant since 2014 (and mostly stagnant since 2009), and Putin has made clear that he has no interest in delivering economic growth or improved living standards. In US dollar terms, Russia's GDP fell from \$2.3 trillion in 2013 to \$1.5 trillion in 2020. Since Putin first invaded Ukraine and illegally annexed Crimea in 2014, Russian households' real (inflation-adjusted) disposable income has fallen by 10%.

With nothing good to say about the economy, Putin has touted Russia's large international currency reserves and minimal public debt. These statistics appear to support his pursuit of national "greatness," which has become synonymous with his own strong-man rule.

Putin thus aspires to create a modern-day Sparta - a state focused solely on its military prowess. Since Russia's August 2008 attack on Georgia, which revealed major military shortcomings, the Kremlin has undertaken substantial military modernisation, while much of the rest of Europe has continued its post-Cold War disarmament.

But Russia's relative military might probably has already peaked.



Although US intelligence agencies are warning that Russia is mobilising its ground forces for an attack on Ukraine, it is still tempting to think that Russian President Vladimir Putin would never actually follow through on such a risky move

According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Russian military expenditures reached \$62 billion in 2020, a year when the US military expenditures were \$778 billion and China's were \$252 billion. Even India surpassed Russia with its \$73 billion military budget.

Seeing the writing on the wall, Putin may now be thinking that if Russia is going to benefit from its military strength, it had better flex its muscles now, before the country's economic foundation erodes further. Moreover, this year's commodity price boom (particularly in energy and metals) has strengthened the Kremlin's incentive to strike while the iron is hot.

Like a cornered animal, declining powers are often the most dangerous ones. As Graham Allison of Harvard University reminds us in *Destined for War*, it was a declining power, Austria-Hungary that started World War I by declaring war on Serbia. In the current context, the Russians appear to be planning a tank and artillery campaign reminiscent of World War II; if so, their war machine is as outdated as Putin's view of Ukraine.

A contemporary, peace-loving Western reader might wonder why Putin would want to start a war. Surely he is familiar with

the legacy of Vyacheslav von Plehve, the Russian Interior Minister who, in 1904, famously argued that, "To avert a revolution, we need a small, victorious war!" Soon thereafter, von Plehve was assassinated by a revolutionary. Even so, the 1904-05 Russo-Japanese War ensued. That conflict was neither small nor victorious - and it ended up catalysing the revolution of 1905.

Putin is most likely focused more on his own small, successful wars in Georgia in 2008 and Crimea in 2014, which led to his highest approval ratings ever. Since then, his approval has reached new lows, and with public discontent building, he has ratcheted up political repression to a level not seen since his hero, the late Soviet leader Yuri Andropov, was in power (1982-84).

To justify his increasingly extreme repression, Putin has cranked up the Kremlin's propaganda machinery to Soviet levels. But anti-Western messaging will not persuade the population to support him. For that, he needs another highly successful war. And because Russia stands no chance in a big war against the whole West, it needs a much more limited conflict. Hence, Putin's choice of Ukraine, which he calls a Western vassal.

But a small, victorious war is

not possible in Ukraine, either. As Ukraine's new Defence Minister, Oleksiy Reznikov, recently pointed out:

"The human cost for Ukraine would be catastrophic, but Ukrainians would not mourn alone. Russia would also suffer massive losses. Images of coffins returning to Russia from the front lines in Ukraine would spread like a virus across social media and would soon prove too much for even the Kremlin censors to contain. A major war in Ukraine would plunge the whole of Europe into crisis."

US intelligence agencies warn that Russia is mobilising some 175,000 troops near its border with Ukraine. But a force of that size would not suffice. Ukraine's active military forces comprise 250,000 troops, many with ample battle experience, who would be defending their homeland against soldiers who may have no higher aim than collecting their salaries.

Russia's mistake in 1904 was that it did not take Japan seriously as a military power. When Japan emerged victorious, the Czar's power was fatally weakened, allowing for the revolution that followed. A 2022 Russo-Ukrainian war could prove to be an even bigger folly, one that Putin is unlikely to survive.

In the meantime, the Kremlin must not be allowed to benefit domestically from its saber-rattling. The West responded with only limited sanctions following Putin's previous aggression against Georgia and Ukraine. It must learn from those mistakes and stand fully with Ukraine. In addition to providing military supplies and training for Ukraine, the West should impose truly devastating sanctions against Russia. Biden and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken have promised as much. They and America's European allies now must follow through.

The writer, a senior fellow at the Stockholm Free World Forum, is the author of *Russia's Crony Capitalism: The Path from Market Economy to Kleptocracy*.

PROJECT SYNDICATE

## SPECTRUM EDUCATION

# Blended learning - the new normal

Implementation and refinement of digital learning have now become the new normal for academic institutions across the world and India cannot be an exception to this. During the lockdown, schools and colleges were closed leaving the students confined to their homes. The teaching community quickly transferred themselves from the traditional pattern to the online mode of imparting education, thereby kept the world moving ahead for the students. The past year witnessed many ups and downs and government is now gradually reopening schools and colleges in a phased manner to enable classroom teaching, which the Indian system is accustomed to.



Dr Bhaskar Nath Biswal

DESIGNING OF COURSES WITH PEDAGOGIC PRINCIPLES OF BOTH INTEGRATING TECHNOLOGY IN A WAY THAT SUPPORTS MEANINGFUL LEARNING IS VITAL

During the pandemic, the teaching community experienced the pros and cons of online education and now they want to harvest the merits of online teaching alongside traditional classroom teaching shaping the blended or hybrid learning system. Blended learning combines the best of traditional face-to-face classroom teaching and the high tech e-learning. Academic institutions all over the world are currently embracing blended learning.

The third wave of Covid-19 is looming over the country. Many students of specific classes are attending their academic institutions following all the Covid-19 protocols. However, a section of the students are not attending the classes fearing spread of the virus. Parents too are not in favour of their participation in the offline learning. On the other hand, students who are in remote areas and unable to afford the digital mode of teaching prefer to attend the physical classes. As there is no choice for them, they are ready to face the risk of infection to continue their studies.

Academic institutions across the world adopted blended learning before the unforeseen impact of the pandemic. Procter defined blended learning in 2003 as 'the effective combination of different modes of delivery, models of teaching and styles of learning'. In 2006, the term became more popular with the publication of the first 'Handbook of Blended Learning' by Bonk and Graham.

Studies have found that while online students performed a little better than students attending physical classes. On the other hand, students who attended blended classes - both online and physical

were found to have performed much better compared to those who attended only online classes.

Teachers are ready to continue with classroom teaching as it is their duty, but many of them are reluctant to accept blended learning. The traditional teaching methods which they have been following till now and mastered the technique are still their favourites. Online teaching was an interim solution for them during the lockdown period. The satisfaction of teaching a packed classroom with live interactions is immeasurable compared to online teaching. They are to be convinced that blended learning can be a long-term viable answer to the challenges and also more effective, if implemented properly.

The point to be taken care of is the designing of courses with pedagogic principles of both integrating technology in a way that supports meaningful learning. The resources available to the students need to be evaluated and, accordingly, learning activities with technology should be chosen in ways that allow every student to participate.

The major advantage of blended learning is that it provides students the process and learning materials in a suitable but flexible

way, and teachers' role is to lay the foundation on which students learn. Teachers provide the necessary topic and the required critical thinking skills, while the students practically apply them in different methods that help them to understand and retain the information. Students are able to vary their pace of learning, utilising as few or as many resources as necessary, selecting tasks and resources that suit them best.

To make the teachers aware of the concept of blended learning, one-day National Level E-Workshop on 'Blended Learning Approach: Prospects and Challenges' was organised by the Faculty of Commerce and Management, Rabindranath Tagore University. More than 100 teachers from across the nation participated in the workshop and learned the basics of a blended learning approach in the current era and how it can be applied in teaching pedagogy. More and more such programmes need to be conducted to convince the teaching community that blended learning is the best suitable way in the current situation to exploit the opportunities of online education combined with classroom teaching.

The writer teaches at Nourangpur College, Odisha.

### Putin's visit

Sir, Russian President Vladimir Putin's India visit should bolster bilateral ties. Foreign policy is a matter of costs and benefits; no two nations are permanent foes. New Delhi, of course, is not on a slippery slope as far as its military and trade ties with Moscow are concerned. An old, and traditional, connection cannot go haywire just like that, and that was exemplified in no uncertain terms by Putin's India visit. The 2+2 meeting between the Defence and Foreign Ministers of both countries was held in a conducive atmosphere. Putin hailing India as a "great power" should do wonders for the healthy bilateral relation. Military, space, power, energy and infrastructure sectors between India and Russia are all set to be further expanded in the aftermath of Putin's short, but crucial, visit. Of late, discordant notes on "Indo-Pacific Ocean" have emanated from Russia which feels "Asia-Pacific" would be a more appropriate word in tune with its warm relations with China. Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) and the role of Taliban in Afghanistan could not have escaped the attention of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Putin when they met for the 21st India-Russia summit. India's stated stand on all the three has been unambiguous. Putin kept away from G20 and rescheduled his Beijing visit amid the pandemic; but kept his word on attending the summit in India.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

### Successful initiative

Sir, India has announced that it would resume vaccine exports for four countries namely Myanmar, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Iran after a gap of eight months due to the emergence of the second wave of Covid-19. India successfully launched the Vaccine Maitri initiative in the month of January 2021, a major diplomatic effort to gift and supply made-in-India vaccines to low-income and developing countries globally. The aim of the global Covax scheme is to deliver two billion doses of Covid-19 vaccines, largely to the developing world, by the end of 2021. Bhutan and Maldives were the first countries to receive vaccines as a grant by India. Owing to the increased production, the government has decided to export the surplus to other nations. The Centre had already permitted the export of five crore doses of Covax, Serum Institute's Covid-19 vaccine, to Indonesia. So far, under the Maitri initiative, India has supplied vaccines to nearly 95 countries across the world. Thus, it paves a way for India to fulfill its commitment towards Covax in line with the motto 'Vasudhaiva kutumbam'.

Krishna Kumar Vepakomma, HYDERABAD

## 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

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# national

of the day quote

Deeply shocked by the tragic death of Chief of Defence Staff, General Bipin Rawat, his spouse Smt. Madhulika Rawat, senior officials of the armed forces & others in a helicopter crash in Coonoor, Tamil Nadu

The fear of red caps has deep-rooted in the minds of the BJP leaders. They are now beginning to feel the threat to their political existence. Their 'red light' is set to turn off and they realise this. Hence, they have been making baseless allegations against the SP

There is an attempt to project Mamata Banerjee as anti-Hindu. I want to tell the people of Goa that the statements of the BJP leaders calling Mamata Banerjee as anti-Hindu is baseless

SHORT TAKES

ED summons Jacqueline again

New Delhi: Bollywood actress Jacqueline Fernandez was summoned by the Enforcement Directorate again Thursday for questioning in connection with a Prevention of Money Laundering case lodged against multimillionaire conman Suresh Chandrasekhar. On Wednesday, Jacqueline appeared before the ED team to record her statement as witness in the case.

Maoists confine 15 villagers

Hyderabad: Around 10 to 15 villagers from Bhadrachalam-Kothagudem district of Telangana were allegedly confined by Maoists in their camps in bordering Chhattisgarh, police said Wednesday. The Maoists Tuesday "forcibly" took away some villagers from Cherla mandal to attend their meetings, they said. The leaders of banned Communist Party of India (Maoist) told tribals that those confined would be released only after they bring more people from other villages to attend the meetings, a release from police said.

Son kills father

Gurugram: A 26-year-old man along with his friend killed his 62-year-old father allegedly under the influence of alcohol in Gurugram's Mubarkpur village, the police said. The incident took place on the intervening night of Tuesday and Wednesday. The accused is yet to be arrested, the police added. Based on a complaint filed by the deceased's elder son Sandeep, a case of murder has been registered against the accused duo.



