



IT'S OFFICIAL

Actor Sushmita Sen has revealed that her relationship with beau Rohman Shawl has ended a long time back

LEISURE P2



MONUMENT REMOVED

A monument at a Hong Kong university best remembered for Tiananmen Square massacre was removed Thursday

INTERNATIONAL P9



LIVERPOOL ADVANCE

Goals from Takumi Minamino and Diogo Jota help Liverpool enter the League Cup semifinals

SPORTS P12

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Forget dreaming of Goa, Kerala or Northeast, sister! Come, live with us in cow belt... life will be safe and peaceful

Omicron cases in state rise to 4

Bhubaneswar: Two more persons in Odisha have tested positive for the Omicron variant of Covid-19 officials said Thursday. The total tally of Omicron infected persons in the state now stands at four with the addition of the new cases. The two infected are girls aged 15 years and 11 years respectively and have returned from 'non at-risk' country Nigeria. They are undergoing treatment at a private hospital here, informed Institute of Life Science (ILS) Director Ajay Parida. The two girls had returned December 13 with their parents to this city. Earlier December 21, the state reported its first two Omicron cases, with both the infected having travel history to Nigeria and Qatar. Both the infectees were male aged about 41 years and 43 years and hailing from Jagatsingpur and Khurda districts. P4



9 students expelled from SUIIT hostel

Burla: A disciplinary committee, formed to probe ragging of a second year B-Tech student at the Sambalpur University Institute of Information Technology (SUIIT) here, ordered Thursday nine students to vacate the hostel for their involvement in the incident. While four of the students will not be allowed to stay in the hostel for one year, the five others have been banned for six months. "Considering the gravity of the incident, the disciplinary committee ordered the nine students to vacate the hostel for ragging a contemporary on a number of occasions," SUIIT director BK Mohanty informed. He also said the situation will be reviewed after six months. P5

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Cuttack-Sambalpur NH-55 to be ready by June

The project scheduled to be completed by September 2020 got delayed due to a number of reasons including the outbreak of Covid-19 and mismanagement

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 23: The construction work for the Sambalpur-Cuttack section of National Highway-55 (NH-55) will be completed by June 2022, Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari recently informed during the Winter Session of the Parliament.

As per the statement given by Gadkari, the four-laning work of the Sambalpur-Cuttack segment of NH-55 has been divided into three phases. They are Cuttack-Angul (phase-I), Cuttack-Angul (phase-II) and Angul-Sambalpur (phase-III). At present 53 per cent, 52 per



cent and 70 per cent of the work in the three phases has been completed. The remainder of the construction is likely to be completed by June 30, 2022, the minister said. As the Cuttack-Angul stretch is quite lengthy, construction has been divided into two phases. The delay in completion of the

project has been due to a number of reasons. Among them are disbursement of land, clearance of forests and removal of government/religious structures. The minister informed that the outbreak of Covid-19 was also responsible in delaying the project. He also blamed a section of the

contractors entrusted with the construction work for holding up the project due to poor financial management.

The original project cost of the entire Cuttack-Sambalpur NH stretch is around Rs 3,500 crore. Out of that, the cost for the Cuttack-Angul (first phase) was earmarked at ₹999 crore, Cuttack-Angul (second phase) at ₹991 crore and Angul-Sambalpur at Rs 2,491 crore.

The Union Minister further informed that 29 projects worth ₹9,292 crore are included in the current year annual plan (2021-22) for Odisha.

The projects would be taken up depending on the completion of pre-construction activities like preparation of DPRs, bidding, land acquisition and other clearances, Gadkari said. Sources said the foundation for the NH-55 project was laid in December 2018 and was to be completed by September 2020.

BUS OWNERS THREATEN STRIKE

Bhubaneswar: The Odisha Bus Owners' Association has warned that it will suspend its services in various routes in the state from January 1, 2022, if its demands are not met. As a precursor, the association suspended Thursday bus services between the state capital and Sambalpur from 6.00am till midnight. "We have been demanding the repairing of NH-55 as vehicles are getting damaged due to poor road conditions. Also buses plying on the route are not reaching the destinations on schedule because of the dilapidated state of roads," said association secretary Ajay Barik. "If our demands are not met, bus services in the routes will be stopped for indefinite period from January 1, 2022," he added. The warning came on a day when Union Minister Nitin Gadkari informed that the stretch between Cuttack and Sambalpur on NH-55 will be completed by June 2022.

11K teachers to be appointed in Odisha schools



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 23: The Odisha government has initiated the process for the appointment of 11,403 teachers in state-run high schools. The recruitment process will be completed by April 2022, officials said Thursday.

This year, in the first phase, advertisements for 4,619 Hindi, Sanskrit and Sports teachers were published August 13. In the second phase, another notification was released August 28 for filling up 6,720 posts of TGT, Arts and Telugu teachers.

Recently the government has appointed 6,131 school teachers on a single day. As the concerned department was finding it difficult to get the required number of qualified candidates for the posts, the examinations and rules were amended to attract more candidates to participate in the recruitment process, official sources said.

Besides, the Odisha government has also sanctioned posts for 3,462 teachers keeping in view the high number of students. It is committed to complete the recruitment process for all the teachers within four months. The aim is to transform the education system in Odisha to a student friendly one and modernise it, another official informed.

Earlier while appointing more than 6,000 teachers a few days back, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had harped on the important role that teachers can play in the development of the nation.

"Education is the collective aspiration of the masses. Teachers are the soul of the education system and students are the symbol of infinite possibilities," said Patnaik. He also said that schools in the state are undergoing a major transformation under the 5T programme.

Patnaik had also pointed out teachers make a significant contribution to the development of society. So they should be given their dues also.

1 dead, 6 injured in Ludhiana court blast

Coming within 3 months of the shootout at Rohini court, the explosion once again exposed the lack of security in judicial buildings in India

AGENCIES

Ludhiana, Dec 23: One person was killed and six others injured when a bomb exploded in the district court complex here Thursday afternoon. The condition of some of the injured are stated to be critical. Sources said that the blast took place around 12.20pm in a bathroom on the second floor of the building. The intensity of the explosion damaged the walls of the bathroom and shattered the glass of nearby windows.

The Ministry of Home Affairs has sought a report from the Punjab government on the explosion, sources informed. Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi said some anti-national and anti-state forces were trying to commit such disgusting acts ahead of the Assembly elections in Punjab. He asserted that all the culprits would be

brought to book quickly and none will be spared.

Ludhiana Police Commissioner Gurpreet Singh Bhullar informed that the explosion was heard near the Record Room on the second floor of the court complex. "The bomb disposal and forensics teams have been called from Chandigarh to probe the incident," Bhullar informed.

However, there was confusion regarding the total number of casualties. Earlier in the day, a number of police officials said that two persons have died due to the blast, but then scaled down the number to one. However, a number of national-level websites said that two people had died.

Replying to a question on preliminary investigation Bhullar said at this point, it is very difficult to say anything and added that probe is underway.

Former Punjab CM Amarinder Singh said he was saddened to know about the deaths in the blast. "Disturbing news of a blast at Ludhiana court complex. Saddened to know about the demise of 2 (two) individuals. Praying for the recovery of those injured," Amarinder said in a tweet.

FESTIVE SPIRIT



With Christmas Eve on the anvil, volunteers carry out Thursday last minute decoration of the interiors of the Union Church at Unit-IV in Bhubaneswar OP PHOTO

13mn face harsh lockdown in China

With the Winter Games just over 5 weeks away, China is not taking any chances. It is imposing strict lockdown at all places where infections are rising

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Beijing, Dec 23: China is redoubling efforts to control new virus outbreaks with a lockdown of 13 million residents of the northern city of Xi'an following a spike in coronavirus cases. The measure comes just weeks before the country hosts the Winter Olympics here, roughly 1,000 kilometres to the west.

As is the case there was no word on whether the virus was the Omicron variant or the far more



common Delta. Officially China has reported just seven omicron cases - four in the southern manufacturing centre of Guangzhou, two in the southern city of Changsha and one in the northern port of Tianjin.

China has also been dealing with

a substantial outbreak in several cities in the eastern province of Zhejiang near Shanghai, although isolation measures there have been more narrowly targeted.

Authorities have adopted strict pandemic control measures under their policy of seeking to drive

new transmissions to zero, leading to frequent lockdowns, universal masking and mass testing. However, this is the first time that China has imposed such a large scale lockdown since the advent of the virus.

The Xi'an restrictions are some of the harshest since China in 2020 imposed a strict lockdown on more than 11 million people in and around the central city of Wuhan, where the coronavirus was first detected in late 2019. Xi'an reported Thursday another 63 locally transmitted cases, pushing the city's total to at least 211 over the past week.

"We are not receiving any new guests and no present inhabitants are allowed to leave the hotel," said a receptionist at the Hanting Hotel in Xi'an, who only gave her surname, Li. "Including guests, we are required to take a test once

every two days. There will be an impact on business and we have no idea how long it will last," Li added.

The owner of a local bookshop said he had closed 10 days before "fearing the worsening of the epidemic situation." "I am now staying at home watching television," said the owner, who gave only his surname, Xiao. He was quick to point out that "with the government behind us, the situation will get better eventually".

One person from each household will be allowed out every two days to buy household necessities, a government order said. It took effect at midnight Wednesday, with no word on when it might be lifted.

China has reported 4,636 deaths among a total of 1,00,644 cases of Covid-19. However, many have doubted the authenticity of the figures provided.

CBI arrests 11 in multi-crore fraud

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 23: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) arrested Thursday 11 accused persons from various places across the country including Bhubaneswar, Delhi, Chandigarh and Kolkata in a multi-crore financial scam. The accused persons in connivance with the CMD and directors of two companies had reportedly duped more than 5.5 crore investors of around Rs 60,000 crore.

"The arrested individuals were produced today before the Special Judge, Rouse Avenue Courts, Delhi. Eight accused were remanded to two-day police custody while three were sent to judicial custody by the competent court," informed the CBI in a press note.

Following the directions of the

Supreme Court, the CBI has been investigating the scam by registering a case February 19, 2014.

The accused persons through their Chandigarh-based firm had reportedly duped investors by issuing bogus allotment letters. After coming to know about fraud, the Punjab & Haryana High Court directed all the accused to stop receiving further deposits through the ponzi scheme and return the investors' money.

In order to avoid legal action, they again opened another company and started collecting money from new investors through various fraudulent schemes. They used to pay the amount collected from the new investors to those they had cheated earlier through the first company.

leisure



JENNIFER LAWRENCE PLANS TO TAKE BREAK FROM ACTING

Hollywood star Jennifer Lawrence is going to be a first-time mom soon and seemingly wants to spend more time with her family once she has her baby. The actress portraying Kate Dibiasky in *Don't Look Up* is reportedly planning to take a break from acting after giving birth, reports *aceshowbiz.com*.

WINSLET COULDN'T STOP CRYING DURING REUNION WITH DICAPRIO

Actress Kate Winslet has said she couldn't stop crying when she recently reunited with her *Titanic* co-star and really close friend Leonardo DiCaprio after three years apart. She said: "I couldn't stop crying. I've known him for half of my life."



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
You are likely to give in to the demands of your children today. Ganesh says it is for times like this that you labour so hard. You will finish the tasks that you have been postponing for a long time. It is a good day for people in the medical field and in the public sector.

TAURUS
Today, you will be as creative and competent as you can get. Your work style, the deft way you handle things will awe and amaze your colleagues and superiors. Your subordinates will be highly impressed and motivated. They will be eager and compliant and will support and assist you to the utmost.

GEMINI
You will listen to your heart over your head, swept away as you will be in a flood of emotions today. This could mean that you will be unable to distinguish between good and bad. However, looking back upon your day in the evening, you are unlikely to regret any of the decisions you made, says Ganesh.

CANCER
You will begin the day with a definite plan for a bright future. You will resolutely implement plans that you have made thoughtfully. Such methodical decisions will save you a lot of time in the future. Ganesh says that you will succeed in every endeavour today.

LEO
You will see some change in your daily schedule today. It is a good day to start a new job or business activity. You will focus more attention on your personality today. You will try to improve yourself and bring your hidden talents to the fore. Make the most of this opportunity to implement your plans, says Ganesh.

VIRGO
An unusual dose of creativity will motivate you to make a trip to some exotic place and mingle with new people. You will have some experiences that will enrich you mentally and emotionally. But don't unpack yet, there may be another adventure on the cards.

LIBRA
Ganesh says you will be getting good news from abroad, which will make you happy. Those of you who are searching for jobs will get good news coming your way. Ganesh says that you should not expect too much or you would feel dejected and disappointed when it is not met.

SCORPIO
Today, you are like a balloon that may burst any time. You may vent out all the sweet and bitter experiences and feel much lighter. Or it may have adverse effects on your health, says Ganesh. You prefer to stay in your cocoon, in the warmth of your near and dear ones.

SAGITTARIUS
Keeping all the work aside, you may be painting the town red today. Falling in love is exciting, isn't it? However, for all those who are already in a relationship, Ganesh shows a red signal. Avoid arguments with your loved one, He suggests.

CAPRICORN
You firmly believe in the concept of 'health is wealth'. You have maintained a very good health so far and it will not be an issue today, also. Successful completion of current projects seem to be a distant target, however, you will finish them off. Your boss may get upset with you for not completing the work on time.

AQUARIUS
You are disappointed and you seek solace in spirituality. Don't run away from the problems; rather face them with strength and confidence, advises Ganesh, to bring your life back on track. With patience and belief in the Almighty, you will sail through the storm.

PISCES
You will display kindness and generosity today and will do your best to help anyone in need. At work you will receive praise for the efforts that you've put in and your dedication will be validated. Even though you intend to give utmost importance to your family, this intention will trail in the shadow of pending work which will require long hours.

Sushmita calls it quits with beau

Sushmita Sen's boyfriend Rohman Shawl has moved out of her apartment and is currently staying at a close friend's home in Mumbai. It was also said that Sushmita has cut all ties with Rohman but the actress revealed that they are still very good friends.

The *Aarya* actress has made it official by saying that it was over a long time ago. The actress took to her social media account and sharing an official statement she wrote, "We began as friends, we remain friends!! The relationship was long over...the love remains!!#nomorespeculations #liveandletlive #cherishedmemories #gratitude #love #friendship .I love you guys!!!(sic)"

The fans left heartfelt messages for the *Aarya* actress, they read, "Strength to u", "In the end, it's all destiny that has things planned", "It's heartbreaking... Love to see you guys.", "This is cute but lil sad for me, but I am happy if you both are happy with this decision GOD BLESS YOU." AGENCIES



Sushmita, Rohman in happier times

Ayushmann talks about purpose of cinema

Mumbai: Ayushmann Khurrana, who was recently seen in *Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui*, feels that cinema can bring about a change in society and that he has tried to contribute towards the cause of inclusivity and equality through his work in films.

Talking about the purpose of cinema, the actor mentions, "I have always believed that cinema can serve a purpose to better society and I hope that such films have done their bit to affect change. I have played a small hand in harbouring a sentiment of equality among my countrymen because I have to credit my visionary filmmakers and script writers for doing the brunt of the work."

In his opinion, a society gets reflected in its films and stories. The actor says, "Progressive films can only be made in a progressive society and the response that *Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui* is getting is tantamount to the fact that people want to see more and more disruptive content." IANS



The Matrix Resurrections: Astutely mounted yet peculiar

PRIYANKA CHOPRA IS CONFIDENCE PERSONIFIED AND STRIKING IN A SMALL PART, ESSAYING SATI, A ROLE EARLIER PORTRAYED BY TANVEER K ATWAL

There has been an aura of obsession and nostalgia with the *Matrix* franchise ever since the first film in 1999. The *Matrix Resurrections* is the fourth film of its franchise and is the sequel to its last release, *The Matrix Revolutions*, which hit theatres nearly 18 years ago.

This film caters to its fan base, and thus, those who are not initiated into the *Matrix* universe would find themselves in an alien world, not knowing what is happening on screen.

With events taking place nearly two decades after *Revolutions*, and unlike its trilogy where the future of humanity was being threatened, this film feels more of a love story within its action drama.

At the core of the narrative are the resurrected Neo (Keanu Reeves) and Trinity (Carrie-Anne Moss), who are hidden within the code and kept on a short leash. This is done to prevent them from getting together and causing another system collapse.

But when a group of humans from the outside world led by a blue-haired gunslinger named Bugs (Jessica Henwick), discovers that



Thomas Anderson, a world-famous video designer working at Deus Machina, is actually the legendary Neo and that he is still alive, they try to break him out of the matrix and seek his help to once again save humanity.

The plot is complex, convoluted, and at times amateurish, with an over-explanation of events from the past. The fights are poorly mounted, and with the ridiculous number of cuts, the scenes appear absurdly choppy even if you ignore that, the choreography itself seems languid and sluggish.

As for the performances, the chemistry between Reeves and Moss is palpable, but not in the same way that one had witnessed

Director: Lana Wachowski

Cast: Keanu Reeves, Carrie-Anne Moss, Jada Pinkett Smith, Priyanka Chopra Jonas, Christina Ricci and others

in the previous *Matrix* films. Priyanka Chopra is confidence personified and striking in a small part, essaying Sati, a role earlier portrayed by Tanveer K. Atwal.

All others in the supporting cast have loads of fun with their characters and have their moments of on-screen glory.

Overall, the film despite being astutely and impressively staged seems to be a bit chaotic and peculiar. IANS



Deepika turns heads at 83 premiere

Mumbai: Actress Deepika Padukone Thursday took to her Instagram stories to share the pictures for her gorgeous avatar for the *83* premiere day. Clad in a dark bottle-green coloured off-shoulder body-hugging gown with a plunging neckline, Deepika complemented the look by wearing a stunning necklace. Skipping the earrings, she kept her bob-cut wavy hair loose.

Grabbing the eyeballs with her bold eyeliner look, the 35-year-old

actor graced the event in style. Apart from this, she also heaped praises on her husband-actor Ranveer Singh who opted for a formal white suit for the red carpet event.

Sharing his pictures from the event on her Instagram story, Deepika wrote, "Hey there handsome." Kabir Khan's directorial *83*, which revolves around India's historical 1983 Cricket World Cup win, stars Ranveer Singh as Kapil Dev, who was the captain of the Indian team in 1983.

For the caption, Deepika simply wrote: "#ThisIs83". Ranveer couldn't stop himself from commenting on his wife's pictures. He exclaimed: "Ufffff."