India is a maritime nation and our navy has a huge role to play in furtherance of our foreign policy and in protecting our national interests and commercial operations. It has been successfully safeguarding our extensive maritime interests with resolve and tenacity

RAM NATH KOVIND | PRESIDENT

## DELHI AIR QUALITY IMPROVES

The national capital's air quality improved Wednesday due to a favourable wind speed with the 24-hour average air quality index (AQI) reading 237 at 4 pm



# Chopper crashes have killed many VIPs



AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 8: From late Lok Sabha speaker GMC Balayogi to late Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y S Rajasekhara Reddy, helicopter crashes have killed a number of VIPs, mainly politicians, in the country in the last few decades. On Wednesday, Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Bipin Rawat, his wife, and 11 other people died in a chopper crash near Coonoor in Tamil Nadu. The last such incident that killed senior armed forces personnel occurred November 22, 1963. Lieutenant General Daulat Singh, Air Vice Marshal E W Pinto, Lieutenant General Bikram Singh, Major General K N D Nanavati, Brigadier S R Oberoi and Flight Lieutenant S S Sodhi were killed when a Chetak helicopter crashed near Poonch district in the Jammu region. When he was a lieutenant general, Rawat had a close shave when a Cheetah helicopter carrying him crashed seconds after taking off from the Rangapahar helipad in Nagaland's Dimapur district February 2, 2015. A number of politicians have been killed in chopper crashes. Reddy and four others were killed when their helicopter crashed on a hillock, about 49 miles (79 kilometres) east of Kurnool in Andhra Pradesh, more than an hour after it took off from Hyderabad September 2, 2009. Balayogi died March 3, 2002, when a private helicopter carrying him from Bhimavaram in West Godavari district crashed into a pond near Kaikalur in Krishna district of Andhra Pradesh. Meghalaya's Rural Development Minister Cyprian Sangma and nine others, who were heading from Guwahati to Shillong on a Pawan Hans helicopter, were killed when the chopper crashed near the Barapani lake, just 20 kilometres from the state capital, September 22, 2004. Arunachal Pradesh Education Minister Dera Natung was killed May 8, 2001, when a Pawan Hans helicopter carrying him from Itanagar to West Kameng crashed due to rough weather. On November 14, 1997, Minister of State for Defence N V N Somu was killed when an Indian Air Force (IAF) helicopter crashed over snow-capped mountains in Arunachal Pradesh.

## THE FATAL CHOPPER CRASH

- 8:47 am: Gen Bipin Rawat, his wife board flight at Delhi
- 11:34 am: Flight lands at Sullur air base, Coimbatore
- 11:48 am: MI 17 VS chopper with 14 onboard leaves for Wellington
- 12:22 pm: ATC contact lost; Chopper crashes in a forest area, 7 km from Coonoor
- 6:03 pm: Indian Air Force confirms Gen Rawat, wife among 13 killed in chopper crash

## SOME UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

One of the big questions that is facing the armed forces as well as the nation is -- how a helicopter carrying a very very important person - India's Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat -- crashed. "Comprehensive checks of the helicopter would have been done. There would have been a standby helicopter as well. The weather condition would have been checked. In this case, if the weather at Wellington was marginal, they may have decided to make an attempt and then call it off," said a former official of the Indian Air Force (IAF). The official said, technical snag or weather could have been the factor due to which crash happened. According to him, if all things were normal, the one possibility is that, as the chopper was close to Coonoor, it would have been flying low and or may be flew into the hill, to duck beneath the clouds. The chopper will have a black box and a study of that could throw more light on the cause of the accident.

# KEY MEETING ON NAGA PEACE TALKS TODAY

AGENCIES

Kohima, Dec 8: The all-important meeting of the Core Committee on the Naga political issue will be held here Thursday, sources in the know of things said Wednesday, adding Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma will attend the meeting. A senior official of the Nagaland government said that the Core Committee on the Naga political issue would discuss the peace talks between the Central government and the various Naga outfits including Isak-Muivah faction of the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (NSCN-IM). The core committee with Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio is the convener. Deputy Chief Minister Y. Patton and former Chief Minister TR Zeliang are co-conveners while Planning and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Neiba Kronu is the member-secretary. All the 60 MLAs of the state are members of the committee, formed on June 10 to pursue the Naga political issue (Naga peace talk). "The Core Committee is likely to urge the Centre to expedite the Naga peace talks at the earliest," the official said on condition of anonymity, refusing to provide details on the other issues likely to be discussed in the crucial meeting. The meeting would also be held in the backdrop of Nagaland government demanding withdrawal of the Armed Forces Special Power Act, 1958 (AFSPA) from the state. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had earlier said he and his Nagaland counterpart (Neiphiu Rio) would soon meet Union Home Minister Amit Shah to discuss the Naga political issue and the opposition-less United Democratic Alliance (UDA) government in Nagaland. Sarma, who is the convener of the BJP-led alliance of regional parties -- North East Democratic Alliance (NEDA), is already involved in the peace talks and attended meetings with the Central government's representative AK Mishra in September in Dimapur. To take forward the Naga peace process, the ruling and opposition parties in Nagaland few months back agreed to form an all-party government named the UDA headed by Rio.

## Thursdays meeting of the Core Committee on the Naga political issue assumes significance after the December 4 firing by the security forces that left 14 civilians dead and 30 others injured

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## CCS BRIEFED ABOUT CRASH

The Prime Minister-led Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) was briefed Wednesday about a military helicopter crash that led to the death of Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Bipin Rawat and other defence personnel near Coonoor in Tamil Nadu. Besides Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the meeting was attended by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Home Minister Amit Shah, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, official sources said. National Security Advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister PK Mishra and Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba also attended the meeting, in which the CCS members were briefed about the tragic incident. The sources said the top cabinet brass expressed condolences on the death of General Rawat. Separately, Chief of Army Staff General MM Naravane briefed the defence minister about the crash and related issues. The defence minister also visited General Rawat's residence and spoke to his daughter. President Ram Nath Kovind and Prime Minister Narendra Modi Wednesday expressed deep grief over the demise of Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Bipin Rawat, his wife and other military personnel, who were killed in a chopper crash in the Nilgiri Hills, Tamil Nadu.

## General Bipin Rawat, India's first Chief of Defence Staff, was a visionary who initiated far-reaching reforms in the military's higher defence organization

MANOJ MUKUND NARAVANE | INDIAN ARMY CHIEF GENERAL

## DEFIANT OPPN CONDEMNS GOVT ATTITUDE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 8: A defiant Opposition Wednesday said it has been forced by the government to protest against the "wrongful and undemocratic" suspension of 12 Rajya Sabha MPs, while asserting that it would not apologise as it has done no wrong. Opposition leaders accused the Centre of vilifying them so that they do not raise issues of public importance in Parliament. A number of Opposition MPs in the Rajya Sabha boycotted the house proceedings and sat on a dharna in front of Mahatma Gandhi's statue inside the Parliament complex in support of the suspended members. Some Lok Sabha members also joined them. The Congress accused the government of derailing democracy and deliberately muzzling the voice of the Opposition. Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge alleged that the government is functioning undemocratically and against the Constitution and giving sermons to the Opposition. "We want Parliament to function smoothly, but the government is forcing us to resort to disruptions against the illegal suspension of the 12 Opposition MPs of the Rajya Sabha, which is against the Constitution and against the rules. "The BJP government does not want us to raise issues of public importance and expose it, be it the issues of price rise, Pegasus (snooping row), the Nagaland violence, the petrol and diesel prices for farmers," he told reporters. "We are appealing to them again and again to revoke the suspensions, but the government is adamant and is asking us to apologise instead. "What for should we apologise? Have we done anything against the rules or the Constitution? No, we have not. None of the suspended members has been named, none of them had torn any file or alighted the table," Kharge said. The senior Congress leader also said the process of the suspensions was not in accordance with law or rules. "All of us are ready to work together and raise issues of public importance. But the government is not giving us an opportunity to raise the issues," he said.

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NCP President Sharad Pawar with Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut as Opposition party leaders join the protest to support the suspended Rajya Sabha MPs demanding revocation of their suspension



A woman poses in the backdrop of Taj Mahal in Agra

## ED raids PFI locations in Kerala

NEW DELHI: The Enforcement Directorate Wednesday raided at least four premises in Kerala linked to the Popular Front of India (PFI) as part of a money-laundering investigation against it, officials said. The searches were carried out in Ernakulam and a few other locations. Central paramilitary personnel escorted the ED teams during the raids. Sources said that "incriminating documents" were recovered by the agency as part of its probe that is related to various instances of funding of the Islamic organisation. Some people also gathered outside the premises that were being raided and raised slogans, they said.

## LS discusses climate change

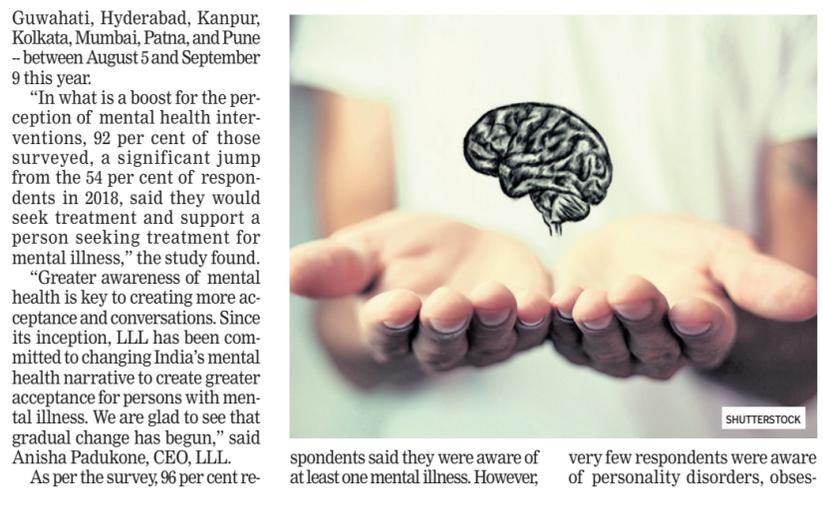
INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 8: The Lok Sabha Wednesday took up the discussion on climate change under Rule 193. Speaker On Birla said this is an important subject for all human beings, and it is a matter of great pride that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has advocated conservation of the climate on all international forums. Initiating the debate, DMK's Kanimozhi cited the excessive flooding in recent weeks in south India and how Chennai was badly affected again, as she stressed that the government needs to act on climate change mitigation and adaptation. BJP's Sanjay Jaiswal said that Prime Minister Modi has initiated a series of steps in this direction soon after he took over in 2014 and equally voiced his concerns on all international forums. However, Leader of Congress Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury said that the time has come when we need to think globally but act locally. India has the lowest rate of emission at five percent only compared to other countries of the world, but climate change was "the most under-reported failure of the Modi government".