Interestingly, Ranveer's wife-actor Deepika Padukone will be seen playing Romi, Kapil Dev's wife in *83*. IANS

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

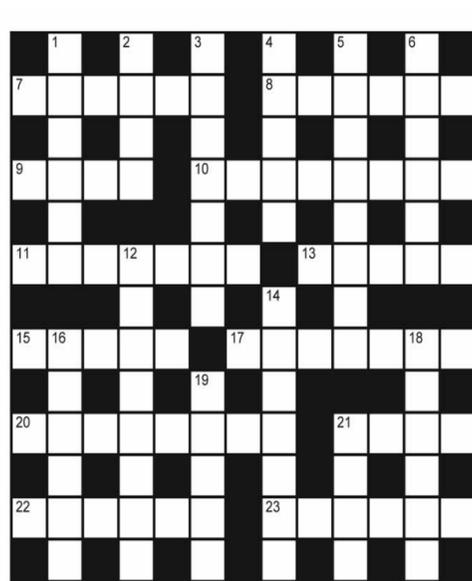


BREVITY



FUN post

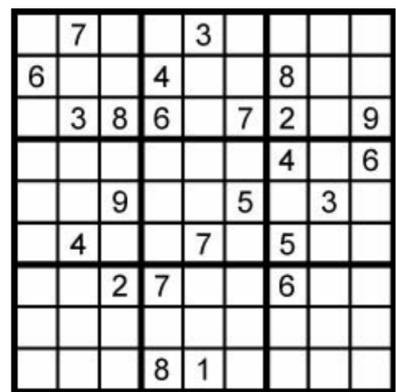
CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 7 Urban problem
 - 8 Acquire
 - 9 Ancestry
 - 10 Used car lack, at times
 - 11 Symbol of purity
 - 13 Irritation, in brief
 - 15 Come from behind
 - 17 Enthusiastic applause
 - 20 Waste
 - 21 Hearty hello
 - 22 Hearty party
 - 23 Links attendant
 - Down**
 - 1 Choice
 - 2 Bat's home
 - 3 Like some verse
 - 4 Fret
 - 5 Not curved
 - 6 Season
 - 12 Break down
 - 14 Ham it up
 - 16 Find not guilty
 - 18 Beginning
 - 19 Perfect
 - 21 Take cover

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

ODIOUS OFFSET
RNNNR L A U
BICYCLE OWNER
I U L S R J E
THREE EVACUEE
S A R A N
I M P R O V E M E N T
A I I A A C
FANBELT NUTTY
F D N I M W G
A S S E T O R A T I O N
I R E T U R N C E M E N T

SUDOKU

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

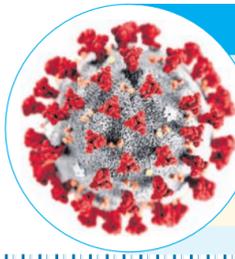
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown



EVICTON IN CITY

Civic authorities in Bhubaneswar remove illegal shops from Ashok Nagar area of the city, Thursday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	27,76,87,256	24,89,11,553	53,96,811
India	3,47,65,976	3,42,08,926	4,78,759
Odisha	10,53,504	10,43,391	8,448



TOURISM BOOST

OTDC chairperson Shreemayee Mishra and other dignitaries during the inauguration of Nimantran restaurant in Puri, Thursday. The restaurant will serve Odia cuisines to tourists

City sees surge in crimes

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 23: The Capital city witnessed a rise in crimes in 2021 as compared to the previous year, as per the data shared by office of Bhubaneswar Deputy Commissioner of Police.

The data claims that as many as 8,967 cases were registered at 23 police stations in the City till December 20 this year.

The number was 1,293 less in 2020, with 7,674 cases registered at different police stations in the state capital during the pandemic-induced lockdown. The number of cases reported this year exceeded the pre-pandemic case numbers. In 2019, police stations across Bhubaneswar reported the registration of 8,229 cases.

The highest number of cases was registered at Capital police station in 2021. As many as 824, 681 and 646 cases were registered at the Capital, Jatni and Khandagiri police stations respectively in 2021.

On the other hand, the police



149 road fatalities

As many as 149 died while 304 sustained grave injuries in 532 road mishaps registered at various police stations in the City till the November 30, 2021. Altogether 162 people had lost their lives in 517 road mishaps in the city in 2020. Sixty-two road accident cases were registered at Capital PS. However, due to the proximity of hospital only five victims succumbed. Balia PS reported 21 fatalities in just 44 road mishaps. Similarly, 18 people lost their lives in 43 road accidents in Jatni police limits. Khandagiri police reported 15 deaths in 53 road mishaps. The police collected ₹ 30, 40,500 from 1,92,943 commuters for violating traffic regulations till November end.

managed to conclude investigations in more number of cases than registered at various police stations till December 20 this year. A

total of 11,202 cases were closed after the submission of charge-sheets and final reports in the court, against the total number of cases registered this year.

Saheed Nagar police solved most number of cases in 2021 at 990. The Saheed Nagar police reported the registration of 518 new cases this year. Similarly, 896 and 786 cases were solved by the Khandagiri and Mancheswar police respectively in 2021. The total number pending cases declined to 12,500 in 2021 as against 14,853 at the end of 2020.

Meanwhile, one of the most worrisome facts shared by the City police is the number of times the police personnel were deployed for security of VIP and VVIPs and law and order duty. The city police personnel were deployed 1,315 times in the security arrangements of VIPs and VVIPs in 2021. Meanwhile, police officials were engaged in law and order duty 1,422 times. The above data indicates that City policemen had been mostly engaged in law and order duty instead of investigations in 2021.

Mamita case: CB files status report in HC

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Dec 23: The Crime Branch Thursday submitted a status report to the Orissa High Court in connection with investigations into Kalahandi teacher Mamita Meher murder case.

The CB filed the status report in a sealed envelope during the hearing of a case filed by the deceased teacher's father and brother. The next hearing on the case has been posted to January 20, 2022.

Mamita's family members had filed the case seeking the HC intervention to fast-track the probe into the murder case. The Bharatiya Bikash Parishad had filed an intervention application seeking a CBI probe into the incident.

The outfit had also sought ₹50 lakh compensation to the victim's family.

HC directs state to form panel on prison reforms

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Dec 23: The Orissa High Court (HC) has directed the state government to form a committee on prison reforms, an official said Thursday.

Home Secretary, Law Secretary, Director General of Police (DGP), DG of Prisons, representatives from the Health and Women and Child Development departments and Odisha State Legal Services Authority Member Secretary will be its members. The panel will have its first meeting January 10 and meet once in every 15 days thereafter, a division bench of HC Chief Justice S Muralidhar and Justice AK Mohapatra ruled, scheduling the next hearing for March 8.

The committee would examine issues plaguing the prisons and subsequently recommend reforms, it was learnt. The HC directive came while hearing a plea filed by Krushnaprasad Sahoo alleging overcrowding in state jails.

Taking cognisance of Sahoo's petition, the HC sought response from Prisons Directorate, which informed the court that there were 21,767 inmates in the state jails against a capacity of 19,855. The HC later asked the DG of Prisons to come up with measures undertaken to decongest the jails. Subsequently, the DG of Prisons submitted an affidavit with the HC December 17 highlighting measures undertaken to decongest the jails.

State gets 3 new courts

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Dec 23: Orissa High Court Chief Justice S Muralidhar Thursday inaugurated three courts—one each at Deogarh, Jharsuguda and Kantamal—through videoconferencing, an official said.

A family court at Deogarh, and another at Jharsuguda and an additional district and sessions judge court at Kantamal in Boudh were inaugurated. According to the Chief Justice, the new courts will go a long way reducing the pendency of cases. Among others, Justices Arindam Sinha and KR Mohapatra were present on the occasion, added the official.

Naveen lays stone for 55 bus stands in 22 districts



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 23: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Thursday laid foundation stone for 55 bus stands in 22 districts of the state on virtual mode.

The bus stands will come up at block levels taking into account several factors like distance from district headquarters, economic activity, places of tourist interest and existing communication facility, said an official.

Speaking on the occasion, Patnaik said rural connectivity has always been one of the top priorities for his government and he believes that this is a step in right direction.

"This (bus stands) will connect the rural people of the state with better communication infrastructure, benefit them to a great extent and prove to be yet another milestone in the communication scenario of Odisha," he said.

According to the Chief Minister, Odisha State Road Transport

Corporation (OSRTC) has been instrumental in connecting the state through its fleet of buses.

"OSRTC is making new strides in reaching across the entire state and connecting people through an integration of infrastructural development and effective communication network," Naveen added.

He expressed happiness over constant innovation and improvement in the quality of service that is being provided to the people of Odisha, many of whom depend on buses for economic, educational as well as recreational purposes.

Attending the programme, Commerce and Transport Minister Padmanabha Behera said his department is working towards improving the transport scenario of the state in order to realise the vision of the CM—providing better communication infrastructure to rural Odisha.

Secretary to the CM (5T) VK Pandian moderated the programme.

CM distributes Covid aid to newspaper hawkers

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 23: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Thursday distributed financial aid of ₹6,000 for every registered newspaper hawker to help them tide over the crisis due to Covid-19. With this development, Odisha became the first state in India to offer financial assistance to newspaper hawkers.

A total of 7,300 newspaper hawkers, who have been registered under the state's Unorganised Workers' Social Welfare Board, have benefited due to this move, officials said. The Odisha government has earmarked an expenditure of ₹4.38 crore from Chief Minister's Relief Fund for the purpose, they informed.

Patnaik said hawkers are a bridge between the newspaper and the readers. Braving sun, rain and cold and even during the Covid-19 pandemic, they have supplied newspapers to the readers, he added.

The Chief Minister said that the hawkers would also be given



financial cover for accidents. In case of death due to an accident, the government will pay ₹2,00,000 as compensation to the family.

The hawkers will also be entitled to amounts between ₹40,000 to ₹80,000 if left incapacitated.

Also, families of newspaper hawkers, who die of natural causes, would be given ₹1,00,000 as compensation, the CM said.

Patnaik further said that a database of the eligible hawkers is being prepared by the Information and Public Relations department, and each beneficiary will soon be provided with an identity card.

COLD WAVE GRIPS ODISHA; PHULBANI SHIVERS AT 5°C

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bhubaneswar, Dec 23: An intense cold wave condition continued to prevail across Odisha in the past 24 hours with the mercury plummeting to 10°C at 12 places, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said Thursday.

Minimum temperature of 5°C was recorded at Phulbani town, making it the coldest place in the state, as per the IMD's Bhubaneswar regional centre.

CAPITAL CITY ALONG WITH ANGUL AND NAYAGARH, RECORDED A MIN TEMPERATURE OF 10°C EACH

Phulbani was followed by Daringbadi with 6.5°C, Jharsuguda (7.1), Titilagarh (7.3), Sundargarh (7.5), Keonjhar (7.6), Bhawanipatna (8), Rayagada (8), Bolangir (9), Sambalpur (9.5), Koraput (9.5) and Boudh (9.6).

Capital city Bhubaneswar, along with Angul and Nayagarh, recorded a minimum temperature of 10°C each. Bhubaneswar has recorded a minimum temperature of 10°C or below in the month of December, for the fourth time in the past 11 years (2011 to 2021). The City had witnessed 8.2°C, 9.8°C and 10°C December 30, 2018 (all time record), December 31, 2019 and December 21, 2021 respectively the Met centre officials said.

Cold wave condition is very likely to prevail over the districts of Jharsuguda, Sundargarh, Boudh, Sonepur, Bargarh, Bolangir and Nuapada in the next 24 hours, it added.

The weather forecasting office advised people to stay indoors during night & early morning and use multiple clothes to avoid exposure to cold. It also suggested people to avoid movement during night especially on two wheelers/open vehicles.

'Eat Right Station' tag for Bhub railway station



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 23: The Bhubaneswar railway station under Khurda Road Division was Thursday certified as 'Eat Right Station' for providing high-quality and nutritious food to passengers.

The certificate was awarded after the conclusion of the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) empanelled Third Party Audit Agency with ratings from 1 to 5 stars. Bhubaneswar station secured 4-star rating.

State Food Safety Commissioner Yamini Sarangi handed over the certificate to Khurda Road Divisional Railway Manager Rinkesh Roy during a function at Bhubaneswar Railway station Thursday. Speaking on the occasion, Roy said, "It is an honour for the Khurda Road Division and it also makes us more responsible to maintain this standard of hygiene and food quality for our valued passengers in future at Bhubaneswar station."

He also said that in the next step, efforts are being made for Puri, Cuttack and other important stations of the division to be included in 'Eat Right Station' category. Director of Food Safety PK

The 4-star rating indicates exemplary efforts made by the Railway authorities at Bhubaneswar station in ensuring safe and hygienic food for passengers

Mohapatra, Chief Medical Superintendent at Khurda Road BGS Rao, and Amitesh Anand, Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, Khurda Road were present on the occasion.

The 4-star rating indicates exemplary efforts made by the Railway authorities at Bhubaneswar station in ensuring that safe and hygienic food is available to passengers. All the catering stalls at Bhubaneswar Railway station are provided with food license certificate and the vendors have medical fitness certificates.

The 'Eat Right Station Certification' is a part of the 'Eat Right India' movement. It is a large-scale effort made by FSSAI to transform food system in the country with an aim to ensure safe, healthy and sustainable food for all. The Eat Right India movement adopts regulatory, capacity building, collaborative and empowerment approaches in ensuring that the food available is suitable for people as well as for planet.

Bhubaneswar Railway station is the 6th Railway station to get the certificate after Chandigarh, Anand Vihar Terminal, Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus, Mumbai Central and Vadodara railway stations.

RU East Hostel centenary fete today

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Dec 23: The Ravenshaw University here is all set to celebrate the centenary of East Hostel December 24.

The varsity is organising a special event to celebrate the occasion that would be graced by Governor Ganeshi Lal as the chief guest, and former Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra and Odisha Public Service Commission (OPSC) Chairman Satyajit Mohanty as guests of honour.

Many eminent persons of Odisha as well as the country were the boarders of East Hostel during their student days in erstwhile Ravenshaw College which was subsequently upgraded into a university a few years ago.

The hostel was the epicentre of



East Hostel decorated with lights for the centenary celebration

the beginning of romanticism (Sabuja Yuga) in Odia literature. Litterateurs and poets like Annada Shankar Ray, Baikuntha Nath Patnaik, Kalindi Charan Panigrahi and Sharat Chandra Mukherjee had introduced the trend in Odia literature. "The university will publish a special magazine on romanticism in Odia literature on

this occasion," said a source.

The university will also build a structure inside East Hostel in memory of its boarders who have achieved excellence in different spheres of life. "All the rooms in the hostel have been decorated for the centenary celebration. All former boarders can visit the hostel with their families during the celebration," said an official.

76% of IIT-Bhubaneswar undergraduates placed

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bhubaneswar, Dec 23: Amidst doubts expressed all around about placements for undergraduates during placement season 2021-22, the placements at IIT Bhubaneswar have shown a record rising trend.

More than 76 per cent BTech and dual degree (integrated BTech and MTech) students were placed in the first three weeks of the ongoing placement drive, said Rabi Kumar Patnaik, career development and placement officer, IIT Bhubaneswar.

As many as 254 students out of 335 attendees have got placement till December 23. The maximum of the selected students belong to computer science, electronic and communication branches, he said.

Some of the blue chip companies ranging from Amazon, Goldman Sachs, Flipkart, Paytm, Google, Microsoft, Oracle, Tata Steel, Unacademy, Samsung RI,



Mathworks, Silicon Lab, Analog Devices, DE Shaw, GE, Ring Central and Future First have taken part in the placement drive, which started December 1. The drive is likely to continue till February, he added.

This is the first time when such a large number of undergraduates got offers in just three weeks of the opening season. The majority of the recruiters are IT & Startups indicating a growing trend in niche sectors also, said Patnaik.

There is a 50 per cent increase in median salary to 24 lakh per annum (LPA) from 16 LPA of last year. The highest offered salary, so far in this year, is ₹44.1 LPA, he stated.

Similarly, the average salary of the institution rose by ₹3 lakh this year. The average salary has been increased from ₹16.1 LPA in 2020 to ₹19.3 LPA this year, the official informed.

IIT-Bhubaneswar Director RV Raja Kumar said, "Better place-

As many as 254 students out of 335 attendees have got placement till December 23

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Average salary has been increased from ₹16.1 LPA in 2020 to ₹19.3 LPA this year

ments over the last year indicate an optimistic placement scenario despite fears about Omicron surfacing and affecting the economies throughout the globe. Currently, more than 80 per cent of our students are on the campus. The institute is running its classes in physical mode for all the students present in the campus and on virtual mode for those who are currently away and are expected to arrive in the campus shortly," the Director said.

2 more Omicron cases take Odisha's tally to 4



Director of Health Services Bijay Mohapatra said that the state government has expedited surveillance and increased pace of the vaccination drive

Corporation (BMC) Commissioner SK Singh said that at least six micro-containment zones have been declared in the state Capital, and Christmas and New Year celebrations will be allowed with adherence to Covid-19 guidelines.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 23: Two minor returnees from Nigeria Thursday tested positive for the Omicron strain of Covid-19 in Odisha, taking the state's Omicron tally to four, a Health department official said.
The new patients, aged 11 and 15, hail from Bhubaneswar, and they are undergoing treatment at a private hospital here, Institute of Life Science (ILS) Director Ajay Parida said.
Earlier December 21, the state had reported its first two Omicron cases among returnees from Nigeria and Qatar. The patients, aged 43 and 41, hail from Khurda and Jagatsinghpur districts.
Director of Health Services Bijay Mohapatra said that the state government has expedited surveillance and increased pace of the vaccination drive.
Bhubaneswar Municipal

STATE LOGS 155 FRESH nCoV CASES, 1 DEATH

Bhubaneswar: Odisha's Covid-19 tally rose to 10,53,504 Thursday as 155 more people tested positive for the infection, 28 lesser than the previous day, while one fresh fatality pushed the state's coronavirus death toll to 8,448, a Health department official said.
Ninety-one new cases were reported in quarantine centres, and 64 fresh infections were detected during contact tracing, he said. Thirty-two children are among the new patients.
Khurda, of which state Capital Bhubaneswar is a part, registered the highest number of new cases at 84, followed by 10 in Sambalpur.

Thirteen of the 30 districts did not record any new case.
The coastal state's daily test positivity rate stood at 0.25 per cent as 61,760 samples were tested.
The fresh fatality was registered in Jajpur district. Fifty-three patients have died due to comorbidities so far in Odisha.
The state now has 1,784 active cases, while 10,43,219 patients have recovered from the disease to date, including 174 Wednesday.
Odisha has thus far tested over 2.50 crore samples for Covid-19, and inoculated more than 1.02 crore people with both doses of the vaccine.