# 'Indians' perception of mental health increased significantly'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 8: The perception of mental health among Indians has increased significantly, claimed a new survey, which found as many as 92 per cent of its respondents agreeing to seek treatment as opposed to 54 per cent in 2018. Conducted by the LiveLoveLaugh Foundation (LLL), a charitable trust founded by actor Deepika Padukone, the key objectives of the study were to understand status changes regarding the knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAPs) towards mental health since LLL's earlier study in 2018. For the research, LLL commissioned Satva Consulting to survey 3,497 respondents spread across nine cities -- Bangalore, Delhi,



Guwahati, Hyderabad, Kanpur, Kolkata, Mumbai, Patna, and Pune -- between August 5 and September 9 this year. "In what is a boost for the perception of mental health interventions, 92 per cent of those surveyed, a significant jump from the 54 per cent of respondents in 2018, said they would seek treatment and support a person seeking treatment for mental illness," the study found. "Greater awareness of mental health is key to creating more acceptance and conversations. Since its inception, LLL has been committed to changing India's mental health narrative to create greater acceptance for persons with mental illness. We are glad to see that gradual change has begun," said Anisha Padukone, CEO, LLL. As per the survey, 96 per cent respondents said they were aware of at least one mental illness. However, very few respondents were aware of personality disorders, obses-

## As per the survey, 96 per cent respondents said they were aware of at least one mental illness

sive compulsive disorder (OCD), schizophrenia, eating disorders, and child disorders such as Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and Autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Of the respondents who knew at least one mental illness, 77 per cent were aware of depression and 65 per cent recognised stress as a cause for mental illness. The survey also revealed a "dramatic shift in the perception of the competence of people with mental illness" with 65 per cent, more than double the 32 per cent from 2018, believing that individ-

uals with mental illness could hold jobs and lead stable, healthy lives. Further, 68 per cent respondents also said that individuals with mental illnesses can have meaningful relationships with friends, family and significant others. Dr Shyam Bhat, chairperson of LiveLoveLaugh, said that the study also showed major gaps in the understanding of conditions like schizophrenia and OCD, along with access to mental healthcare. "A reduction in the stigma surrounding mental health is very encouraging. People are becoming more knowledgeable about common mental illnesses like depression and anxiety. Improving access to mental healthcare is a critical need and should be the focus of any planning discussions about the subject at every level of governance," Bhat said in a statement.

# Maharashtra puts off civic polls

The Congress and the NCP demanded postponing the polls after the Supreme Court stayed OBC reservation in Maha local body elections

AGENCIES

**Mumbai, Dec 8:** The Maharashtra Cabinet has decided to postpone elections to 23 municipal corporations in the state at its weekly meeting Wednesday, said sources. Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, who underwent surgery last month, presided over the meeting.

The demand for postponing the polls has been made by parties like the Congress and the NCP, after the Supreme Court stayed OBC reservation in Maharashtra local body elections.

"Our party has already conveyed to the state government that polls for all municipal corporations be stayed till there is finality to the OBC quota issue," state Congress spokesperson Gopal Tiwari said. "The state cabinet may suggest to the State Election Commission (SEC) to postpone civic elections that are slated to be held next year," he added.

On Tuesday, the SEC stayed elections in seats reserved under the OBC quota. The elections to 344 of the 1,802 nagar panchayat seats and 23 of the 105 seats in Bhandara and Gondial Zilla Parishads, which were to go to the polls December 21, have been stayed.



Maharashtra has 27 municipal corporations. Of these, as many as 23 municipal corporations with over 650 OBC seats were slated to go to the polls next year. The process of holding the elections has already been started by the SEC. The civic bodies are also in the process of submitting the draft ward limitation plan to the SEC. The SEC has already announced that each ward will elect three corporators.

Following the Supreme Court order, NCP leader and state Health Minister Rajesh Tope in a letter to the Maharashtra government said, "Till there is a final decision

on the OBC quota, all civic elections in the state should be stayed."

The Health Minister added that "If we go as per the previously declared election schedule and reservation, it will not be right. Democracy will be in peril. Therefore, a new election schedule should be announced."

Echoing similar sentiments, state BJP chief Chandrakant Patil said, "Not holding elections to OBC seats and conducting the polls for other seats will be inappropriate. Instead, all elections should be stayed till the OBC quota issue is resolved."

Senior NCP leader Chaggaan Bhujbal, who is a minister in the Maha Vikas Aghadi government, said: "The OBCs comprise 54 per cent of the state population. Not having their representatives in local self-government bodies will be an injustice."

The Congress suggested that till there is a final outcome to the OBC quota issue in the Supreme Court, all political parties should provide 27 per cent reservation on their own during ticket distribution. "The BJP is playing politics over the issue. Instead of further rubbing salt into the wounds of the OBC community, it should reserve 27 per cent seats for the OBCs while preparing its candidate list and allow them to contest from general wards. All parties should follow a similar pattern and it will ensure justice to the OBC community," Tiwari said.

NCP MP Supriya Sule said, "The Centre has in its possession the empirical data required for OBC reservation. If a discussion is held in Parliament on this issue, we can get some sort of solution. The government can also come up with ordinances for Maratha, OBC and Dhargar reservations."

# NIA court sets bail conditions for Sudha Bharadwaj's release

THE COURT WEDNESDAY SAID THAT THE ACTIVIST WILL RESIDE IN THE JURISDICTION OF THE COURT IN MUMBAI WHILE ON BAIL

AGENCIES

**Mumbai, Dec 8:** Lawyer and activist Sudha Bharadwaj, arrested over three years and three months ago in the Elgar Parishad case, is likely to be released soon. On Wednesday, Bharadwaj was produced before the special court, a day after the Supreme Court dismissed an appeal by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) against her default bail granted by Bombay High Court last week. The High Court had directed the special court to set conditions for her release.

On her behalf, lawyer Yug Mohit Chaudhari submitted a plea seeking her release on cash bail for now with time to submit two or more sureties. The plea also sought to allow her to travel between Maharashtra, her residence in Haryana and Chhattisgarh where she is a practising lawyer in the High Court.

The NIA special prosecutor Prakash Shetty said that Bharadwaj can be allowed to be released on cash bail but opposed the other grounds including being allowed to leave Mumbai. Shetty



Police escort activist Sudha Bharadwaj towards a van as she leaves the jail to appear in a special NIA court, ahead of her release on bail in Mumbai, Wednesday

said that while there is no apprehension that Bharadwaj will abscond, there was an apprehension of evidence tampering evidence.

Special judge Dinesh E Kothalikar allowed her release on cash bail with a time of a month to submit sureties. The court said that Bharadwaj will have to re-

side within the jurisdiction of the court and cannot leave the city without its permission. The court also said that Bharadwaj cannot make any statement regarding the proceedings in the case or there shall not be any large gathering of visitors other than her relatives.

## CRY FOR EMPLOYMENT



Bihar Public Service Commission (BPSC) selected Assistant Engineers stage a protest demanding release appointment letter, outside Visvesvaraya Bhawan in Patna, Wednesday

# After Modi, Shah and Sonia, Yogi and Soren jabbed in Gaya!

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Patna, Dec 8:** After Arwal where Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Congress chief Sonia Gandhi, and actor Priyanka Chopra were listed as Covid vaccine beneficiaries, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, his Jharkhand counterpart Hemant Soren, former Bihar Chief Minister Rabri Devi, and state Health Minister Mangal Pandey were named as recipients of the first dose in Bihar's Gaya district.

The Health Department believes that some persons may be involved in forgery of data to defame the department. Following the discovery of these names, an FIR has been registered in Tekari police station on a written complaint by Gaya



Civil Surgeon Dr Arvind Kumar. "We have learnt that names of some politicians were included in the data of corona's first dose recipients in the Alipur health centre under Tekari police station in Gaya. Accordingly, we have registered FIR against three unknown persons. As three phone numbers are mentioned in the list of beneficiaries, we have included the numbers as well," the civil surgeon said. One of the numbers belongs to Jammu and Kashmir while two other numbers are found

switched off. "As per the preliminary investigation, the mobile number of ANM Usha Kumari was mentioned as user ID and password on the portal for Covid vaccination. That mobile number was used by some persons to upload names of prominent leaders of the country," he said. "We are taking help of cyber experts to identify accused," he added.

Similar mischief appeared in Arwal district Monday where names of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, Congress chief Sonia Gandhi, actor Priyanka Chopra and other were uploaded in the list of beneficiaries of second dose of the Covid vaccine in the common health centre of the district's Karpi block.

# Manjhi threatens to leave NDA

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Patna, Dec 8:** Hindustani Awam Morcha (HAM) president Jitan Ram Manjhi has "threatened" to withdraw support from the Nitish Kumar-led Bihar government if the Janata Dal-United (JD-U) leader does not sanction ₹1,000 crore for the development of the constituencies of the former Chief Minister's party.

The HAM has four seats in Bihar Assembly. It is one of the parties which are part of the coalition government of the NDA in the state.

HAM spokesperson Danish Rizwan, however, said the statement of his party's president is not "a threat". "He demanded the money for the development of his party's constituencies," Rizwan said.

Addressing a gathering at Mahua block in his own assembly constituency Imanganj in Gaya district, Manjhi said: "If Nitish Kumar does not give me ₹1000 crore for the development of party's constituencies in Bihar, we are free to take a decision. We are not in his party; we are in the coalition of this government... and we can make our party separate from this coalition."

"Nitish Kumar does not ignore me. He always listens to me and I am sure that he will sanction the said amount for the development of our constituencies," he added.

The support of Manjhi's party plays a key role in the government that has 127 members including 74 of the Bharatiya Janata Party, 45 of JD-U, four of HAM, three of the Vikassheel Insaan Party, and one Independent candidate.

If Manjhi withdraws support from the NDA government, it will stand at just one seat above the majority mark.

# HC quashes order staying bail granted to bookie Gaur

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Dec 8:** Observing that a Sessions Court judge cannot stay operation of his own order, the Bombay High Court Wednesday quashed and set aside a special court's order staying the bail granted to cricket bookie Naresh Gaur in the Antilia bomb scare case.

A single bench of Justice SK Shinde was hearing an application filed by Gaur, challenging the special NIA court's decision to stay the bail granted to him for 25 days.

## ANTILIA BOMB SCARE CASE

In the order, Justice Shinde noted that a sessions court judge does not have the power to stay his own order and that only the high court can stay the operation of a bail order where it deems necessary so as to prevent abuse of process of the court or to meet the ends of justice.

"In my view, the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) does not empower the Sessions Judge to stay the operation of his order of grant of bail. That even otherwise,

the learned Sessions Judge has not justified the order (granting stay) by recording the reasons in suspending his own order," Justice Shinde said.

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) had arrested Gaur in March this year, accusing him of being involved in the Antilia bomb scare case and in the killing of businessman Mansukh Hiran.

Antilia is the name of the multi-story residence of businessman

Mukesh Ambani in south Mumbai, near which an explosives-laden vehicle was found parked in February this year. A few days later, Hiran, who purportedly owned that vehicle, was found dead in a creek in Thane.

On November 20, a special NIA court granted bail to Gaur, observing that prima facie (on the face of it), he did not seem to be aware of the conspiracy.

Gaur was the first accused in the case to be granted bail. The special court, however, stayed its own

order for 25 days after the prosecution requested for the same, saying it wished to challenge the grant of bail before an appellate court. Gaur then approached the high court through his counsel Aniket Nikam, challenging the special court's stay on his bail order.

The accused in his plea said that the special court had granted him bail after observing that he did not have a role in the conspiracy to kill Hiran or the Antilia bomb scare case. The court, therefore, should not have stayed its order.



# Prez Kovind presents 'President's Standard' to 'Killers'

THE YEAR ALSO MARKS THE 50 YEARS SINCE THE INCEPTION OF THE MISSILE VESSEL SQUADRON, ALSO KNOWN AS THE 'KILLERS'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Dec 8:** President Ram Nath Kovind Wednesday awarded the 'President's Standard', a rare honour for its distinguished service, to the 22nd Missile Vessel Squadron, the unit that had bombed and sank Pakistan Navy's vessels in the 1971 war.

The President said the honour is the testimony to the services rendered by the past and present officers of the squadron.

The year also marks the 50 years since the inception of the Missile Vessel Squadron, also known as the 'Killers', which over the past five decades have maintained the capability of delivering a credible offensive punch from the sea.

"The timing of this award could not have been more befitting as our nation is celebrating 'Swarnim Vijay Varsh'. The presentation of the Standard is a testimony to the exceptional service rendered by



officers and sailors, past and present, of this squadron to our nation," President Kovind said at the ceremony.

Based in Mumbai, the Missile Vessel Squadron has participated in Operation Vijay, Operation Parakram and most recently, dur-

ing the heightened security state following the Pulwama attack in 2019 deployed within striking distance off the Pakistan coast.

The 22nd Missile Vessel Squadron was formally established at Mumbai in October 1991 with ten Veer Class and three Prabal Class missile

boats. However, the genesis of 'Killers' dates back to the year 1969, with the induction of OSA I Class missile boats from the erstwhile USSR to bolster the strength of the Indian Navy.