CALL FOR PACE



Medical students staging a demo Thursday over delay in the NEET PG counselling at SCB Medical College and Hospital, Cuttack

JUBA SANSKAR PROG

College students to get lessons on good conduct

Higher Education dept directs the colleges to start the programme from the first week of January 2022

Bhubaneswar, Dec 23: State Higher Education (HE) department Secretary Saswat Mishra Thursday directed all the government and government aided colleges under its jurisdiction to introduce 'Juba Sanskaar' programme in colleges for good character building of students.
Under this programme, classes (standard duration of one period) shall be held covering all students of UG and PG semesters, mandatorily at least once in a

month. In these classes, freely available good short audio-visual films on character building themes such as staying away from drugs/tobacco and developing sense of respect for seniors/women would be shown to the students to sensitise them

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Govt vigilant against smuggled goods: Min

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 23: The menace of counterfeit and smuggled goods has penetrated deep into our society and it is impacting the socio-economic prosperity of the country, which needs to be addressed immediately, said Industries Minister Dibya Shankar Mishra.
"Strict enforcement plays a very crucial role in curbing the menace of illicit trade. I am proud to share that Odisha's enforcement agencies have been vigilant in fighting these illegal activities," said Mishra while addressing a webinar on 'Combating Counterfeiting and Smuggling during the Covid-19 pandemic and beyond'.
The webinar was organised by FICCI's Committee against Smuggling and Counterfeiting Activities Destroying the Economy (CASCADE) recently.

TEACHERS' DEMO



Members of the Primary School Teachers' Association protest Thursday near PMG Square, Bhubaneswar, demanding reinstatement of old pension system

BMC invites proposals for clean technology challenge

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 23: In a bid to provide effective sanitation services to the citizens of the state capital, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) has invited innovative solutions from individuals, startups and academic institutions for waste management.
Initiated under Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), 'Swachha Technology Challenge' the objective is to harness the entrepreneurial potential of the waste management sector in India and promote an enabling environment for enterprise development under Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban (SBM).
The BMC in a notification has sought proposals from individuals, startups, companies, academic institutions, parastatals among

others in four thematic areas which mention social inclusion, zero dump, plastic waste management and transparency.
"The outcome of the challenge would see top solutions from startups which can participate in 'Swachhata Start-up Challenge.' Top three solutions in each of the thematic areas across the country will be felicitated with an award in the Swachh Survekshan Award ceremony," the notification read.
Furthermore, as per the MoHUA guidelines, the BMC has also set up a five-member committee to evaluate the proposals.
The committee has BMC Commissioner Sanjay Singh as its chairperson while Chief Engineer (Sanitation) and Deputy Commissioner (Sanitation) innovative solutions among others are its members.

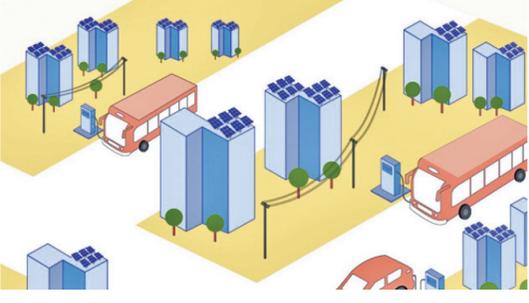
STPI, RSP ink pact

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 23: An MoU was signed between Software Technology Parks of India (STPI), Bhubaneswar and SAIL-Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP) Thursday for knowledge mentoring and networking support.
The signatories were Jurisdictional Director of STPI-Bhubaneswar (Odisha, Bihar & Jharkhand) Manas Panda & SR Suryawanshi, Executive Director (Works) at Rourkela Steel Plant.
The primary objective of the MoU is to forge strong and meaningful alliance between STPI and SAIL-RSP to support the upcoming STPI Centre of Entrepreneurship on Emerging Technologies in Bhubaneswar and Rourkela, known as EmTek which is being established with funding support from Union Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY) and state Electronics & Information Technology department.

EV charging stations with rooftop solar more economical: Report

Aiming to demonstrate the concept of using a clean source of energy (solar) for charging Electric Vehicles (EVs), a new report has shown that electric vehicle charging stations (EVCSs) with solar rooftop photovoltaic (SRTPV) facility are economically more viable than those with grid.
"The mismatch between solar energy generation and consumption (from charging) can be solved by deploying net-metering at charging stations. Among the scenarios considered, an EVCS connected to RTPV under net-metering policy represents the best-case scenario with the least LCOC," the report by the Centre for Study of Science, Technology and Policy (CSTEP) said.
The report is based on the CSTEP's system design for the pilot project at the Bangalore Electricity Supply Company (BESCOM) Corporate Office premises consisting of a power conversion unit



Hence, decarbonising the transport sector with the deployment of EVs is a crucial step in mitigating air pollution

The project showcases an intelligent bi-directional converter (PCU) that interfaces with SRTPV and battery systems (with DC coupling) to manage the energy flow with electric vehicle (EV) chargers and the grid
This is necessary in view of the facts that Indian cities top the charts every year for worst air quality in the world
Studies have established that the transport sector is a major contributor (40-80 per cent) to air pollution in the cities

mately 16 per cent of the total daily solar energy (on average) generated. The costs of upstream electricity for grid only, PV only, and PV plus BESS are ₹5, ₹4.6, and ₹8.9 per unit, respectively. "Including a BESS increased the cost of PV+storage system electricity by ₹5.3/kWh."
A novel framework to estimate the levelised cost of charging (LCOC) at a certain EVCS with grid connected RTPV and RTPV plus energy storage is also provided in the report.
The framework can be extended to assess the feasibility of using a grid tied RTPV plus energy storage system serving any electrical load in general.
"Currently, only EV charging guidelines are in place, sourcing the power from renewable energy sources is not emphasised. Learnings from the study can, therefore, guide policies for the widespread adoption of SRTPV-based EVCSs," the report mentioned.

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SHORT TAKES

HM suspended for poaching deer

Rajnagar: The headmaster of a primary school, who was arrested on a charge of hunting a deer in Bhitarkanika National Park 14 days ago, was suspended. Following a directive from the school and mass education department, the Rajnagar block education office issued a suspension order (4572, Dec 22) against accused Fakirmohan Nayak, the headmaster of Bagapatia Primary School. His suspension will be effective from December 9. Additional block education officer Ajit Kumar Barik said departmental proceedings will be started against the headmaster for poaching wildlife inside the national park when as a teacher he is supposed to teach children on protection of wildlife and environment.

Short-range ballistic missile Pralay test-fired again in 24 hrs



POST NEWS NETWORK

Balasure, Dec 23: Short-range ballistic missile Pralay was test-fired again from Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Island off Odisha coast at 9.35 am Thursday. This is the second successful test of the missile in last 24 hours. The short-range surface-to-surface guided ballistic missile system includes state-of-the-art navigation system and integrated avionics. The Pralay missile,

launched from the APJ Abdul Kalam Island around 10.30 am Thursday, met all mission objectives. The solid-fuel, battlefield missile developed by Defence Research Development Organisation (DRDO) is based on Prithvi Defence Vehicle from the Indian ballistic missile programme.

Pralay is a 350-500 km short-range, surface-to-surface missile with a payload capacity of 500kg-1,000 kg. The advanced missile has been developed in a way to be able to defeat interceptor missiles. It has the ability to change its trajectory after covering a certain range mid-air. Notably, Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) successfully conducted maiden flight test of this indigenously developed surface-to-surface missile from Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Island Wednesday.

MOCK DRILL



NDRF personnel performing a mock drill on rescue of people drowning in sea and rivers during natural calamities like cyclones and floods on the Penta coast in Rajnagar area of Kendrapara district, Thursday
OP PHOTO

300 booked for attack on police

Kujang: Local people and police are at loggerheads over the proposed steel plant to be set up by JSW at Dhinkia village under Erasama tehsil in Jagatsinghpur district. Meanwhile, police have registered cases against 300 people for recent attack on police during demarcation of Mahal hamlet's limits. A group of project opponents had pelted stones at police personnel. According to reports, police have booked 300 people of Dhinkia, Gobindapur, Trilochanpur, Patna and Mahal. IIC of Abhaychandpur police station, Jibananda Jena warned if law and order deteriorates in the area, stern action will be taken against the trouble makers. On the other hand, project opponents have decided that they would not allow entry of police and officials into Dhinkia. Meanwhile, the administration has identified the land near Mahal for a protection wall.

9 students Covid+ in Deogarh dist

Deogarh: Nine more students of a residential school in Deogarh district tested positive for Covid-19 and all of them are asymptomatic, authorities informed. "Students who tested positive for the virus have been kept in isolation in a separate room. A total of 221 swab samples of students including staff of the school were sent for rapid antigen testing, of which nine samples tested positive," the headmaster of the school said. Tests were conducted after ten persons including six students and four staff of the school tested positive for Covid-19 two days ago. "Infected students and staff have been kept in isolation and may be shifted to a local government-run health facility for further treatment, only if need arises. The Covid-19 safety protocols are strictly followed in the school," a district administrative official stated. Meanwhile, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik urged the people of Odisha Wednesday to remain cautious and not to step out of their homes to curb probable spread of Omicron variant of Covid-19. The CM's message came after detection of two Omicron cases. Two more cases were found Thursday.

SUIT orders 9 students to vacate hostel

POST NEWS NETWORK

Burla, Dec 23: A disciplinary committee, earlier formed to probe an incident of ragging of a second-year B.Tech student at Sambalpur University Institute of Information Technology (SUIT) in Burla, Thursday ordered nine students to vacate the hostel premises for their alleged involvement in it. Four of the students will not be allowed inside the hostel for a year and five others for six months. "Considering the gravity of the incident, the disciplinary committee ordered nine students to vacate hostel premises for ragging another student for six months to one year," SUIT Director BK Mohanty said. "Students who faced the disciplinary action include eight of second-year batch and one of the fourth-year batch. While four second-year batch boarders have been vacated from the hostel for one year, the other was ordered to vacate for the next six months," an official added. The victim had lodged a report



RAGGING ROW

with the disciplinary committee last month alleging that the nine students had scolded and beaten him as part of ragging. He had also mentioned their names in the report, a source said. It is pertinent to mention, as per an FIR lodged at Burla Town police station Saturday morning, a student of Veer Surendra Sai University of Technology pursuing production engineering also faced ragging. The victim, identified as Manas

whether I know their names or not. As I could not tell their names, they thrashed me by punching my face, neck, back including other parts of the body," the victim had said. The seniors also grabbed his neck and choked him, Singh had added. Acting on an FIR, Burla Town police launched an investigation into the alleged incident. However, no arrests have been made so far.

It is pertinent to mention here that 12 students of the VSSUT were rusticated by the university authorities earlier September 22 this year for allegedly attacking and injuring a hostel inmate. They had attacked a student of the electrical department on the hostel premises following a scuffle that erupted over a girl student belonging to the institution. The inmate had sustained grievous injuries in the attack. In 2019, ten students of the VSSUT were debarred from appearing in exams for one year over ragging. In addition, 52 hostel inmates who were involved in ragging were fined ₹2,000 each.

₹2.5cr for development of Sarisua waterfall

KHAIRA: The state government has planned to boost tourism potential of Sarisua hill under Khairā tehsil in Balasore district. A scenic waterfall on the hill and Kupari Natya Madap will be developed. The two projects are part of Kupari tourist spot. Tourism and culture minister Jyoti Prakash Panigrahi will inaugurate the two projects. A number of infrastructure projects and beautification of the place are expected to attract more tourists. In rainy season, the waterfall becomes attractive while in other seasons its flow shrinks. Architects have drawn up a blueprint for the development of the waterfall to ensure flow of water from the cliff in all seasons. According to reports, an outlay of ₹2.5 crore has been prepared for construction of bathrooms for tourists, landscape, raised platforms for picnickers, parking lots, photo shoot points and various other works. After Jyoti Prakash Panigrahi became the tourism minister, he turned his focus on the development of the Sarisua hill and the waterfall.

Aniders installed to scare away jumbos in Sundargarh



POST NEWS NETWORK

Sundargarh, Dec 23: In order to mitigate the man-animal conflict, forest officials have installed aniders (Animal Intrusion Detection and Repellent System), mainly in Kinjirikela forest section under Ujalpur forest range of Sundargarh forest division, Thursday. The aniders have been installed at selected locations along elephant-passing routes based on movement of the animals near villages. The aniders are meant to scare away elephants, prevent their straying inside villages and ward off any death or injury to humans or house damage by the animals.

The aniders have sensors that detect movement of elephants or other wild animals within 30m to 100m. The system blows siren and flashes lights to scare away animals. As a result, the elephants change their path without getting physical injury. MLA, Talsara, Bhabani Shankar Bhoi visited the site and inquired about the equipment. He witnessed the installation of aniders in presence of DFO, Sundargarh, ACF Sundargarh, RO Ujalpur, and other forest officials. He appreciated the efforts of the forest department in controlling this menace and urged villagers to extend help to forest personnel.

Boudh to have state's 2nd longest rly tunnel

POST NEWS NETWORK

Boudh, Dec 23: A railway tunnel, the second longest in the state, will come up in this district as part of the Khurda-Bolangir rail route project, a report said. Work on the rail route has gathered pace after the district administration provided necessary land for construction of the rail route. Earlier, a 1960-metre long railway tunnel had been constructed between Rayagada and Koraput districts. The soil laying work for the rail route from Manmunda to Boudh is going on at a brisk pace. The railway tunnel which will be a 1-km long will be constructed from Purunakatak to Adenigarh cutting through the hill.



Earlier, the state government has signed an agreement with the railway department to provide land free of cost for the rail route and to bear 50 per cent of the total expenses. The state government will also bear 50 per cent of the expenses for construction of the rail

Millet farming strikes chord in Sundargarh

MANDIS TO OPEN FROM JANUARY 3

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sundargarh, Dec 23: The state government's millet mission aimed at addressing nutrition problems in people has struck a chord in Sundargarh district with over 16,000 farmers under 11 blocks taking up finger millet (ragi) cultivation on 3773.73 hectare of land, a report said. Meanwhile, the district administration has started making preparation for purchase of ragi from the farmers as it announced to open mandis from January 3, 2022. The mandis will be opened in all 11 blocks where the cultivation has been taken up.

This time, the administration plans to purchase 13,612 quintals of ragi (mandia) through 142 mandis to be opened in these 11 blocks. The mandis will operate till March 15 to purchase ragi from the registered farmers. The mandis are being opened to provide right price to the ragi farmers. The district administration is sensitising farmers in all 11 blocks to selling their produce at the government-run mandis. The ragi to be purchased is meant for public distribution. Malnutrition will be redressed through distribution of ragi laddus among kids studying in Anganwadi centres.

The farmers have registered their names through Large Area Multipurpose Cooperative Societies (LAMPS) to sell their harvested ragi at mandis. The farmers are also



registering their names in the block agriculture office. The registration will conclude December 31. This year, the minimum support price for ragi has been fixed at ₹3,377 per quintal. In 2018, Sundargarh district was included in the nutrition map. In the first phase, ragi cultivation was taken up in four blocks - Kutra, Nuagaon, Kuanmunda and Rajgangpur. Later, the cultivation was taken up in Tangarpali, Hemgir, Lefripada and Balishankara blocks in 2020. In 2021-22, its cultivation was promoted in Gurundia, Lathkata and Lahunipada blocks. As a result, the number of blocks where ragi and other nutrition-rich crops are cultivated went up to 11. The funds for the purpose is being allocated from the district mineral foundation (DMF) while a tripartite agreement has been signed among the DMF authorities, the agriculture and farmers' empowerment department and Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA) at the DMF office.

CHILLY WEATHER



People huddle around a bonfire to warm themselves amid biting cold at a village in Keonjhar district, Thursday
OP PHOTO

Joda's septuagenarian wins gold

POST NEWS NETWORK

Joda, Dec 23: Age is just a number for 72 year-old Debraj Samant, a resident of Joda town in Keonjhar district. He has done the state proud by bagging two gold medals in the 100-metre and 400-metre race organized in Jharkhand. The adage 'practice makes a man perfect' holds good for this septuagenarian who has kept himself physically fit by working out regularly. On his reaching Joda town Wednesday, Debraj was accorded a hero's welcome by local residents for his outstanding achievement, particularly something impossible at this age. He said, he runs for 15 km everyday in the town, bet it rain or sun. That apart, he encourages youths



to run regularly and keep them physically fit. He also trains them. He has a 25-member running team that covers 25 km from Baneikala

to Ingnaijharan or Bichakundi. "Thanks to regular running, I don't feel that I am in the twilight. It has kept me fit and fine. For good health, routine exercise and running is a must," he observed. Competitions for people in the age group of 70 to 75 in the 100-metre and 400-metre categories were organised at Keenan stadium at Janshedpur in Jharkhand Sunday. He struck gold in both the categories. Interestingly, when he was on the track, a large crowd on the gallery was cheering him, shouting, "Debraj is not at 70." In various running competitions in the past, he has won medals. He has bagged more than 100 medals, said a local. Debraj further added that regular running would keep one fit and fine and can boost confidence, no matter what age you are in.

EAST COAST RAILWAY
File No. DRM/Engg/KUR/21-22/
E-Tender/87, Dt. 20.12.2021
Tender No. e-Tender-North-KUR-225-2021, Date: 17.12.2021
Description: PROPOSED HIRING OF MULTI UTILITY VEHICLE (TATA-207 DI OR EQUIVALENT/HIGHER CAPACITY) FOR RAILWAY DEPARTMENTAL USE OF SENIOR SECTION ENGINEER (WORKS)/KENDUJHARGARH IN KHURDA ROAD DIVISION FOR A PERIOD OF TWO YEARS.
Approx cost of the work: ₹12.83 lakhs
Completion Period of the work: 22 (Twenty Two) Months.
Date & time of Tender Closing: 05.01.2022, 1500 hrs.
No manual offers sent by Post/ Courier/Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-Tenders, even if these are submitted on firm's 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.ireps.gov.in
Note: The prospective tenders are advised to revisit 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./ PR-664/M/21-22) Khurda Road



Let us offer our work to the Divine; this is the sure means of progressing. Go and prepare yourself and the best preparation is to be useful to the Divine's work.

THE MOTHER



Battle for Boric's soul

Chile has long been something of a bellwether in Latin America. So, when Chilean voters elected the Left-wing Gabriel Boric, a 35-year-old former student leader, as President Sunday, the rest of Latin America wanted to know: What does this mean for Chile – and for us?

First, it is worth taking a closer look at the result itself. With nearly 56% of the vote, Boric won by a margin of more than ten percentage points – huge by Chilean standards. Since 1989, when democracy was restored, most Presidents have secured only four- or five-point leads. And yet, the far-right runner-up, José Antonio Kast, not only won the election's first round, but also secured a substantial 44% of the vote in the run-off.

In fact, the results of the latest election mirror those of the 1988 plebiscite on whether Chile's dictator since 1973, Augusto Pinochet, could extend his rule for another eight years. Pinochet's supporters lost, but the country's far right was – and remains – alive and well. Run-off elections are always polarising, but the split among Chileans seems particularly sharp, fairly even, and remarkably durable.

But it is the implications for the Chilean and Latin American Left that might be the most significant. In the first round, Boric allied with a heterogeneous group comprising the Communist Party, the so-called Broad Front (composed of left-wing parties and movements apart from the Socialist Party), and various environmental, feminist, and LGBTQ groups.

In the second round, however, Boric broadened this coalition further, adding the socialists, the center-left Party for Democracy, the Christian Democrats, and a few other centrist organisations. So, as the Chilean political scientist Patricio Navia asks, which of the two alliances will govern, and on which platform will the Boric government stand?

For many Chileans, it seemed that, despite a significant drop in poverty, the gains of the country's economic "miracle" had not been shared equitably. And yet, the Gini coefficient – the most widely used metric of inequality, with zero indicating perfect equality, and one signifying perfect inequality – suggests that inequality in Chile had declined over the preceding 20 years, from .55 in 2000 to .51 in 2019 (despite an uptick from .48 in 2015).

In any case, Boric's original platform addressed many of the protesters' specific grievances. He promised to deliver universal health insurance, overhaul the pension system, raise the minimum wage, eliminate student debt, and shorten the work week. He would finance higher social expenditure by increasing government revenues – especially by taxing big companies and wealthy individuals – by 8% of GDP.

While it was not a revolutionary programme, it was certainly ambitious. And much of it may align with the positions of the Left-leaning constitutional assembly elected earlier this year. But Boric softened his approach in the second round, when he went from blaming the political coalition that had administered Chile's economic miracle, the Concertación, to reaching out to its former presidents, Ricardo Lagos and Michelle Bachelet. His second-round platform was still highly reformist, including versions of many of his original promises, but less radical.

Ultimately, however, Boric owes his victory not only to his more moderate, traditional, older constituents, but also to his younger, more radical supporters. That means battle for the millennial president's political soul may be brewing.

The tension Boric likely feels mirrors a broader phenomenon, which I examined 15 years ago. Since the turn of the century, Latin America has had two distinct political "Lefts": a moderate, democratic, globalised, modern Left, and an anachronistic, statist, nationalist, and authoritarian Left. The more moderate group is exemplified by the Chilean and Uruguayan governments of the last 20 years, and the Brazilian government during President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's two terms. To a lesser extent, Bolivian President Evo Morales' first-term government and the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front's rule in El Salvador (again, despite its corruption) also fit into this category.

The radical Left is exemplified by Venezuela's late President, Hugo Chávez, and his hand-picked successor Nicolás Maduro. Ecuador's Rafael Correa, Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega, and the Castro regime in Cuba. It is tougher to categorize Mexico's Andrés Manuel López Obrador, Peru's Pedro Castillo, and Argentina's Néstor Kirchner. Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, and Alberto Fernández, though they have all tended toward the doctrines and policies of the past.

In Caracas, Havana, Mexico City, and Buenos Aires, the standard-bearers of the radical left have celebrated Boric's election results, apparently viewing Boric as one of them. But they might end up being disappointed.

For example, it is worth highlighting events that closely preceded the first round of Chile's election. Ortega's re-election in a sham vote, Maduro's landslide victories in regional elections, and the Cuban regime's suppression of a scheduled protest forced responses from the Boric coalition's members. While the Communist Party and others ultimately decided to congratulate Ortega and Maduro, and backed the Castro regime in Havana, neither Boric nor his second-round allies joined them.

Add to that Chile's recent history, the results of the second round, and the composition of the governing coalition, and there is good reason to think that Boric might not govern like a typical Latin American left-wing populist. Instead, he might operate more like a European social democrat, akin to Felipe González, Spain's first Socialist prime minister after that country's return to democracy in the 1970s. For Chile's sake – and for Latin America's – one certainly hopes so.

The writer, a former Foreign Minister of Mexico, is a professor at New York University and author of *America Through Foreign Eyes*.

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WISDOM CORNER

- Your passion is waiting for your courage to catch up. ISABELLE LAFLECHE
- Work hard for what you want, because it won't come to you without a fight. LEAH LABELLE
- Don't be afraid to give up the good to go for the great. JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER

WORDSWORTH

Carpet

To find the origins of this we have to delve into criminals' and prison slang. The first recorded use of carpet for a prison sentence comes from the book *The Mark of the Broad Arrow* by "No 77", published in 1903. He suggests that the word was then current prison slang for a six months' sentence, with the usual term for a three-month one being drag. However, he was either wrong or carpet took over the latter's meaning. Perhaps No 77 made a mistake, since carpet came about as the result of a bit of rhyming slang: carpet-bag = drag, implying that the two words have always meant the same thing.

Dr DK Giri

IT IS IN ORDER TO CELEBRATE THE HISTORIC DAYS LIKE DECEMBER 16, 1971. IT DISPLAYED AND EXEMPLIFIED THE HEROISM, BRAVERY, AND SACRIFICE OF INDIANS IN LIBERATION OF BANGLADESH



Jorge G Castañeda

In Caracas, Havana, Mexico City, and Buenos Aires, the standard-bearers of Latin America's radical Left have celebrated the result of Chile's presidential election, apparently viewing the millennial Leftist as one of them. But they might end up being disappointed

SPECTRUM ENVIRONMENT

Climate change and national security



Avilash Roul

INDIA VOTED AGAINST THE RESOLUTION AS THE UNSC WAS NOT THE PLACE TO DISCUSS EITHER ISSUE OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND CLIMATE JUSTICE

On 13th December, United Nations Security Council (UNSC) failed to adopt a resolution on climate change-induced security risks that exacerbates conflict across the geo-political fault lines. India, as the only non-permanent member voted against the draft resolution with Russia, a permanent member, vetoing it, while China abstained. UNSC recorded 12 votes in favour of the resolution.

India voted against the resolution as the UNSC was not the place to discuss either issue of climate change and climate justice. India, also, intensely submitted that handling of climate change at the UNSC is neither acceptable nor desirable. Despite India's staunch opposition to UNSC's mandate on climate change, the securitisation of climate change is inevitable and indispensable.

The draft resolution, sponsored by Ireland and Niger and supported by Kenya and majority of the UNSC members, recommended adopting climate-related security risk as a central component into UNSC's comprehensive conflict-prevention strategies. The draft resolution argued that adverse effects of climate change can lead to 'social tensions, exacerbating, prolonging, or contributing to the risk of future

conflicts and instability and posing a key risk to global peace, security, and stability'. It is to be noted that the UNSC mandate as per the UN Charter is 'to maintain international peace and security in accordance with the principles and purposes of the UN'.

Additionally, the draft resolution asks the Secretary-General to submit a report 'on the security implications of the adverse effects of climate change in relevant country or region-specific contexts on the Council's agenda as well as recommendations on how climate-related security risks can be addressed' in two years to UNSC. The draft resolution was drawn heavily from a Germany drafted resolution of 2020 but that was never put to vote due to tough resistance from China, Russia and the US.

While generally it has been believed that India's negative voting against the resolution is a reflection of its long-standing position of opposing any expansion of agenda items of UNSC beyond its Charter, it needs to be looked into India's domestic and international positioning. India's long campaign and advocacy on reforming and restructuring post-World War institutions including a permanent seat at the UNSC is well known. Barricading intrusion of climate

change into the UNSC agenda and expanding UNSC itself - so far the most undemocratic set up with five nations deciding world peace - is self-contradictory.

India's apprehension is well conveyed that only five countries will have a free hand in deciding on all climate-related issues than 196 countries + European Union (EU) as parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The UNSC functions in secrecy with powerful 'veto' politics than UNFCCC, which works in consensus with transparency. The UNSC is the antithesis of what UNFCCC has been collectively progressing through 'common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities' of members. Perhaps India cautiously calculates that sanctions may be imposed against India and other emerging or developing countries under UNSC if they don't meet their climate mitigation targets. Ironically, UNSC permanent members are the largest greenhouse gas (GHG) emitters at 50.47 per cent of global emissions in 2020.

In all probability, India has either overlooked or deliberately misunderstood the context of expanding security discourse by linking it into climate change (terrorism is other item in the draft resolution).

While aware of relative ambiguity on defining national interest or national security, it is absolutely relevant to adopt and accept climate change as a threat to national or global security and peace for policy implications.

To contextualise the UNSC debate, it is sensible to explore the environment and security discourse within India that is at its nadir; both policy wise and academically. Too much bad blood has been spilled over between proponents of several high profile development projects and opponents of those projects. Many in the government as ill-advised by less knowledgeable satraps baselessly blame environmental crusaders and champions as impediments to securing so-called national security. Meanwhile, the Supreme Court has recently said in the Chardham Road case that 'there is no doubt that sustainable development has to be balanced with national security requirements'. Protection of the environment and natural resources for future generations is in part of safeguarding national security.

The writer is guest professor of Humanities and Social Sciences at Indian Institute of Technology, Chennai.

FOCUS VIJAY DIWAS 2021

50 YEARS AFTER

Vijay Diwas marks the passage of 50 years since the historic day in 1971. This day, on the December 16, 1971, a new country was born, Bangladesh. Another country, Pakistan was vivisected after 24 years of its creation. India was torn twice, once after a lot of bloodshed in a civil conflict, again in 1971 in a war engaging three countries – East Pakistan (Bangladesh), West Pakistan (Pakistan) and India. For Bangladesh, it was a moment of celebration, for Pakistan, one of defeat and disgrace and for India, on deeper reflection, and one could say, it could be a mixed bag of feelings, as it was to engage in a bloody conflict twice in 25 years or so and split twice.

Let us recall the events around the historic moment and ponder over how we celebrate these now and in future. Fifty years is a long period in history to reflect on developments that changed the shape of South Asian region. To recall briefly, after Independence, India was divided into two countries – India and Pakistan – the latter was further divided into two territories – West Pakistan and East Pakistan.

The East Pakistanis were discriminated in multiple ways by West Pakistani administration. There was enormous resentment in East Pakistan. It reached a boiling point when Pakistan Peoples' Party declined to hand over power to the Awami League, which had genuinely won the elections in East Pakistan. In utter frustration, the Awami League declared independence from Pakistan. Then West Pakistan army occupied East Pakistan. The trail of oppression began – rape, torture, murder, plunder – forcing a heavy exodus of refugees from East Pakistan into India. The barbarism was carried out by the Pakistan army under the Operation Searchlight.

However, for India, the tipping point came when Pakistan attacked Indian airbases. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister, in retaliation, declared a full-scale war on Pakistan. In a matter of 13 days, India won the war forcing Pakistan



In the context of Vijay Diwas, we need to celebrate it in a different way. The prominent hero of the Second World War, Winston Churchill had said, "In War: Resolution, In Defeat: Defiance, In Victory: Magnanimity, In Peace: Good will"

to surrender December 16, 1971. This momentous day is celebrated as Vijay Diwas (the Victory Day). This year, Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, in the celebration, had this to say in a tweet, "On the 50th a Vijay Diwas, I recall the great valour and sacrifice by the Muktiyodhas, Biranganas, and brave-hearts of Indian armed forces. Together, we fought and defeated oppressive forces. Rashtrapatiiji's presence in Dhaka is of special significance to every Indian."

As a part of the celebration, the golden jubilee of the victory, Prime Minister Modi conducted a solemn ceremony at the National War Memorial at the India Gate. The day is also remembered as the biggest ever victory since the World War II as a staggering number of Pakistani soldiers surrendered to the Indian army unconditionally.

It is in order to celebrate the historic days like December 16,

1971. It displayed and exemplified the heroism, bravery, and sacrifice of Indians in liberation of Bangladesh. Note that, the Europeans remember the holocaust to reflect on the cruelties committed by the Nazi dictator. Many former colonies celebrate their independence days from the colonial empires. Democratic countries celebrate the day of adoption of their Constitutions and so forth.

What is, however, important and necessary is to learn the lessons from history, good and bad. To quote George Santayana, the Spanish-born American philosopher who is regarded as one of the most important thinkers of the first half of the 20th century, and one of the most prominent champions of critical realism, a critic, dramatist, educator, essayist, novelist, and poet – all rolled into one, "Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it".

Santayana's profound advice

was articulated nicely by Rajnath Singh that "this war tells us that the partition of India on the basis of religion was a historic mistake. Pakistan was born in the name of a religion; it could not remain one entity." Therefore, religion is an untenable tool or basis of making a country. Religion is subjective, individual or community based, and not good for governance. Principles of a religion are not universally shared causing inter-religious and even intra-religious contentions, conflict and violence.

At best, the genuinely and truly religious citizens could contribute to the construction of a saner society imbued with humanism – love, compassion, fellowship, piety and so on. Furthermore, many in India, even in the ruling dispensation, talk about reclaiming Akhand Bharat (the Undivided India). They perhaps mean India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Those subscribing to the concept of Bharata Varsha call India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Tibet, Sri Lanka and Burma are one nation. They had all embraced Sanatan Dharma. However, that is another story.

In the context of Vijay Diwas, in current times, we need to celebrate it in a different way. The prominent hero of the Second World War, Winston Churchill had said, "In War: Resolution, In Defeat: Defiance, In Victory: Magnanimity, In Peace: Good will." We recall the atrocities not to repeat them; we recall the sacrifice to honour them in gratefulness. We take the last words of Churchill – peace. We are in peace times, as a full-scale war is ruled out between nuclear countries. Therefore, we promote good will, vow not to nurture hatred or hubris, seek security, unity and development.

Vijay Diwas today should mean victory of over hatred and hubris. Sounds moralistic, not pragmatic! But that is the way to go. – INFA

The writer is Prof International Politics, JIMMC. Views expressed are personal.

Transgenders & their rights

Sir, The department of Social Security and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (SSEPD), the nodal department for transgenders in the state, has recommended equal education, employment and healthcare opportunities besides for them, and their inclusion in government schemes. This policy has also proposed a dedicated fund which should be established for sex reassignment surgery (SRS) in government hospitals, including separate HIV surveillance centres. It also states that a dedicated three-month paid leave should be provisioned for the transgender persons who are undergoing SRS or hormonal therapy. According to the Socio Economic and Caste Census (2011) in Odisha, there are 20,332 transgender persons in the state, including 2,124 children, 3,236 SC and 4,533 ST persons. Their literacy rate stands at just 54.3 per cent. The government has proposed to create a transgender helpline with trained counsellors to respond and manage incidents of violence, abuse and other inhuman treatments. The draft policy also states that action would be taken against parents who desert or abuse their gender non-conforming children and doctors who undertake unethical conversion therapy. Hitesh Kumar Parida, JAJPUR

Twenty-one is good

Sir, The Left parties opposing the Centre's move to raise the minimum legal marriage age for women to 18 years goes to show that they are mere opportunists and have fallen to vote bank politics and religious appeasement. Otherwise how come the same left that 'harangued' on women empowerment and emancipation now suddenly without even thinking and realising about what they always 'lectured' now are suddenly dancing to the tune of minority parties and organisations. It is really surprising that so-called progressive forces like the Left parties that spoke volumes on gender equality and freedom for women in all spheres of life are now opposing a proposal that gives gender equality and parity. The proposed Bill no doubt aims at protecting overall health of women and empowering them to handle situations with maturity. It gives women, irrespective of caste and religion opportunities, responsibilities and rights to lead a better life. As education is a key factor and by 21 women will get an opportunity to complete their higher studies it will not only help them but also their families, the society and the nation as a whole. The Left parties' allegation that this is another step towards introducing a uniform civil code in the country is rather a baseless argument. M Pradyu, KANNUR

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

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national

of the day quote

Barring few, many (legislators) do not wear a mask. Throw me out if even I do not wear a mask. The entire Maharashtra is looking at what is happening here, but at least after speaking one should wear the mask

AJIT PAWAR | MAHARASHTRA DEPUTY CM

Hunar Haat brings the talents of artisans and craftspeople from the remote corners of the country to the mainstream, taking forward Prime Minister Narendra Modi's resolve of an 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat'

BHUPENDER YADAV | UNION MINISTER

A five-member committee will be constituted for taking decisions regarding appointments to different posts in universities of the state

MANOHAAR LAL KHATTAR | HARYANA CM

SHORT TAKES

Shiv Sena to contest UP polls

Lucknow: The Shiv Sena has announced that it will contest the upcoming assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh with the intentions to defeat BJP. "The Shiv Sena will field strong candidates against all BJP ministers to ensure their defeat," said the state Sena secretary Vishvajet Singh. He said that a decision to this effect had been taken at a meeting of party leaders held here on Thursday and presided over by state president Anil Singh.

ASIGMA launched

New Delhi: The Indian Army Thursday launched a new messaging application called ASIGMA for in-house communication. ASIGMA, which stands for Army Secure Indigenously Messaging Application, has been developed entirely in-house by a team of officers of the Corps of Signals, an official statement said. "The new application is being deployed on the Army's internal network as a replacement of Army Wide Area Network (AWAN) messaging application which has been in service for the past 15 years," the Army said. ASIGMA has been fielded on Army-owned hardware and lends itself to lifetime support with future upgrades, it said.

5 kg IED defused

Srinagar: A major tragedy was averted after a joint team of the police, CRPF and the army detected and defused a 5 kg IED (Improvised Explosive Device) in South Kashmir's Pulwama district Thursday, officials said. Officials said that they acted on a specific input about the IED planted on the Neva Srinagar road and started an operation. The IED was defused by the bomb disposal squad on the spot, added the officials. "Pulwama Police averted major tragedy. Acting on specific information Pulwama Police along with 50 RR & 183 BN CRPF found an IED of approx. 5 kg assembled in a container planted on Neva Srinagar road."

MP lost 85 tigers in past 4 yrs: Govt

Bhopal, Dec 23: As many as 85 tigers, including 32 cubs, have died in the past four years due to various reasons in wildlife habitats of Madhya Pradesh, the government has informed the state Assembly. State forest minister Kunwar Vijay Shah gave this information in a written reply to a question by Congress legislator from

Jabalpur (East) Lakhan Ghanghoriya. The Congress MLA had sought to know how many tigers died in the state in four years from 2018-19 to 2021-22. The MLA had also sought information about how many big cats had escaped from various reserves, to which Shah said that the movement of the tigers through various forest corridors is a natural process

in search for food, partners, better habitat and new territory. "State government spent ₹28,306.70 lakh on the conservation, security and monitoring of the big cats during 2018-19, while this amount was ₹22,049.98 lakh in 2019-20. In 2020-21 and 2021-22, ₹26,427.86 lakh and ₹12,882.82 lakh have been spent on this work respectively," Minister told the house.



The rival parties, including the BJP, Samajwadi Party and others, are busy painting a Hindu-Muslim colour to the elections to hide their shortcomings. The BSP people will have to go to every village and every house to warn the people. This task must begin now

MAYAWATI | BSP CHIEF

YOGI GOVT TO COMPILE HISTORY OF VILLAGES, CITIES

After Prime Minister Narendra Modi asked mayors of various states to celebrate their cities, UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has directed officials to chalk out plans to compile the rich history of villages and cities in the state



AYODHYA LAND 'SCAM'

PRIYANKA, MAYAWATI SEEK SC INTERVENTION

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi/Lucknow, Dec 23: Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi and BSP supremo Mayawati Thursday sought the intervention of the Supreme Court in the alleged land 'scam' in Ayodhya linked to local MLAs and relatives of state government officials, a day after the Uttar Pradesh government ordered a probe into the matter.