These missile boats were transported to India on heavy-lift merchant ships and commissioned in early 1971 at Kolkata. They were baptised by fire in the same year during the Indo-Pak war of 1971 where they played a decisive role in the outcome of the war.

On the intervening night of December 4-5, 1971, the youngest warriors of a young Indian Navy drew first blood when they launched a devastating offensive on the Pakistan Navy.

Indian Navy ships Nirghat, Nipat and Veer fired their Styx missiles and sank Pakistan Navy ships Khyber and Muhafiz. Code-named Op Trident, this operation is considered to be one of the most successful operations in modern naval

history, with no casualties being sustained by the Indian forces.

The Navy carried out another daring attack on the intervening night of December 8-9, when INS Vinash, along with two frigates, launched four Styx missiles, sinking the Pakistan Naval Fleet Tanker Dacca and inflicting substantial damage to Keamari Oil Storage Facility at Karachi.

The President said the 22nd Missile Vessel Squadron has undertaken a steady journey over the past five decades. Known for their speed and firepower, these ships had played a crucial role in the 1971 war, he noted.

Over the years, the 'Killers' squadron has constantly evolved through the induction of the Veer and Prabal class of ships, he said. The Prabal class ships are built in India. It showcases the Navy's commitment towards indigenisation and the vision of 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat'.

# Tejashwi to get married, RJD rank and file jubilant

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Patna, Dec 8:** Leaders and workers of the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) in Bihar had a big reason to celebrate Wednesday when news came in that Tejashwi Yadav, younger son and heir apparent of party supremo Lalu Prasad, is going to get married.

Yadav, who at 32 years is arguably the most eligible bachelor in the state's political circles, is scheduled to get engaged in Delhi Thursday. The identity of the bride-to-be remains a mystery since all members of the RJD chief's extended family are camping in Delhi for the 'sagaa'.

"We are exhilarated. Tejashwi is the only one left (among the nine children of Lalu-Rabri) to get married," said Bhai Virendra, the party's MLA and chief spokesperson in the state.

The Maner MLA expressed his

delight by distributing 'laddoos' for which the town and the eponymous Assembly segment have been famous.

He did not have much of a clue as regards the date of marriage or who the bride was, but asserted, "After the engagement, we look forward to a grand wedding. Entire Bihar would like to join its beloved leader in his moment of happiness." According to sources close to the family, the function is being kept low key at the instance of Yadav, the leader of the opposition in the state Assembly, who is wary of a large gathering at a time a fresh spurt in Covid cases is being feared.

Speculations are rife that the wedding may take place sooner rather than later since December 14 heralds 'kharmaas', a month-long period during which all auspicious functions are kept in abeyance.

# national

## of the day quote

People of Jammu and Kashmir cannot wait anymore as there is no alternative to the popular government. There can be no substitute to the elections and the way the government is dilly dallying the delimitation report, it appears they have no intention to hold polls in near future

**FAROOQ ABDULLAH** | FORMER JAMMU AND KASHMIR CM

At the peak of the pandemic, Congress leaders did nothing except misleading the people of the State

**JAI RAM THAKUR** | HIMACHAL PRADESH CHIEF MINISTER

I am telling this to all the states. In West Bengal, if a person is from the state, he/she must get priority during recruitment to state government jobs even if his/her mother tongue is not Bengali. I have no objection to that

**MAMATA BANERJEE** | WEST BENGAL CM

## SHORT TAKES

### AIADMK gears up for Urban polls

**Chennai:** The opposition AIADMK is gearing up for the urban body elections and has elected former Chief Ministers O Panneerselvam and Edappadi K. Palaniswami as the Coordinator and Co-Coordinator respectively. According to political observers, the decision would help the party function in a more coordinated manner. Organising secretary of the AIADMK, D Jayakumar, who was also a former Minister in Tamil Nadu government, while speaking to IANS said: "There were several people who had predicted that AIADMK will dissolve and disintegrate after the demise of Amma (J. Jayalalithaa).

### 4 of family found dead

**Mangalore:** Four members of a family were found dead in their house here Wednesday, police sources said. The deceased were identified as Nagesh Sheriguppi (30), his wife Vijayalakshmi (26) and their children Sapna (8) and Samarth (4). It is suspected that Nagesh killed his wife and two children before committing suicide. Nagesh was found hanging from the ceiling of the house, while others were poisoned to death, the sources said.

### AMU gets NAAC grading

**Aligarh:** Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) has been ranked 'A' with a Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) of 3.24 in the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) review held in the last week of November. The NAAC grading accorded to AMU which will be valid for five years is based on the accreditation as per the Revised Accreditation and Assessment Framework launched by the NAAC in July 2017, representing an explicit paradigm shift in the accreditation process and making it ICT enabled, objective, transparent, scalable and robust.

### Man ends life

**Dakshina Kannada (Karnataka):** In a disturbing incident, a man Wednesday ended his life after killing his wife and two children, leaving a death note which said he is doing this to prevent his family from getting converted to another religion. The incident took place in Mangaluru of Dakshina Kannada district of Karnataka.



Before you shake hands with people, ask them if they have taken a second dose?  
**PRAMOD SAWANT** | GOA CHIEF MINISTER

## COMBATING POLLUTION

To curb vehicular pollution, the Delhi government has impounded 1,754 vehicles, including diesel cars older than ten years or petrol cars over 15 years old



# Farmers get fresh proposal from govt

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 8:** A five-member committee constituted by the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) for dialogue with the government on the protesting farmers' pending demands Wednesday said it has received a fresh draft proposal from the Centre and is hopeful of a resolution.

The panel held a meeting in the national capital to discuss the government's fresh proposal. Talking to reporters after the committee's meeting here, farmer leader Yudhvir Singh said that they discussed a fresh proposal received from the Centre.

"Today, the five-member committee held a meeting. It was in continuation with yesterday's



Senior SKM leaders address a press conference on the future course of the farmers agitation at Singhu Border in New Delhi

meeting. We had asked some questions to the government. Today we

have received a revised draft from the government. We deliberated on the fresh proposal," Singh said.

He said discussions and conclusions reached in the panel will be communicated in the SKM's meeting, which was being held Wednesday evening.

"If the SKM approves, then we will move forward. If there are no agreements at the SKM meeting, then we will do further discussions," he said.

Asked about the content of the revised draft proposal of the government, Singh said: "We don't have much to say at this moment. We will not tell you anything till we discuss the matter in the SKM meeting."

He did not comment on why there was no direct meeting with

the government representative. Farmer leader Shiv Kumar Kakka said: "We are hopeful. Things are progressing and moving forward."

"A final call on the government's fresh proposal will be taken during the SKM meeting at the Singhu border," another farmer leader, Gurnam Singh Chaduni, said.

The SKM meeting at the Singhu border protest site Wednesday is likely to take a decision on whether protesting farmers should end their agitation following the government's fresh proposal.

On Tuesday, the SKM had demanded clarification on certain points in the government's proposal, including on the precondition set for the withdrawal of "fake" cases against farmers.

Farmers from Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh have been protesting at the borders of the national capital since November 26 last year to demand repeal of the three farm laws.

On November 29, a bill was passed in Parliament to repeal the three contentious farm laws, one of the main demands of the protesting farmers.

But the stalemate continues with the protesters demanding that the government fulfil their other demands that include a legal guarantee on MSP, withdrawal of cases against protesting farmers and compensation to families of those farmers who died during the protest.

## Meeting today to take decision on ending protest, says SKM

The Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) Wednesday said that a consensus has been reached over a revised draft proposal of the Centre on their pending demands and it will now meet on Thursday to decide the future course of the movement, even as its leaders demanded a formal communication on government letterhead. Farmer leader and SKM core committee member Gurnam Singh Chaduni said that the earlier draft from the central government on pending demands was not acceptable to them following which a fresh proposal was received from the Centre Wednesday. "We are in agreement with the government regarding our demands. We will decide about suspending the agitation after the meeting tomorrow. No decision has been taken yet on calling off agitation. Another meeting of SKM will be to be held tomorrow (Thursday) at 12 noon," Chaduni said at a press conference after a meeting of the SKM core committee. The SKM, which is spearheading the farmers' movement, said in a statement that a consensus has been achieved on the central government's draft regarding farmers' demands.

## Cabinet nod to extension of rural housing scheme for another 3 yrs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 8:** The Union Cabinet Wednesday approved the continuation of Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana (Rural) for another three years to provide financial assistance for the construction of the remaining 155.75 lakh houses under the scheme.

**As of November 29 this year, 1.65 crore PMAY-G houses have been constructed out of the total target of 2.95 crore**

Union Minister Anurag Thakur told reporters at a press briefing on decisions taken by the Union Cabinet that the scheme has been extended beyond March 2021, and till March 31, 2024.

The total target is to construct 2.95 crore 'pucca' houses. The total financial implication for construction of the remaining 155.75 lakh houses is ₹2,17,257 crore, with a central share of ₹1,25,106 crore and a state share of ₹73,475 crores for achieving cumulative targets of 2.95 crore houses in rural areas, an official statement later said.

"The continuation of the scheme till March 2024 will ensure that the remaining 155.75 lakh households within the overall target of 2.95 crore houses would be provided assistance for construction of pucca houses with basic amenities to achieve the objective of 'housing for all' in rural areas," the statement said.



A vendor carries vegetables on a foggy winter morning in Guwahati, Assam

# Principal, 14 teachers booked in gangrape case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jaipur, Dec 8:** Fifteen teachers, including the principal of a government school in Rajasthan's Alwar district, were booked after five girl students accused them of gang-rape.

Police, who conducted preliminary investigation at their village, suspect it to be a case of "revenge" and "witness harassment" by a former teacher of the school, who was arrested last December on charges of molesting three girl students.

They said the complainants have refused to undergo medical examination. "A Special Investigation Team (SIT) has been

formed to probe the matter thoroughly," Superintendent of Police, Bhiwadi, Ram Murthy Joshi said. He said the principal and 14 teachers, including five women, were booked under the Indian Penal Code and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO) after the girl students registered three FIRs at Mandhan police station in Bhiwadi, Alwar, on Tuesday night.

"Entire staff of the school has been booked in the FIRs. The family members of the girls have refused to get medical examinations conducted. Their statements will be recorded in the court and a thorough investigation will be held," Joshi said.



Speaking about the possibility of "witness harassment", he said, "I went to the village and spoke to the villagers and family members. It appears to be a case of witness harassment on the basis of primary investigation. "Last

# 3 LeT ultras killed in J&K encounter

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Srinagar, Dec 8:** Three Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) militants were killed in an encounter with security forces in Shopian district of Jammu and Kashmir Wednesday, police said.

Security forces launched a cordon and search operation in Chacki-Cholan village in Shopian following information about the presence of militants there, a police official said. He said the search operation turned into an encounter after militants opened fire on the security forces, who retaliated.

One ultra was killed in the early exchange of firing between the two sides, the official said. During the day-long gunbattle, two more militants were killed, he added. Police identified the slain ultras as Amir Hussain, Rayees Ahmad and Haseeb Yousuf.

A police spokesman said as per official records, all the three terrorists were part of groups involved in several terror crime cases, including attacks on security forces and civilians. "Pertinently, the killed terrorist, Amir Hussain, was active since September 2020 and involved in several terror crime cases including Case FIR No. 264/2021 of PS Shopian regarding attack on Police/SF at Village Rakhma on 01/10/2021," the spokesman said.

"He (Hussain) was also involved in luring gullible youth to join terror folds." "Terrorist Rayees Ahmad was active since June 2021 and involved in several terror crime cases including attack on Police/SF He was also involved in attack on Police/SF at Village Rakhma," the spokesman said.