Priyanka Gandhi also dismissed as an "eyewash" the probe into what she called as Ayodhya land 'scam' in areas around the proposed Ram temple while Mayawati demanded that the state government cancel the land deals if the allegations in a media report on the issue are true. Priyanka Gandhi said the Supreme Court should take suo motu cognisance of the land deals and hold an inquiry as the Ram temple in Ayodhya is being built following its order. Addressing a press conference in Delhi, she accused BJP leaders and officials of indulging in "corruption", and said they have hurt the faith of people who have donated for the construction of the Ram temple.



A report in the media Wednesday claimed that MLAs, mayors, relatives of the commissioner, SDM and DIG bought land in Ayodhya after the Supreme Court announced the verdict in the Ramjanmabhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute on November 9, 2019. The long awaited verdict had cleared the way for construction of the Ram temple.

Additional Chief Secretary, Information, Navneet Sehgal said in Lucknow Wednesday night that "Chief

Minister Yogi Adityanath has ordered the Revenue department to probe the matter thoroughly." Mayawati, a former UP chief minister, urged the Supreme Court to take note of the media report and order a high-level inquiry into the land deals.

"It is a very serious matter. My party would want the Supreme Court to take notice and if the allegations are true, the state government needs to get the deals cancelled," she told reporters in Lucknow when asked to

Priyanka Gandhi said the Supreme Court should take suo motu cognisance of the land deals and hold an inquiry as the Ram temple in Ayodhya is being built following its order

The Ram Temple Trust's money is being "misused to benefit" BJP, RSS and trust members, she alleged

comment on the report. At her news conference, Priyanka Gandhi also questioned the "silence" of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath over the alleged corruption by temple trust members, BJP leaders and officials in buying land for the temple, saying they owe a moral responsibility towards the donors who gave their money out of faith.

The Ram Temple Trust's money is being "misused to benefit" BJP, RSS and trust members, she alleged, adding land belonging to Dalits which is not allowed to be sold is also being "usurped" and illegally bought by officials and their relatives.

'Fight against pandemic not over'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 23: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Thursday reviewed the COVID-19 situation in the country amid fresh concerns sparked by the outbreak of highly transmissible Omicron variant and stressed on the need to be 'satark' (vigilant) and 'saavdhan' (cautious).

While asserting that the government is alert and seized of the evolving scenario, he added that the fight against the pandemic is not over yet and highlighted the "paramount importance" of Covid-safe behaviour; a statement from the PMO said.

He directed officials that the Centre's teams be sent to states with low vaccination, rising cases, and insufficient health infrastructure, to assist them improve the situation. Places like New Delhi and Maharashtra have seen a rise in the number of new infections of late. After the presentation by officials, including the measures taken to deal with the new challenges, Modi directed them to maintain a high level of vigil and alertness at all levels. He asked them to work in close coordination with states to



A health worker prepares to collect swab sample of the outstation passengers for COVID-19 test, at Dadar railway station in Mumbai. PTI PHOTO

support their efforts of public health measures of containment and management under the 'whole of government' approach.

"The strategy of the Centre for proactive, focussed, collaborative and cooperative fight against the pandemic should guide all our future actions," Modi told the officials. In a tweet he said, "Reviewed the COVID-19 situation across India, particularly in the wake of Omicron. Our focus is on further ramping up health infra, testing, tracing and ensuring full vaccination coverage."

In the meeting, he directed the officials to ensure that the health systems in the states, beginning

from the district level, are strengthened to meet any challenge posed by the new variant. It is important for states to ensure that the oxygen supply equipment are installed and fully functional, Modi instructed the officials at the meeting, according to the statement.

He also asked the officials to work with states on a regular basis and review the status of preparedness of various components of health infrastructure including training and capacity building of human resources, timely availability of ambulances, readiness of states to operationalise COVID facilities for institutional quarantining, and effective and supervised monitoring of those in home isolation.

He further asked officials to make effective use of IT tools for tele-medicine and tele-consultation. Heightened and close monitoring of emerging clusters and hotspots through active, prompt and effective surveillance should continue, Modi stated at the meeting.

Modi directed officials for sending a good number of positive samples for genome sequencing to INSACOG Labs in a prompt manner.

Anti-conversion Bill passed

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Belagavi, Dec 23: The Karnataka Assembly Thursday passed the Anti-conversion Bill amid uproar by the Opposition during the ongoing Winter Session of the Assembly. The day was reserved for discussion on the Bill.

"The Anti-conversion Bill is Constitutional and pro-people," Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai said while speaking to mediapersons at the Suvarna Soudha here.

"Instead of presenting their views on the Bill, the Opposition leaders chose to make political speeches. In fact, the preparations for bringing the Bill was made during the earlier Congress regime itself. Former Chief Minister Siddaramaiah himself had agreed to present the Bill before the state cabinet after it was scrutinised by the law department. Doesn't it amount to his consent to the Bill," Bommai asked.

"The Bill is especially pro-SC, ST and poor segments of the society. It would help in the protection of all the communities and uphold their dignity. The state government is very clear in implementing the Bill. The government is opposed to conversion by exploiting poverty and offering allurements like employment and education," Bommai said.

The Congress leaders are opposing the same Bill now in the Assembly, which shows the dual policy of the party, Bommai said.

"The draft Bill was not prepared by former Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa. He had just referred a request in this regard to the Law Commission. It was the Congress government which prepared the draft Bill after getting a report from the Law Commission. Congress leaders who supported the draft Bill then are now opposing it only because of vote bank politics," Bommai said.

However, the Congress party said that it would roll back the Bill when it comes to power.

The Protection of Right to Freedom of Religion Bill, 2021, popularly known as Anti-conversion Bill proposes protection of right to freedom of religion and prohibition of unlawful conversion from one religion to another by misrepresentation, force, undue influence, coercion, allurement or by any fraudulent means and for the matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

"No person shall convert or attempt to convert, either directly or otherwise, any other person from one religion to another by use or practice of force, undue influence, coercion, allurement or by any fraudulent means or by any other means or promise of marriage, nor shall any person abet or conspire such conversion," the Bill says.

PM takes a dig at Oppn in UP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Varanasi (UP), Dec 23: Taking a swipe at Opposition parties, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said talking about cow has been made a matter of "sin" by some people but "it is mother and sacred for us".

The PM was addressing a rally here after inaugurating and laying foundation stones of 27 projects, including a dairy project, just months ahead of the Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh.

He said those making jokes on cows and buffaloes forget that the livelihood of eight crore families depends on "pashudhan" (livestock). "Talking about cow, talking about 'gobardhan' (cow dung) has been made a matter of 'gunah' (sin) by some people. Cow can be a sin for some people, for us it is mother, sacred (gaaye kuch logo ke liye gunah ho sakti hai, hamare liye gaaye, mata hai, poojniye hai)," Modi said.

In an apparent attack on the Samajwadi Party, Modi said their



Prime Minister Narendra Modi receives a memento from UP CM Yogi Adityanath during launch of various development projects at a public meeting in Varanasi, Thursday. PTI PHOTO

dictionary contains "mafiavard" and "parivarvad". "For us, the priority is 'sabka saath, sabka vikas,'" the PM said.

"It gives pain to some when I talk of double engine, double power and double development as they, who see politics from the spectacle of caste, sect and religion, never wanted the development of UP," the PM alleged.

Modi also alleged that those thinking of selfish gains do not like the development of the state.

"They have an objection to the development of Purvanchal and works for Baba Vishwanath Dham. I have been told that last Sunday, 1.50 lakh pilgrims reached for darshan of Baba Vishwanath Dham," he said. Those who pushed UP backward, their anger will further increase as people from all over the state are standing with the double engine government and giving their blessings, Modi claimed. The PM also stressed on natural farming, saying it is the need of the hour.

Senior Congress leaders speak to Harish Rawat

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 23: Top Congress leaders Thursday spoke to the party's campaign committee head and former Uttarakhand Chief Minister Harish Rawat and sought to mollify him after his public outburst against party leaders, sources said.

This comes a day after Rawat created a flutter in the political circles, alleging non-cooperation from his organisation and noting that he sometimes feels it is time for him to rest. The sources said the senior leaders

sought to know from Rawat the reasons behind his criticism. He was asked to continue to work towards ensuring the party's victory in the upcoming polls, they said.

Rawat would be attending a series of meeting in Delhi on Friday on Uttarakhand polls. Meanwhile, Congress MP from Punjab Manish Tewari also criticised the party leadership.

"First Assam. Then Punjab. Now Uttarakhand...Bhog Poora Hi Paur Gaye. (Will finish completely). Kasar na raje jawe koi (No effort will be spared)," he said in a cryptic tweet.

OFFICE OF THE PANCHAYAT SAMITI LAXMIPUR, DIST.- KORAPUT
Notice No. 2877/21 Dtd.21.12.2021
QUOTATION CALL NOTICE
No.i-296:- Sealed limited quotations are invited from reputed Indian Manufacturers / Suppliers / Agencies, their authorized dealers / DGS&D approved registered Firms/SHG groups of Laxmipur Block for "Supply of Face Mask (double layer cotton) and procurement and distribution of Digital Thermal Sensor, Oxy Pulse Meter, N95 (5 layer) Mask, face shield, Sanitizer 200 ml. and washable hand gloves to distribute to ANM, AANM, Male health workers, AWW, ASHA & AWH of Laxmipur Block".
The detail information of which are made available in Koraput Dist. website i.e. http://www.koraput.nic.in & in DRDA Website http://www.drdakoraput.org.
The date and time of receipt of seal quotations are from 22.12.2021 to 27.12.2021 upto 5.00 P.M. on working days only.
Sd./- Block Development Officer, Laxmipur
OIPR-19158/11/0008/2122

NANDANKANAN ZOOLOGICAL PARK
SHORT QUOTATION CALL NOTICE
NOTICE No.19 of 2021-22
Dated the Nandankanan 23rd December, 2021
No.MM-310:- The interested individuals / firms/ agencies are invited to express their willingness for "SUPPLY OF CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS TO NANDANKANAN ZOOLOGICAL PARK, ODISHA FOR THE YEAR 2021-22". The application form of the said item along with detail terms and conditions shall be available at the website www.nandankanan.org from 23.12.2021.
Sl. No. Item of service Last date of submission of quotation Date of opening of quotation
1 SUPPLY OF CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS TO NANDANKANAN ZOOLOGICAL PARK, ODISHA 5.00 P.M. of 03.01.2022 11.00 A.M. of 04.01.2022
Sd./-Deputy Director, Nandankanan Zoological Park
OIPR-08070/11/0006/2122

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER KENDRAPARA (R&B) DIVISION-I, KENDRAPARA
E-Mail ID: eernbkdp@gmail.com
Tel. (06727)-220268, Fax No. (06727)-220862
GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA "e" Procurement Notice
e-procurement Notice for Building works
Bid Identification No. E.E., R n B KDP-26/2021-22
No.B-890:-
1. No. of work : 5 Nos. Building works
2. Estimated cost : Rs.14.24 lakh to Rs.39.78 lakh (Approximately)
3. Period of completion : 02 (Two) to 03 (Three) calendar months
4. Date & time of sale & receipt of bid document : From 10.00 A.M. of 24.12.2021 to 5 P.M. of 03.01.2022
5. Last date / time of receipt of bids : 5 P.M. of 03.01.2022
6. Date & time of opening of bids : 11.00 A.M. of 04.01.2022
7. Name and address of the : Executive Engineer, Kendrapara officer inviting bid (R&B) Division-I, Kendrapara Further details with any addendum, corrigendum, cancellation can be seen from the State Govt. portal 'https://tendersorissa.gov.in'
Sd./- (Er. K.C Behera)
Executive Engineer, Kendrapara (R&B) Division-I
OIPR-34097/11/0017/2122

OFFICE OF THE PANCHAYAT SAMITI, BOIPARIGUDA, DISTRICT- KORAPUT
No. 3861/2021 Dated the 21st December, 2021
TENDER CALL NOTICE NO. 3 /2021-22
The Block Development Officer, Boipariguda, District- Koraput (Odisha) on behalf of the Governor of Odisha invites percentage rate contract tender in single cover system for the following work:-
Sl. No. Name of the work Amount put to tender (In Rs.)
1 Construction of Science Lab, Computer Class, Art/Craft room & Library in one block (G + 1 with stair) at Govt. UGHS, G. Majhiguda Rs.34,62,501/-
2 Construction of additional classroom at Govt. UGHS, G. Majhiguda Rs.8,23,250/-
Bid documents/DTCN will be available in the website www.koraput.nic.in from dt.22.12.2021 to dt.30.12.2021 (up to 5.30 PM). Last date of receipt of bid documents/DTCN through Speed Post/Regd. Post only is dt. 30.12.2021 (up to 5.30 PM). Bid documents will be opened on dtd.31.12.2021 at 11.00 AM in the office chamber of the undersigned.
Bid document/DTCN and other details can be seen from the website www.koraput.nic.in
Block Development Officer
Boipariguda
OIPR-19157/11/0007/2122

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER RURAL WORKS DIVISION, KORAPUT
Email: eerwkoraput@yahoo.com, Phone: 06852-251263
e-Procurement for Building Works
Bid Identification No. SERWKPT-Online-19/2021-22
Letter No.6931 Date: 23.12.2021
No.O-1507--01. Name of the work: Building works in the Dist. of Koraput for the year 2021-22. 02. Total number of works: 4 (Four) Nos. 03. Approximate estimate cost : Rs.1.77 lakhs to Rs.10.62 lakhs (Approximately). 04. Class of contractor: 'D' & 'C' class. 05. Period of completion: Within 2 to 3 months. 06. Other details:
Procurement Officer Bid Identification No. Availability of tender online for bidding
From To
Superintending Engineer, R.W. Division, Koraput Online Tender / 19/ SERWKPT/2021-22 14.12.2021 at 12.00 A.M. 30.12.2021 upto 3.00 P.M.
Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in/nicgep/website
All amendments, time extension, clarifications etc. will be uploaded in the website only. Bidders should regularly visit the above website to keep themselves updated.
"N.B. - Any addendum or corrigendum will be available in the website only.
OIPR-25088/11/0015/2122 **Sd./- Superintending Engineer, Rural Works Division, Koraput**

BORDER ROW

Pressure on border residents to choose Meghalaya: Assam

ASSAM AND MEGHALAYA HAD IDENTIFIED 12 POINTS OF DISPUTES AT CHIEF MINISTERIAL-LEVEL TALKS IN AUGUST THIS YEAR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, Dec 23: Assam Border Areas Development Minister Atul Bora has said that there are reports of "pressure" on people in disputed border areas along Meghalaya in Assam's Kamrup (Rural) district to choose the neighbouring state while settling the boundary row.

He did not specify from which source the pressure was being put, though local Boko MLA Nandita Das of the Opposition Congress claimed that Meghalaya Police also had a role in encouraging local residents to opt for the bordering state.

Replying to a Zero Hour discussion raised by Das in the Assembly, Bora said, "We have some reports that police administration is encouraging people (in border areas) to choose Meghalaya."

We have been observing all happenings in these areas minutely and our report will be based on it, he added.

Bora and Das are members of a committee formed by Assam government to look into the disputes in Kamrup (Rural) district areas bordering Meghalaya, and the panel had visited some of these areas a couple of months back for on-ground inspection.

They were accompanied by mem-

bers of a similar committee from Meghalaya side and during the joint inspection visit the delegates had held meetings with the public to gauge their preference for either state.

Assam and Meghalaya had identified 12 points of disputes at chief ministerial-level talks in August this year, with six points, including the area under Boko Legislative Assembly constituency in Assam, taken up for resolution in the first phase.

A final joint statement by the two states based on reports of ministerial-level committees set for dealing with the six points of dispute is slated to be announced at the end of this month.

Bora further said willingness or preference of the residents to choose a state is not the sole criterion for settling the disputes, with ethnicity also being an important factor that will be taken into consideration. He also said Assam has administrative control in the areas under Boko LAC and though these are mostly Garo community dominated areas, many such villages are likely to opt to remain with Assam.

The minister also said the government has received a memorandum submitted by the people of those areas through the local officials wherein they have mentioned their preferences and problems.



Gauhati HC to hear PIL against 'encounter deaths' in Assam

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Guwahati, Dec 23: The Gauhati High Court has agreed to hear a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed by senior lawyer Arif Jwadder, who claimed that more than 80 police encounters took place in Assam since May, leaving 28 dead and 48 others injured.

The senior lawyer, who earlier lodged a similar complaint with the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), in his PIL, demanded a CBI probe or constitution of a court monitored Special Investigation Team (SIT) comprising police officials of other state to probe the "fake encounters".

"All the victims were unarmed and handcuffed at the time of the encounter. Those people who have been killed or injured were not

dreaded criminals," Jwadder told the media.

"Above all, this petition raises the issue of violations of the rule of law and equality before law and equal protection of laws. Police personnel do not have a licence to kill, the whole idea of the CrPC is to apprehend criminals and bring them to justice, not to kill them."

The PIL said that such encounter killings deprive the victims of the right to personal liberty and life, which cannot be denied except by "procedure established by law".

"There is no law enabling what come to be known as 'encounter killings' and the Assam Police, like any other persons, are bound by the provisions of the CrPC. Failure to apprehend criminals and bring them to justice is a failure of the entire policing system in the state which requires an investigation by this Court."

Refusal to marry after physical relationship isn't cheating: HC

The Bombay High Court acquitted a Palghar man in a case of cheating after 25 years as there was no "evidence to prove that the woman had consented to physical relationship on a misconception of fact"

AGENCIES

Mumbai, Dec 23: After 25 years, a Palghar man was let off from a case of cheating wherein a woman had alleged that he had a sexual relationship with her on the pretext of marrying her.

The Bombay High Court acquitted the man, saying that since there was no "evidence to prove that the woman had consented to physical relationship on a misconception of fact...the mere refusal to marry would not constitute an offence under Section 417 of the IPC".

The woman had lodged an FIR in 1996, alleging that the accused had a sexual relationship with her on the pretext of marriage. He subsequently declined to marry her; the woman alleged in the FIR.

Based on the FIR lodged by the woman, a case was registered against the accused for offences punishable under Sections 376 (rape) and 417 (cheating) of the Indian Penal Code.

During the trial, the accused denied all the allegations levelled against him.

After three years of trial, the additional Sessions judge in Palghar held the accused guilty of offences punishable under Section 417 of the IPC. He was then sentenced to imprisonment for one year and a fine of ₹5,000 was imposed on him.