"Terrorist Haseeb Yousuf was also involved in several terror crime



## 75 vehicles seized under UAPA Act in 2021: Police

Jammu and Kashmir Police Wednesday accorded sanction for the seizure of a truck used for terror activities, taking the number of such seizures under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) to 75 this year, police said. Five residential houses, six shops, land and cash have also been seized under the act till date, a police spokesperson said. Quoting an order issued by the police headquarters here, he said sanction was accorded for the seizure of a truck, which was used by its owner to give shelter to a terrorist who was arrested along with a huge quantity of explosive substances and other arms and ammunition from the vehicle on the outskirts of Srinagar recently.

cases in the areas of Kulgam," he said. The spokesman said incriminating material and arms and ammunition including one AK-74 rifle and two pistols were recovered from their possession.

## Parl gives nod to Dam Safety Bill

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 8:** Parliament Wednesday passed a bill that seeks to set up an institutional mechanism for the safety of specified dams in the country.

Rajya Sabha had passed The Dam Safety Bill December 2 with minor amendments, including changing the year in the title of the Bill from 2019 to 2021. Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat moved amendments to the Bill in Lok Sabha, which approved it with a voice vote.

The Bill provides for surveillance, inspection, operation and maintenance of the specified dams

for the prevention of dam failure-related disasters. It provides for an institutional mechanism to ensure a safe functioning of the dams.

A clause has been added to the bill to impose punishment on the states or people if the norms are not adhered to.

Earlier, Lok Sabha had passed the Bill August 2, 2019. The Bill also seeks to constitute National Committee on Dam Safety (NCDS), which is expected to work as a think-tank at the central level with the National Dam Safety Authority to monitor the implementation of the recommendations made by the NCDS.

# Water quality in lower stretches of Ganga alarming: Study

RAPID HUMAN PRESSURE AND ANTHROPOGENIC ACTIVITIES HAVE RESULTED IN RELEASE OF UNTREATED MUNICIPAL AND INDUSTRIAL SEWAGES ALONG WITH OTHER FORMS OF POLLUTANTS IN THE RIVER GANGA

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Dec 8:** Water quality in the lower stretches of the river Ganga was found to be alarming by a team of scientists, who developed the much-needed baseline of Water Quality Index (WQI) of the place.

They reported a continuous deterioration of water quality.

Rapid human pressure and anthropogenic activities have resulted in release of untreated municipal and industrial sewages along with other forms of pollutants in the River Ganga. "In particular, the lower stretches of the

River Ganga, close to the megapolis Kolkata, are heavily influenced by anthropogenic factors, mainly due to intense population pressure on both sides of the river banks. As a result, there has been a marked increase in discharge of untreated municipal and industrial sewages in the lower stretch of the Ganges with consequences for many unique and biodiversity ecosystems such as the Sundarbans mangrove and endangered charismatic species such as the Gangetic Dolphin," a statement from the Ministry of Science & Technology said quoting the study. The team led by Professor Punyasloke



Bhadury from the Integrative Taxonomy and Microbial Ecology Research Group (ITMERG) at IISER, Kolkata monitored nine

sites encompassing 59 stations along the 50 km stretch of the lower stretches of the River Ganga over two years to understand the

dynamics of key environmental variables, including forms of dissolved nitrogen along with biological proxies to assess the state of health of Ganga. The scientists have come up with the WQI of the place, a key metrics that helps understand the health and ecological consequences for the lower stretch of River Ganga, the statement said.

Department of Science and Technology (DST)-Water Technology Initiative has supported the group to undertake this key study published in the journal 'Environment Research Communications' recently.

Their study has shown that WQI

values of this stretch of the river was between 14-52 and was continuously deteriorating irrespective of the season of sampling. They have also identified the point source along with type of pollutants, in particular forms of nitrogen with effect on biota along the 50 km stretch that required immediate intervention for effective river basin management.

The findings from this study will be pivotal for long-term ecological health monitoring of the lower stretch of River Ganga, along with the integration of sensors and automation, the statement added.

# international

## of the day quote

Even amid #ViennaTalks, the US cannot stop imposing sanctions against Iran. The US fails to understand that 'maximum failure' and a diplomatic breakthrough are mutually exclusive  
**SAEED KHATIBZADEH** | SPOKESPERSON, FOREIGN MINISTRY, IRAN

We consider the situation as being serious. Both delta and omicron infections are increasing in Norway. The number of people who are admitted to hospitals and intensive care units is increasing  
**JONAS GAHR STOEER** | PRIME MINISTER, NORWAY

Although two doses of the vaccine may still offer protection against severe disease caused by the Omicron strain, it's clear from these preliminary data that protection is maximised with a third dose of our vaccine  
**ALBERT BOURLA** | CEO, PFIZER

## SHORT TAKES

### Amazon outage disrupts US biz

**Washington:** A major outage in Amazon's cloud computing network Tuesday severely disrupted services at a wide range of US companies for more than five hours, the latest sign of just how concentrated the business of keeping the internet running has become. The incident at Amazon Web Services mostly affected the eastern US, but still impacted everything from airline reservations and auto dealerships to payment apps and video streaming services to Amazon's own massive e-commerce operation.

### S Korea's daily cases cross 7K

**Seoul:** New coronavirus infections in South Korea exceeded 7,000 for the first time since the start of the pandemic Wednesday as hours-long lines snaked around testing stations in the capital Seoul amid a worsening virus crisis. More than 5,600 of the new 7,175 cases were reported in Seoul and the nearby metropolitan region, where a delta-driven surge has led to a shortage of hospital beds and strained an already depleted health care workforce.

### Chinese fert firm sues SL

**Beijing:** A Chinese firm has launched an international arbitration against Sri Lanka for rejecting a large consignment of its fertiliser after failing to reach a "constructive agreement" to resolve the issue, official media here reported on Wednesday, in a rare legal action against Beijing's close ally. A ship loaded with 20,000 tonnes of fertiliser from Shandong-based producer Seawin Biotech meant for export to Sri Lanka is on its way back after failing to reach any constructive agreement with Sri Lanka, despite relentless efforts to solve the dispute, state-run Global Times reported.

### France releases Saudi national

**Paris:** France released Wednesday the Saudi national arrested at a Paris airport over suspected links to the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi after officials concluded it was a case of mistaken identity. French law enforcement sources had identified the man in detention as Khaled Aedh Al-Otaibi, the same name as a former member of the Saudi Royal Guard listed in US and British sanctions documents and a UN-commissioned report as having been involved in Khashoggi's killing in Turkey.



But at this point, Israel needs to be more sensitive concerning its Palestinian policy. It needs to be sensitive about Jerusalem and al-Aqsa Mosque. As soon as we detect the sensitivities, we will do our best and take steps  
**RECEP TAYYIP ERDOGAN** | PRESIDENT, TURKEY

### JAPANESE TYCOON TAKES OFF FOR ISS

Fashion tycoon Yusaku Maezawa and producer Yoza Hirano, who plans to film his mission, rocketed to space in a Russian Soyuz spacecraft Wednesday as the first self-paying space tourists in more than a decade



## UKRAINE TENSIONS

# Kremlin: No date set for more talks

NO BREAKTHROUGH IN BIDEN-PUTIN TALKS



ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Moscow, Dec 8:** Russian President Vladimir Putin and US President Joe Biden agreed to appoint envoys to continue talks on security in Europe in light of escalating tensions over Russia's massing tens of thousands of troops near its border with Ukraine, but the Kremlin said Wednesday it was unclear when the talks would happen.

Biden and Putin spoke for over two hours during a video call Tuesday. The conversation seemed to have yielded little progress on Ukraine and the Russian troop buildup apart from the two leaders agreeing to name envoys to keep the discussion going.

"The presidents meant that it should happen rather promptly," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters in response to a question about the next steps for Washington and Moscow after the much-anticipated call between Putin and Biden.

Biden delivered a simple message to during his call with Putin invade Ukraine again and face painful sanctions that will do resounding harm to your economy. Putin had his own blunt take, according to foreign policy adviser Yuri Ushakov, and told the US president that "the Russian troops are on their own territory, and they don't threaten anyone."

The contact itself serves as deterrence and de-escalation. We appreciate the crucial diplomatic engagement of the US in efforts to bring Russia back to the table of negotiations  
**DMYTRO KULEBA** | FOREIGN MINISTER, UKRAINE

With no immediate breakthrough to ease tensions on the Ukraine question, the US emphasised a need for diplomacy and de-escalation, while issuing stern threats to Russia about the high costs of a military incursion.

"Biden told President Putin directly that if Russia further invades Ukraine, the United States and our European allies would respond with strong economic measures," US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said.

White House officials made clear that Biden is not interested in putting US troops in harm's way defending Ukraine.

Ushakov, Putin's foreign policy adviser, dismissed the sanctions threat, telling reporters following the presidents' video call "Sanctions aren't something new. They have been in place for a long time and will not have any effect."

## BEIJING WINTER OLYMPICS

# OZ, UK JOIN DIPLOMATIC BOYCOTT

REUTERS

**Sydney/ Beijing, Dec 8:** Australia and Britain will join the United States in a diplomatic boycott of the Winter Olympic Games in Beijing, their prime ministers said Wednesday, as other allies weighed similar moves to protest at China's human rights record.

The United States has said its government officials would boycott February's Beijing Olympics because of China's human rights atrocities, just weeks after talks aimed at easing tense relations between the world's two largest economies.

China said the United States would pay a price for its decision and warned of countermeasures in response, but gave no details.

Asked in parliament if his country would follow Washington, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said, "There will be effectively a diplomatic boycott of the Winter Olympics in Beijing, no ministers are expected to attend and no officials."

I do not think that sporting boycotts are sensible and that remains the policy of the government, he added, indicating that British athletes will still compete.

Earlier, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said its decision came because of Australia's struggles to re-open diplomatic channels with China to discuss alleged human rights abuses in the far western region of Xinjiang and Beijing's moves against Australian imports. Announcing the plans, Morrison said Beijing had not responded to several issues raised by Canberra, including the rights abuse accusations.

So it is not surprising therefore



Johnson said, "There will be effectively a diplomatic boycott of the Winter Olympics in Beijing, no ministers are expected to attend and no officials."

China has denied any wrongdoing in Xinjiang and said allegations are fabricated. Its foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said at a daily briefing in Beijing that Australian politicians were engaged in political posturing. Whether they come or not, nobody cares, he added.

## HUNTING HONEY



Devi Bahadur Nepali, an experienced honey hunter, climbs on a bamboo rope to harvest cliff honey in Dolakha, 115 miles east of Kathmandu, Nepal  
AP PHOTO

UK PM says ministers will 'effectively' boycott Beijing  
Australia says athletes will attend but not govt officials  
US bases action on China's human rights 'atrocities'  
Japan considering diplomatic boycott - media

that Australian government officials would not be going to China for those Games, Morrison told reporters in Sydney. Australian athletes will attend. China has denied any wrongdoing in Xinjiang and said allegations are fabricated. Its foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said at a daily briefing in Beijing that Australian politicians were engaged in political posturing. Whether they come or not, nobody cares, he added.

## Malaysian court upholds ex-PM's graft conviction

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Putrajaya (Malaysia), Dec 8:** Malaysia's Appeal Court Wednesday upheld the conviction and 12-year jail sentence of ex-Prime Minister Najib Razak linked to the massive looting of the 1MDB state investment fund that brought down his government in 2018.

Najib was found guilty by a high court in July 2020 of abuse of power, criminal breach of trust and money laundering for illegally receiving 42 million ringgit (\$9.9 million) from SRC International, a former unit of 1MDB. It was the first of several corruption trials against Najib that are linked to the 1MDB scandal, which sparked investigations in the US and several other countries.



Najib was found guilty by a high court in July 2020 of abuse of power, criminal breach of trust and money laundering

The ruling by the three-member appellate bench was delivered via a Zoom hearing after a defence lawyer was suspected to have contracted COVID-19.

"All in all, we find the conviction safe, said Appeal Court judge Abdul Karim Abdul Jilil. "We dismiss the appeal... And affirm the conviction by the High Court on all seven charges."

The appellate court approved the defence's request to stay the conviction pending a final appeal. Najib, 68, will remain out on bail until then.

Najib, who looked somber when the verdict was read out, told a virtual news conference later that he was disappointed in the outcome. He reiterated his innocence and said he would appeal to the Federal Court, the country's top court.

# Pfizer: Covid booster offers protection against Omicron



ASSOCIATED PRESS

**New York, Dec 8:** Pfizer said Wednesday that a booster dose of its COVID-19 vaccine may protect against the new omicron variant even though the initial two doses appear significantly less effective.

Pfizer and its partner BioNTech said lab tests showed a booster dose increased by 25-fold the level of so-called neutralising antibodies against omicron.

Pfizer announced the preliminary laboratory data in a press release and it hasn't yet undergone scientific review.

The companies already are working to create an omicron-specific vaccine in case it's needed.

Scientists have speculated that the high jump in antibodies that comes with a third dose of Covid-19 vaccines might be enough

**Pfizer and its partner BioNTech said lab tests showed a booster dose increased by 25-fold the level of so-called neutralising antibodies against Omicron**

to counter any decrease in effectiveness.

Antibody levels predict how well a vaccine may prevent infection with the coronavirus but they are just one layer of the immune system's defenses.

Pfizer said two doses of the vaccine may still induce protection against severe disease.

"Although two doses of the vaccine may still offer protection against severe disease caused by the Omicron strain, it's clear from these preliminary data that protection is maximized with a third dose of our vaccine," Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla said in a statement.

# Scholz takes over as German Chancellor

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Berlin, Dec 8:** Olaf Scholz became Germany's ninth post-World War II chancellor Wednesday, opening a new era for the European Union's most populous nation and largest economy after Angela Merkel's 16-year tenure.



We are venturing a new departure, one that takes up the major challenges of this decade and well beyond that  
**OLAF SCHOLZ** | CHANCELLOR OF GERMANY

Scholz's government takes office with high hopes of modernizing Germany and combating climate change but faces the immediate challenge of handling the country's toughest phase yet of the coronavirus pandemic.

Lawmakers voted by 395-303 to elect the center-left leader, with six abstentions — a comfortable majority, though short of the 416 seats his three-party coalition holds in the 736-seat lower house of parliament. That's not unusual when chancellors are elected, and some lawmakers were out sick or in quarantine.

Scholz was formally appointed by Germany's president, then returned to parliament to be sworn in. The new chancellor, who has no religious affiliation, omitted the optional phrase "so help me God" from his oath of office — as did Merkel's predecessor, Gerhard Schroeder. Merkel, who is no longer a member of parliament, looked on from the spectators' gallery as parliament voted. Lawmakers gave her a standing ovation as the session started.

Scholz, an unflappable and supremely self-confident figure who in the past has displayed an ability to put aside setbacks quickly, cracked a smile as he was elected and as he was formally appointed.

# Johnson apologises, orders probe into leaked 'party' video

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**London, Dec 8:** British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's aide resigned Wednesday after he was forced to "apologise unreservedly" and order an inquiry following a leaked internal Downing Street video which showed his press office staff joking about a so-called party in December last year, at a time when the UK was under strict lockdown rules to protect against Covid-19.

Soon after the apology in Parliament, the senior Downing Street aide at the centre of the leaked video read out a tearful resignation statement outside her home in London, saying she did not want to be a "distraction" in the government's fight against the pandemic.

"My remarks seemed to make light of the rules, rules that people were doing everything to obey. That was never my intention," said Allegra Stratton, who was Johnson's official spokesperson at the time the video was shot in December 2020.

"I will regret those remarks for the rest of my days and I offer my profound apologies to all of you at home for them. I understand the anger and frustration that people feel. To all of you who lost loved ones, who endured intolerable loneliness, and who struggled with your businesses, I am truly sorry. And this afternoon I am offering my resignation to the Prime Minister," she said.

Earlier, addressing the weekly Prime Minister's Questions session at the House of Commons, Johnson started off with an apology and announced an internal inquiry by his Cabinet Secretary to establish the full facts around the leaked video. He, however, maintained that no party actually took place that would have been in breach



of the lockdown rules at the time. I have been repeatedly assured since these allegations emerged that there was no party and that no Covid rules were broken... the Cabinet Secretary has been charged to es-

I was also furious and I apologise unreservedly for the offence it had caused up and down the country, and I apologise for the impression it gives  
**BORIS JOHNSON** | PRIME MINISTER, UK

ublish all the facts and it goes without saying that if those rules were broken then there will be disciplinary action for all those involved, he said. Johnson faced off with a furious Opposition Labour Party Leader, Sir Keir Starmer, who dismissed

his opening statement as raising more questions than answers. "Millions of people now think the Prime Minister was taking them for fools and they were lied to — they were right, weren't they?" he said.

Starmer accused the UK PM of pretending that the first he knew about a party, alleged to have taken place December 18 last year, was only as a result of the leaked video.

"The Prime Minister has been caught red-handed," he declared. The outrage followed a video acquired by ITV News channel which shows a recording of rehearsals for Downing Street's media briefings.

Senior press office staff blurred out in the video pose "mock" questions to Allegra Stratton, Johnson's official spokesperson at the time and since then his COP26 spokesperson.

## of the day quote

Going forward, I believe that the mobile industry will be vital in achieving India's vision to be a \$5 trillion economy by 2025, of which \$1 trillion will be the contribution from the digital economy

We want to benchmark our regulatory framework with the best in the world. We want industry to keep adding value to the people. So I request all of you through this conference, please come up with suggestions of the regulatory framework

The government initiatives and customer-friendly policies have continued to drive demand for the category, translating into positive sales momentum

## SHORT TAKES

### Airtel partners with Juniper

**Bangalore:** Juniper Networks Wednesday announced that it has been selected by Bharti Airtel (Airtel) to deliver network upgrades for the expansion of Airtel's nationwide broadband coverage across India. Airtel has expanded its Fibre-to-the-Home broadband coverage to over 430 towns with plans of covering 30 million households in over 2,000 cities. "In support of this increased nationwide penetration into many previously underserved cities and markets, the latest network upgrades build on the strong long-term relationship between Airtel and Juniper Networks," a statement said.

### Byju's acquires Austria's GeoGebra

**New Delhi:** Continuing its aggressive acquisition spree, Byju's Wednesday said it has acquired Austria-headquartered GeoGebra. The acquisition will help the homegrown edtech company - which has 115 million students on its learning platform - integrate GeoGebra's capabilities to enable the creation of new product offerings and learning formats to its existing mathematics portfolio, a statement said.

### Advent ties up Dixcy, Enamor

**New Delhi:** Advent International, a global private equity firm, announced the completion of the merger of its portfolio companies Dixcy Textiles Pvt Ltd and Gokaldas Intimatewear Pvt Ltd to create one of India's leading apparel and innerwear manufacturers. The new name of the merged entity is Modenk Lifestyle Pvt Ltd. Modenk will have a strong portfolio of 5 sub-brands, including Dixcy Scott Originals, Dixcy Scott Maximus, Josh by Dixcy Scott, Slimz and Enamor.

### BoB ED visits state

**Bhubaneswar:** The Executive Director of Bank of Baroda (BoB) Debadatta Chand made his maiden visit to Odisha. Chand visited various senior government officials including Chief Secretary, Additional Chief Secretary, Energy Secretary, Secretary Mission Shakti and Secretary Fisheries also discussed about involvement of BoB in various developmental growth in the state. Chand indicated that bank is keen to support in dairy development, financing to SHG and farmers for the agricultural growth.



**The roll out of 5G should be India's national priority. Jio has developed a 100 per cent home-grown and comprehensive 5G solution which is fully cloud native and digitally managed**

MUKESH AMBANI | CHAIRMAN AND MD, RIL

## META TO TRAIN ENTREPRENEURS, CREATORS

In a bid to scale its India operations, Meta (formerly Facebook), Wednesday unveiled its new office in Gurugram, which is said to be the company's first stand-alone office in Asia. The company also announced that it aims to train one crore small businesses and entrepreneurs and 2,50,000 creators in the next three years



# Banks can infuse capital in foreign arms sans nod

AT PRESENT, BANKS INCORPORATED IN INDIA CAN INFUSE CAPITAL IN THEIR OVERSEAS BRANCHES AND SUBSIDIARIES, RETAIN PROFITS IN THESE CENTRES AND REPATRIATE TRANSFER THE PROFITS WITH PRIOR APPROVAL OF THE RBI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Dec 8:** Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Wednesday said banks will be allowed to infuse capital in their overseas branches as well as repatriate profits without seeking its prior approval, subject to fulfilling of certain regulatory capital requirements.

"With a view to providing operational flexibility to banks, it has been decided that banks need not seek prior approval of the RBI if they meet the regulatory capital requirements," RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said while announcing the bi-monthly monetary policy.

The instructions in this regard are being issued separately, he added.

Extant regulatory instructions on classification and valuation of investment portfolio by scheduled commercial banks are largely based on a framework introduced in October 2000 drawing upon the then prevailing global standards and best practices.

In view of the subsequent significant developments in the global standards on classification, measurement and valuation of investments, the linkages with the capital adequacy framework as well as

progress in the domestic financial markets, there is a need to review and update these norms, he said.

As a step in this direction, a discussion paper covering all relevant aspects will be placed shortly on the RBI website for comments, he noted.

In view of the imminent discontinuance of LIBOR (The London Inter-Bank Offered Rate), Das said

any widely accepted interbank

rate or Alternative Reference Rate (ARR) applicable to the currency of borrowing may be used as a benchmark, post discontinuation.

Currently, the benchmark rate for Foreign Currency (FCY) External Commercial Borrowings (ECB)/Trade Credit (TC) is specified as six-month LIBOR rate or any other six-month interbank interest rate applicable to the currency of borrowing.



## RBI flags digital currency concerns

**Mumbai:** As the RBI moves ahead for the launch of the central bank digital currency (CBDC), Governor Shaktikanta Das Wednesday marked out cyber security and digital frauds as the main challenges in the new system. Deputy Governor T Rabi Sankar said there are two types of CBDCs - wholesale and retail - and a lot of work has happened in the former while the latter was termed as a complicated aspect which will take time. Das recalled that a few years ago, there were concerns with fake currency and similar aspects can play out with the launch of the CBDC, which need to be prevented by putting up the necessary firewalls and a robust security architecture. Earlier, Das had hinted about a soft launch for the CBDC by the end of December 2021.

**Main concern comes from the angle of cybersecurity and possibility of digital frauds. We have to be very careful about that**



SHAKTIKANTA DAS | GOV, RBI

## Soon, UPI payments can be done through feature phones

**Mumbai:** Crores of feature phone users will soon be able to make digital payments as the Reserve Bank Wednesday proposed to introduce UPI-based payment products for such handsets. Unified Payments Interface (UPI) has emerged as popular mode of payment through smart phones.

India has a large mobile phone

consumer base of about 118 crore users (TRAI, October 2021). Of this, a significant number of users are still on feature phones. As per Statista, July 2021, about 74 crore users have smart phones.

However, feature phone users have limited access to innovative payment products. Although such phones have NUUP (National

Unified USSD Platform) as an option for availing basic payment services using the short code of \*99#, the same has not picked up. To deepen financial penetration, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said it is important to bring feature phone users into the mainstream digital payments.

In the first cohort of RBI



Regulatory Sandbox, some innovators had successfully demonstrated their solutions for feature phone payments, under the theme of 'Retail Payments', he said.



Sensex skyrocketed 1,016 points while the Nifty rallied past the 17,400-mark Wednesday as easing concerns over the Omicron variant and RBI's accommodative policy stance galvanised investor sentiment

## Govt okays 23 projects

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 8:** Union power minister R K Singh has approved 23 new inter-state transmission system projects worth ₹15,893 crore.