During the trial, the prosecu-



tor had examined eight witnesses, including the woman. She revealed to the court that the accused was known to her. She said that she had a sexual relationship with the accused for over three years. Even her sister told the court that there was a love affair between the two.

Justice Anuja Prabhudesai of the Bombay High Court said while examining the appeal filed by the accused that the evidence on record indicated that the sexual relationship between the two was consensual. "The accused has been held guilty of an offence under Section 417 of the IPC solely for the reason that he refused to marry the prosecutrix. The question is whether in such circumstances refusal to marry constitutes an offence of

cheating," said Justice Prabhudesai.

Examining the issue further, Justice Prabhudesai noted that the evidence of the woman did not indicate that she had sexual relationship with the accused under a misconception of fact, with regard to the promise of marriage or that her consent was based on fraudulent misrepresentation of marriage.

"There is no evidence on record to indicate that since the inception, the accused did not intend to marry her. In the absence of evidence to prove that the woman had consented to a physical relationship on a misconception of fact, as stipulated under Section 90 of IPC, the mere refusal to marry would not constitute an offence under Section 417 of the IPC," said Justice Prabhudesai.

Man held for threatening Aaditya Thackeray

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 23: Mumbai Police have arrested a man from Bangalore for allegedly threatening Maharashtra cabinet minister Aaditya Thackeray, following which the state government Thursday announced that an SIT would be set up to probe the incidents of threat issued to legislators and others, and a policy would be framed to deal with such cases.

Speaking in the Legislative Assembly, Maharashtra Home Minister Dilip Walse Patil said the man, identified as Jaisingh Rajput, who threatened Thackeray, was apprehended in Karnataka by the Mumbai crime branch's cyber team and brought to Mumbai.

A police official earlier said that Rajput had allegedly called Aaditya Thackeray December 8, but the latter did not receive the call. After that the accused had sent threatening text messages to the minister.

Aaditya Thackeray, the son of Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, holds the Environment and Tourism portfolios.

During the investigation, the cyber police traced the caller's mobile number to Bangalore in neighbouring Karnataka.

Accordingly, a team was sent to Bangalore, where the accused person was arrested, the official said. He was later produced before a court which sent him in police custody.

The accused was a fan of late actor Sushant Singh Rajput, the official said.



Addressing the Lower House of the state legislature later in the day, Walse Patil said, "Members (of the Legislative Assembly) put forth different complaints. Be it a member of the legislature or a common man, their security is very important. A Special Investigation Team (SIT) will be formed to probe complaints and threats and a policy will be formed to deal with this."

The issue was raised by Shiv Sena MLA Sunil Prabhu, who sought to link the case to Karnataka, a BJP-ruled state. Prabhu said activists Govind Pansare, Narendra Dabholkar, writer MM Kalburgi, journalist Gauri Lankesh were killed and their killings had Karnataka connection.

The BJP is ruling in Karnataka and the accused are from the state, he said, adding that the one who threatened Thackeray was also arrested from that state, and wondered whether this is part of a "larger conspiracy".

"The House needs to know about this," he said.

Prabhu was joined by NCP minister Nawab Malik in saying that a minister receiving threats is a very serious issue.

INSTA POST CASE

Kangana appears before Mumbai police

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 23: Actor Kangana Ranaut appeared before the Mumbai Police Thursday in connection with an FIR registered against her for a social media post that allegedly linked farmers' protests to a separatist group, her lawyer said.

Ranaut reached the Khar police station around 11 am. An FIR was registered there against her last month following a complaint by a Sikh organisation. Her lawyer Rizwan Sidiquee said she reached the police station to record her statement.



The police earlier this month issued a notice to her for questioning. Her counsel had told the Bombay High Court that she would appear before the Khar police December 22. However, Wednesday, her lawyer sought another date for appearance.

The city police had earlier told the HC that they would not arrest Ranaut till January 25, 2022 over her social media post that allegedly linked farmers' protests to a separatist group.



SANTA IS COMING

A boy admires statues of Santa Claus in front of a shop in Bandra, Mumbai, Thursday

IIT-Guwahati develops perovskite solar cells

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

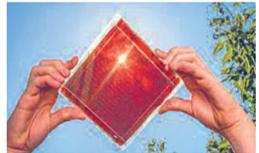
New Delhi/Guwahati, Dec 23: Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati, researchers have developed hybrid perovskite-based solar or photovoltaic devices, which are highly efficient, cost effective, easy to manufacture and easily recyclable when it comes to producing electricity from the sunlight.

The emerging perovskite-based semiconducting devices are considered the most promising due to their low-cost, ease of manufac-

turing as roll-to-roll devices, high material availability and easy recyclability.

These devices were developed achieving power conversion efficiencies beyond 21 per cent by utilizing economical solution-based photovoltaic device processing techniques at mild room temperature and realizing high ambient, thermal and optical stability.

Among all the renewable energy sources, the energy from sun (solar energy) is considered to be



the most sustainable due to its ample availability on the surface of the earth. Currently, inorganic solar cell (silicon-based) is a major player in the market. However, this technology requires high-temperature processing, which

results in the high price of solar panels. Further, the recycling of solar panels is hazardous and complicated.

"The perovskite solar cells (PSCs) research has experienced tremendous attention due to their exponential growth in terms of efficiencies achieved within a decade. However, the perovskite materials are extremely unstable towards ambient (humidity and oxygen) conditions that restrict their commercialisation," said a release from IIT-Guwahati.

MUSLIM QUOTA

Rumbling in MVA govt in Maharashtra

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, Dec 23: Discontent brews afresh in the ruling Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government, this time over the pending issue of 5 per cent reservations for Muslims in education and government jobs.

Ex-minister and Congress working president Arif Naseem Khan has shot off a memorandum to the top party bosses reminding them of the 2019 understanding among the MVA allies in their Common Minimum Programme (CMP).

Khan has urged in his letter to Congress Legislative Party leader and Minister Balasaheb Thorat to "actively pursue plans for giving reservations" to the Muslims and also adequate funds for their development activities.

"It's over two years since the MVA government of Shiv Sena-Nationalist Congress Party-Congress took office. Forget implementing the promise in the CMP, the matter has not even been discussed once by the state Cabinet," said an irked Khan.

He recalled how the previous Congress-NCP regime had given 5 per cent reservations to Muslims which also secured the legal nod, but after the Bharatiya Janata Party-led alliance government came to power in October 2014, they failed to implement the quota. "As the then Minister of Minorities, I had implemented many schemes for the Muslim society, including many executed through Maulana Azad Minority Financial Development Corporation," he said.

Footfalls down at Ajanta, Ellora and other tourist sites

AURANGABAD, ALSO KNOWN AS THE 'TOURISM CAPITAL OF MAHARASHTRA', HAS A NUMBER OF ATTRACTIONS FOR VISITORS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Aurangabad, Dec 23: The number of visitors at prominent monuments in Maharashtra's Aurangabad district came down significantly this year due to the tourist attractions being shut for some months in view of the COVID-19 pandemic, and guides as well as others dependent on the tourism industry faced livelihood issues.

Aurangabad, also known as the 'tourism capital of Maharashtra', has a number of attractions for visitors, including the world famous Ajanta and Ellora caves, Bibi-Ka-Maqbara, Daulatabad (Devgiri) fort and the Aurangabad cave.

The number of domestic tourists at these five sites, which fall under the jurisdiction of the Archaeological Survey of India, came down to 5.94 lakh from March 21 to November 21 this year, as compared to 19.77 lakh in 2019-20 (pre-pandemic period) and 23 lakh

in 2018-19, as per the ASI data. The monuments remained closed in 2020-21 in the wake of the COVID-19-induced lockdown.

Till November 21 this year, only 745 foreign tourists visited these five monuments, as compared to over 40,000 in 2019-20, as per official figures. "The pandemic taught us to put curbs on the entry of tourists at our monuments. People learnt online ticketing and many of them have now taken it as a routine practice," ASI, Aurangabad, Superintendent Milan Kumar Chauley said.

While earlier the workload of managing tourists used to take much of the manpower; this year the ASI used the workforce for the maintenance of these monuments, he said.

"Earlier, we had to deploy the manpower to control the crowd, but this year we could concentrate on the maintenance and cleaning work as the workforce number was



not curtailed despite the lockdown," the official said.

But, the guides and others dependent for their survival on the tourism industry faced difficult times. Amod Basole, president of the Ellora guides welfare association, said there were not many foreign flights this year and policy regarding domestic tourism kept changing in the wake of the pandemic, reducing work assignments for them. "There are nearly 60 reg-

ist sites have increased somewhat in the current winter season, the visitors do not seem keen on hiring guides. This has led to our savings getting exhausted and many guides are dependent on the income of other family members," he said. Some guides tried to venture into the taxi business, but had to eventually sell the vehicles due to lack of funds for paying the monthly installments of the vehicle cost, Kawde said.

Aurangabad Tourism Development Foundation president Jaswant Singh said their sector faced many hurdles this year. "Not many foreign tourists turned up in Aurangabad and connectivity was also a problem for them. Visitors coming by road were asked for RT-PCR reports at the district entry points. Tourists expected cheaper rates of various services due to less business demand, but the inflation and rising fuel prices didn't allow us to do it," he said.

istered guides in our district, but half of them have left the profession. Even if the business stabilises henceforth, it will take at least three years for getting back the total strength of guides here," he said.

Another guide Pankaj Kawde said before the pandemic, guides were in high demand at various tourist sites in Aurangabad. "Now, many of us have no work. This shows there is panic among people. Though the footfalls at

international



No country can boost its way out of the pandemic. It's important to remember that the vast majority of hospitalisations and deaths are in unvaccinated people, not un-boosted people
TEDROS ADHANOM GHEBREYESUS | DIRECTOR-GENERAL, WHO

100 KIDS REUNITED WITH KIN

A Biden admin effort to reunite children and parents, who were separated under Trump's zero-tolerance border policy, has made increasing progress as 100 children, mostly from Central America, are back with their families and about 350 more reunifications are in process



of the day quote

All of us are called to humility, because all of us are called to give life. We are called to find a right relationship with our roots and our branches. Without those two things, we become sick, destined to disappear

None of us want to be here - we're tired of COVID, we want it to just go away. But we know it's not going to just go away unless we all do our part

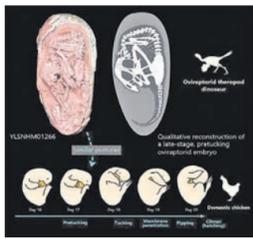
It would not be smart not to have a safety net. We say goodbye to the old nuclear reactors and look to nuclear energy of the future

Perfectly preserved dino embryo, waiting to hatch, found

THE SPECIMEN WAS ONE OF SEVERAL EGG FOSSILS THAT WERE FORGOTTEN IN STORAGE FOR DECADES

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
Washington, Dec 23: Scientists announced the discovery of an exquisitely preserved dinosaur embryo from at least 66 million years ago that was preparing to hatch from its egg just like a chicken.
The fossil was discovered in Ganzhou, southern China and belonged to a toothless theropod dinosaur, or oviraptorosaur, which the researchers dubbed Baby Yingliang.
It is one of the best dinosaur embryos ever found in history,

University of Birmingham researcher Fion Waisum Ma, who co-authored a paper in the journal iScience, told AFP.
Ma and colleagues found Baby Yingliang's head lay below its body, with the feet on either side and back curled - a posture that was previously unseen in dinosaurs, but similar to modern birds.
In birds, the behavior is controlled by the central nervous system and called tucking. Chicks preparing to hatch tuck their head under their right wing in order to stabilise the head while they crack the shell with their beak.



Embryos that fail to tuck have a higher chance of death from an unsuccessful hatching. This indicates that such behavior in modern birds first

This little prenatal dinosaur looks just like a baby bird curled in its egg, which is yet more evidence that many features characteristic of today's birds first evolved in their dinosaur ancestors

which instead assume a sitting posture with the head bending upon the chest up to hatching.
Oviraptorosaurs, which means egg thief lizards, were feathered dinosaurs that lived in what is now Asia and North America during the Late Cretaceous period.
Baby Yingliang measures around 27 cm long from head to tail, and lies inside a 17 cm-long egg at the Yingliang Stone Nature History Museum. The creature is between 72 and 66 million years old, and is probably preserved by a sudden mudslide that buried the egg, protecting it from scavengers for eons

Actor James Franco admits sleeping with students



Los Angeles, Dec 23: Oscar-nominated actor James Franco has acknowledged sleeping with students of an acting school he previously ran, saying he struggled with a sex addiction and has been working to improve his behavior in recent years.
In excerpts from The Jess Cagle Podcast made public Wednesday, Franco, 43, said that while teaching, he did sleep with students, and that was wrong. He said he did not start the school to lure women for sexual purposes.
"I suppose at the time, my thinking was if it's consensual, okay," he added in the SiriusXM podcast. "At the time I was not clearheaded."
The remarks were Franco's first extended comments about accusations leveled against him nearly four years ago when the Los Angeles Times reported that five women had accused Franco of conduct they considered inappropriate.
Later, in October 2019, two women filed a civil suit against the Pineapple Express star, accusing him of exploiting aspiring actors at his now-defunct school and duping young women into shooting explicit sex scenes.
Franco said he developed a sex addiction after he became sober from an alcohol addiction he developed at a young age. It's such a powerful drug, he said. I got hooked on it for 20 more years. The insidious part of that is that I stayed sober from alcohol all that time.
Franco co-hosted the Oscars ceremony in 2011 and was a nominee at the 2012 awards for his performance in 127 Hours.

'Omicron less likely to put you in hosp'

ASSOCIATED PRESS

London, Dec 23: Two new British studies provide some early hints that the omicron variant of the coronavirus may be milder than the delta version.
Scientists stress that even if the findings of these early studies hold up, any reductions in severity need to be weighed against the fact omicron spreads much faster than delta and is more able to evade vaccines. Sheer numbers of infections could still overwhelm hospitals.
Still, the new studies released Wednesday seem to bolster earlier research that suggests omicron may not be as harmful as the delta variant, said Manuel Ascano Jr, a Vanderbilt University biochemist who studies viruses.
"Cautious optimism is perhaps the best way to look at this," he said.
An analysis from the Imperial College London COVID-19 response team estimated hospitalisation risks for omicron cases in England, finding people infected with the variant are around 20 per cent less likely to go to the hospital at all than those infected with the delta variant, and 40 per cent less likely to be hospitalized for a night or more.
That analysis included all cases of COVID-19 confirmed by PCR



tests in England in the first half of December in which the variant could be identified 56,000 cases of omicron and 269,000 cases of delta.
A separate study out of Scotland, by scientists at the University of Edinburgh and other experts, suggested the risk of hospitalization was two-thirds less with omicron than delta. But that study pointed out that the nearly 24,000 omicron cases in Scotland were predominantly among younger adults ages 20-39. Younger people are much less likely to develop severe cases of COVID-19.
"This national investigation is one of the first to show that Omicron is less likely to result in COVID-19 hospitalisation than Delta," researchers wrote. While the findings are early observations, "they are encouraging," the

Putin urges West to act quickly to offer security guarantees

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Moscow, Dec 23: Russian President Vladimir Putin urged the West Thursday to move quickly to meet Russia's demand for security guarantees precluding NATO's expansion to Ukraine and the deployment of the military alliance's weapons there.
Speaking during a marathon annual news conference, the Russian leader welcomed talks with the US that are set to start in Geneva next month, but warned the discussion focused on Moscow's demand needs to produce quick results.
Last week, Moscow submitted draft security documents demanding that NATO deny membership to Ukraine and other former Soviet countries and roll back the alliance's military deployments in Central and Eastern Europe.
A key principle of the NATO alliance is that membership is open to any qualifying country.
The US and its allies have said they won't give Russia the kind of



guarantee on Ukraine that Putin wants.
American officials are conferring with European allies in advance of the Geneva talks.
Moscow presented its demand amid soaring tensions over a Russian troop buildup near Ukraine that has stoked fears of a possible invasion.
US President Joe Biden warned Putin in a conference call earlier this month that Russia will face "severe consequences" if it attacks Ukraine.
During his annual news conference, Putin accused the West of trying to make Ukraine "anti-Russia, constantly beefed up with modern weapons and brainwashing the population."

We want to ensure our security. We put it straight there must be no further expansion of NATO eastward
VLADIMIR PUTIN | PRESIDENT, RUSSIA

SHORT TAKES

UNGA Prez tests Covid-19 positive

United Nations: President of the United Nations General Assembly Abdulla Shahid Thursday said that he has tested positive for the COVID-19 and is isolating at home with mild symptoms. The 59-year-old Maldivian Minister of Foreign Affairs is fully vaccinated along with a booster jab. "I have tested positive for COVID-19 today. I am isolating at home with mild symptoms. I was privileged to have been fully vaccinated including a booster. My prayers are for the millions suffering from Covid and the billions without access to vaccine! I Stand for #VaccineEquity," Shahid, the President of the 76th session of the UN General Assembly, said on Twitter.

Israeli detained in Thailand over virus

Bangkok: Officials in Thailand say an Israeli tourist who was the subject of a nationwide police manhunt after breaking out of quarantine while apparently infected with the omicron variant of the coronavirus has been detained on a southern resort island. The 29-year-old man will be charged with breaking quarantine regulations and then deported and banned from Thailand for life following his release from hospital detention, authorities said.

Vienna talks to resume Monday

Berlin: Negotiators from Iran and five world powers that are trying to revive a tattered 2015 nuclear deal will resume talks in Vienna next week, the European Union said Thursday. The talks were adjourned nearly a week ago after a round marked by tensions over new demands from Tehran. They are chaired by EU diplomat Enrique Mora. The EU said participants from Britain, France, Germany, China, Russia and Iran will resume their efforts Monday. They had been interrupted to allow Iran's chief negotiator to return home for consultations.

US adds Merck pill as 2nd COVID drug

Washington: US health regulators Thursday authorised the second pill against COVID-19, providing another easy-to-use medication to battle the rising tide of omicron infections. The Food and Drug Administration authorization comes one day after the agency cleared a competing drug from Pfizer. That pill is likely to become the first-choice treatment against the virus, thanks to its superior benefits and milder side effects.

SHRINGLA IN MYANMAR

India raises security concerns with junta

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Naypyidaw, Dec 23: Foreign Secretary Shringla Vardhan Shringla has raised matters relating to India's security in the border areas with Myanmar's State Administration Council as he made the first high-level outreach to the military junta here during which he emphasised New Delhi's interest in seeing the country's early return to democracy and the release of detainees and prisoners.
Shringla is here on a two-day working visit, in the first by the top Indian diplomat after Myanmar's military deposed the democratically-elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in a coup February 1.
The powerful State Administration Council (SAC) is headed by General Min Aung Hlaing, who seized power in February.
According to the Ministry of

External Affairs (MEA), Foreign Secretary Shringla called on the Chairman, SAC and other senior representatives and held meetings with members of civil society and political parties, including the National League for Democracy led by Suu Kyi.
During his meetings, the Foreign Secretary emphasised India's interest in seeing Myanmar's return to democracy at the earliest; release of detainees and prisoners; resolution of issues through dialogue; and complete cessation of all violence, the MEA said in a statement Thursday.
He reaffirmed India's strong and consistent support to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) initiative and expressed hope that progress would be made in a pragmatic and constructive manner, based on the five-point consensus, the MEA said.