The new inter-state transmission system (ISTS) projects comprise 13 projects with an estimated cost of ₹14,766 crore to be developed under Tariff Based Competitive Bidding (TBCB) and 10 projects with an estimated cost of ₹1,127 crore to be developed under Regulated Tariff Mechanism (RTM), a power ministry statement said.

It further said that the Union Minister of Power and New and Renewable Energy has approved new 23 ISTS projects with an estimated cost of ₹15,893 crore.

The new transmission projects would inter-alia facilitate evacuation system for 14 GW of renewable projects in Rajasthan, 4.5 GW of RE projects in Gujarat, 1 GW Neemuch Solar Park, Madhya



Pradesh and feeding areas near Akhnoor and Jammu region by establishing Siot Substation in Jammu.

These projects were approved after examining the recommendations of the National Committee on Transmission and in accordance with the National Tariff Policy 2016, notified by the central government, which provides that ISTS project is developed through TBCB, except for certain category projects, which are strategic, technical-upgradation or time-bound in nature, it stated.

## Big ticket projects boost mineral values: Experts

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 8:** The total value addition of iron ore in Odisha sees only a minor percentage of whole resource, in spite of possessing massive mineral and crude materials within the state, said the industry experts here.

"Despite Odisha being the leader in minerals, only a small portion of this resource provides added value within the state," said Trilok Tripathy, the industry expert and entrepreneur in steel business.

According to official sources, about 20% of the iron ore despatch was exported in FY20-21, moreover, with the remaining 41% going to companies within the state and the remaining 39% going to industry outside the state.

Tripathy said, "The value addition has plummeted in the state as most steel companies do not supply finished products extracted from iron ore. There is a need of quality value addition to the raw materials in the state to increase revenue."

"Big ticket projects, such as JSW's proposed integrated steel plant at Paradip, will undoubtedly raise the value of raw materials like iron ore. Entities like Rourkela

Steel Plant also increase the value addition from the iron ore," he added. JSW ISP has high potential to generate enormous job opportunities. The company has recently invited applications for employment from youth in Nuagaon, Gadakujang and Dhinika GP prior to project roll out.

"Such projects are not meant to benefit a few but are intended for the broader benefit of people of Jagatsinghpur and Odisha," said Amrut Das, Senior Advocate & President of Kujang Bar Association, Jagatsinghpur.

"Land acquisition is a major constrain for setting up a plant. The government should earmark areas for the development of such plants. The government should first acquire land from the local people and then hand it over to the company," said Ajit Kumar Pradhan, industry expert and General Secretary of Neelachal Executive Association.

"The state government should promote private players to develop areas for establishment of steel plants. Steel plants should be developed in the port areas which will become hassle free for export," added Pradhan.

## ICC inks pact with state govt, RITES

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 8:** Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC), signed two MoUs Wednesday, one with the state government and another with RITES Limited to undertake comprehensive report on transport logistics infrastructure of Odisha.

Under the MoUs, ICC will undertake study on logistics infrastructure that cover transport modes like road, rail, inland waterways, slurry transportation,

public transport, port and air connectivity. The dignitaries present during the MoUs signing were Asit Tripathy, Chairman, WODC and Principal Advisor to Chief Minister, Pradeep Kumar Jena, Development Commissioner-cum-Additional Chief Secretary, Planning and Convergence Department and Hemant Sharma, the Principal Secretary of Industries department.

The study will be carried out with an assessment of the existing infrastructure and future expansion



plans of the industries, the road and rail infrastructure of the state.

Sharma said, "We expect this report will suggest some actionable recommendation to government for improvement in transport infrastructure. The report will be presented in three months."

Asit Tripathy said, "We all know about the transport infrastructure constraint of the state. We keep on asking industries about the problem they are facing in regular interval and prepared action plan accordingly to solve the issue."

ICC Odisha State Council Chairman JB Pany said, "The study involves wide ranging consultation with various departments to collect and collate information and data to prepare the report."

## Auto retail sales remain in slow lane in Nov: FADA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 8:** Automobile retail sales in the country dropped by around 3 per cent in November as chip shortage and heavy rains in South India impacted sales across various segments, including passenger vehicles and two-wheelers, automobile dealers' body FADA said Wednesday.

The total registrations last month stood at 18,17,600 units, down 2.7 per cent from 18,68,068 units in November 2020.

Passenger vehicle sales last month stood at 2,40,234 units, a drop of 19.44 per cent from 2,98,213 units in the same period last year.

Similarly, two-wheeler sales last month dropped to 14,33,855 units as compared to 14,44,762 units in the year-ago period.

Tractor sales dropped to 45,629 units last month from 50,180 units in November 2020. Commercial vehicle and three-wheeler registrations, however, increased last month as compared to the year-ago period.

"Auto retail for the month of November continued to remain in the negative zone despite Diwali as well as marriage season in the same month. The unwanted rains in southern states further spoiled the party. Unless rural India starts showing signs of strength, overall



retails will continue to remain weak," FADA President Vinkesh Gulati said in a statement.

The passenger vehicle segment continues to face the brunt of semi-conductor shortage, he added.

ON YoY BASIS, TOTAL VEHICLE RETAILS DECREASES BY 2.70% WHEN COMPARED TO NOV '19, OVERALL RETAILS CONTINUE TO FALL BY 20% ON YoY BASIS, 3W AND CV WERE UP WHILE 2W, PV AND TRACTORS FELL BY 1%, 19% AND 9% RESPECTIVELY

In the two-wheeler segment, the overall buying sentiment remained low as marriage season also didn't help in revival, except in one or two states, he stated.

"Apart from this, crop loss due to incessant rains and flood in southern states, high acquisition

price as well as fuel costs kept the customers away. Further, there are no signs of an increase in inquiry levels which is a bigger cause of concern," Gulati noted.

FADA is hopeful that the chip shortage will ease in times to come and therefore reduce the waiting period of vehicles and help in increasing sales. On the two-wheeler front, we once again request all OEMs to announce attractive schemes, which can work as a stimulus for growth in sales, it said.

Overall, the industry body remains extremely cautious and hopes that India does not see a third wave with the new COVID variant, it added.

## Cook secretly signed deal with China: Report

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**San Francisco, Dec 8:** Apple CEO Tim Cook 'secretly' signed a deal estimated to be worth more than \$275 billion with Chinese officials allegedly promising Apple would do its part to develop China's economy and technological prowess through investments, business deals and worker training, The Information reported.

The Apple CEO reportedly forged the five-year agreement, which has not been previously reported, during the first of a series of in-person visits he made to the country in 2016 to quash a sudden burst of regulatory actions against Apple's business, according to internal Apple documents viewed by The Information.

Before the meetings, Apple executives were scrambling to salvage the company's relationship with Chinese officials, who believed the company wasn't contributing enough to the local economy, the documents show. Amid the government crackdown and the bad publicity that accompanied it, iPhone sales plummeted, the report said late Tuesday.

The report alleged that Cook personally lobbied officials in China over threats made against Apple Pay, iCloud and the App Store.

The report further alleged that in an aim to mollify authorities, Apple announced an investment of \$1 billion in Didi Chuxing.

# Cummins Pats off England

Starc set the tone with first-ball dismissal as Australia take command of the first Ashes Test after bowling the visitors out for a paltry 147 at the Gabba on a rain-hit Day 1

# England's call to drop Broad surprises many



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Brisbane, Dec 8:** Former England captain Michael Vaughan and spinner Phil Tufnell have been surprised by Joe Root's decision to drop pace bowler Stuart Broad from the Playing XI in the opening Ashes Test at The Gabba here Wednesday.

The 35-year-old Broad is the sixth-highest wicket-taker in the world with 524 wickets in Tests, while he ranks third among fast bowlers only behind compatriot James Anderson (632) and Australia's Glenn McGrath (563). Broad was in England's 12-member squad announced by skipper Root Tuesday but was dropped

Wednesday morning.

"A juicy pitch at the Gabba," Vaughan tweeted, adding, "It'd done more than I have ever seen in my time watching Ashes cricket. England's Test batting hasn't coped on these kind of pitches for a long time. I'm also staggered that there's no Broad on this kind of surface."

In fact, former Australian batter Mark Waugh was surprised with Root's decision to drop Broad for the Test and he tweeted his reply to Vaughan's comment, saying, "Shocked England batted first and left out both Anderson and Broad. (Man shrugging emoji)."

Former England left-arm spinner Tufnell said that he was surprised England missed the green Gabba pitch and the "massive clouds overhead" Wednesday morning and elected to bat.

"We're all talking about the pink-ball games but the one thing that England will have wanted is to come to an Australian ground and see the pitch covered in green grass and massive clouds overhead but they decided to bat," Tufnell told BBC's Test Match Special Wednesday. "I can't quite understand it. Australia's bowlers are professional and high-class. What they can do is run up and hit the top of off stump."

Tufnell said that England had gifted the initiative to the hosts by electing to bat. "All they (Australian quick bowlers) really had to do was run up and execute the biggest and simple skill they've got in their bowling armoury, which is hitting a good length outside off stump. Australia were enabled I'm afraid by England deciding to have a bat. I couldn't quite believe that, I'm sorry," he said.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Brisbane, Dec 8:** England captain Joe Root won the toss, opted to bat and lost opener Rory Burns on the very first delivery of the Ashes series, a late swinging yorker from Australia paceman Mitchell Starc (2/35).

It set the tone for the opening two sessions Wednesday, which were more like open season for Australia's pace bowling pack.

Pat Cummins (5/38) took the last three wickets and finished with a five-wicket haul in his first innings as Australia captain. The England innings finished with ominous thunder and lightning, starting to the west and south of the Gabba.

Heavy rain and bad light combined to prevent any further play on Day 1. The overcast conditions rapidly grew more gloomy for the visitors after Starc's early strike, with Josh



Hazlewood (2/42) dismissing Dawid Malan (6) and Root (0) as England slipped to 11/3 in the sixth over.

When Cummins took his first wicket — star all-rounder Ben Stokes (5) caught low at third slip by Marnus Labuschagne four balls after the first drinks break — England was reeling at 29/4.

Opener Haseeb Hameed defied the attack and helped England to 59/4 at lunch, but was out for 25 early in the second session when he edged a

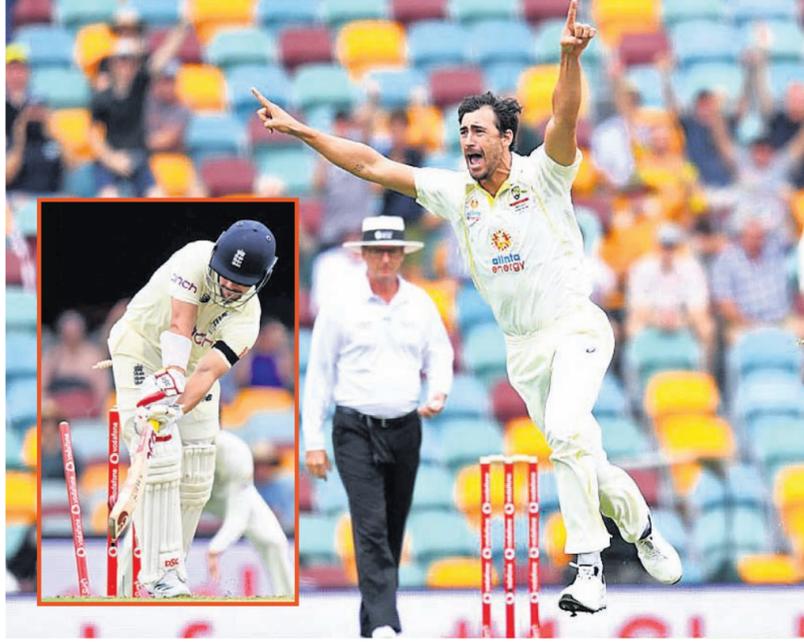
Cummins' delivery that moved away off the seam and was caught by Steve Smith at second slip.

Ollie Pope (35) and Jos Buttler (39) settled the innings, combining in a 50-run stand to stanch the flow of wickets before both were out in their 30s.

Buttler played an expansive drive for his fifth boundary to reach 39 but was

out next ball from Starc, edging behind to Alex Carey as England slumped to 112/6. England added six runs before Pope topped an attempted hook and was caught by Hazlewood diving forward near the fine-leg boundary, giving all-rounder Cameron Green (1/6) his first Test wicket.

Cummins had Ollie Robinson (0) caught behind and Mark Wood (8) caught at



**START WITH A BANG:** Mitchell Starc wheels away in celebration after dismissing Rory Burns on the first ball of the 2021-22 Ashes series at the Gabba, Wednesday

**ENGLAND HAVEN'T WON A TEST IN AUSTRALIA SINCE WINNING THE ASHES HERE IN 2010-11, AND HAVEN'T WON A TEST AT THE GABBA SINCE 1986**

short-leg and the stadium lights were turned on before he had Chris Woakes (21) caught in the deep by Hazlewood to finish off the innings.

Brief scores: England 147 (Jos Buttler 39, Ollie Pope 35, Haseeb Hameed 25, Chris Woakes 21; Pat Cummins 5/38, Mitchell Starc 2/35, Josh Hazlewood 2/42, Cameron Green 1/6) v Australia.

## NUMBERS GAME

**2** Pat Cummins became only the second Australian to claim a 5-wicket haul on captaincy debut in men's Tests. George Giffen picked up 6/155 in England's second innings in his maiden Test as captain in 1894 in Melbourne. Overall, Cummins is the 14th player to bag a fiver on men's Test captaincy debut

**1982** Cummins is the first captain to claim a fiver in the men's Ashes since Bob Willis' 5/66 at the Gabba against the hosts in 1982. Cummins is also the first Australian skipper with a fiver in the Ashes since Richie Benaud's 6-wicket haul in 1962, also at the Gabba

**2** Instances of a wicket falling on the very first ball of a men's Ashes Test series (where data is available), including Mitchell Starc casting Rory Burns Wednesday. The other occasion was back in 1936 at the Gabba, when England opener Stan Worthington was dismissed caught behind off the bowling of Ernie McCormick

**6** Number of times England have lost a wicket on the first ball of a Test (where data is available). Before Burns, Andrew Strauss was the last batter to be dismissed on the first ball of a Test, caught in the slips off Dale Steyn in 2010 in Johannesburg

**147** This is the fifth-lowest all-out total for England in the very first innings of a Test series in the last 100 years (excluding one-off Tests). Only once they bagged a lower total after electing to bat in this period — 134 against Australia in 1958 in Brisbane

**3** All-out totals lower than England's 147 in the first innings of an Ashes series in the past 100 years. Australia were bowled out for 116 at the Gabba in 1968 and 118 at Edgbaston in 1997, while England posted only 134 at the Gabba in 1958

**7** Number of all-out totals of less than 150 for England in Tests this year. Only two teams got all out under 150 more often in a calendar year — Australia in 1888 and West Indies in 2000, both eight times

**6** Number of ducks for Burns in Tests in 2021, the most for an opening batter in a calendar year. India's Pankaj Roy (in 1952) and England's Michael Atherton (in 1998) had five ducks each

**4** Ducks as a captain for Joe Root in the Ashes, the joint-most for England alongside Mike Brearley. Don Bradman, with five ducks, holds the unwanted record for most ducks as a captain in the Ashes

# Rohit named new ODI captain

Mumbaikar also replaces his statemate Rahane as Virat's deputy in Tests as squad announced for South Africa series

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 8:** The Indian team's tour of South Africa will be all about Rohit Sharma's ascendancy as the national white-ball skipper along with the additional responsibility of being the vice-captain of the Test team that will take on the Proteas in a three-match series starting December 26.

That Ajinkya Rahane will be losing vice-captaincy was clear after the tour of England and once he was dropped from the playing XI against New Zealand in his hometown Mumbai on pretext of a mysterious hamstring niggle, the writing was on the wall.

Rahane's position in this team had become untenable for the longest time as his only significant contribution in the last two years was a hundred in India's victory against Australia in Melbourne during the Boxing Day Test.

The series which he won as captain should have marked his return to form but he endured a rather massive slump in form with his average in 2021 across 12 Tests being below 20.

One of the reasons that Rahane



has been able to keep his place is because new coach Rahul Dravid would like to give him a long rope before moving on and South Africa series could well be his last at the international level if he doesn't perform as per expectations.

"One of the reasons for Rahane being able to keep his place is the fact that even Cheteshwar Pujara and Virat Kohli are not scoring runs for a long time. It would be grossly unfair to just target one player when two others have also been in equally horrendous form.

"Obviously Kohli is in a different league but for Rahane and Pujara, South Africa will be their last chance," a senior BCCI official told this agency on conditions of anonymity.

He said that Rahane is very unlikely to start in the first Test at the Centurion from December 26. The other reason that helped him retain his spot was Shubman Gill's shin injury that has resurfaced after it made him miss the England away series post the World Test Championship.

### JADEJA WILL BE MISSED

If there is one thing that India will miss in South Africa, that's the absence of Ravindra Jadeja the all-rounder, who lends that balance at No.7 in the away Test matches with a left-handed batting option. Jadeja is out with a right forearm injury. Worse, even his like for like replacement Axar Patel has a similar injury and is out of the tour.

### THE SQUAD

Virat Kohli (C), Rohit Sharma (vc), KL Rahul, Mayank Agarwal, Cheteshwar Pujara, Ajinkya Rahane, Shreyas Iyer, Hanuma Vihari, Rishabh Pant (wk), Wriddhiman Saha (wk), R Ashwin, Jayant Yadav, Ishant Sharma, Mohd. Shami, Umesh Yadav, Jasprit Bumrah, Shardul Thakur & Md. Siraj; **Standby Players:** Navdeep Saini, Saurabh Kumar, Deepak Chahar & Arzan Nagwaswalla.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Porto, Dec 8:** Three red cards, on-field brawls, countless chances and a flurry of late goals. A wild, win-or-bust match in the Champions League between Porto and Atletico Madrid had it all.

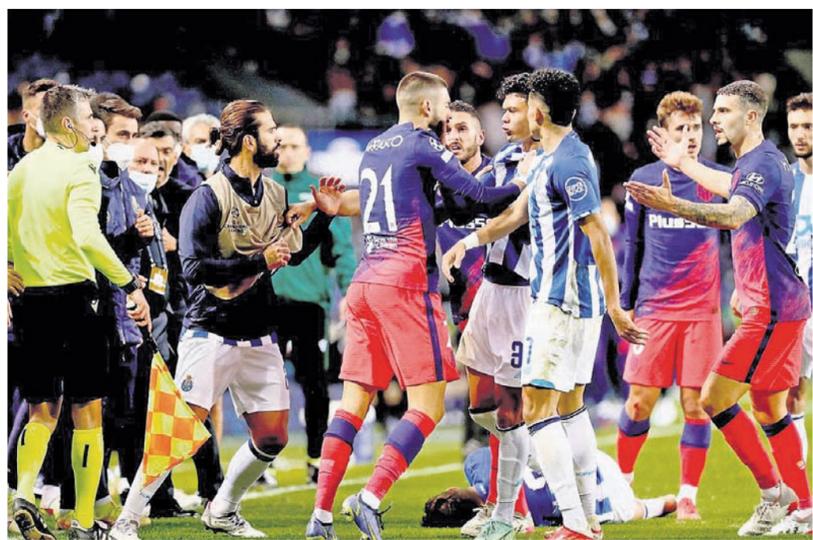
In the end, it was Atletico celebrating a place in the last 16 of Europe's top club competition with a 3-1 win Tuesday, emerging from a three-way fight for qualification in the final round of group games.

On a night when Ajax striker Sebastian Haller became an unlikely history-maker, Real Madrid finished top of their group, and Kylian Mbappe and Lionel Messi ran amok for PSG, much of the focus on the next-to-last night of group play was on the Group B finale as three teams vied to be runner-up to Liverpool.

Porto started the night in second place, a point ahead of Atletico and AC Milan, which hosted Liverpool. Milan wound up losing 1-2, meaning the winner of the all-Iberian match at the Estadio do Dragao would advance.

It turned ugly, unsurprisingly given the stakes, with Porto having two players red-carded after Atletico had Yannick Carrasco sent off for swinging his arm around an opponent's neck.

Atletico was outplayed for much



**FIERCE SCENES:** Atletico Madrid's Yannick Carrasco (No.21) involves in a fight with a Porto player before being sent off during his side's win, Tuesday

of the game but was opportunistic in front of goal, with Antoine Griezmann scoring the 56th-minute opener at a corner and both Angel Correa and Rodrigo De Paul adding breakaway goals after the 90th minute. It sparked wild celebrations on the touchline by Atletico's

famously passionate coach, Diego Simeone, and striker Luis Suarez, who was forced off injured after 13 minutes.

Porto earned the consolation of a third-place finish and a spot in the Europa League knockout playoffs. With their victory, Liverpool became the first English team to win all six of their group games in a single Champions League campaign.

### STROLL FOR PSG

Messi and Mbappe had some fun in PSG's group closer. It was anything but fun for Manchester City. City manager Pep Guardiola selected a strong lineup for the 1-2 loss at Leipzig despite his team being guaranteed as the Group A winner and in the middle of a busy domestic schedule. Leipzig finished third to stay in European competition.

It was a stroll for second-place PSG in a 4-1 win over Club Brugge, with Mbappe scoring twice inside the first seven minutes and — at 22 years and 352 days — becoming the youngest player to reach 30 goals in the competition.

Messi added his own double, the first a curler from outside the area

and the second a penalty, and has now scored against a record-extending 38 different teams in the Champions League.

### HISTORIC HALLER

Haller's first season in the Champions League has been a historic one. By converting an eighth-minute penalty for Ajax in its 4-2 win over Sporting, the Ivory Coast striker became only the second player — after Cristiano Ronaldo in 2017-18 — to score in all six matches of a single group stage. He finished with 10 goals in total.

Ajax was already sure of winning Group C and finished on a maximum 18 points. Sporting had already secured second place.

Indeed, with Borussia Dortmund certain of third place before their 5-0 thrashing of 10-man Besiktas, the last round of matches in the group didn't affect the standings.

### REAL IN FIRST

In a match that determined which team finished top of Group D, Real Madrid beat Inter Milan 2-0. Toni Kroos and Marco Asensio, with a brilliant curler that flew in off the far post, scored the goals for the 13-time European champions.

# WEIGHTLIFTER JHILI WINS SILVER AT CWC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Tashkent, Dec 8:** Odisha girl Jhilli Dalabehera won a silver medal in women's 49kg category in the Commonwealth Weightlifting Championships (CWC) here, Wednesday.

Dalabehera lifted a total of 167kg (73+94) to finish behind Peter Stella Kingsley of Nigeria who had a total effort of 168kg (72+96).

Jhilli was competing in the weight category of Olympic silver medalist Mirabai Chanu who had pulled out of the Commonwealth

Championships as well as the World Championships which are being held simultaneously in Tashkent. The Commonwealth Weightlifting Championships also served as qualifying event of the 2022 CWG in Birmingham.

The gold medalists in each weight category in the Commonwealth Weightlifting Championships directly qualify for the 2022 and the rest will qualify through Commonwealth rankings. Chanu can still qualify as she is currently number one in Commonwealth ranking.

# Odisha to host Para Badminton National C'ships

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 8:** More than 500 para shuttlers, including Tokyo Paralympics gold medalist Pramod Bhagat, will be vying for top honours at the Para Badminton National Championships scheduled to be played in Bhubaneswar, Odisha December 24-26.

Bhagat, who won India's first-ever badminton gold at the Paralympics and was also awarded the Major Dhyani Chand Khel Ratna Award, will be the star attraction in the event.



**DEADLY COMBO:** Lionel Messi and Kylian Mbappe celebrate after a goal against Club Brugge at the Parc des Princes