NO N-RELEASE



Environmental activists stage a rally demanding the withdrawal of Japanese government's decision to release treated radioactive water from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant, near a building which houses Japanese Embassy in Seoul, South Korea, Thursday

Last monument for Tiananmen massacre removed in Hong Kong

The dismantling of the sculpture came days after pro-Beijing candidates scored a landslide victory in Hong Kong legislative elections, following amendments to election laws allowing the vetting of candidates to ensure they are "patriots" loyal to Beijing

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Hong Kong, Dec 23: A monument at a Hong Kong university that was the best-known public remembrance of the Tiananmen Square massacre on Chinese soil was removed early Thursday, wiping out the city's last place of public commemoration of the bloody 1989 crackdown.
For some at the University of Hong Kong, the move reflected the erosion of the relative freedoms

they have enjoyed compared to mainland China.
The 8-meter-tall Pillar of Shame, which depicts 50 torn and twisted bodies piled on top of each other, was made by Danish sculptor Jens Galschiot to symbolize the lives lost during the military crackdown on pro-democracy protesters in Beijing's Tiananmen Square June 4, 1989.
Billy Kwok, a University of Hong Kong student, said the Pillar of Shame has been treated as part of

PILLAR OF SHAME



the university by many who studied there. It had been standing at the university for more than two decades. "It's the symbol of whether

the sculpture be put in storage because it could pose "legal risks."
"No party has ever obtained any approval from the university to display the statue on campus, and the university has the right to take appropriate actions to handle it at any time," it said in a statement after its removal.
Each year June 4, members of the now-defunct student union would wash the statue to commemorate the massacre. The city and Macao were the only places on Chinese soil where commemorations of the crackdown were allowed. Authorities have banned annual Tiananmen candlelight vigils for two consecutive years and shut down a private museum documenting the crackdown. The group that organized the annual

vigil and ran the museum, the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China, has since disbanded, with some of its key members behind bars.
The Pillar of Shame became an issue in October, when activists and rights groups opposed a university demand that it be removed following "the latest risk assessment and legal advice." Galschiot offered to take it back to Denmark provided he would not be prosecuted under the national security law, but has not succeeded so far.
Galschiot said he has been promised a spot for the sculpture in a park across from the Chinese Embassy in Washington, DC, and was also offered places in Norway, Canada and Taiwan.

of the day quote

Yesterday, I signed a file on flex-fuel engines (to advise carmakers to manufacture flex-fuel engines). We have given them (carmakers) six months (to introduce flex-fuel engines in vehicles that can run on more than one fuel)

NITIN GADKARI | UNION MINISTER

I don't see someone strapping a frigg' screen to their face all day. I don't know if I necessarily buy into this metaverse stuff, although people talk to me a lot about it. I think we're far from disappearing into the metaverse, this sounds just kind of buzzworthy

ELON MUSK | CEO, TESLA AND SPACEX

Looking into the emergence of the new variants and supply side challenges at this point of time, we would like to be a little conservative and will aim for an export of \$460-475 billion during the next fiscal

A SAKHIVEL | PRESIDENT, FICO



I expressed serious doubts when the government had expressed its intent to present the bill, about the introduction of the crypto-assets/currencies bill in the Winter Session of Parliament. I am, therefore, not surprised to see the present situation where there is zero clarity over what is the Bill

SUBHASH CHANDRA GARG | EX-FINANCE SECRETARY

HERO, VW TO HIKE PRICES FROM JAN

The country's largest two-wheeler maker Hero MotoCorp Thursday said it will increase prices of its entire model range by up to ₹2,000 from January 4, 2022 in order to offset the impact of rise in input cost. Similarly, Volkswagen Passenger Cars India announced that it will hike the prices of Polo, Vento and Taigun from January 1, 2022 owing to the rising input and operational costs



ALL-TIME HIGH IPO fund raising at ₹1.18L cr

The IPO frenzy continues to remain strong with 35 companies holding SEBI approval proposing to raise roughly ₹50,000 crore and another 33 companies which are awaiting SEBI approval to raise about ₹60,000 crore

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 23: On several counts, 2021 has been a truly exceptional and record breaking year for the Indian IPO market. Sixty three Indian corporates raised an all-time high ₹1.18 lakh crore through main board IPOs in calendar 2021, according to data compiled by PRIME Database Group. "IPOs from new age loss-making technology startups, strong retail participation and huge listing gains were the key highlights," according to Pranav Haldea, Managing Director, Prime Database Group. Overall public equity fundraising crossed the ₹2 lakh crore mark to reach ₹2.02 lakh crore in calendar 2021 which was higher than the previous highest amount of ₹1.76 lakh crore in the preceding year.

The year witnessed tremendous response from retail investors as well. The average number of applications from retail was 14.36 lakh, in comparison to 12.77 lakh in 2020 and 4.05 lakh in 2019. The highest number of applications



63 Indian corporates raised ₹1,18,704 crores through main board IPOs in 2021. The listing was almost double of the previous best year 2017 in which ₹68,827 crore was raised. This record amount was nearly 4.5 times the ₹26,613 crores raised through 15 IPOs in 2020.

THE LARGEST IPO IN 2021, WHICH WAS ALSO THE LARGEST IPO EVER IN THE HISTORY OF THE INDIAN IPO MARKET, WAS FROM ONE 97 COMMUNICATIONS (PAYTM) FOR ₹18,300 CRORE

from retail in 2021 was received by Glenmark Life Sciences (33.95 lakh) followed by Devyani International (32.67 lakh) and Latent

View (31.87 lakh). The amount of shares applied for by retail was a huge 135 per cent of the IPO mobilisation (156 per cent

India followed the global trend and the stock markets did exceedingly well hence record retail money came to the markets

DHARMESH MEHTA | FOUNDER, DAM CAPITAL

in 2020). However, the total allocation to retail was ₹24,292 crore which was just 20 per cent of the total IPO mobilisation (down from 32 per cent in 2020).

According to Haldea, success of the IPOs was further buoyed by strong listing performance. Of the 58 IPOs which have got listed thus far, 34 gave a return of over 10 per cent (based on closing price on listing date). Average listing gain was 32 per cent, in comparison to 44 per cent in 2020 and 19 per cent in 2019.

The year 2021 also saw record number of filings with SEBI. As many as 115 companies filed their offer document with SEBI for approval. According to Haldea, to put this in context, 2019 and 2020 cumulatively had a total of just 50 filings.

IOC set to invest ₹9,028cr on new crude oil pipeline



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 23: Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), the nation's largest oil firm, Thursday said it will invest ₹9,028 crore in laying a new crude oil pipeline from Mundra in Gujarat to Panipat in Haryana.

"The pipeline, which will have a nameplate capacity of 17.5 million tonne per annum, will transport imported crude oil from the Gujarat coast to the firm's refinery in Haryana," the company said in a statement.

Under this project, IOC would also build 9 crude oil tanks of 60,000 kilolitres each at Mundra, which, apart from meeting operational requirements, would help in enhancing crude oil storage capacity in the country.

The total estimated cost of the project is ₹9,028 crore, it said adding the board of the company approved the investment proposal at its meeting December 20.

IOC is implementing a project for capacity expansion of Panipat refinery from 15 million tonne per annum to 25 million tonne along with the installation of polypropylene unit and Catalytic Dewaxing Unit with targeted completion in second quarter of FY 2024-25.

IOC operates a network of more than 15,000 km long crude oil, petroleum product and gas pipelines

IOC, Adani arm top bidders for city gas licenses

New Delhi: State-owned Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) and a joint venture of billionaire Gautam Adani's gas arm and Total of France -- Adani Total Gas Ltd -- have bid for maximum number of licenses to retail CNG to automobiles and piped cooking gas to households in the latest city gas bidding round. IOC bid for 53 out of 61 geographical areas or GAs that received bids in the 11th city gas licensing round that closed on December 15, according to bid details made public by the sector regulator -- Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB). Adani Total Gas Ltd bid for 52 GAs. Adani group had originally ventured into city gas business in a joint venture with IOC but it later tied up with Total. Adani and IOC did not put any combined bid in the latest bidding round.

and, as a pioneer in oil pipelines in the country, manages one of the world's largest oil pipeline networks. It added 337 km of additional pipeline length during 2020-21 and plans to continuously expand the network in line with growth in business.

Card tokenisation deadline extended by RBI till June 30

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, Dec 23: The Reserve Bank of India Thursday extended card tokenisation deadline by six months till June 30, 2022, from the earlier deadline of December 31, 2021.

"The timeline for storing of CoF (card-on-file) data is extended by six months, ie, till June 30, 2022; post this, such data shall be purged," it said in a notification.

"In addition to tokenisation, industry stakeholders may devise alternate mechanism(s) to handle any use case or post-transaction activity that currently involves or requires storage of CoF data by entities other than card issuers and card networks."

The RBI's card tokenisation guidelines mandated replacing the actual card data with encrypted digital tokens, which are then used to facilitate and authenticate transactions. The devaluation of sensitive card details would have alleviated risk and reduced vulnerability of sensitive data. However, industry bodies urged the RBI to extend card tokenisation deadline beyond December 31, 2021.

The Merchant Payments Alliance of India (MPAI) and the Alliance of Digital India Foundation (ADIF) had recently urged the central bank to extend the CoF tokenisation deadline of December 31 for merchants. Citing several operational challenges that will hinder the transition to the token-based payments ecosystem, the industry bodies voiced their concerns over industry readiness on the RBI directive on card-on-file tokenisation.

The MPAI and ADIF said that 'ecosystem readiness' is a sequential process of going live with stable API documentation for tokenised transactions.

Air France-KLM, IndiGo sign codeshare pact

From their hubs in Paris and Amsterdam, Air France and KLM operate flights to four Indian cities -- Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Bangalore

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 23: Air France-KLM and IndiGo Thursday announced that they have entered into a codeshare agreement that allows each airline to sell seats on the other's flights.

With this new partnership, Air France and KLM will offer their customers access to 25 new Indian destinations, a joint statement mentioned.

This means that once the codeshare agreement comes into force, Air France-KLM group will be able to sell seats, on its distribution sys-



tem, of IndiGo flights on 25 domestic routes.

Similarly, IndiGo will also be able to sell seats on the European airline group's flights on more than 250 routes, the joint statement noted. In a codeshare agreement, each airline on its distribution sys-

tem can sell seats of other's flights. Subject to government approval, this cooperation (codeshare) will start in February 2022, the statement mentioned.

IndiGo also has codeshare agreements with Turkish Airlines, Qatar Airways and American Airlines.

Scheduled international passenger flights have been suspended in India since March 23 last year. However, limited passenger flights have been operating between India and approximately 32 countries, including France and the Netherlands, under 'air bubble' arrangements.

SOS call answered, now telcos to ring in 5G in '22

WITH THE GOVERNMENT PROMISING MORE REFORMS, THE INDUSTRY IS ENTERING THE NEW YEAR ON A BUOYANT NOTE, KEEN TO SEE POSITIVE OUTCOME ON 5G SPECTRUM PRICING AT THE MEGA AUCTION THAT IS JUST MONTHS AWAY

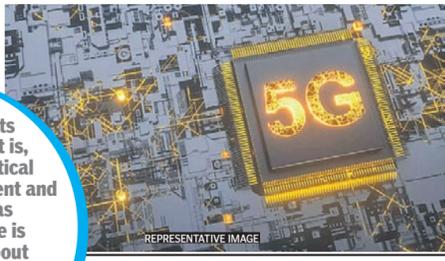
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 23: A rare bonhomie among three private telecom companies in raising tariffs coming on the back of a bailout package by the government may have helped the telecom sector avert a crisis but the challenges haven't ceased to exist as the industry faces a cash-guzzling task of rolling out 5G networks in the coming months.

After years of cut-throat competition and the apex court ruling on payment of past statutory dues left some players in the lurch, billionaire Sunil Mittal's Bharti Airtel and struggling Vodafone Idea almost in tandem raised tariffs, taking the plunge they had

long been talking about. Shortly thereafter, richest Indian Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Jio too followed suit.

The tariff hike alongside the government's relief package that included a four-year break on payment of dues lifted the industry's spirits and ignited hopes of fueling investment in new-age



technology that a nation aspiring to become a \$5 trillion economy deserves.

The relief measures, it is expected, will enable the industry to redirect cash flows towards building fu-

GETTING READY

■ Jio Platforms had raised a staggering ₹1,52,056 crore from marquee investors earlier and seems all set to tap into new opportunities

■ Airtel, whose ₹21,000 crore rights issue in October was oversubscribed, plans to use the proceeds to strengthen its balance sheet, build its arsenal, and gear up for 5G

■ Vodafone Idea's fund raising plans are significantly delayed but the company expects to conclude it this fiscal

2500 MHz, 3300-3670 MHz. The last round of auctions, in March, had attracted bids of over ₹77,800 crore for 855.6 MHz of spectrum but 63 per cent of total radio waves on offer remained unsold. The sector is expected to see

satellite-based broadband services with OneWeb and Elon Musk-led Starlink already in fray to start their service in 2022.

"The biggest opportunity for the entire telecom ecosystem is 5G," Ericsson India head Nitin Bansal said, adding if spectrum gets allocated at the right time and with affordable pricing, we can expect commercial rollout in the second half of 2022.

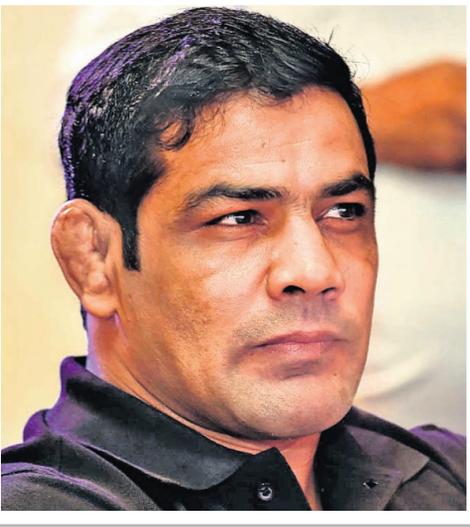
The Indian telecom market is poised for a slew of innovations in 2022, according to Prashant Singhal, Emerging Markets, Technology, Media, Telecom (TMT) Leader at EY. The year 2022, he said, will be a "defining year" and the sector will get back to the "golden period of accelerated growth".

Investments in key components of 5G network, that is, spectrum, OFC (Optical Fibre Cable) deployment and building towers as pan-India coverage is estimated to be about ₹1.3-2.3 lakh crore

SP KOCHHAR | DIRECTOR GENERAL, CELLULAR OPERATORS' ASSOCIATION OF INDIA

MIRRED IN CONTROVERSY

Fall from grace

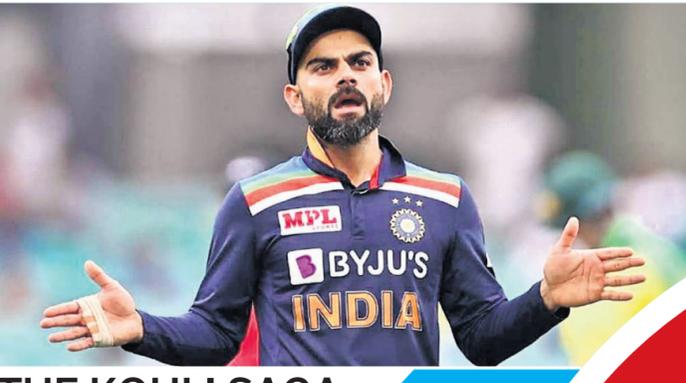


Two Olympic medals in his kitty and yet wrestler Sushil Kumar stepped on the wrong side of the law. The legendary wrestler who won bronze in Beijing (2008) and London (2012) has been behind bars in Tihar jail since May this year on murder charges. It has been alleged that Sushil and his group of friends allegedly beat up young matman Sagar Dhankar so badly that it led to his death. Kumar was on the run for more than three weeks... he was finally arrested and since then jail has been his home. Unthinkable to see such a disgraceful fall for a man considered to be among the top Indian sporting legends.

Since the advent of Covid-19, the world has definitely turned into a gloomier place to live in. Tough times do make the going tough and sports and sportspersons have been one of the worst sufferers due to the marauding Covid-19. Quarantine, bio-bubble, frequent tests have become the order of the day for participants in all disciplines of sports. Sports have always garnered huge attention because of star power, their way of life and the success that it brings – some think instantly. But sports and controversy have always walked hand-in-hand. The scandals associated with sportspersons also generate the same kind of interest which one would associate with Neeraj Chopra winning gold at the Tokyo Olympics. The year 2021 has not been any different both in India and abroad. A number of controversies involving sports stars have attracted huge limelight. Here's a look at some of those controversies that attracted attention:

'Male' goalkeeper in women's soccer

Immediately after a match between the women's football teams of Iran and Jordan in September, controversy struck. The Jordan FA alleged that Zohreh Kouadaei, 32 who played goalkeeper in the Iranian team, is a 'man'. Kouadaei made two saves as Iran defeated Jordan 4-2 on penalties to qualify for the Women's Asia Cup. The Jordan FA also urged November 14 the Asian Football Confederation to 'wake up' in a tweet. Kouadaei, on her part has said that she will sue the Jordan FA. As of now the stalemate has not been resolved.



THE KOHLI SAGA

No one knows what will ultimately happen in the BCCI-Virat Kohli alleged rift. Well, none of the two parties have openly admitted that there is a rift, but the signs are clear. Kohli had announced that he will give up the captaincy in T20 cricket after the just-concluded World Cup. However, after India made an early exit, Kohli was unceremoniously removed as the skipper of the 50 overs side. Kohli is yet to come out with a statement, but there are a large number of people who have opined that the BCCI could have handled the matter 'judiciously'. To top it all, BCCI has backed its move of appointing Rohit Sharma as captain in the white ball format by highlighting Kohli's failures. Surely it could have been avoided keeping in mind Kohli's contribution in white ball cricket.

Sex, lies and red tape

Grand Slam doubles winner, tennis player Peng Shuai rubbed a lot of feathers the wrong way in China when she alleged that top Communist Party leader Zhang Gaoli had sexually assaulted her and forced her to have sex with him. Her post on Weibo was deleted within hours after it appeared. Peng then disappeared from public eye before some pictures of her at a party surfaced. As concerns over her safety grow, the whereabouts of Peng still remains unknown. The US, the UK, Australia and



Canada have all announced a diplomatic boycott of the Winter Olympics in Beijing as a mark of protest against the treatment meted out to Peng. The Women's Tennis Association has suspended all tournaments in China and other human rights associations have sprung to Shuai's defence. In a late development, Peng suddenly announced that she had never made any such allegation. But keeping in mind, the pressure tactics, one can be sure that there is a different angle to the whole story.

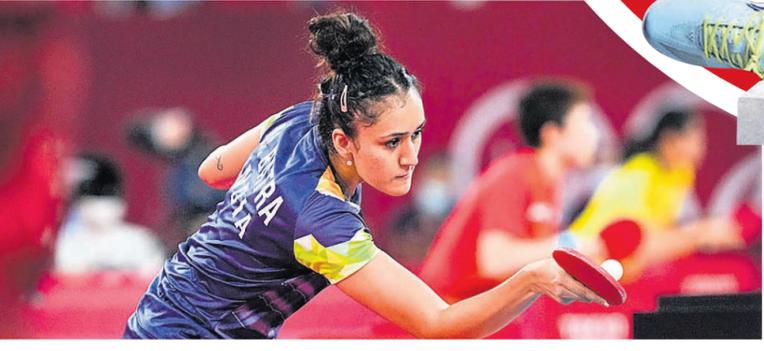
PAINFUL FOR PAINE

Some 'harmless' sexting in 2016 came back to haunt Australian cricketer Tim Paine and ultimately led to his resignation from the hot seat of captain just before the Ashes series a few days back. Paine announced days before the first Test that his behaviour was unbecoming of a cricketer of the national team and for that reason he was quitting the side. Paine admitted that he was at fault and he should have been more careful as he always had the aspiration to represent the Australian team.



Match-fixing in table tennis!

Paddler Manika Batra put up a great show in women's singles at the Tokyo Olympics reaching the third round. But more importantly, during the event she never took the help of national coach Soumyadeep Roy. Batra had requested that her personal coach Sanjay Paranjape be allowed in the field of play at Tokyo. However, it was turned down by the TTFI. She later said that Roy had asked her to throw a match during the Olympic Qualifiers in March, an allegation to which Roy has already given a written reply to the TTFI. The TTFI then suspended Batra, but she moved court and got an order in her favour. However, the entire turn of events shocked the Indian sporting fraternity.



At war with the media

Japanese tennis player and former World No.1 Naomi Osaka created furore by announcing that she will not participate in press conferences anymore. The four-time Grand Slam winner made the announcement just before the start of the French Open tennis tournament in May. She blamed the media for the breakdown of mental health of players. "The media asks the same questions everyday forgetting the strain it puts on the mental health of the players. Day after day we have to go through this. I would rather pay hefty fines than attend such press conferences," Osaka said in a tweet. "Sometimes there are questions that creates doubts about our abilities and talent as a player," she added. Needless to say she remained true to her words and avoided the media for the rest of the year.



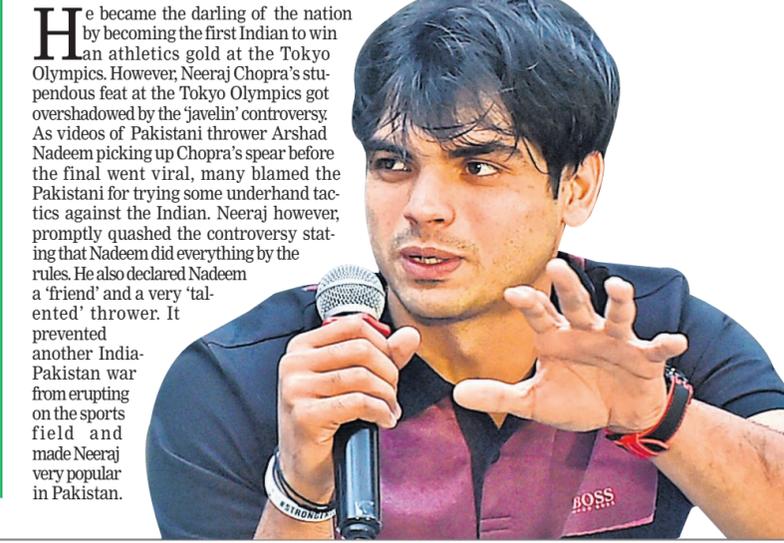
THE IPL GOOF-UP

In spite of a raging second Covid-19 wave in India, the BCCI decided to go ahead with IPL-2021 in six cities. All protocols were 'meticulously' followed yet Covid-19 breached the shield. Players and support staff of Chennai Super Kings, Kolkata Knight Riders and Sunrisers Hyderabad were infected by the virus. So the tournament had to be suspended and later shifted to the UAE. Coming just ahead of the T20 World Cup, the IPL left the Indian players drained. It led to a poor show by the national team and left the entire country disappointed.



THE JAVELIN ROW

He became the darling of the nation by becoming the first Indian to win an athletics gold at the Tokyo Olympics. However, Neeraj Chopra's stupendous feat at the Tokyo Olympics got overshadowed by the 'javelin' controversy. As videos of Pakistani thrower Arshad Nadeem picking up Chopra's spear before the final went viral, many blamed the Pakistani for trying some underhand tactics against the Indian. Neeraj however, promptly quashed the controversy stating that Nadeem did everything by the rules. He also declared Nadeem a 'friend' and a very 'talented' thrower. It prevented another India-Pakistan war from erupting on the sports field and made Neeraj very popular in Pakistan.



Football's darkest moment

Some of the premier football clubs announced the formation of the European Super League in April 2021. It prompted a fierce backlash from both the UEFA and FIFA who promised stringent action against the clubs involved in the formation of the League. Initially top 20 clubs from England, Spain, Italy, Germany and France were set to play the league, but then a number of them withdrew fearing sanctions from the world's governing body. The announcement of the Super League received widespread criticisms from fans, administrators and in some cases even leaders of countries. This huge backlash prompted the organisers to announce that they 'were suspending operations' as of now.



NEVER SAY DIE

Benzema brace helps Real edge past Bilbao



LIVERPOOL COME FROM BEHIND TO BEAT LEICESTER VIA PENALTIES AND SET UP SEMIFINAL DATE WITH ARSENAL; CONTE'S SPURS TO FACE THE MANAGER'S FORMER CLUB CHELSEA



MEN BEHIND TURNAROUNDS: Takumi Minamino wheels away in celebration after scoring the late equaliser against Leicester; (inset) Diogo Jota reacts after scoring the winner in the penalty shootout for Liverpool, Wednesday

ASSOCIATED PRESS

London, Dec 23: A last-gasp stoppage time winner by Takumi Minamino helped Liverpool stretch their League Cup match against Leicester into penalties, where Diogo Jota struck the winner for the Reds, Wednesday.

Jürgen Klopp would gladly give up home advantage to see Liverpool not have to play two games for the semifinals in the first two weeks of 2022 given the lack of winter break and packed festive program stretching the squad.

Liverpool were taken to penalties by Leicester in the quarterfinal, prevailing 5-4 in the shootout after the game ended 3-3 after 90 minutes.

Antonio Conte will have to overcome former club Chelsea to reach the League Cup final early in his Tottenham career, and he wants to do it in one match.

The semifinals, beginning in two weeks, are still due to be over two legs despite the upsurge in coronavirus cases wiping out games and creating a fixture pile-up.

Tottenham overcame West Ham 2-1 and Chelsea beat Brentford 2-0 on Wednesday before being paired together in the last four that will see Arsenal also play Liverpool.

LIVERPOOL COMEBACK

There was an immediate impact at Anfield by Leicester striker Jamie Vardy whose double made it 10 goals in 14 appearances against Liverpool.

Goalkeeper Caoimhin Kelleher got a touch to Vardy's shot in the ninth minute but couldn't keep it out. The striker side-footed in a cross from Patson Daka four minutes later.

Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain prevented the game running away

from Liverpool by pulling one back in the 19th but James Maddison restored Leicester's two-goal lead in the 33rd with a strike from 25 yards.

Having made 10 changes from the side that drew at Tottenham in the Premier League Sunday, Klopp turned to more experienced players in the second half — including Jota who netted in the 68th.

Leicester was preparing for a semifinal until Minamino equalised in the fifth minute of stoppage time.

But with a chance to win the shootout for Liverpool, Minamino failed to convert. After Ryan Bertrand's penalty for Leicester was saved by Kelleher, Jota responded by hitting the target to send Liverpool through to meet Arsenal. Mikel Arteta's side beat Sunderland 5-1 Tuesday.

GOAL BURST

The three goals at Tottenham came in a five-minute spell. Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg's pullback was turned into the net by Steven Bergwijn in the 29th minute.

The lead only lasted until the 32rd when Eric Dier's clearance was intercepted and the ball eventually reached West Ham forward Jarrod Bowen who, on the turn in the penalty area, switched the ball between his feet before equalising.

But Tottenham were quickly back in front with Bergwijn dribbling past Manuel Lanzini and squaring to Lucas Moura to squeeze the shot through the crowded penalty area into the net.

A Premier League and FA Cup winner as Chelsea manager, Conte is trying to deliver Tottenham's first trophy since winning the League Cup in 2008. The north London club lost to Manchester

City in last season's final with Ryan Mason in temporary charge following Jose Mourinho's firing.

CHELSEA LATE BREAKTHROUGH

Thomas Tuchel already has experience of picking up a bigger trophy — the European Cup — since taking charge of Chelsea in January. Reaching the semifinals of England's second-tier cup competition was satisfying for Tuchel given the coronavirus cases and injuries depleting his squad.

Chelsea only took control at Brentford after N'Golo Kante was brought on for the final 15 minutes. The World Cup winner with France was involved in the buildup before a cross from Reece James was turned into his own net by Pontus Jansson.

The win was secured in the 85th from Jorginho's penalty after Mason Mount was tripped by goalkeeper Álvaro Fernández.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Barcelona, Dec 23: Karim Benzema struck two quick goals to lead Real Madrid to a 2-1 win at Athletic Bilbao in a Spanish league game missing several players because of coronavirus infections.

Defending champion Atlético Madrid slumped to a fourth consecutive league defeat after losing 1-2 at Granada, extending their worst run in the competition since Diego Simeone took charge a decade ago.

A total of 12 players between Madrid and Bilbao missed the game after testing positive for COVID-19. That included Madrid midfielder Luka Modric and Bilbao's Unai Simón, the goalkeeper for Spain's national side.

Benzema started the scoring for the league leaders with a superb strike four minutes into the match at San Mamés. He struck again in the seventh for his league-leading 15th goal of the season. Oihan Sancet hit right back for the hosts to close out a wild first 10 minutes of the game.

Inaki Williams went close to grabbing an equaliser with a half-hour to play, but a defense anchored by Eder Militao held on to increase Madrid's lead to eight points over second-place Sevilla.

The outbreak on Madrid's squad gave Eden Hazard, Eduardo Camavinga, and Nacho Fernández the opportunity to earn rare starts. The game came hours after the

Spanish league strengthened its testing protocols to try to prevent teams being hit by outbreaks.

In addition to Modric, Madrid was without David Alaba, Isco, Marco Asensio, Rodrygo, Gareth Bale, Marcelo and backup goalkeeper Andriy Lunin. Besides Simón, Bilbao was without Inigo Martínez, Jokin Ezketa and Alex Berenguer.

Benzema dazzled with his opening goal from the side of the area. The France striker stunned Bilbao when he used one touch to send a pass from Toni Kroos curling into the far corner of the net.

Benzema's second came after a poor touch by Bilbao defender Unai Nuñez gifted him the ball with only Simón's replacement, Julen Agirrezabala, to beat. Sancet struck from the edge of the area to send the ball in off the post.

ANOTHER LOSS

Atlético had not lost more than two league games in a row since Simeone became their coach in December 2011. This month they have lost to Mallorca, Real Madrid and Sevilla before their defeat in Granada.

Atlético started well with a goal from Joao Felix only three minutes after kickoff. Darwin Machis then levelled in the 18th and Jorge Molina scored from a cross by Granada striker Luis Suárez to complete the comeback in the 61st. Atlético was left in fifth place, some 17 points off Madrid's pace.



Inter end year with seventh straight win



CARRYING MOMENTUM FORWARD: Inter players celebrate Denzel Dumfries' (No.2) goal against Torino, Wednesday

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Rome, Dec 23: Seven straight wins, six straight without conceding and 11 straight unbeaten... Inter Milan concluded the year with a 1-0 win over Torino Wednesday to confirm their control of Serie A and intention of securing consecutive Italian league titles.

While Inter had already secured the lead for the season's halfway point entering the holiday break, it was a welcome victory a day after the club's offices were raided by finance police amid an ongoing investigation into false accounting.

Denzel Dumfries scored from the edge of area to conclude a counterattack after taking a backheel pass from Edin Dzeko during the first half at the San Siro. It was the third goal in four matches for the Netherlands right back.

Inter remained four points ahead of city rival AC Milan, who won 4-2 at Empoli with a brace from Franck Kessie and a goal each from

Alessandro Florenzi and Theo Hernandez.

Third-placed Napoli dropped seven points behind Inter after losing 0-1 at home to relegation-threatened Spezia, which benefited from an own-goal from Napoli defender Juan Jesus.

Manolo Gabbiadini scored 10 minutes from time to secure a 1-1 draw for Sampdoria at Roma. Eldor Shomurov had put Roma ahead eight minutes earlier on his third attempt after his first two shots were blocked. Gabbiadini then scored from close range following a corner.

Roma are sixth, six points behind Atalanta and the final Champions League berth in Jose Mourinho's first season with the Giallorossi. Roma are level on points with seventh-placed Fiorentina, which drew 1-1 at Hellas Verona.

Lazio won 3-1 at Venezia despite missing striker Ciro Immobile, who has the coronavirus. Pedro, Francesco Acerbi and Luis Alberto scored for the Roman club.

Gaurs challenge awaits Odisha FC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Vasco, Dec 23: FC Goa would look to make a positive start under new coach Derrick Pereira after parting ways with Juan Ferrando when they take on Odisha FC in a ISL here Friday.

FC Goa parted ways with its coach Ferrando and turned back to Pereira in a frantic last few days. Ferrando joined ATK Mohun Bagan after Antonio Lopez Habas vacated his chair at the helm.

Pereira, who was with the club

as their technical director, had also been in charge of the Gaurs along with Clifford Miranda and Roma Cullinera during the fag end of the 2019-20 season after the departure of Sergio Lobera.

During his short stint, he took the side to the top of ISL table at the end of the 2018-19 league phase, paving the way for FC Goa's qualification for group stages of the 2021 AFC Champions League.

A veteran tactician in Indian football, Pereira is not expected to be on the touchline Friday with

former India international Miranda to be in charge in an interim capacity.

The Gaurs are eighth in the points table having seven points from six games. They have not lost in their last three outings, winning two of them in a bid to turn things around after three successive losses at the start of the season.

Goa were held to a 1-1 draw by Hyderabad FC in their last engagement but the team showed fight and marked improvements

from their first three games.

Odisha, meanwhile, need to reverse their recent run of form. The Kiko Ramirez-coached side have been winless in the last two games and have dropped to seventh in the table from six matches.

Javi Hernandez has been in tremendous form, netting four goals. He is fourth in the race for the golden boot, and he has two assists this season additionally. His tally of six goals is only behind Greg Stewart (8) and Roy Krishna (7).

Icardi late goal saves PSG day against Lorient



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Paris, Dec 23: Runaway leader Paris Saint-Germain headed into the winter break after narrowly avoiding a humiliating defeat as Mauro Icardi's injury-time goal salvaged a 1-1 draw at struggling Lorient in the French league.

PSG leads second-place Nice and third-place Marseille by 13 points. Nice beat Lens 2-1 while Marseille needed an even later injury-time goal than PSG to draw 1-1 at home to Reims. Nice and Marseille are separated on goal difference.

It was another mostly bland and uninspiring performance from PSG this season. Coach Mauricio Pochettino's side was easily exposed by fast attacks and conceded an alarming 11 shots in the first half against a side in 19th place.

Pochettino brought on former Real Madrid defender Sergio Ramos after the break, but he was sent off five minutes from the end for a second yellow card.

With 10-man PSG pouring forward, right back Achraf Hakimi clipped over a great cross from the right and Icardi expertly headed home in the first minute of injury time to cancel out Thomas Monconduit's thundering strike late in the first half.

NDTL 'gets back' WADA recognition

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 23: Sports Minister Anurag Thakur Thursday said that the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) has restored the accreditation of the National Dope Testing Laboratory (NDTL), which was suspended in 2019 because of its failure to meet global standards.

"National Dope Testing Laboratory (NDTL) regains the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) accreditation," Thakur posted on his official Twitter page. "Restoration of accreditation is a boost to India's efforts to achieve the highest global standards of excellence in sport. This is the result of untiring efforts by GOI (Government of India)," he added.

India is currently third in the WADA's global list of dope violators led by Russia. The suspension had prohibited the NDTL from carrying out any anti-doping activities, including all analysis of urine and blood samples.

The WADA first suspended NDTL in August 2019 for a period of six months and extended the de-recognition period after its inspections showed that non-conformities still existed.

Pujara backs batting line-up



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Centurion, Dec 23: Middle-order batter Cheteshwar Pujara says the current India batting line-up is experienced enough to tackle lateral movement on pace-friendly tracks in South Africa and he has no doubt that the team led by Virat Kohli will deliver in the Rainbow nation.

Pujara said the recent overseas success has made India a confident unit and that will reflect in the three-Test series, beginning Sunday.

"When you are a visiting team, you know that there is pace and

bounce and there is lateral movement and to face the fast bowlers is always a big challenge when you go out of India," Pujara said in a video posted by BCCI on its twitter handle.

"This team has learnt that and this is a much more balanced batting line-up and I think we will be able to tackle that and with our preparation I am very confident we will put up a good show."

Pujara also felt that the experience of having played in South Africa will also stand them in good stead. "Most of the (Indian) play-

ers have played in South Africa in the past, it is an experienced side and it terms of preparation, we know what is expected from us.

"Most of the teams play well in their home conditions and it's the same with the South African team. They have one of the best bowling line-ups and facing one of the best fast bowlers has always been challenging," said the 33-year-old from Rajkot.

India had retained the Border-Gavaskar trophy after beating Australia 2-1 in the four-match series early in the year. Virat Kohli's men also claimed a 2-1 victory in the five-Test rubber in England before the fifth Test was cancelled due to COVID-19.

"Having done well in England and Australia will make a big difference in this squad's confidence and self belief that we can win overseas, we can win in any conditions," Pujara said. "And with our bowling and batting line-up, I am very confident that we have the capacity to win a series in South Africa."

Pujara has lacked consistency since 2020 with his last century coming in January 2019 in Australia. In the last 10 innings, he has scored two fifties but couldn't convert them to big scores.